

**INTERVENTIONIST POLICY AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION: A  
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH  
EAST ASIAN NATIONS AND THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY  
OF WEST AFRICAN STATES**

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**Abstract**

This paper examines the roles of interventionist policies of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the attainment of regional integration within West African and East Asian sub-regions respectively. The paper is qualitative in approach and adopted the historical and descriptive research methods of investigation. From our analysis, it was revealed that while the non-interventionist policy adopted by ASEAN promoted integration and resulted in increased performance in regional integration, the interventionist policy displayed by ECOWAS has not resulted in an improved performance in regional integration. Moreover, while ASEAN has participated in the peace process of many member-states including Cambodia, ECOWAS displayed act of interventionism in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea which has resulted in discriminations, disharmonies and dichotomy between the Anglophone and Francophone States. Consequently, the paper recommended, among others, that since integration tends to thrive in the atmosphere of peace, ECOWAS should follow the ASEAN way by not intervening in the internal affairs of member-states if the desired unity that would lead to integration is to be achieved.

**Keywords:** Interventionist policy, regional integration, political realism, ASEAN, ECOWAS.

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## **Introduction**

In his celebrated work, “A Working Peace System”, Mitrany (1965) had argued that peace and economic development can be initiated and sustained, if international organisation concentrate on “low” political issues (economic issues) rather than high political issues (issues of war). It is against this prescription that this paper intends to examine the role interventionist policy has played in regional integration from ECOWAS and ASEAN perspectives. The paper takes cognizance of the interventionist roles of ECOWAS under the instrumentality of ECOMOG, in resolving the crisis in Liberia 1990 to 1997 and those of Sierra Leone and Guinea. However, while these expectations were never certain, fundamental questions must be asked: why was the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of member-states not an article in the charter that established ECOWAS? How did the intervention of ECOMOG in the internal affairs of member-states blurred regional integrative process in the sub region?

Contrary to ECOWAS position, ASEAN adopted a more pragmatic approach by not interfering in the internal affairs of member-states. This brought in cohesiveness and the spirit of oneness among members of the organisation and enhanced integration process. It is against the above backdrop that this paper seeks to examine the impact of interventionist policy as an obstacle to regional integration.

## **Theoretical and Conceptual Foundation**

Realism has been adopted as a theoretical approach for this study. The theory of realism is a power theory and is exercised by states. All realists have a pessimistic view of human nature. In view of this, they regard international relations as necessarily conflictual and international conflicts as ultimately resolved by war.

According to Ghosh (2009), political realism in international relations reached its zenith and assumed a grotesque stature in the hands of Hans J. Morgenthau in his seminal work “Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace” (1948). In his six principles of realism, Morgenthau (1948) has asserted that politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature which is unchanging. Therefore, it is possible to develop a rational theory that reflects these objective laws. The main issue of political realism is

the concept of interest defined in terms of power which infuses rational order into the subject matter of politics, and thus makes the theoretical understanding of politics possible. Expounding on Morgenthau's conceptualization Ghosh (2009) conceived international politics as a process in which national interests are accommodated or resolved on the basis of diplomacy or war. Ghosh (2009:27-28) maintained that:

The concept of national interest presupposes neither a naturally harmonious, peaceful world nor the inevitability of war as a consequences of the pursuit by all nations of their national interests. Quite to the contrary, it assumes continuous conflict and threat of war to be minimized through the continuous adjustment of conflicting interest by diplomatic action.

Realism assumes that interest defined as power is an object category which is universally valid but not with a meaning that is fixed once and for all. In a world in which sovereign states compete for power, survival constitutes the minimum goal of foreign policy and the core national interest. The protection of their physical and cultural identity against encroachments by other nations constitutes the vital interest which is common to all states. Therefore, the basic minimum national interest identifiable is national survival and other interests are determined by the requirements of time, place, culture, socio-economic and political conditions of the states.

To support his argument, Morgenthau gave classic examples from history. One of such is the policy of Great Britain in the late 1930s towards Finland which, he said, was not based on legalistic or moralistic foundations but backed by massive military aid on the face of Soviet aggression that might have backfired on Britain's survival. It would have faced destruction in the hands of Nazi Germany and would not have been able to restore the independence of Finland thus endangering its vital national interest, i.e. national survival. Pertinently, Morgenthau posed the question: When the national interest related to national survival has been safeguarded, can nations pursue lesser interest?

Universal moral principles cannot be applied to state action. They must be filtered through concrete circumstances of time and place. To confuse individual morality with state morality is to court disaster, as states in pursuit to their national interest are governed by a morality that is

different from the morality of individuals in their personal relationships. Political realism refuses to identify the moral aspirations of a particular nation with the moral laws that govern the universe. It is the concept of interest defined in terms of power that saves us from the moral excess and political folly. The political realist maintains the autonomy of the political sphere (Morgenthau 1948).

