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**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL
SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

Sierra Leone's Foreign Policy to ECOWAS from 2018-2022

**A thesis Prepared for a Partial Fulfilment of Masters of Art in
International Relations and Diplomacy
Addis Ababa University**

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**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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BY

Patricia Ansumana

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my own original work and has not been presented for a degree in any university and that sources of materials used for the study have been properly acknowledged.

Name: Patricia Ansumana

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List of Acronyms

AAU	Addis Ababa University
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AFDB	African Development Bank
AU	African Union,
CET	Common External Tariff
CPPS	Political Affairs, Peace, and Security
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States monitoring group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ETLS	Trade Liberalization Scheme
GCF	Green Climate Fund
HRW	Human Rights Watch
MRU	Mano River Union
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NAP	Sierra Leone's National Adaptation Plan
NCDDR	National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
NCDDR	National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
NGOs	Nongovernmental organizations
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
SLDD	Sierra Leone's Digital Diplomacy
U.S.	United States
UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNOWA	United Nations Office for West Africa

Abstract

Sierra Leone is one of the member states of ECOWAS. ECOWAS has a broad mandate encompassing economic, political and security cooperation, making it a more holistic and integrated regional body. It also has a strong emphasis on conflict prevention and resolution, deploying peacekeeping forces (ECOMOG) and mediating disputes among member states. This proactive approach to maintaining peace and security sets it apart from some regional organizations that primarily react to conflicts after they erupt. This research critically appraises Sierra Leone's foreign policy toward ECOWAS between 2018 and 2022. The study aims to evaluate the effectiveness, coherence, and contribution of Sierra Leone's engagement with ECOWAS in achieving both national and regional goals during this period. Specifically, this study aims to achieve three interrelated objectives: the first one is evolution of Sierra Leone's foreign policy towards ECOWAS in recent years. Secondly, assess the key domestic and international factors shaping Sierra Leone's engagement with ECOWAS since 2018. Thirdly, the paper discusses the effectiveness of Sierra Leone's foreign policy in achieving its national interests through ECOWAS. The study employs a qualitative research design, and methodology involved (both primary and secondary data collection methods, e.g., analysis of policy documents, interviews with key officials, and review of relevant literature). The study reveals that Sierra Leone's foreign policy significantly influences its national interests, prioritizing security, and promoting regional cooperation to convert ECOWAS engagement into economic benefits. The analysis was validated applied theories like Liberalism, Realism, constructivism, and rational theory. The study Recommend that strengthening Sierra Leone's ECOWAS engagement include enhancing domestic coordination mechanisms, or prioritizing capacity building in key sectors. The research contributes to a deeper understanding of Sierra Leone's foreign policy choices and their implications for regional integration and development within ECOWAS.

Keywords: *Sierra Leone, ECOWAS, Foreign Policy, and Regional Integration*

Chapter One

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

On Africa's west coast, Sierra Leone has been actively involved in regional and global diplomacy to advance economic growth, peace, and security. After its independence in 1961, Sierra Leone has pursued a foreign policy characterized by multilateralism, regional cooperation, and the promotion of international norms and values. Sierra Leone, a member of various international organizations, has adapted its foreign policy over time, with its membership in ECOWAS significantly influencing its foreign policy towards the organization, highlighting its adaptability to global dynamics and internal priorities.

ECOWAS, recognized in 1975, and it is a West African regional organization encompassing 15 countries comprising Burkina Faso, Benin, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. ECOWAS aims to foster economic cooperation and integration among its West African member states¹. ECOWAS also aims to achieve regional peace, security, economic development, and political stability through trade, agriculture, education, health, infrastructure, and tackling transnational crime and terrorism.

ECOWAS is a key regional organization of West Africa and it has meaningfully increased its role in handling and soothing regional politics post-2018². The organization has increased its efforts to regulate political crises and strengthen cooperation among member states. Before discussing on the general background of the foreign relationship among Sierra Leone and ECOWAS, it will be important to show the growing significance of the later in the sub-region³.

Since 2018, ECOWAS has been influential in addressing political crises of the region through simplifying discussion and negotiation in countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali, and Nigeria. For example, in Mali, ECOWAS maintained the mediation efforts led by its

¹ Jean Bossuyt, Political economy of regional integration in Africa. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Report, 2016.

² Smith SC, Sierra Leone in ECOWAS: A Blessing or a Curse? Africa Spectrum, 2019.

³ Onuoha F.C. & Giyasov . ECOWAS's Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Response to Boko Haram Insurgency, Journal of African Security, 2019.

special diplomat, causing in the signing of the Algiers Accord in 2015 and the successivemaintenance of the country.

ECOWAS rapidlyconvicted the military coup in 2015, in Burkina Faso and facilitated a peaceful shift to democratic government. These efforts demonstrate ECOWAS' promise to upholding political stability and preventing the acceleration of conflicts in the region⁴.

Since 2018, ECOWAS has played aessential role in regional politics by encouraging economic incorporation among member states, enabling the free movement of goods, services, and people. The promotion of the ECOWAS Common External Tariff (CET) in 2015 has been a major landmark in advancing Trade Corporation. The CET has facilitated to simplify customs processes and reduce trade obstacles, enabling member states to expand their trade and economic cooperation. Furthermore, ECOWAS wasenergeticallyengaged in negotiations for the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), aiming to establish a single market for goods and services across Africa. These efforts highlight ECOWAS' commitment to fostering economic development and growth in West Africa.

Since 2018, ECOWAS has been helpful in West Africa's regional diplomacy, intervening political disputes and promoting peaceful resolves. It has facilitated dialogues in Togo and organized a military force intervention inGambia,strengthening democratic principles and solidification governance. ECOWAS has also been proactive in fightingviolence and encouraging security collaboration among member states. Sierra Leone's foreign policy is essential for endorsing national security, economic development, regional combination, and global collaboration, promotes peaceful bilateral and multilateral relationships since 1961, and sustaining a strong regional connection.

The foreign policy of Sierra Leone is extremely rooted in principles of non-alignment, respect for sovereignty, and safeguarding of its national benefits. It has wanted to establish diplomatic relations with countries across the world, participating in bilateral relationshipsgrounded on mutual respect and support.

The framework of Sierra Leone's foreign policy has also answered to growing global dynamics. In current years, there has been a plannedchange toward prioritizing economic

⁴Okeke-Uzodike U &Oluka K. The Nigeria-ECOWAS Nexus in Conflict Resolution in Sub-Saharan Africa: A case Study of Mali, African Journal of Political Science and International Relations, 2017.

diplomacy and increasing corporations for maintainable development⁵. This change is manifest commitment of Sierra Leone's foreign policy with regional organizations like ECOWAS, which plays a critical role in encouraging economic collaboration, peace, and political stability in region.

Reviewing Sierra Leone's relationship with ECOWAS is vital for a wide-ranging assessment of its foreign policy from 2018-2022. Firstly, ECOWAS helps as a significant stand for regional incorporation and partnership in West Africa. Accepting Sierra Leone's commitment with ECOWAS allows for an investigation of its promise to regional strength, economic development, and political collaboration⁶. Examining Sierra Leone's role within ECOWAS provides perceptions into its position on key regional issues such as intermediation, trade, and governance.

Secondly, revising Sierra Leone's relationship with ECOWAS important to identify the problems and prospects it faces as a small, rising nation in a regional alliance. This exploration helps to understand Sierra Leone's efforts to support its foreign policy aims with the shared ambitions of ECOWAS member states⁷. Furthermore, appreciating Sierra Leone's commitment with ECOWAS enables an assessment of the country's ability to successfully contribute in regional decision-making processes and change regional policies (Kamara, 2019:443-444). Lastly, evaluating Sierra Leone's affiliation with ECOWAS from 2018-2022 agrees for an appraisal of the effect of its foreign policy on national development and regional amalgamation. By examining the effects of Sierra Leone's partnership with ECOWAS during this period, it becomes possible to assess the extent to which the country has completed its foreign policy objectives and contributed to regional progress (Kargbo and Bangura, 2018:90).

The period from 2018 to 2022 observed numerous notable measures in Sierra Leone's foreign relationships with ECOWAS. In 2018, Sierra Leone held presidential elections, which caused in a peaceable change of power. ECOWAS checked the elections and played a important role in ensuring transparency and democratic rule. The organization's participation in Sierra Leone's electoral process revealed its promise to promoting democratic principles and

⁵Kargbo E.S. & Bangura K. Sierra Leone Foreign Policy and ECOWAS Integration: Opportunities, Challenges and Prospects. International Journal of Advanced Academic Research/Social Sciences, 2018.

⁶Cornuelle C. Regional Security Strategy of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Foreign Policy and International Security Studies, The George Washington University, 2017.

⁷United Nations Development Programme. Sierra Leone: Country Programme 2019-2023, UNDP Sierra Leone, 2018.

supporting peace and stability in the region (Smith, 2019). Hence, the aim of this research is to look at Sierra Leone's affiliation with (ECOWAS).

1.1.1: Status of regional integration in West Africa:

There are presently eight Regional Economic Communities (REC) through different levels of integration that have been officially recognized by the African Union (Table 1). ECOWAS has the most extensive integration outline, except for the single market regulations in the East African Community, which permits the free movement of labour, capital, goods and services. ECOWAS has the most comprehensive integration framework out of the remaining RECs.

Table1: Status of regional economic integration, by regional economic community

EAC	✓	✓	✓	3/5	✗
COMESA	✗	✓	✗	Burundi and Rwanda have committed themselves to the protocol	✗
ECOWAS	✓	✓	✗	15/15	UEMOA(8 countries)
SADC	✗		✗	7/15	✗
ECCAS	✗		✗	4/11	CEMAC(6 countries)
CEN-SAD	✗	✗	✗	Unclear	✗
IGAD	✗	✗	✗	No protocol	✗
AMU	✗	✗	✗	3/5	✗

Source: United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (2017).

According to the Africa Regional Integration Index, which ranks ECOWAS as the continent's second most integrated regional economic community (REC), in terms of free movement of people, trade cooperation, financial integration, and productive integration, convergence of macroeconomic policies, and regional infrastructure and connections. The three top performing countries in ECOWAS sub-region are Senegal, Togo, and Côte d'Ivoire, all of which achieved an overall score of greater than 0.6 out of a possible 1. Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, The Gambia, and Cabo Verde, on the other hand, all have scores below 0.5. Table 2 displays the complete ranking for ECOWAS member states.

Table2: Regional integration ranking: ECOWAS

Côte d'Ivoire	1	2	12	7	1	7
Togo	2	7	3	2	1	6
Senegal	3	3	13	4	1	3
Niger	4	8	8	9	1	1
Ghana	5	4	2	3	1	12
Burkina Faso	6	9	6	14	1	2

Benin	7	11	14	8	1	8
Mali	8	6	15	12	1	5
Nigeria	9	1	7	10	1	13
Guinea-Bissau	10	10	9	15	1	4
Gambia	11	14	4	1	1	10
Cabo Verde	12	12	1	13	1	9
Sierra Leone	13	5	11	6	1	14
Liberia	14	15	10	5	1	11
Guinea	15	13	5	11	1	15

Source:United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (2017).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

West African political security and regional alliance are greatly assisted by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Within the ECOWAS, Sierra Leone has incorporated in a number of foreign policy decisions and creativities. The shifting of political, economic, and security situation in West Africa, which disturbs regional collaboration and amalgamation, makes the years 2018–2022 noteworthy.

Sierra Leone actively involved in West African regional organizations like ECOWAS, demonstrating commitment to regional integration through key initiatives and decision-making processes, promoting peace, security, and stability in the region⁸. In 2018, the country played a significant role in the mediation efforts to resolve the political crisis in neighboring Guinea-Bissau⁹. Moreover, Sierra Leone has been an active collaborator in ECOWAS' economic corporation initiatives, such as the formation of a single currency and the application of the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (OECD, 2021). These examples demonstrate practical engagement of Sierra Leone with ECOWAS and its commitment to raising regional collaboration and integration.

Sierra Leone has continued its active involvement in ECOWAS, demonstrating its commitment to regional integration through various initiatives and collaborations. One example is the country's participation in the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol, which aims to facilitate the movement of people, goods, and services within the region (UNDP, 2020:7). Sierra Leone enhances border crossing procedures, reduces trade barriers, and collaborates with ECOWAS to tackle regional security issues like cross-border crime and terrorism

⁸ Adar K. Regional Integration in West Africa: Progress, Challenges, and Prospects, Routledge, 2020.

⁹ Antwi-Boasiako K. Assessing ECOWAS' Role in Conflict Management in West Africa: A case Study of Sierra Leone's Civil War. Contemporary Security Policy, 2002.

(Akinterinwa, 2018:66-67). These examples highlight Sierra Leone's proactive engagement and the tangible measures it has taken to support regional integration within ECOWAS.

Further, Sierra Leone has demonstrated an active role within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) from 2018 to 2022. One example of this can be seen in Sierra Leone's appointment in the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council. The country played a essential role in mediating the political crisis in neighboring Guinea-Bissau in 2019. Sierra Leone, along with other ECOWAS member states, organized a monitoring and intermediation force to uphold peace and stability during the presidential election in Guinea-Bissau. This example displays Sierra Leone's commitment to resolving conflicts and promoting stability within the West African region through its foreign policy engagement with ECOWAS.

In 2019, the outbreak of Ebola virus changes the economic and humanitarian conditions of Sierra Leone and causes many crises. ECOWAS providing financial and logistical support to aid Sierra Leone fight the epidemic and prevent its spread within the region. This support emphasized the commonality and collaboration rose within ECOWAS in times of crisis. Additionally, in 2020, Sierra Leone actively partaken in regional discussions and initiatives aimed at addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. ECOWAS coordinated regional efforts to diminish the impact of the virus and facilitate economic recovery. By engaging in these regional actions, Sierra Leone revealed its commitment to collective action and collaboration within the ECOWAS.

The relationship between Sierra Leone and ECOWAS helps as a valuable case study for understanding regional politics in West Africa. ECOWAS plays a vital role in encouraging regional collaboration in peace and development. Studying commitment of Sierra Leone within the organization offers insights into the dynamics of regional advantages and the problems faced by smaller states. The most important issues of Sierra Leone foreign policy relationships with ECOWAS from 2018 up to 2022, containing the democratic transition of power, giving reaction to the Ebola outbreak, and combating COVID-19, demonstrate the significance of regional collaboration in minimizing shared problems. By studying the relationship between Sierra Leone's and ECOWAS, intellectuals and policymakers can increase their appreciation of regional dynamics and it helps to the enhancement of peace, stability and development in West Africa.

Sierra Leone has maintained a strong relationship with ECOWAS since 2018. The membership of country in ECOWAS has permitted Sierra Leone to join in regional economic and political collaboration, focused at fostering peace, stability, and development in West Africa. However, the link among Sierra Leone and ECOWAS has faced several problems in current years¹⁰. One of the major problems has been the issue of security challenges in the region, including terrorism and political insecurity in some member states. These problems have made it problematic for ECOWAS to bring effect on the security concerns of its member states, including Sierra Leone¹¹.

Furthermore, economic problems such as unemployment, poverty and lack of infrastructure development have also posed barriers to the collaboration among Sierra Leone and ECOWAS. The economic differences among member countries have stalled efforts to increase regional incorporation and development in West Africa¹².

Despite these encounters, there have been some developments in the region that have the chance to strengthen the interaction between Sierra Leone and ECOWAS. One of the key developments is the current signing Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement, of the African. Its objective is to bring a one market for goods and services in Africa. This treaty has the probability to boost regional trade and economic collaboration in West Africa, benefiting countries like Sierra Leone.

In addition, efforts to increase regional peace and economic security collaboration via regional organization such as the ECOWAS special Force and the West African Police Information System (WAPIS) have displayed potential in solving security problems in the region. Sierra Leone and other member states can better react to security threats and strengthen peace and stability in West Africa under working together,.

Thus, the connection between Sierra Leone and ECOWAS since 2018 has come across problems linked to security, economic development, and regional collaboration. However, with new developments such as the AfCFTA and increased security cooperation, there is hope for a more prosperous and stable West Africa in the years to come. Going forward, continued integration between Sierra Leone and ECOWAS will be crucial in reducing these problems and comprehending the potential for growth and development in the region.

¹⁰ Ibid8

¹¹ Ibid9

¹² Ojo E.T. Challenges and Prospects of Regional Integration in Africa: A case study of

Sierra Leone's long history of involvement and importance of its relationship with ECOWAS; However, there has been little research on evaluating the success and effects of the foreign policy of Sierra Leone approach during the period from 2018 to 2022 towards the organization in current years.

Literature on Sierra Leone's foreign relations with ECOWAS is limited due to content and time gaps, and no comprehensive study has been conducted yet. There is a need for a comprehensive analysis that assesses the alignment of Sierra Leone. While most previously conducted researches indicated the challenges and prospects of Sierra Leone's foreign relation with ECOWAS, they have not addressed the issue considering the new dynamics that emerged in the years after 2018. As such, there is an observable gap both in terms of time span and in terms of depth of analysis.

Accordingly, it is imperative to address the challenges and opportunities that Sierra Leone's foreign policy has encountered in the context of ECOWAS during the specified period. It is important assessing how the national interests of Sierra Leone align or conflict with the wide objectives of ECOWAS and the effect of this interaction on regional political stability and development.

Seeing the breaches acknowledged the above, this research aims to fill this gap by analytically assessing the foreign policy of Sierra Leone in relation to ECOWAS from 2018 to 2022. It has been specially focusing on major policy decisions, diplomatic participation, and the configuration of national interest of Sierra Leone with regional goals. Through recognizing problems, prospects, and potential areas of improvement, this investigation will contribute to a wide-ranging assessment of foreign policy of Sierra Leone towards ECOWAS within the larger framework of West African regional dynamics.

1.4 Objective of the Study

The objective of this study to evaluate the foreign policy of Sierra Leone towards ECOWAS from 2018 to 2022, investigate its success, collaboration, and impact on regional goals.

1.4.1 General Objective

This research aims to assess the major factors of foreign policy of Sierra Leone within ECOWAS and appraise the benefits of its diplomatic involvement from 2018-2022.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

This research specifically aims to:

- I. Analyze the historical background of Sierra Leone's foreign policy towards ECOWAS in current years.
- II. Identify the key domestic and international factors shaping Sierra Leone's engagement with ECOWAS since 2018.
- III. Evaluate the success of Sierra Leone's foreign policy in achieving its national interests through ECOWAS.
- IV. State recommendations to increase Sierra Leone's role in promoting regional integration and development within ECOWAS.

1.5 Research Questions

To critically assess the foreign policy of Sierra Leone towards ECOWAS since 2018, the proposed research has been relying on this broad research question: “What has been the nature and impact of Sierra Leone's foreign policy towards ECOWAS from 2018 to 2022, and how has it influenced regional integration and cooperation?” Based on this main research question, the study has tried to answer and analyzed the following specific questions:

- I. How has Sierra Leone's foreign policy towards ECOWAS evolved recently?
- II. What key factors are influencing Sierra Leone's approach to ECOWAS since 2018?
- III. To what extent has Sierra Leone been successful in achieving its national interests through its engagement with ECOWAS?
- IV. How can Sierra Leone's foreign policy towards ECOWAS be strengthened to promote regional integration and development?

1.6 Research Methodology, Methods and Instruments of Data Collection

1.6.1 Research Design

The research centers itself on the broader questions that depict its objectives: “What has been the nature and impact of Sierra Leone's foreign policy towards ECOWAS from 2018 to 2022, and how has it influenced regional integration and cooperation?” To accomplish the research objectives, a qualitative research approach was adopted. The methodology has involved a comprehensive review of literature on Sierra Leone's foreign policy, ECOWAS, and broader West African regional dynamics. The review of recent literature has provided insight into the key themes, concepts, and debates surrounding the topic, enabling a critical analysis of Sierra Leone's foreign policy towards ECOWAS. The analysis of both secondary and primary sources has facilitated a thorough examination of Sierra Leone's foreign policy towards ECOWAS and its implications for regional integration.

1.6.2 Methods and Instruments of Data Collection

The researcher utilized both primary and secondary sources to gather data for the study, including books, interviews, journals, articles, reports, official documents, newspapers, magazines, and internet.