Therefore, the understanding of human nature, as selfish and conflictual unless given appropriate conditions, has been successfully adopted internalized and transformed into a modern theory of international relations. During the Cold War, it became the most widely accepted perspective of world politics. As already pointed out by some scholars, realism became the “doctrine which provided the intellectual frame of reference for the (US) foreign policy establishment for something like twenty years, it did determine the categories by which they assessed the external world and the state of mind with which they approached prevailing problems. Realism prevailed as the dominant paradigm with its emphasis on the autonomy of political action and the “billiard ball” model in International Relations till it was challenged by the behavioural revolution. But it again re-emerged in the form of neo-realism in the 1970s.

The realist tradition suffered a setback due to the emergence of the neo-liberal thought, especially the challenge posed by ‘pluralism’. The pluralist’s challenge to realism was soon met by a new brand of realists, and the forerunner among them was Kenneth Waltz. Waltz (1979) came up with his idea of world politics which is popularly known as neo-realism, Walt argues that the key difference between international and domestic politics lies not in the regularity of war and conflict but in the structure of international system. In the absence of higher authority in the international system, there is no other way to secure oneself other than self-help which will ultimately lead to security dilemma because security build-up of one would lead to insecurity of others. The resultant anarchy for the neo-realists is therefore, due to the presence of a system characterized by the absence of a high power over the sovereign states, it is this structure of international system which decisively shapes up the behaviour of states in international relations and their struggle for power. Thus, the sources of conflict or causes of war, unlike what the traditional or classical realists argue, do not rest on the human nature but within the basic framework of the anarchic structure of international relations. Waltz (1979) used game theory

(an economic concept which is widely used in many fields today) in addressing the balance of power and self-help in this environment. He says that balance of power results in this kind of system irrespective of the intentions of a particular state. But in international politics, in the absence of authority to effectively prohibit the use of force, the balance of power among states becomes most often a balance of capabilities, including physical force, which states chooses to use in pursuing their goals. Thus, in a self-help system, the logic of self-interest provides a basis of understanding the problem of coordinating the interest of individual versus the interests of the common good and the pay-off between short-term and long-term interests (Dunne, 1997). Neo-realists did not overlook the prospects of cooperation among states a lots, but the point of contention was that states, while cooperating with each other, tried to maximize their relative power and preserved their autonomy.

The first major criticism which has been levelled against realism is that like idealism, realism is also lopsided and stresses solely on power and power struggle i.e. “power monism” the traditional realists formulated their views in reaction to the liberal utopians of the 1920s and 1930s. Consequently, they put their greater emphasis on “power politics” state sovereignty, balance of power and war. For the realists, states were the only important actors in international relations. Besides, scholars point out that Morgenthau’s realism was based on a prior assumptions about human nature, such as the rational pursuit of self-interest, utility maximization and the like, which are hardly verifiable and tested. Many scholars have criticized traditional realism on the ground that it is neither realistic nor consistent with itself. According to Hoffman (1960), this theory is full of anomalies and ambiguities and ignores the discussion of ends and the impact of values on national policy. Tucker (1952) criticized the theory because he thought it was inconsistent both with itself and with reality. It is contended that a statistical analysis of international relations would reveal that though there was overwhelming dominance of realist paradigm in the 1950s and 1960s, but it failed to adequately explain international politics. According to the findings, over 90 percent of the 7000 realist hypotheses were falsified. It is opined that there is a need to go beyond the structural realists’ emphasis on constraints and the liberal realists’ predilection for order, in order to develop an emancipatory form of theory which seeks to deepen the sense of solidarity and widen the bonds of community in global politics.

Neo-realism is also not without flaws as a major problem with the unit-structure relationships is that it leaves little or no room for systemic change induced by the unit themselves (Burchill, 2001). Burchill further argued that by emphasizing recurrence and repetition in the international system, neo-realism cannot envisage a form of statecraft which transcends the calculus of power and control. This scholars place the neo-realist theory in the category of problem solving approach to international relations when this may be little more than a cover for a rationalization of immoral and unethical behaviour. By deconstructing realism neo-realism and neo-liberalism, post-modern critical theory observes that the concept of interstate anarchy is in reality an artificial construction of the dominant discourse and the state practices associated with it. It is contrived and generated by the dominant international relations discourse (Bandyiodhyaya and Mukherjee, 2001).

There has also been a feminist critique of realist theory from the point of exclusion of the women throughout the whole discourse. The most common motif in feminist analyses of peace and war depicts masculinity as a transcendently aggressive force in society and history. Women are by-standers or victims of man's war. Most feminist commentary, through the 1980s followed this framework. In particular, the extraordinary outburst of concern over the nuclear threat in the 1970s and early 1980s resulted in a spate of feminist writings explicitly or implicitly founded on a critique of masculinist militarism. In appraising Morgenthau, for instance scholars criticize realism as only a practical description of international politics owing to its deeply embedded masculinist bias. But partial descriptions are practical descriptions; they are not dead wrong. Morgenthau's paradigm has been attacked on several grounds. But the main concern is to offer a feminist reformulation of certain realist principles, in a similar vein, the central problem may not be with objectivity as such, but with objectivity "as it is culturally defined ... [and] associated with masculinity". The idea of the "national interest" likewise needs to be rendered more "multidimensional and contextually contingent", but not necessarily abandoned (Rodan, 1993).

Consequently, Ghosh (2009) sums up the basic assumption of realism as follows:

1. The international system is anarchic.
2. Sovereign states are the principal actors acting in the international system.

3. States are rational unitary actors each acting under the consideration of its own national interest.
4. National security and survival are the primary “national interest” of each state.
5. In pursuit of national security, states strive to increase national power.
6. National power and capabilities determined the relations among states.
7. National interest defined as terms of national power guides the action of the state in international relations.

It is clear from the above that realists have a high value for national security and state survival. Their position is completely at variance with the principle of give and take and cooperation with integration entails. A state which pursues maximum state security cannot at the same time agree to subject its sovereignty to regional cooperation involving integration. Since realists believe that states are always at war with another, the theory of realism is a good tool for the study of the integration of South East Asian Nation and ECOWAS nations because nations at war cannot at the same time have room for regional integration.

### **ASEAN and ECOWAS: Intervening for Regional Peace and Cooperation**

As already noted, the ASEAN was formed to ensure regional peace and stability by helping to moderate relations between its five founding members, to be achieved over time by inculcating a shared understanding among its members that each would practice restraint in its relations with other members. In view of this primary goal, it was not surprising that the commitment to sovereignty and non-interference became vital norms for the Association (Foong and Nesadurai, 2011). A decade later, in 1976, these principles were formally articulated in the ASEAN’s first treaty, the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC), which set out the grouping’s core principles for inter-state relations (ASEAN, 2007). Aside from the sovereignty/non-interference principle and the commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes, inter-state behaviour in the ASEAN is also governed by a set of informal, procedural norms, which emerged through repeated practice as officials and leaders interacted with each other over time. These practice, which became known as the “The ASEAN Way” of cooperation, include a group preference for informal over formal institutions, consensus decision making, and non-confrontational, deliberative styles of interaction (Acharya, 2007). Centralized institutions

were established only in 1977. Member governments have openly declared their aversion to European-style centralized bureaucracies and supranational entities, a long-standing preference that continues to shape the ASEAN's style of regional governance.

Sovereign/non-interference and the ASEAN Way have been central to the success of the ASEAN in averting war and open conflict between its members. In fact, the very persistence of the ASEAN as a regional organization may be attributed to members, shared undertaking not to undermine the sovereignty, stability and territorial integrity of member-states. Member-states also discovered the value of cooperating in line with these ASEAN principles during the 1980s when the ASEAN took an active part in seeking a resolution to Cambodian crisis. By respecting these principles and conducting their behaviour around them, the ASEAN members managed to develop a unified position on a major regional security problem in the 1980s Vietnam's invasion and occupation of Cambodia despite serious internal differences over the nature of the Vietnamese threat and how to respond to it (Caballero and Heywood, 2010). These principles, therefore, facilitated the ASEAN unity and consequently helped the organization to project and sustain the Cambodian conflict on the international agenda despite the Association's limited material capabilities and marginal international interest in Southeast Asia at that time (Foong and Nesadurai, 2011).

Moreover, once the Cold War ended, the ASEAN members also found their principles to be useful in deflecting calls by the western powers for the ASEAN governments to fully democratized, respect individual human rights and engage in comprehensive economic liberalization. The ASEAN principle also help shield member governments from having to commit to addressing joint tasks that they had little administrative capacity to undertake or that they found politically difficult given domestic interest. Given the benefits of sovereignty/non-interference as well as dialogue, accommodation and a consensus-driven style of decision making, it is therefore not surprising that these principles became deeply embedded as a central institutional feature of the organisation. By extending these principles to the wider regional institutions that the ASEAN member-states were involved in, to be discussed below, the relatively small states of Southeast Asia were able to exercise a degree of influence in these forums beyond their material power capabilities. In addition to their functional utility, the



persistence of these principles is also result of a normative commitment among officials and leaders to a set of principles that they recognized ‘as the most appropriate standard of behaviour for a group of very diverse states having to work together on common problems’ (Foong and Nesadurai, 2011). Most of the ASEAN members believed that abandoning this ‘time-honoured principle’ would take the ASEAN down the path towards eventual disintegration.