The proposed reference materials include, publications from Sierra Leone's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation; interviewing of some African diplomats in Addis Ababa, official documents and treaties from ECOWAS; academic articles on regional integration and foreign policy analysis; reports from international organizations on West African regional affairs as well as news articles and expert commentaries on Sierra Leone's involvement in ECOWAS in the post-2018 West African dynamics.

1.6.3 Methods of Data Collection

The research question will be addressed through three data collection methods: document analysis, and archival sources.

1.6.3.1 Document Analysis

The study utilized ECOWAS reports and collected data from various sources to analyze Sierra Leone's foreign policy towards the sub-regional organization, focusing on its relations with neighboring countries.

1.6.3.2 Archives

I have used Archival sources that reveal Sierra Leone's foreign relations with ECOWAS and inter-state interactions since 2018, including bilateral agreements, minutes, and documents from various Sierra Leone ministries and ECOWAS archives.

1.6.3 Interview Data Sampling

To gather data from key informants, the researcher utilized purposive sampling. I believe my experience of working as a diplomat helps me to use my own judgment and experience in selecting list of informants. Purposive sampling is a researcher's preferred method for selecting participants based on their personal qualities and knowledge of the subject being studied. I have purposely selected interviewees depending on their informative nature owing to their specialized knowledge and the positions they occupy in the government offices mentioned before.

1.6.4 Data Analysis and Interpretation.

The study used qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis techniques to identify patterns, trends, and relationships between Sierra Leone and ECOWAS, focusing on infrastructure development, institutional frameworks, and foreign relations. It also employs a triangulation data analysis method to enhance the credibility of the research.(Patton, 1999). This study's credibility can be enhanced by data triangulation using secondary and primary methods of data collection.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The significance of the study lies in its potential to contribute to the understanding of small states' foreign policy within regional organizations. It will offer recommendations for enhancing Sierra Leone's engagement with ECOWAS to promote regional integration, peace, and development.

Sierra Leone's foreign policy towards ECOWAS is an important aspect of its engagement with the West African region. This research examines the period from 2018 to 2022 to gain insights into the effectiveness of Sierra Leone's foreign policy in achieving its national interests and promoting regional integration. By conducting a critical appraisal and evaluating key foreign policy decisions, it will shed light on the country's approach to regional cooperation and its impact on Sierra Leone's development and regional standing. Accordingly, the study will contribute to the knowledge on countries' foreign relation with regional economic communities as well as general trends of regional economic integration in West Africa.

From the vantage of foreign relations and diplomacy, this study will have various significances. By identifying the post-2018 general patterns of foreign relation in the ECOWAS sub-region, the study provides an insight in studying Sierra Leone's contribution to ECOWAS since 2018. In so doing, the outcome of the investigation will inform how Sierra Leone preserve international peace, strengthens the security of the State vis-à-vis other countries. Furthermore, the study will expose the gaps underlining cooperation between the different nations of ECOWAS sub-region thereby providing background for similar future researches. Generally, this study can serve as springboard for further studies and investigations on thematic areas such as foreign relations, and regional integration schemes in West Africa.

In general, this study will contribute to a deeper understanding of Sierra Leone's role within ECOWAS. It will offer valuable insights for policymakers in Sierra Leone and other member states on how to strengthen regional cooperation and address shared challenges. Additionally, the research will identify areas for improvement in Sierra Leone's foreign policy to ensure it effectively promotes national interests and contributes to regional development.

1.8 Scope of the Study

This research is specific to investigating Sierra Leone relationship with ECOWAS within a limited time span of 2018 to 2022. This research will delve deeper into Sierra Leone's foreign policy towards ECOWAS specifically between 2018 and 2022. However, it explores specific aspects such as Sierra Leone's participation in ECOWAS programs and initiatives during this period; key diplomatic moments or challenges in the relationship with ECOWAS; the impact of regional developments on Sierra Leone's foreign policy towards ECOWAS, among others.

1.9 Organization of the Study

The research paper is divided into four chapters, with the first focusing on the study's background, problem statement, central argument, objectives, questions, methodology, significance, scope, and organization. Chapter two is a highlight of relevant reviews of related literature and theoretical framework on major themes of the study. This chapter also examined the various concepts of foreign policy, including literature on Sierra Leone foreign policy strategy, and Sierra Leone's contribution to international peace and security. The third chapter presents historical backgrounds to Sierra Leone's foreign policy and its relation with the ECOWAS. As such, the chapter presents the changes and continuities of the bilateral relations across the timeline of the last century and the ages of the African Union and regional economic communities. The fourth chapter presents the analysis part of this research. To be precise, the chapter is where challenges and prospects of behind the bilateral relation since 2018 are discussed. Further, the analysis covers discussion on the impact of new developments in the sub-region on the freeing relation of Sierra Leone and its dealing with the ECOWAS. Chapter five will include a conclusion and recommendations.

Chapter Two:

2. Literature Review: Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

2.1. Conceptual Definition

This section discusses foreign policy and ECOWAS, as well as West Africa regional integration concepts, economic, political, and environmental issues, and Sierra Leone's perspective, and also examining rationales and levels of integration.

2.1.1 Concept of Foreign Policy

Foreign policy: has been conceptualized in international relation scholarship in various ways. However, the conceptualization of foreign policy is concerned with the behavior and actions of a state towards other states. Breuning (2007) defines foreign policy as a country's interactions with international actors, focusing on understanding and changing behaviors and actions towards other countries and the international environment. Foreign policy involves a nation's strategies and actions to manage interactions with other countries and international actors, aiming to protect national security, promote economic interests, advance ideological values, and ensure global stability. A nation's foreign policy is shaped by a complex interplay of domestic factors (political system, public opinion, economic conditions) and external factors.

2.1.2 Concept of ECOWAS:

ECOWAS, founded in 1975, promotes economic cooperation among 15 West African countries, including Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Sierra Leone¹³. ECOWAS is a 15-member union aiming to promote free trade, free movement of people, common tariffs, cooperation, compensation, and development. Despite facing political crises in the 1980s, ECOWAS has embraced the security agenda as a core business, focusing on trade objectives and common projects in agriculture, transport, and energy¹⁴.

¹³ Ibid1

¹⁴ Ibid1

ECOWAS is a regional political and economic union of fifteen West African countries, albeit there has been the removal of three countries, including Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. Founded in 1975, its primary objectives are to promote economic integration, political stability, and social development among its member states. ECOWAS seeks to achieve these goals through various initiatives, including the creation of a common market, the harmonization of trade policies, the development of regional infrastructure, and the promotion of peace and security. The organization has played a significant role in conflict mediation, peacekeeping operations, and humanitarian assistance within the West African region¹⁵.

Since its inception in 1975, ECOWAS has promoted economic cooperation, regional integration, and developed Africa's most advanced regional peace and security mechanisms among its member states. ECOWAS is widely considered the most significant accomplishment of West Africa's post-independence leaders. Also, from the early 1990, it progressively created Africa's most sophisticated mechanisms of regional peace and security. ECOWAS has expanded its focus on peace and security laws, transforming into a regional security community. However, this has led to economic growth and integration issues, affecting its ability to sustain peacemaking. Post-Cold War conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone exacerbated these issues. ECOWAS is arguably the single most important achievement of West Africa's post-independence leaders. ECOWAS's effectiveness is, however, subject to various challenges, including political instability in some member states, resource constraints, and differing national interests.

ECOWAS, despite operational limitations and competition, has become a leading peacemaking actor in Africa since the 1990s, partnering with the AU and UN to promote West African peace and security. Another central objective of the organization (ECOWAS) is to promote trade liberalization within the community by eliminating customs duties and administrative barriers, and promoting free movement of people, services, and capital, as outlined in the 1979 Protocol.

2.1.3. 'West Africa' region

West Africa geographically, comprise all the Western African states like Nigerian, Ghana, Liberia, Guinea-Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Sierra Leone etc. Since the 1960s, the

¹⁵Adekeye Adebajo. ECOMOG and Sierra Leone Conflict, 2001.

region has experienced high rates of coup d'états, civil wars, and political crises, leading to instability and reversals in developmental gains. Recent conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, and Guinea-Bissau have caused widespread hardships. The ECOWAS, UN, and international community have diverted resources for human and economic development to peacekeeping efforts. Large caches of weapons contribute to violence in West Africa. The region's vulnerability to diseases like meningitis, cholera, and Lassa fever, along with weak health infrastructure and vaccine shortages, poses significant threats. The region is widely recognized as a trailblazer, including for the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA)¹⁶. For the purpose of this study, Sierra Leone is center however, the West Africa include many countries in the region that shares border with Sierra Leone.

2.1.4: Trade integration

On trade integration, 44 African Union (AU) member States signed the Agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) on 21 March 2018, in Kigali, Rwanda. Six other AU member States signed the Kigali Declaration thereby signifying their commitment to sign the AfCFTA Agreement after necessary national consultations have taken place. The AfCFTA, a flagship project of the AU Agenda 2063 for "The Africa We Want", could play a key role in advancing the development prospects of the ECOWAS. It is therefore key for experts to examine how the region can benefit from the opportunities offered by the AfCFTA to overcome the challenges it is facing and to create pathways for transformational change and sustainable development. (ECA, SEPS Diagnostic analysis, 2018). The AfCFTA offers a perspective of regional integration for ECOWAS member States which reaches across West Africa and offers trade integration with neighbouring countries and beyond. An important aspect is that Guinea Bissau, Nigeria and Sierra Leone did not sign the AfCFTA, but are nonetheless bound by ECOWAS' common external tariff. ECOWAS exports to the rest of Africa increased from 6.3 percent in 2007 to 11.7 per cent in 2014. Intra ECOWAS export remained stable at 10.5 percent during the same period (ECOWAS, 2015).