In the 1990s, the ASEAN continued to structure its cooperation on a range of transnational problems around these long-standing principles. However, these same principles now posed setbacks to effective cooperation, which required member governments to do more than engage in the kind of diplomatic coordination that characterized the ASEAN cooperation during its first two decades. The ASEAN’s strong preference for the sovereignty/non-interference principle limited the role that regional cooperation could play in addressing one of the more pressing problems to confront member-states during the 1990 regional environmental crisis caused by haze pollution from Indonesian forest fires. Although the gains from joint cooperation were potentially significant to domestic publics, member governments in the end chose to ensure autonomy for member-states over effectiveness in the way they framed the *ASEAN Agreement on Trans-boundary and Haze Pollution*. Adopted in June 2002, this Agreement endorsed acknowledging in Article 3 the ‘sovereign right’ of member-states to ‘exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental and developmental policies’. The ASEAN members were anxious to avoid a situation where strict compliance with regional environmental commitments would undermine governments’ ability to pursue rapid economic growth and reduce corporate profits. Although member-states wanted Indonesia to take the necessary actions to reduce or prevent forest fires, these governments were not prepared to develop more intrusive monitoring and enforcement mechanisms that might have aided that process, beyond pledging technical and financial resources to help Indonesia develop its internal capacity to prevent and respond to forest fires. Similarly, the ASEAN members also refrained from adopting a more intrusive approach to the problem posed by Burma by citing these principles as the cornerstone of the ASEAN.

Although there are other instances where ECOWAS through ECOMOG has intervened, the intervention in Liberia has attracted attention of many scholars. ECOWAS ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) as an intervention force was established in August, 1990 as a

result of the Liberian conflict. The conflict started with an invasion by rebels in December 1989 and quickly spread through the entire country. By August 1990, the main rebel movement, the National Patriotic Front of Africa (NPFL) under the leadership of Charles McArthur Ghankay Taylor, was controlling about 90% of the country. It was during this time that the Liberian President Samuel K. Doe, who came to power through military coup in 1980, called on ECOWAS to assist him to restore normalcy to his country. This request initially divided ECOWAS between its Anglophone and Francophone factions (Berman and Sam, 2000). While president Doe was a good friend to Nigerian president General Ibrahim Babangida, he was not on good terms with President Houphouët Boigny of Cote D'Ivoire. What compounded the issue further was that Charles Taylor, the leader of the rebel group (NPFL) was Houphouët Boigny's son-in-law and obviously had the support of the Ivorian president. Subsequently, during early August 1990 as mayhem loomed in Liberia, the Anglophone members of ECOWAS, under the auspices of ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee, met in Banjul, the Capital of Gambia, and decided to send military forces to intervene in the conflict in Liberia (Berman and Sam, 2000).

The devastating effects of the conflict in Liberia coupled with the failure of the International Community to intervene posed a security challenge to ECOWAS. However, it was not until 30<sup>th</sup> May, 1990 that the regional body had a formal deliberation on the conflicts at its 13th Head of States Summit in Banjul, Gambia. At the summit, General Babangida of Nigeria referred to a request from President Doe to ECOWAS for assistance and argued that ECOWAS must intervene on the conflict based on the Protocol of Mutual Assistance of Defense (PMAD). A five-member Standing Mediation Committee (SMC) comprising Gambia, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria and Togo was constituted to facilitate the mediation in the conflict in Liberia.

The SMC held its first and second meetings with the faction in Banjul, Gambia in July and from 6 to 7 August, 1990 respectively. At the end of the second meeting, the SMC drafted a proposal of ECOWAS Peace Plan for Liberia which recommended a military intervention using the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to monitor the Peace Plan. The recommendation generated brought division between the Anglophone and Francophone member-states. Except Guinea, all the Francophone countries led by Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso opposed the

intervention while the Anglophone countries led by Nigeria advocated a military intervention. A decision on the recommendation was taken on 25 August, 1990 when the Heads of States and government approved military intervention based on the PMAD and on humanitarian grounds. Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea, Gambia and Sierra Leone contributed troops for the initial 3000 strong ECOMOG Force. Mali and Togo refused to contribute troops although they were members of the SMC.

ECOMOG carried out two major intervention operations in Liberia. The first occurred from August 1990 to July, 1997. During the eight-year period, ECOMOG was opposed and attacked by NPFL who saw ECOMOG as an occupation force. This happened because ECOWAS did not have the consent of the main rebel movement, the NPFL, before intervening in the conflict. On the eve of ECOMOG's arrival in Liberia, Taylor called the peacekeeping force 'a flagrant act of aggression' (Berman and Sam, 2000:93). In the process, ECOMOG metamorphosed from peacekeeping to a peacekeeping force in order to be able to enforce peace in Liberia.