2.1.5: Macroeconomic Policy Convergence and Establishment of a Monetary Union and Single Currency

¹⁶ Ibid1

The idea of creating a single currency within ECOWAS was launched in May 1983 by the Conference of Heads of State and Government (Decision A/DEC./6/5/83 relating to the proposal to establish a single ECOWAS Monetary Zone). In 1987, the Heads of State and Government of the Community member States, by Decision A/DEC.2/7/87 relating to the adoption of an ECOWAS monetary cooperation programme (EMCP), expressed their desire to create a single monetary zone within ECOWAS. Delays in implementation of

the intermediary

target towards regional currency prompted the Conference of Heads of State of ECOWAS, in Abuja on 15 June 2007 to request the ECOWAS Commission to review the monetary integration process with a view to accelerating the launch of the regional monetary union. This ultimately led the ECOWAS Convergence Council to adopt the roadmap for the ECOWAS single currency in 2020, in May 2009 (ECA, ECOWAS at 40, 2015). The adoption of this roadmap seeks, through the implementation of planned activities, to transform the ECOWAS region into an optimum currency area, one in which it would be beneficial to establish a single currency. Such an area can group several countries or may involve a few regions of a larger country. Defining an optimum currency area requires identifying the conditions under which the benefits of participation in a monetary union outweighs the associated costs. Member States were then invited to develop and submit multi-year convergence programmes to ECOWAS and the West African Monetary Agency (WAMA).

Less than two years from the attainment of the targeted deadline for the single currency, the pre-requisite conditions to achieving the goals contained in these programmes, notably the macroeconomic convergence criteria have only been partially achieved (table 3). A presidential task force comprised of the Heads of State of Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Niger and Nigeria has been put in place to advocate for this monetary agenda. An updated road map was adopted in Ghana at the meeting of the presidential task force. It is important that West African experts be informed of the new road map and examines the potential implications of the ECOWAS common currency.

Table 3: Primary and secondary macroeconomic convergence criteria compliance (%) 2005-2016

Country	Benin	Burkina Faso	Cabo Verde	Côte d'Ivoire	Gambia, the	Ghana	Guinea	Guinea	Liberia	Mali	Niger	Nigeria	Senegal	Sierra Leone	Togo
								a							

Primaryrankcriteria																
Budget deficit ≤ 3%	50	25	0	75	16.7	8.3	66.7	41.7	91.7	33.3	25	83.3	0	16.7	25	
Inflation rate ≤ 10%	100	100	100	100	100	25	33.3	100	91.7	100	91.7	41.7	100	25	91.7	
Budget deficit financed by the Central Bank ≤ 10%	100	100	100	100	58.3	66.7	75	100	100	100	100	91.7	100	66.7	100	
Gross Reserves in months of import ≥ 3	100	100	100	100	83.3	75	16.7	100	33.3	100	100	100	100	91.7	100	
Secondrankcriteria																
Public debt/GDP ≤ 70%	100	100	0	100	0	50	83.3	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	66.7
Nominal exchange rate variation ± 10%	100	100	100	100	83.3	66.7	66.7	100	100	100	100	66.7	100	83.3	100	

Source: ECA (2018)

2.2 Theoretical Frameworks

Regional integration theory, which began in the 1950s and 1960s, has since shifted its focus to European integration and the European Union. This subsection discusses various regional integration theories, examining their relevance to the topic under study due to their diverse and multifaceted nature. Theories are also discussed so as to show how they could be useful in explaining the existing level of integration of Sierra Leone Foreign policy towards ECOWAS. Foreign policy analysis, a complex and multifaceted field, seeks to understand the motivations, processes, and outcomes of states' interactions with the external world. A plethora of theoretical frameworks have emerged to guide this inquiry, each offering distinct perspectives on the factors shaping foreign policy choices.

2.2.1. Rational Choice Theory

This framework assumes that states act rationally, seeking to maximize their interests and minimize costs. According to this model, carefully balance potential results, calculate costs and benefits, and make decisions based on a logical calculation of their national

benefits¹⁷. This standpoint focuses on the authority level of foreign policy with regards to strategically informing the processes of governments, their information, analysis, and strategic calculation¹⁸. This theory also helps to define the conduct of foreign policy of Sierra Leone towards ECOWAS. This theory claims that states operate in a rational manner and attempt to optimize or gain the highest interests at the lowest cost. In this case, decisions are made by weighing the possible consequences of the decision made (Downs, 1957). This approach explains these choices as a combination of steps that strive to achieve Sierra Leone's national interests. Sierra Leone's foreign policy towards ECOWAS also has its issues. The country's internal political instability poses some challenges alongside the fragile economy and intricate geopolitical reality.

These constraints limit Sierra Leone's capacity to fully leverage its membership in ECOWAS and influence regional outcomes. The country must carefully weigh its national interests against the realities of its limited resources and potential constraints¹⁹.

2.2.2. Realist Theory

Realists, originating from western political thought, view state cooperation and regionalism as challenging to explain, viewing the state as the primary actor in international systems. The theory suggests that states are distrustful and constantly in competition for power, leading to a lack of trust and cooperation²⁰. Realists advocate for international anarchy, where states are free from international government, allowing them to make decisions based on the actions of their co-actors.

Realist theory, a dominant paradigm in international relations, posits that states are driven primarily by their pursuit of power and security in a world characterized by anarchy²¹. Countries are realized as unitary actors, which driven by self-interest and pursuing to impose their power in relation to other states. The theory often emphasized on factors like national interest, military strength, and balance of power as major elements of foreign policy²². The theory also emphasizing national interest benefits and power extension, this perspective argue

¹⁷ Bueno de Mesquita B et al. *The Logic of Political Survival*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003.

¹⁸ Allison G.T. *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971.

¹⁹ A. Conteh. *Political Instability and Governance in Sierra Leone: A Historical Perspective*, 2015.

²⁰ Donnelly Jack. *International Human Rights*, 3rd ed., 2007.

²¹ Morgenthau H.J. *Politics Among Nations: The struggle for Power and Peace*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948.

²² Mearsheimer J.J. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, New York: WW.Norton& Company, 2001.

that Sierra Leone's foreign policy towards ECOWAS is mainly driven by a quest for security and stability in a volatile regional environment²³. The country's dependence on ECOWAS for conflict avoidance and peacekeeping shows its susceptibility and the need for external provision²⁴. Sierra Leone's integration with ECOWAS can also be seen as a strategy to increase its regional effect and position itself within the balance of power in West Africa. Therefore, Realism argues that states should be strong in military and economy to meet national interests, rather than liberal institutionalism and regional collaboration. This suggests that genuine cooperation among West African countries will be difficult due to mutual distrust.

2.2.3. Liberal Theory

In contrast, Liberalism advocates for harmonious state relations, with institutional liberalism/liberal internationalism assuming international anarchy can be overcome through international organizations and law, emphasizing institutions' impact on political outcomes. The adoption of a European constitution is considered the key step towards transforming the European Community into a true federal state within the context of European integration²⁵.

Liberal theories emphasize the importance of institutions, cooperation, and the spread of democratic values in shaping foreign policy²⁶. They suggest that states are not always driven solely by self-interest but can also be influenced by shared interests, international organizations, and domestic pressures²⁷. Liberal theorists often highlight the role of international law, human rights, and economic interdependence in shaping state behavior²⁸. Approaches of this assume that institutions can guide unit decisions and manage conflict-raising behavior, making the establishment of international and regional institutions crucial for the progressive development of international relations²⁹. Liberal theories argue that, institutional liberals are in service of regional collaboration. This lens, highlighting the importance of institutions, integration, and common values, shows Sierra Leone's promise

²³ Ibid21

²⁴ Ibid15

²⁵ Gerring J. *Social Science methodology: A unified framework*, 2nd ed., Cambridge University Press, 2020.

²⁶ Doyle M.W. *Liberalism and World Politics*, *American Political Science Review*, Vol.80, No.4, pp.1151-1169, 1986.

²⁷ Keohane R.O. *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World*, 1984.

²⁸ Ikenberry G.J. *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order After Major Wars*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

²⁹ Ibid25

to regional collaboration and its interest of collective solutions to common problems³⁰. Based on this theory, countries can integrate in ECOWAS initiatives, such as the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS) and the ECOWAS Common External Tariff (CET), the theory suggests a willingness to cooperate for shared economic benefit (ECOWAS, 2023). The participation of Sierra Leone with ECOWAS reveals its trust in the importance of international institutions and the rule of law for encouraging stability and development³¹.

2.2.4. Constructivist Theory

This theory contests the materialist focus of realist and liberal theories, it arguing that state condition is shaped by common ideas, identities, and norms. According to this theory, beliefs of States and cultural values are taken as important in changing their foreign policy choices³². This also theory emphasize the importance of dialogue, social collaboration, and the importance of ideas in shaping country's international politics³³. The theory, focusing on the role of ideas, norms, and identities, advocates that Sierra Leone's foreign policy towards ECOWAS is fashioned by a common identity as a member state of the regional bloc and a commitment to mutual action. The country's integration in ECOWAS reflects a common perception of regional interests and a promise to promoting peace, security, and development³⁴. The common values and norms implanted within ECOWAS influence Sierra Leone's foreign policy interest, creating a sense of belonging and responsibility to the regional community³⁵.

2.2.5. Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy

This outline underscores the part of domestic causes in determining foreign policy. This model arguing that, state movements are predisposed by internal political dynamics³⁶. Factors such as public attitude, interest, bureaucratic politics, and regime type can all exert pose

³⁰ Ibid26

³¹ Ibid27

³² Finnemore M. National Interests in International Society. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996.

³³ Adler E. Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics, European Journal of International Relations, Vol.3, No.3, pp. 319-363, 1997.

³⁴ Ibid32

³⁵ Ibid33

³⁶ Allison G.T. Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971.

impact on foreign policy choices. This viewpoint highlights the multifaceted collaboration between national politics and global relationships³⁷.

Inside political condition of Sierra Leone is characterized by a complex mix of political parties, interest groups, and power dynamics. The Sierra Leone has experienced a long period of uncertainty, including the devastating civil war (1991-2002), which has predisposed the political system and its capacity to function successfully³⁸. These internal splits and encounters crushed Sierra Leone's foreign policy priorities and its ability to integrate with ECOWAS³⁹.

Public opinion plays a significant role in shaping foreign policy priorities. Sierra Leonean people hold different opinions on regional incorporation and ECOWAS's role. Public emotion towards ECOWAS can be impacted by reasons such as the perceived success of the organization in solving domestic challenges, the insight of ECOWAS's involvements, and the benefits of regional amalgamation. These public viewpoints can impact government decisions and change the country's foreign policy towards ECOWAS.