Among the many difficulties ECOMOG encountered was its inadequate logistical support as well as interoperability command and control issues. Despite all these difficulties, ECOMOG halted the senseless carnage, maintained law and order and restored peace. It assisted in humanitarian efforts, which reduced the suffering of the civilian population. ECOMOG's intervention created an atmosphere conducive for ECOWAS secretariat to dialogue. This eventually led to a peaceful, free and fair presidential and parliamentary election, on 19 July 2007, with Charles Taylor becoming the president. In addition to the countries that initially contributed troops for the force in Liberia, other countries that joined subsequently included Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo. These countries joined later as the corridor for diplomatic negotiations had been widened to include the Francophone countries in the sub-region.

The second ECOMOG intervention Operation in Liberia occurs five (5) years later in August 2003. Two rebel movements, the Movement for Democracy of Liberia (MODEL) and the Liberia United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), invaded from the north and west and controlled a large part of the country. The rebel groups demanded the resignation of the president

and a fresh election. As a result of the human sufferings in the country and looming danger, the ECOWAS Heads of States, fearing a humanitarian disaster, coerced President Taylor to give in the demand of the rebels and step down as president to allow an interim government to be formed for fresh elections within six months.

President Taylor yielded to enormous pressure by ECOWAS leaders and agreed to the rebels' demands on the condition that ECOMOG force be formed to provide security to the interim government until fresh elections were held. Consequently, ECOWAS employed ECOMOG, made up of mainly Nigerian troops to intervene with logistical support from the US. This force was known as ECOWAS Mission in Liberia (ECOMIL). As a result of the ECOWAS sponsored dialogue between President Taylor and the rebel movements, Charles Taylor stood down as president on 11 August, 2003, and handed over power to the National Transition Government of Liberia (NTGL), and went into exile in Nigeria. ECOMOG forces now numbering about 3500 (troops from Nigeria and Ghana), continued to maintain security in Monrovia and facilitated the signing of a Comprehensive Agreement in Accra on the 18 of August, 2003 which brought in the UN. The agreement requested the UN to deploy a force to support the NTGL to implement the agreement.

On 19 September, 2003, the Security Council adopted resolution 1509 authorizing a UN mission to be known as United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). The force strength was earmarked at 15,000 soldiers and 1,115 police officers and at its inception was the largest on-going UN peacekeeping mission in the world. Once more, the Security Council requested the Secretary General to transfer authority of the mission area from ECOMIL to UNMIL on 1 October, 2003 and absolved the ECOMIL troops. Approximately, 3500 ECOMIL troops became UNMIL troops on 1 October, 2003 all in the quest for peace in West African sub-region.

### **ECOWAS Interventionist Policy and Regional Suspicion**

Many observers are of the view that ECOWAS as a body has consistently interfered with the affairs of its members and this has raised suspicion among member-states. The Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) at a time has a force of

approximately 8000 with contingents drawn from Nigeria, Ghana, Mali, Burkina Faso, Senegal and Sierra Leone. Although member-states have contributed to the force, Nigeria's prominence is evident as past and present Nigerian leaders have always echoed the point that Nigeria was the giant in not only the sub-region but in the whole of Africa. From the Nigeria's dominance in all the peace initiative in Liberia and Sierra Leone, it was clear to other members of the ECOWAS that this dominance was to actualize Nigeria's leadership ambition. Nigerians and their leaders have come to the conclusion long ago that their country was designed for greater rule, in fact the leader of Africa and the entire black race (Alade, 2000). This explains why successive Nigerian leaders have been affected by this pervasive view among Nigerians and President Ibrahim Babangida echoed this mind-set when he said, "Nigeria is the only country every other country was looking up to provide the desired leadership" (Babangida, 1993). It was because of this that the rivalry between the Francophone member-states led by Cote d'Ivoire and Anglophone group led by Nigeria crystalized.

On the issue of rivalry between Anglophone and Francophone countries, it obvious that the Francophone Countries were skeptical about what they perceived to be overbearing dominance of Nigeria in the sub-region. This skepticism led them to have several meetings outside the framework of ECOWAS to discuss strategies and define positions design to balance this dominance. Beyond stopping Nigeria's dominance in the sub-region, Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso had hatred for Samuel Doe whom Ibrahim Babangida (then President of Nigeria) supported. For Houphouet Boigny (then president of Cote d'Ivoire), Samuel Doe was a dangerous upstart whose killing of his in-law (William R. Tolbert) exceeded all limits of decency (Bassey, 2005).

Therefore, the rivalry has actually been between Anglophone and Francophone states. Accordingly, sub-regional security mechanisms were formed. Accord de Non-Agression et d'assistance en matiere de defence (ANAD) formed in June and sponsored by France as a counter to the ECOMOG which came into being in 1990 as a result of Liberia crises. These divisions and rivalries have somewhat retarded integration process in the West African sub-region. We can, therefore, say that the May 1981 ECOWAS protocol of mutual assistance on defence did not actually help. The ECOWAS relied on the 1981 protocol relating to mutual assistance while the ASEAN pursued religiously a policy of non-interference.

## **ASEAN and the Principle of Non-interference: Towards Real Regional Integration**

The principle of non-interference is the original core foundation upon which regional relations between the ASEAN member-states are based (Keling, 2011). The principle was first lined out in the ASEAN's foundation document, the Bangkok Declaration, issued in 1967. The Bangkok Declaration expressed that the member-states are determined to prevent external interference in order to ensure domestic and regional stability (Stubbs, 2008). The non-interference policy was reiterated in the Kuala Lumpur Declaration of 1976 (Keling, 2011). It was further reinforced in the 1999 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAG), in which the principle of non-interference in members' internal affairs was explicitly referred to as one of the association's fundamental principles (Stubbs, 2008).

To understand the ASEAN's guiding principle of non-interference, it is important to clarify its meaning. While the principle of non-interference is adopted by many organisation throughout the world and is enshrined in the Charter of the UN, what appears to be unique to the ASEAN's conduct of regional relations is therefore not merely the adoption of non-interference as a behavioural norm, but rather its particular understanding and subsequent practices of this norm. The UN charter on non-intervention recognizes the sovereignty of states (Article 2(7)). However when it comes to human rights, Article 2(4) provides for intervention of either a multilateral force or individual nation for the sake of guaranteeing of promoting the rights of citizens. This broad interpretation led the non-interference policy function as an arrangement for the prevention of any acts by the ASEAN member-states that would possibly undermine the authority of the dominant political elite and upset domestic governance in any of the member-states (Ruland, 2011). The non-interference norm should therefore not be regarded merely as an ideal, but also as a political tool (Nesadurai, 2009).

Two political factors have been critical in the development of the ASEAN's normative framework, sometimes referred to as the 'ASEAN Ways', and these factors are important for an understanding of why the ASEAN has used the non-interference principle as a guiding light. The first factor is the particular importance attached to state-sovereignty by the Southeast Asian States as a result of their historical experience. Colonial rule, Cold War experiences and frequent attempts by China to export communism all reinforced internal conflict and led to Southeast

Asian to perceive sovereignty as a key element in ensuring regional as well as domestic stability. The second factor is the priority assigned to preserving domestic stability as internal security matters are considered to be of fundamental importance. This factor stems from the countries' fragility of the social and political order, which has made the domestic field their main security focus (Katsumata, 2003).

Although there is a broad consensus among scholars on the longstanding importance of the non-interference policy in the ASEAN's conduct of regional affairs, the principle has never been absolute (Jones, 2010). In an article on the theory and practice of the ASEAN's non-interference policy, Jones firmly rejects the principle's centrality in the Southeast Asian affairs. He demonstrates the inconsistent application of the policy and concludes that the principle is used as a device for legitimizing state-behaviour and thereby applied in line with the interest of the dominant economic and political elites. He pointed out that during the Cold War continues, extra-ASEAN interventions were made to contain radical communist groupings who were perceived to threaten the capitalist social order within the ASEAN states e.g. Vietnam and Cambodia.

With the end of the Cold War, new capitalist elite started to meddle in one another state's affairs as these elites were competing and seeking to exploit investment opportunities throughout the region to maximize their wealth. However, despite the manifold violations by member-states, the non-interference principle has nevertheless had a profound effect on the ASEAN's conduct of regional affairs, as state autonomy and internal stability have been given priority over effective governance of the Southeast Asian region as a whole (Ruland, 2011). Indeed throughout the years, the ASEAN's political practices have reflected a rigid reluctance to interfere in member-state's internal affairs. Its decision-making approach appears to have been greatly influenced by a common concern for preventing outside interference in domestic matters.

The importance assigned to non-interference is notable in the association's opposing stance towards Vietnam's intervention in Cambodia in the late 1970s that blocked the Khmer Rouge regime in its genocidal campaign. The ASEAN even set out to organize international protest against Vietnam's intervention. In the case of Vietnam and Cambodia, already mentioned

above, it was at the instance of the USA government on one hand and the former Soviet Union on the other. It was a period when the region was fractured by rivalry between the two super powers at the time with the US trying to use the ASEAN to stop Vietnam from falling into communist camp during the Cold War and the US didn't want Vietnam to fall to communism. It really had nothing to do with the ASEAN non-intervention policy which was initiated only in 1976. The introduction of new policy guidelines among the member-states appear to be more significant in affecting the function of the non-interference principle as interpreted according to its original meaning. New policy guidelines signify a shift in outlook and thereby paved the way for gradual but genuine turn in the ASEAN's behaviour. Proposals for new policy guidelines appear to stem primarily from pressure exerted by the international community, from globalization process, and from growing demands for democratization among citizens of the different member-states (Jetschke and Ruland, 2009).