2.3 Foreign Policy Decision-Making Models

Appreciating how states make decisions in the universal political ground is central to foreign policy investigation. While different factors influence foreign policy choices, scholars have developed various models to explain the processes through which these decisions are made:

2.3.1. The Rational Actor Model

The classical model presumes that states are rational actors pursuing their goals for self-profit maximization while minimizing associated costs⁴⁰. Courtiers are considered as unitary actors with absolute goals and choice, accomplishing a cost-benefit examination in choosing the most balanced choice⁴¹. This model has shaped the opinion of planned decision-making in global politics, though it has been appraised for its generalization of complex political elements processes⁴². This theory has a substantial influence on Sierra Leone's foreign policy

³⁷ Lake D.A. *The State Built Environment: Governance and the Politics of Development*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.

³⁸ Paul Richards. *The Sierra Leone Civil War: A case Study in Failed State Reconstruction*, 2005.

³⁹ Musa I.S. *Sierra Leone's Post-Conflict Recovery and the Role of ECOWAS*, *Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 34, No.2, pp. 241-265, 2013.

⁴⁰ Downs A. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper & Row, 1957.

⁴¹ *Ibid* 17

⁴² *Ibid* 36

decision-making with relation to ECOWAS, though it is not the only factor influencing these decisions. The RAM demonstrate that states act in a predefined way in pursuit of increasing interests and resources by weighing losses and gains to obtain optimal results⁴³. while the Sierra Leonean foreign policy from within the RAM framework is largely concentrated on planned domestic interest therefore seeks to involve in approaches that maximize domestic welfares, they mostly forgets that there are other reasons beyond rationale that influence the country's decision-making. A thorough examination goes beyond rationality and incorporates other frameworks of foreign policy analysis such as bureaucratic politics or constructivism.

2.3.2. The Bureaucratic Politics Model

This model challenges the rational actor model, arguing that foreign policy decisions are the result of bargaining and compromise among different bureaucratic actors with competing interests within the government⁴⁴. Each bureaucratic agency seeks to maximize its own power and influence, leading to a process of negotiation and compromise to reach a decision⁴⁵. This model highlights that, complications of domestic politics and the interaction of different organizations and interest groups⁴⁶. According to this perspective, Sierra Leone's foreign policy decision-making regarding ECOWAS is meaningfully impacted by the Bureaucratic Politics Model (BPM). Unlike the Rational Actor Model, which undertakes a amalgamated domestic interest, the BPM also argued that, the internal opposition and negotiating among different government organizations and actors⁴⁷. This means Sierra Leone's methodology to ECOWAS isn't a single, comprehensible approach, but a product of dialogues and conciliations among various bureaucratic actors with their own interests and viewpoints.

2.3.3. The Organizational Process Model:

This model emphasize on the role of well-known processes, normal working techniques, and structural configurations in affecting foreign policy decisions⁴⁸. Organizations often operate

⁴³ Ibid 40

⁴⁴ Ibid 36

⁴⁵ Allison G.T. & Zelikow P. *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2nd ed. New York: Longman-Pearson, 1999.

⁴⁶ Halperin M.H. & Kanter J. *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1973.

⁴⁷ Ibid 36

⁴⁸ March J.G. & Simon H.A. *Political Economy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

grounded on pre-existing drivers and procedures, leading to foreseeable results even in the face of changing conditions. This model highlights the impact of structural culture and procedures, often leading to "satisficing" rather than optimal decision-making⁴⁹. The theory also offers an appreciated lens through which to analyze Sierra Leone's foreign policy decision-making concerning ECOWAS. Unlike the Rational Actor Model, which assumes a unitary, rational actor, or the Bureaucratic Politics Model, which focuses on inter-agency competition, the OPM emphasizes the role of standard operating procedures (SOPs), organizational routines, and bureaucratic structures in shaping foreign policy choices⁵⁰. In the context of Sierra Leone and ECOWAS, this means that decisions are not always the result of deliberate, calculated choices by top leaders, but rather emerge from the established processes and structures within government organizations.

2.3.4. The Government-in-a-Box Model

The Government in a Box Model, proposed by Robert Jervis, promotes the intrinsic difficulties of foreign policy decision-making through recognizing that there are multiple "black boxes" within government persuading decisions. It accepts that each "box" (such as the decision-making branch, lawmaking branch, or the intellect community) functions with its own domestic factors and information movement, influencing the final decision⁵¹. According to this model, the need to consider the interdependence of several government actors and their national procedures when examining foreign policy. The Government in a Box Model, a modification of the bureaucratic politics approach planned by Robert Jervis, can deliver a valuable outline for considering the decision-making of foreign policy of Sierra Leone concerning ECOWAS. Unlike simpler models that undertake a united domestic importance or direct inter agency competition, the Government-in-a-Box Model has stated that, the complication and mistiness of government procedures⁵². It views the government as a group of semi-autonomous "black boxes" different agencies, departments, or even individuals each with its own internal processes, information movements, and decision-making determinants. In the context of Sierra Leone and ECOWAS, Diverse governmental "boxes" such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defense, and the Ministry of Finance own sole information connected to

⁴⁹ Ibid28

⁵⁰ Ibid45

⁵¹ Ibid32

⁵² Jarvis R. Perception and Misperception in International Politics, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976.

ECOWAS. This information is often not common fully or evidently crosswise boxes, resulting in incomplete or biased information reaching decision-makers.

2.3.5. The Prospect Theory Model.

This model, based on mental psychology, encounters the perception of coherent actors and argues that decision-makers are affected by mental biases and heuristics⁵³. Individuals tend to be risk-averse when facing potential gains but risk-seeking when facing potential losses⁵⁴. It is the effect of psychological causes, framing effects, and decision-making under ambiguity on foreign policy choices⁵⁵. The opportunity this Model bargains a valuable, albeit occasionally challenging, lens through which to outlook of Sierra Leone foreign policy decision-making regarding ECOWAS. Unlike balanced choice models that undertake consistent risk aversion, this model postulates that decision-makers are influenced by psychological biases and frame choices differently depending on whether they perceive a situation as a potential gain or loss⁵⁶. This has important effects for understanding choices Sierra Leone regarding ECOWAS. Therefore, this Model also suggests that Sierra Leone's engagement with ECOWAS isn't solely driven by rational calculations of costs and benefits. The approach, in which possible gains and losses are framed, along with cognitive biases and reference point dependence, meaningfully impacts the decisions made. Appreciating these emotional factors is crucial for widely understanding foreign policy of Sierra Leone toward ECOWAS and forecasting future activities.

2.4 Literature Review

This part of paper reviews related works on regional interaction and challenges in West Africa, concentrating on major issues and themes associated to ECOWAS's regional collaboration energies.

2.4.1 Historical context of Foreign policy of Sierra Leone towards ECOWAS.

Sierra Leone has been a member state of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) since its establishment in 1975. ECOWAS is a regional institute that encourages economic amalgamation, collaboration, and peace and security in West Africa. Sierra Leone

⁵³ Ibid 36

⁵⁴ Putnam R.D. Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games, International Organisation, Vol. 42, No.3, pp.427-460

⁵⁵ Ibid 37

⁵⁶ Kahneman D. & Tversky A. Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision under Risk, Econometrica, Vol. 47, No.2, pp.263-291, 1979.

has played a crucial role in ECOWAS and has advanced from its membership in many ways, comprising via peacekeeping operations, economic support, and trade. Its foreign policy towards ECOWAS has been noticeable by a multifaceted interaction of historical influences, regional factors, and domestic benefits. While Sierra Leone has generally wanted to keep strong relations with the regional alliance, its relationship with ECOWAS has been impacted by internal clashes, economic dependence, and political concerns.

After liberation in 1961, Sierra Leone was a founding member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975. The early years were categorized as strong promise to regional incorporation, motivated by the vision of a united West Africa with common economic wealth and political solidity. Sierra Leone actively partaken in ECOWAS initiatives and sought to foster economic integration with its neighboring states⁵⁷. It is committed to regional peace and security. The country has contributed troops to ECOWAS peacekeeping missions in other West African countries, such as Liberia and Mali. Sierra Leone also plays an active role in ECOWAS's efforts to combat terrorism and organized crime in the region (ECOWAS, 2022).

The outbreak of civil war in 1991 dramatically affected Sierra Leone's relationship with ECOWAS. The conflict destabilized the country, leading to economic decline, widespread humanitarian crisis, and a heavy reliance on external assistance⁵⁸. ECOWAS played a significant role in mediating peace efforts and deploying peacekeeping forces under the auspices of ECOMOG (the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group)⁵⁹. However, the conflict also highlighted the limitations of ECOWAS's capacity to address internal conflicts within its member states. Because ECOWAS's agenda of economic integration, focusing on regional development, has been influenced by politico-security issues in Liberia and Sierra Leone, triggered by civil wars.

Sierra Leone's civil war, which lasted from 1991 to 2002, had a devastating impact on the country. And also resulted in severe human rights violations, including abuse, arbitrary arrest, corruption, gender-based violence, and child abuse. The outbreak of Ebola further exacerbated these issues, affecting the country's health and livelihoods⁶⁰. ECOWAS played a

⁵⁷Dumbuya A.B.C. *Sierra Leone: Towards Sustainable Peace and Development*, London: Routledge, Development, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.

⁵⁸ Ibid 38

⁵⁹ Ibid 15

⁶⁰Oyeniyi Abe. *The State of business and human right*, 2022.

crucial role in the peace process, deploying a peacekeeping force to the country and helping to negotiate a peace agreement. In the years since the war, ECOWAS has continued to support country's post-conflict reconstruction efforts, providing financial and technical assistance⁶¹. After the war ended in 2002, Sierra Leone, still recovering from the conflict's devastation, sought to strengthen its ties with ECOWAS⁶². The country's commitment to regional integration was renewed, with a focus on economic recovery, development, and stability⁶³. Sierra Leone actively participated in ECOWAS initiatives aimed at fostering regional trade, promoting economic diversification, and addressing shared challenges such as poverty and climate change⁶⁴. While Sierra Leone has considered as a committed member of ECOWAS; its foreign policy towards the regional alliance remains to be changed by a range of encounters, including:

Firstly, Sierra Leone remains economically susceptible and reliant on external aid and investments. The country also encounters problems in realizing economic growth and modification. The country is also greatly reliant on ECOWAS for trade and economic improvement. Sierra Leone is a member of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), which uses shared money, the CFA franc. It also aids from ECOWAS's regional trade arrangements, which have assisted to increase trade and investment in the region⁶⁵. Secondly, despite the end of the civil war, Sierra Leone has practiced periods of political uncertainty and weak governance⁶⁶. Thirdly, the West African region faces numerous security terrorizations, including terrorism, international crime, and the explosion of small arms⁶⁷.

Despite these encounters, the country remains devoted to regional incorporation and vigorously pursues to leverage ECOWAS as a stand for encouragement of peace, stability, and development. The foreign policy of Sierra Leone towards ECOWAS will continue to be designed by its domestic interests, regional factors, and the developing problems opposite the West African region.

⁶¹Koroma A. The Role of ECOWAS in Sierra Leone's Post-Conflict Reconstruction, *African Security Review*, 29(3), 245-262, 2020.

⁶² Ibid 39

⁶³Sahr E. Economic Integration in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone, *African Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 15, No.1, pp.12-33, 2014.

⁶⁴ Kamara C. The Impact of Climate Change on Sierra Leone: A Challenge for ECOWAS, *Journal of Climate Change and Development*, Vol.12, No.1, pp.1-18, 2019.

⁶⁵Lansana G. Sierra Leone's Foreign Policy towards ECOWAS: A Critical Assessment, *Journal of African Studies*, 46(2), 153-172, 2019.

⁶⁶ Ibid 19

⁶⁷ Johnson D. West Africa's Security Challenges: A Threat to Regional Peace and Stability, *African Security Review*, Vol.29, No.3, pp.215-236, 2020.

Additional, since 2018, foreign policy of Sierra Leone towards ECOWAS has been fashioned by a number of current developments, comprising the election of a new government and the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2018, the country elected a new government led by President Julius Maada Bio. The new government has approved a more confident foreign policy, predominantly towards ECOWAS. Sierra Leone has taken a more dynamic role in regional matters, and has been more willing to complain ECOWAS when it believes the association is not doing enough to address solve the problemschallenging the region. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a substantialeffect on foreign policy Sierra Leone towards ECOWAS. The pandemic has led to deterioration in trade and economic actions in the region, and has also pretendedencounters to regional peace and security. Sierra Leone has operatedthrough ECOWAS to reduce the problems imposed by the pandemic, and has also called for more regional collaboration to fight the virus⁶⁸.

2.5 Previous studies on Sierra Leone's Foreign Policy

The investigation of foreign policy of Sierra Leone has gathered growing attention, mainly in light of its unrestrained past and continuingencounters. Therefore, the foreign relations of Sierra Leone have been fashioned by its geographic location, historical context, and nationalconditions.

2.5.1. The Impact of Civil War and Regional Security:

Richards (2005) provides a comprehensiveexamination of the Sierra Leonean Civil War, highlighting its overwhelminginfluenced on state organizations, infrastructure, and the social fabric of society. The conflict undermined the government's authority and ability, making it reliant on external actors for stability and reconstruction. The civil war also had a profound impact on foreign policy Sierra Leone, forcing the country to engage with regional and global actors for support and intervention⁶⁹.Furthermore,the Sierra Leone civil war resulted in the loss of 800 peacekeepers, affecting all aspects of society. The Sierra Leone government, ECOWAS, and international organizations worked together to address the conflict and improve sociopolitical conditions. ECOWAS used plannedhandling tools like counterinsurgency and conflict resolve to break the cycle of war. Many researchers argue that ECOWAS should be responsible for solving internal conflicts due to its familiarity with the

⁶⁸ Ibid65

⁶⁹ Ibid15

region. However, researchers have overlooked ECOWAS's role in regional conflict settlements.

Numerous researches have examined the role of ECOWAS in the Sierra Leonean war. Adebajo (2001) examines the deployment of ECOMOG, the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group, and its impact to the peace progression. The skirmish highlighted the restrictions of ECOWAS's intermediation capability and emphasized the complications of superseding in domestic conflicts. Succeeding the termination of hostilities, Sierra Leone faced immense task of post-conflict modernization and nation-building. Investigation by Musa (2013) and Dumbuya (2011) discover the problems of transformation that devastated organizations, fostering economic recovery, and avoiding the legacies of violence. Foreign policy Sierra Leone was heavily inclined by the need for world wide support and partnership to issue maintainable peace and development.

The civil war left-hand a lasting inscription on foreign policy of Sierra Leone. The country's appointment with ECOWAS has been fashioned by a rehabilitated focus on regional security, conflict avoidance, and collaboration⁷⁰. Its foreign policy program remains to prioritize securing global provision for peacebuilding initiatives, economic development, and achieving the social and economic consequences of the conflict⁷¹.

Appointment of Sierra Leone with ECOWAS also reflects acknowledgement of common security intimidations and the need for regional collaboration. The rise of terrorism, international crime, and the propagation of small arms in West Africa has encouraged stronger security partnerships within ECOWAS. Sierra Leone has partaken in regional security initiatives aimed at reducing these problems and fostering shared security responses. An important body of work discovers the impact of the Sierra Leonean conflict (1991-2002) on the foreign policy of Sierra Leone.

2.5.2. Regional of Integration in ECOWAS:

Academic research has also discovered the appointment of Sierra Leone with ECOWAS, predominantly in the context of regional incorporation. Dumbuya (2011) observes the commitment Sierra Leone to ECOWAS initiatives and its pursuit of economic collaboration. Musa (2013) assesses the role of ECOWAS in Sierra Leone's post-conflict recovery, emphasizing the importance of regional partnerships for sustainable development. UNAMSIL DDR (2003) stated that, The National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilization and

⁷⁰ Ibid39

⁷¹ Ibid39

Reintegration (NCDDR) was established to remove arms from communities and integrate ex-combatants, while ECOWAS established the National Commission for Consolidation of Peace to negotiate peace in Sierra Leone. Forceful military intervention and diplomatic approaches, such as soft realism, were employed to disarm rebels and broaden power. Confidence building was crucial in securing disarmament. Internal trade liberalization and the CET prioritize the agricultural sector and food security to facilitate intra-regional trade flows and protect regional producers by ECOWAS role.

When we see the rationale of the Economic Community of West African States it plays a crucial role in counterinsurgency and conflict resolution, particularly in the Sierra Leone government and the Revolutionary United Front. The insurrection initiated a decade-long civil conflict in Sierra Leone, resulting in significant human rights violations, property damage, and a devastated nation. The conflict resulted in 50,000 civilian deaths, 4,000 amputee survivors, 500,000 refugees, 2 million internally displaced citizens, and 5,000 children recruited as soldiers by conflicting groups (Evenson, 2004).

2.5.3. Economic Dependence and Foreign Aid:

Sierra Leone's foreign policy has been significantly influenced by its economic vulnerabilities and dependence on foreign aid. The World Bank (2023) provides a comprehensive overview of the country's economic challenges, highlighting the need for sustainable development strategies and increased investment. Sahr (2014) and Kamara (2019) observe the influence of economic need on the foreign policy Sierra Leone, examining the compromises and restrictions forced by outside actors. "Sierra Leone: Economic Overview." World Bank, This offersevidence on the economic dependence of Sierra Leone, a majorcause influencing foreign policy. Foreign policy of Sierra Leone to ECOWAS has concentrated on improvingeconomic amalgamation and development through regional trade and investment. Sahr (2014) observes the problems and prospects of economic combination for post-conflict Sierra Leone, highlighting the need for a helpful regional setting. The country's contribution in the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS) and the implementation of the ECOWAS Common External Tariff (CET) validate a promise to regional trade liberalization.

2.5.4. Political Instability and Governance:

The assessing of Sierra Leone's foreign policy also includes the contests of political uncertainty and weak governance power. Conteh (2015) offers a historical standpoint on the recurring political uncertainty and its influence on state ability and foreign policy. Johnson

(2020) argues that, the wider situation of security pressures in West Africa, including violence and international crime, which additionally complicate foreign policy agenda of Sierra Leone. ECOWAS decentralization, initially a political tool, has advanced into a security regionalism driven by developmental regionalism and liberal economic development approaches. The Nigerian involvement in Sierra Leone meaningfully compressed ECOWAS's international relationships and political history in West Africa particularly on foreign policy.

2.5.5. Emerging Themes or Issues

The impact of climate variation on foreign policy Sierra Leone, especially in relation to regional combination and resource administration, is a great consideration. Climate change is a universal matter, with substantial influence for the whole West African region. The foreign policy of Sierra Leone to ECOWAS is extremely obsessed by the necessity to address shared climate susceptibilities. The country is aggressively contributing in regional efforts to encourage climate alteration, disaster risk management, and sustainable resource administration. Sierra Leone identifies the need for combined action within ECOWAS to decrease climate change induced effects and build resilience. Climate change has become a central attention area of foreign policy of Sierra Leone towards ECOWAS. The country promotes for aspiring regional climate achievement strategies, looking for to surge the alliance's assurance to the Paris Agreement. Sierra Leone is also required to amplified resource utilization and knowledge involvement to support climate adaptation and mitigation methods or any involvement actions in ECOWAS.

Evolving technology, containing mobile banking and digital stands, potential to enable economic expansion and improve the success of foreign policy initiatives is being discovered. A technological progression also brings prospects to upsurge regional amalgamation in addressing climate change effects. Sierra Leone desires to enforce technology within ECOWAS to advance climate change controlling, initial notice arrangements, and data distribution. The country is also exploring advanced climate-smart agricultural experiences and green energy solutions that can be common throughout the region. Technological improvements are transforming diplomacy. Sierra Leone is employing digital platforms and communication technologies to enhance regional cooperation on climate change. This includes facilitating information exchanging, virtual meetings, and strengthening integration across ECOWAS member states.

2.6 Empirical Review

ECOWAS's Role in Sierra Leone and West Africa

ECOWAS has played a multifaceted role in West Africa, intervening in various political and economic situations. Here, I examined its involvement in Sierra Leone's elections, economic development initiatives, and the 2021 attempted coup in the region.

2.6.1. The of Role ECOWASin Sierra Leonean political Elections

According to ECOWAS (2023) report, ECOWAS has actively engaged in observing and supporting electoral activities in Sierra Leone, demonstrating its cooperation to democratic governance within the region. In the 2018 presidential and parliamentary elections, ECOWAS deployed a large observer mission to assess the electoral process. The mission's report commended the conduct of the elections but analyzed some shortcomings, including logistical challenges and instances of voter intimidation. ECOWAS's presence and recommendations contributed to the overall legitimacy of the elections, signaling the importance of credible democratic voting processes.