In the early 1990s, with the end of the Cold War, Western countries' foreign policy was increasingly characterized by the promotion of democracy and respect for human rights. This had a significant impact on the ASEAN's relations with the European Community and the US. The West demanded that the ASEAN would be more compliant with those cosmopolitan norms. However, the ASEAN firmly rejected to adopt a policy stance more in line with ideals propagated by the West. Instead, as a response to the perceived normative assault, the ASEAN way was actively promoted as an alternative approach to regional cooperation based on shared values among Southeast Asian elites. Therefore, far from undermining the principle of non-interference, the ideational pressure from the West at the end of the Cold War reinforced the ASEAN's traditional way of conducting regional affairs (Jetschke and Ruland, 2009). For example, as Nesadurai (2009) explains:

The norms prescribing flexible cooperation and non-interference were emphasized by regional leaders as core ASEAN norms that should remain central to regional environmental governance, in the process helping to secure domestic policy autonomy on matters relating to the environment.

The financial crisis that Asia experienced in 1997 and 1998 posed a more significant challenge to the normative underpinnings of the ASEAN way. The crisis dealt a serious blow to



the ASEAN's rhetoric as the situation seemed to show that the ASEAN way was inadequate to organize a successful response. Pressures for adopting a different set of ideational principles increased. The consequences of the financial crisis drew attention to the unavoidable settings of a globalized economy and seemed to demonstrate that the cooperation model structured around a prioritization of national sovereignty was ineffective in coping with this interdependency (Jetschke and Ruland, 2009). In the same year as the financial crisis, widespread atmospheric pollution resulting from the Indonesian forest fires posed another challenge to the ASEAN's traditional stance on domestic affairs. Moreover, in the context of the growing international recognition of good governance norms centred on human security, the decision to include into the grouping other South East Asian countries in which considerable human rights violations took place further undermined the ASEAN's reputation on the global scene. Meanwhile, civil society groups have increasingly pressured for a more people-centric security policy instead of the traditional state-centric approach that has been characteristic in most ASEAN member-states (Collins, 2008).

The events led to serious debate among the member-states on a reconsideration of the ASEAN's non-interference policy. In particular Thailand and Indonesia, as the more democratize member-states, have been significant in attempting to adapt the traditional approach (Stubbs, 2008). The former foreign minister of Thailand, SurinPitsuwan, suggested an approach of flexible engagement' at a ministerial meeting in 1998 (Jetschke and Ruland, 2009). Under the approach of flexible engagement, member-states would be allowed to openly discuss a state's domestic affairs with cross-border effects.

The proposal for flexible engagement was turned down however, for it was perceived by most of the member-states as an approach that would undermine national sovereignty and would thereby also put regional stability at risk. Following lengthy discussion, "enhanced interaction replaced the proposed policy of flexible engagement. Under enhance interaction, member-states are individually allowed to comment on the domestic affairs of neighbouring states when these heave regional repercussions, but it reaffirmed the non-interference norm. Yet this new policy still constituted a change to the manner in which the non-interference principle originally had been applied. Notable examples in which the changing stance of the ASEAN is reflected in

regional affairs are the international forum in 2003 set up by the ASEAN in which the domestic matters of Myanmar were discussed. The association's eleventh summit in 2005 during which the grouping openly put pressure on Myanmar for reforming its political system and decided to send an investigating team. The ASEAN's 42 ministerial meeting of 2009 were member-states collectively demanded that Myanmar would release political detainees.

The above examples indicate ASEAN's increasing collective approach (Haacke, 2010). With respect to Cambodia any substantial discussion on the need to intervene was absent, and the humanitarian motivations of Vietnam's intervention received virtually no sympathy from the ASEAN member-states. In East Timor, there were many demands from political elites and citizens of the ASEAN member-states to stop the oppressive acts by way of undertaking collective action assisted by military force. The ASEAN now believed that it could not afford refusing to recognize the oppressive acts and look other way. According to Evans (2004), this shows that "the normative framework has clearly shifted on humanitarian action". The ASEAN government merely criticized such actions but did not intervene militarily but diplomatically unlike in the case of ECOMOG in Liberia in 1990 and Sierra Leone in 1991. It should be noted however that while the ASEAN's expressed intentions have been partly realized through its more flexible approach, any fundamental change is not yet visible in the ASEAN's conduct of regional affairs. In spite of the ASEAN's rhetorical change, notably through the establishment of an ASEAN Charter and the formal recognition of cosmopolitan norms, ASEAN's practical actions have continued to be restrained by its traditional ideals of the ASEAN way (Jetschke and Ruland, 2009).