2.6.2. Economic and Development Programs of ECOWAS in Sierra Leone:

A Case Study of Sierra Leone on: "The Success of ECOWAS Economic and Development Programs." (2017) stated that, ECOWAS has applied numerous economic and development packages in Sierra Leone, intended to encourage economic development and partnership within the region. The ECOWAS, ETLS has sponsored trade between member states, including Sierra Leone, by reducing tariff barriers. ECOWAS also promotes technical assistance and capacity building programs to support economic development in its member countries, including Sierra Leone. However, the success of these programs has been under question, with some recommended that they have not yet accomplished their full effort in growing economic growth and dropping poverty in Sierra Leone.

2.6.3. The Post-2021 Attempted Coup and ECOWAS's Response

The 2021 attempted coup in Guinea was a substantial occasion for the West African region, introducing the ongoing problems to democratic governance and stability. ECOWAS convicted the coup, enforced sanctions on the junta, and called for the direct release of the democratically elected president. The organization also used a military force to Sierra Leone, validating its readiness to use force to support legal command. ECOWAS's reaction was

extensively seen as a critical step in discouraging future coups and supporting the regional obligation to democracy.

Chapter Three

3. Overview of Sierra Leone

Before evaluating, the incorporation between foreign policy of Sierra Leone and ECOWAS, it is well to see topographical, socio-economic and political features of Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone is a West African nation with a rich history yet damaged by prolonged war, subjugates a substantial position within the contemporary regional landscape. Its journey since freedom in 1961 has been marked by periods of both comparative peace and disturbing internal strife, meaningfully inducing its appointment with regional institutions, particularly the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). This summary observes Sierra Leone in its contemporary situation, emphasizing the lasting legacy of conflict and the country's growing connection with ECOWAS in conflict resolve and wide regional improvement. Hence, Sierra Leone, a West African nation, faces excessive problems as a result of its geographic location, economic susceptibilities, and a legacy of civil war. Recognizing its modern situations requires examining these linked factors and its evolving connection with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

3.1 Geography of Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone, a western African nation, boundaries Guinea and Liberia. Its coastline is commonly low-lying mangrove swamps, with irregular sandy beaches and estuaries. The maximum point, Bintumani Mountain, is 6,390 feet in the country's hilly eastern region⁷². Sierra Leone, a subregion of West Africa, covers 71,740 km and has a population of 5,612,685 as of July 2013. Sierra Leone is home to 16 distinct ethnic groups, including Koranko, Yalunka, Loko, Soso, Madingo, Fula, Temne, Bullom, Limba, Kono, Krim, Vai, Gola, Kissi, Mende, and Sherbro. The Western region, which includes the country's capital, Freetown, was historically dominated by the Krio, but now has a diverse community. The

⁷²IshaJebbehKpaka. Estimating the extent of illegal fishing in the exclusive economic zone of Sierra Leone, 2023.

natural resources found in Sierra Leone include diamonds, titanium ore, bauxite, iron ore, gold, and chromite. Sierra Leone gained its political independence from Britain on April 27, 1961. Geographical Context: Sierra Leone's geography (coastal location, diverse terrain) influences its economic activities (e.g., agriculture, mining) and its vulnerability to natural disasters. In summary, Sierra Leone's geography significantly shapes its foreign policy within ECOWAS. Its location necessitates strong regional cooperation on security, trade, and environmental issues, while also presenting both opportunities and challenges for economic development and regional integration. The effectiveness of Sierra Leone's engagement within ECOWAS is directly linked to its ability to leverage its geographical position for mutual benefit with its neighbors.

3.2 Economic context of Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone is one of the world's poorest nations, faces high unemployment, deteriorating health, and a rising HIV/AIDS incidence due to its population of 26% in extreme poverty.

Low-income countries often share borders with conflict-ridden nations. In the 1990s, 70 million poor were displaced, with Africa producing one-third of refugees. UNAMSIL's post-conflict peace-building achievements include disarming and demobilizing over 75,000 combatants, reintegrating child soldiers, overseeing the 2002 democratic election, and regulating the diamond mining industry. In the case of Sierra Leone, the DDR process was to be implemented by the UN and various other role players, including the government of Sierra Leone with the support of ECOWAS and the UNDP. Yet, Sierra Leone remains in a precarious state and it needs the international community to overcome further challenges in dealing with its delicate peace. In the words of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Sierra Leone: 'The country is fragile. We can't continue with the peacekeeping. We need peace-building. My appeal is that the country is ready for the next phase of development.' This said the possibility that the two million unemployed youth in Sierra Leone, many of whom are former combatants, may take up arms again to fight, is a real one. In the early days of the conflict the youth were unemployed or living in precarious economic circumstances. Diamond mining industry remains unlicensed, with illegal smuggling prevalent, driven by financial compensation and looting opportunities, and mismanagement of natural resources is a potential conflict source. Also, since 2002, the UNDP has focused on assisting Sierra Leone in addressing conflict causes through three focus areas: democracy,

poverty reduction, and peace and development, balancing immediate development needs with long-term reform and capacity building for sustainable development.

Abe (2022), Stated that Sierra Leone's civil war, ending in 2002, resulted in severe human rights violations, including abuse, arbitrary arrest, corruption, and gender-based violence, and a challenging healthcare system. The Sierra Leone Civil War highlights failed state reconstruction in the country, resulting in human rights complaints, environmental degradation, displacement, livelihood loss, and food security issues. Solomon (2006) has already been said that Sierra Leone remains one of the world's poorest countries, with 26% in extreme poverty, 70% living on less than \$1 per day, and only 59% having safe drinking water. This is exacerbated by high unemployment and deteriorating health conditions with a growing incidence in HIV/Aids, typhoid, malaria and tuberculosis. These figures are indeed reason for serious concern as the relation between economics and violent armed conflict. These studies underscore the importance of regional cooperation in addressing security threats and rebuilding fragile states. Economic Context: The country's economy is heavily reliant on natural resources (e.g., diamonds), making it susceptible to price fluctuations and the "resource curse." Poverty and inequality remain significant challenges, hindering development. The economic impact of Sierra Leone's foreign policy within its ECOWAS engagement is significant and multifaceted. In conclusion, the economic impact of Sierra Leone's foreign policy within ECOWAS is a complex interplay of potential benefits and challenges. Realizing the full economic potential requires effective implementation of ECOWAS initiatives, strong governance within Sierra Leone, and a focus on diversification and inclusive growth strategies.

3.2.1. Socio-political context of Sierra Leone

The 1990s in Sierra Leone was marked by sociopolitical instability, with President Momoh's military coup in 1992 and the formation of the National Provisional Ruling Council. In 1996, Vice President Brigadier Julius Maada Bio ousted Captain Strasser from power. In the same year, Maada Bio held a national election that returned the country to a civilian government, which was won by Ahmad Tejan Kabbah of the Sierra Leone People's Party. In 1997, Major Johnny Paul Koroma successfully overthrew the government for the second time and formed the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council, an action condemned by ECOWAS, the African Union, the international community, and the United Nations. In 1998, ECOWAS's

multilateral armed force, known as the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), and the civil defense forces (Kamajors) removed the junta and its ally.

In 1991, the RUF entered Eastern Sierra Leone, leading to a protracted civil war that impacted the country's political and social life. Motives included overthrowing the one-party rule of the AllPeoples Congress and restoring multi-party democracy, while Charles Taylor sought revenge against Momoh's government for supporting ECOMOG and allowing ULIMO factions to operate⁷³.

The Liberian Civil War significantly influenced Sierra Leone's civil war, with Nigeria leading the defeat of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), funded by President Charles Taylor. ECOMOG's mandate in Sierra Leone was to reverse the military coup, restore Kabbah, and restore peace. Nigeria financed 70% of ECOMOG operations. Nigeria contributed 80% of the 13,000 troops in five brigade formations, including Niger and Sierra Leone, and reported 700 Nigerian soldiers killed during the war. In 1997, Nigeria, under the leadership of General SanniAbacha, stepped in to restore peace and democracy in Sierra Leone, despite the conflict's origins in 1991.

Despite being treated as a pariah state by the international community, Nigeria considered its intervention a moral obligation due to its hegemonic political power. The peacekeeping mission was not formally authorized by ECOWAS, but Nigeria considered it a moral obligation. Rebels launched attacks on ECOMOG camps and civilians, but were resisted until 2002. Nigeria's involvement in Sierra Leone was hindered by lack of UN support, economic sanctions, and domestic challenges. After Abacha's death in 1998, General AbdulsalamAbubakar took over as Head of State and later handed over power to President Olusegun Obasanjo in 1999.

Sierra Leone government and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) initiated an armed conflict, extending the civil war in Liberia. The insurrection was the starting point of the decade-long civil conflict in Sierra Leone, a bloody war that resulted in substantial human rights violations (i.e., rape and torture) as well as ruined property and which left the nation in a devastated condition. The conflict resulted in 50,000 civilian deaths, 4,000 amputee survivors, 500,000 refugees, 2 million internally displaced citizens, and 5,000 children recruited as soldiers by conflicting groups. Socio-Political Context: The legacy of the 1991-

⁷³Amanor-Lartey E.T. A Historical Overview of ECOWAS Intervention in Sub-Regional Conflicts: The Case of Sierra Leone, 2015.

2002 civil war continues to shape Sierra Leone's socio-political landscape. Issues such as ethnic tensions, weak governance, and corruption persist.

Sierra Leone's future depends on addressing its enduring challenges through sustainable economic diversification, strengthening governance, promoting social cohesion, and fostering continued collaboration with ECOWAS and other international partners. The socio-political impact of Sierra Leone's foreign policy within its ECOWAS engagement is profound and multifaceted, influencing internal dynamics and regional stability. Thus, the socio-political influence of Sierra Leone's foreign policy within ECOWAS is a multifaceted mix of positive and negative impacts. The general influence depends on the success of regional collaboration, the ability of Sierra Leone to involve in beneficially within the association, and the capability of ECOWAS to address the varied problems facing its member countries. A well-adjusted method that respects national sovereignty to encourage regional collaboration is critical for upgrading the positive socio-political welfares of ECOWAS appointment.