While the principle's original guiding function is seriously undermined, not so much by the occasional violations but by the newly agreed stance on regional affairs, to date an appropriate replacement for the non-interference policy proves difficult to develop in light of the continuing domestic instability in many of the member-states (Dosch, 2012). Proposals which are perceived to erode the non-interference principle have generally been rejected, like for instance Indonesia's proposal for an "ASEAN Peacekeeping Force" (Rahim, 2008). Furthermore, while many of the regional disputes continue to linger on as no appropriate conflict resolution mechanism of the ASEAN is in place, others have been handed over to great powers like the US when the situation is particularly severe but in which the newest member-states block

any collective interference in a state's internal affairs in order to uphold the national sovereignty norm (Ruland, 2011).

This restraint on the ASEAN's conduct is reflected in its practices with regard to the repressive situation in Myanmar. Although the ASEAN had departed from its traditional policy by frequently exerting criticism, not only individually but also collectively, a lack of political will and capacity to enforce have frequently inhibited a successful response by the ASEAN member-states, so that the association failed to deal with the situation on its own (Dosch, 2012). While the ASEAN has been showing a turn towards a more liberal stance whereby the non-interference principle is undermined, issues of domestic instability and disparities between the member-states continue to hinder an absolute shift from mere recognition of cosmopolitan norms towards putting the cosmopolitan aspirations into practice.

The ASEAN's principle of non-interference has allowed the member-states to concentrate on nation-building and regime stability while maintaining cooperative ties with other states. While the ASEAN's principle has never been absolute, and has often been used as a tool for legitimizing state-behaviour in the interests of the dominant political and economic elite, in recent years common interests have come to play a more important role in the association's conduct of regional affairs. This is happening in light of increasing interdependence among the member-states and the growing realization that norms of good governance should be taken into account in order for the association to regain relevance and credibility among the region's own citizens as well as on the broader global scene. In this respect, the principle's function as a guiding light for the association's behaviour in regional affairs has become increasingly fragile in recent years. With its new policy of allowing for public criticism of other states' affairs where regional security is at stake, together with a more assertive stance on human rights, the ASEAN has moved beyond its traditional non-interference approach. Yet, the non-interference principle, as it is interpreted today, still acts as a comparatively strong restraint on the ASEAN's behaviour in regional affairs. The principle's guiding function is seriously undermined, but to date a new code of conduct as an appropriate replacement for the non-interference policy proves difficult to develop in light of the continuing domestic instability in many of the member-states.

The above analysis should not give the impression that the ASEAN do not interfere whenever there is any crisis. In fact, the ASEAN states have in recent times come under criticisms for their limited engagement in providing solution to internal conflicts within the sub region. Although the ASEAN has a strong adherence to its traditional understanding of states sovereignty and non-interference, it must be acknowledged that the ASEAN countries have not been completely passive vis-à-vis involvement in regional peace operations. For example, in 1999, the ASEAN was criticized for failing to initiate any preventive diplomatic efforts in the case of East Timor and for rejecting a collective intervention for independence.

The criticism above was not entirely true. A number of the ASEAN members, including Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and Philippines supported the Australian led coalition to bring about peace in East Timor. Also, following the cessation of hostilities in 2005 between the Indonesian government and GAM (Gerakam, Aceh and Merdeka), GAM defined ASEAN's role in peace operations. Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines and Brunei Darussalam under the canopy of the ASEAN participated in an EU–AU led civilian mission to implement the memorandum of understanding between the government of Indonesia and GAM.

Despite the above incidence, it can be observed that where the ASEAN members have intervened as a mechanism for conflict resolution, it often does so within its traditional peace keeping activities rather than in a complete mission that may involve peace enforcement. This is because most the ASEAN states do not have the military interventions, specifically within the ASEAN region.

### **Conclusion**

The paper set out to compare the interventionist policy and regional integration of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Within the limit of our analysis certain facts were unveiled, viz:

- (i) That although ASEAN has participated in the peace process of some member-states, it does so without actual acts of intervention i.e. without seeking to intervene in the internal affairs of member-states involved.
- (ii) That ECOWAS has actually intervened in the internal affairs of member-states as in the case of Liberia.

- (iii) That the singular act of intervention in Liberia led to discrimination and disharmony among member-states of ECOWAS especially those of the Francophone States.
- (iv) That it is difficult for regional integration to strive in times of conflict.

The paper submits that the formation of ANAD by the Francophone block as a counter force for ECOMOG was a realist thought which manifested in the ECOWAS sub-region. ECOWAS failed to achieve greater performance in regional integration because at a point, it was pursuing regional power with the use of force instead of cooperating in low political issues that would have eventually led to regional integration. In effect, ECOWAS, at some point, was pursuing regional power rather than regional integration. This action has slowed down the pace of ECOWAS move towards integration of West African States. It is recommended that ECOWAS should follow the ASEAN way by not intervening in the internal affairs of member-states.

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