Chapter Four

4. A Critical Appraisal of Sierra Leone's Foreign Policy to ECOWAS from 2018 – 2022

This section of the thesis has inspected how Sierra Leone's foreign policy involvements have fashioned its incorporations with ECOWAS, examined the efficiency of regional relations in addressing the country's security difficulties and encouraging peace building initiatives. It additionally taken as how Sierra Leone's cooperate with ECOWAS take part to increase regional collaboration goal, taking into account the significant interaction of domestic politics, economic circumstances, and including security threats in West Africa.

4.1 Analysis of the evolution of Sierra Leone's foreign policy towards ECOWAS in recent years.

The foreign policy of Sierra Leone, fundamentally its appointment with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), has assumed as important development in contemporary years. This investigation discovers this revolution, investigative the major causes and effects of this developing affiliation. By outlining the modifications in Sierra Leone's attitude to ECOWAS, the purposes this research is to explore the fundamental aspects determining its foreign policy decisions and evaluate the success of its approaches in achieving domestic wellbeing within the regional situation. The investigation was seeing the interaction of national political factors, regional security issues, economic priorities, and global trends in determining Sierra Leone's appointment with ECOWAS. Additionally, this part of the thesis pursues to offer inclusive appreciation of evolving foreign policy of Sierra Leone and its consequences for regional partnership and development in West Africa. Therefore, Sierra Leone's foreign policy towards ECOWAS in current years suggests that a various political environment fashioned by collaboration of national priorities, regional encounters, and international trends.

4.1.1 Prioritizing national interests:

Though the country has constantly wanted to continue resilient relations with the regional cooperation, its partnership has become more significant and tactical, determined by

particular interests and growing priorities. The Rational Actor Model (RAM) proposes that states act realistically; looking for to increase their national interests and prudently computing costs and benefits⁷⁴. Sierra Leone's partnership with ECOWAS, particularly in the after-conflict era, shows this approach. The country's engagement in peacekeeping missions, trade initiatives, and regional security cooperation can be interpreted as strategic choices to minimize security threats, enhance economic development, and increase its political impact. This rational approach likely stems from the need to address pressing security and economic problems, minimize the risks of political insecurity, and gaining international support⁷⁵.

One of the interviewees has stated that, there has been a demonstrable change towards prioritizing domestic interests. The transformation of government in 2018 carried out extra forceful foreign policy method, centering on using ECOWAS for economic improvement and security improvement. Their promise to collaboration, revealed in their enlarged incorporation in regional initiatives, appears solid. But national capacity-building remains an important element for effective implementation. From realist perspective, States are seen as unitary actors, driven by self-interest and seeking to increase their power relative to other states. Realists often focus on factors like national interest, military strength, and balance of power as key determinants of foreign policy⁷⁶. Realist theory, also promotes that, domestic interest and power intensification. This theory also recommends that Sierra Leone's foreign policy towards ECOWAS is mostly determined by a mission for security and stability in an unstable regional situation⁷⁷. The country's dependence on ECOWAS for conflict resolution and peacekeeping establishes its susceptibility and the need for outside maintenance⁷⁸. Sierra Leone's appointment with ECOWAS can also be seen as a plan to improve its regional effect and place itself within the equilibrium of power in West Africa. Therefore, Realism suggests that states should be strong in military and economy to pursue national interests, rather than liberal institutionalism and regional integration. This suggests that genuine cooperation among West African countries will be difficult due to mutual distrust.

In contrary, Liberal theories emphasize the importance of institutions, cooperation, and the spread of democratic values in shaping foreign policy⁷⁹. They suggest that states are not

⁷⁴ Ibid 40

⁷⁵ Ibid 39

⁷⁶ Ibid 22

⁷⁷ Ibid 21

⁷⁸ Ibid 15

⁷⁹ Ibid 26

always driven solely by self-interest but can also be influenced by shared interests, international organizations, and domestic pressures⁸⁰. The country's participation in ECOWAS reflects a shared understanding of regional interests and a commitment to promoting peace, security, and development⁸¹. The shared values and norms embedded within ECOWAS influence Sierra Leone's foreign policy choices, creating a sense of belonging and obligation to the regional community⁸². States are viewed as unitary actors with clear goals and preferences, conducting a cost-benefit analysis to choose the most rational course of action⁸³. The Rationale Actor Model posits that states act rationally to maximize their domestic interests, weighing costs and benefits to achieve optimal outcomes⁸⁴. Therefore, Sierra Leone's foreign policy towards ECOWAS often aligns with the core tenets of the RAM prioritizing domestic interests and engaging strategically to maximize gains, beyond pure rationality that will influence the country's decision making. According to, another interviewee: Sierra Leone's engagement with ECOWAS has become noticeably more strategic and proactive since 2018. There is a clear shift from a primarily reactive stance to a more proactive one, particularly regarding regional security. They are significantly more involved in collaborative security initiatives. However, their economic integration efforts, while present, still appear to face some challenges in translating participation in trade agreements into substantial economic gains.

4.1.2 A Renewed Emphasis on Regional Security integration:

New developments in the region, such as the signing of the African Continental Free Trade Area agreement and initiatives like the ECOWAS Standby Force and WAPIS, have the potential to strengthen the relationship between Sierra Leone and ECOWAS, boosting regional trade and economic cooperation.

Since its inception in 1975, ECOWAS has promoted economic cooperation, regional integration, and developed Africa's most advanced regional peace and security mechanisms. According to Asante, (2004), ECOWAS, despite operational limitations and competition, has become a leading peacemaking actor in Africa since the 1990s, partnering with the AU and UN to promote peace and security in West Africa. The post-conflict era has

⁸⁰ Ibid27

⁸¹ Ibid32

⁸² Ibid33

⁸³ Ibid17

⁸⁴ Ibid40

witnessed a growing emphasis on regional security in Sierra Leone's foreign policy. The country recognizes the interconnected nature of security threats in West Africa, including terrorism, transnational crime, and political instability.

Sierra Leone's engagement with ECOWAS's security initiatives, such as the ECOWAS Standby Force and the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace, and Security (ECOWAS-CPPS), reflects its commitment to collective action and collaboration in addressing these challenges. According to the key informant, Sierra Leone's foreign policy towards ECOWAS has become progressively calculated and motivated since 2018. While the promise to regional amalgamation becomes resilient, the methodology has moved from a more reactive stance to a more dynamic one, motivated by specific domestic interests. There's also been a rehabilitated emphasis on cooperative security, predominantly given the mounting threats of terrorism and international crime in the region. This is evident in Sierra Leone's influences to ECOWAS peacekeeping processes and counter attacking of terrorism initiatives.

Sierra Leone's foreign policy toward ECOWAS in current years has practiced attention on, domestic interests. Investigative this development through the perspective of the key theoretical lens reveals a more appreciation of the country's inspirations and activities within the regional alliance. According to Realist Standpoint, with its highlighting on domestic security and power expansion, suggests that Sierra Leone's foreign policy is determined by a aspiration to secure its boundaries, protect its interests, and improve its effect within a unstable regional situation⁸⁵. Sierra Leone's obligation to ECOWAS peacekeeping assignments and its dynamic involvement in regional security initiatives reveal a planned method to lessening threats and securing its domestic interests. This theory highlights the country's planned choices to exploit its security through cooperative achievement, reducing the costs related to outside threats⁸⁶. This refers to the renewed approach of Sierra Leone's foreign policy toward ECOWAS.

4.1.3 Fostering Economic Integration:

Nigeria withdrawn from direct ECOMOG peacekeeping operations due to financial costs in Liberia and Sierra Leone, allowing the UK, UN, France, and AU to become more involved in post-conflict reconstruction in the.

⁸⁵ Ibid21

⁸⁶ Ibid39

The challenges faced by ECOWAS led to the reheating of ECOMOG forces as UN peacekeepers in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Côte d'Ivoire. This task involved regional, trilateral, and multilateral arrangements. The World Bank has been instrumental in post-war reconstruction and infrastructure development in Sierra Leone, focusing on security sector and economic reforms. It has received support from donor governments and organizations, including the Poverty Reduction Strategy and the British government. The bank has also played a significant role in post-war peace-building, training military forces, and enhancing peacekeeping capabilities. The World Bank and ECOWAS play interconnected roles in promoting economic integration in Sierra Leone. Their efforts are often complementary, with the World Bank providing financial and technical assistance to support ECOWAS initiatives and broader national development goals aligned with regional integration. The peace-building operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone were characterized by donor-dependent, North-South relations, with key actors from the North, while Southern partners were relegated to supporting roles.

As a member state Sierra Leone acknowledges the importance of peace and security for economic development, requiring a balance between economic strategies, human development, social infrastructure, health, environment, and ethnic and political conflicts. Based on the fact that, Sierra Leone's foreign policy is increasingly focused on leveraging ECOWAS to promote economic growth and regional integration. The country actively participates in ECOWAS trade initiatives, such as the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS) and the Common External Tariff (CET), aiming to enhance its market access and attract foreign investment. Sierra Leone's engagement with ECOWAS reflects recognition that economic prosperity and development are best achieved through regional cooperation⁸⁷.

Liberal theory argues that the importance of global organizations, partnership, and shared values in adjusting foreign policy⁸⁸.

Based on this theory Sierra Leone's appointment with ECOWAS reflects acceptance in the value of regional integration and it's potential to increase economic growth, political stability, and development. The country's involvement in ECOWAS trade initiatives and its

⁸⁷ Ibid63

⁸⁸ Ibid26

encouragement for regional improvement programs validate its promise to cooperative resolutions and common welfares.

4.1.4 Global trends

4.1.4.1 Climate Change and Shared Vulnerabilities:

Climate change imposes an important threat to Sierra Leone and the whole West African region. The country's foreign policy towards ECOWAS is progressively determined by the necessity to address common climate susceptibilities. Sierra Leone is actively partaking in regional initiatives to encourage climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction management, and maintainable resource administration, promoting the imperative need for cooperative action. In conclusion, climate change meaningfully modified Sierra Leone's affiliation with ECOWAS by making common susceptibilities that demand regional collaboration. By dynamically participating in ECOWAS initiatives, Sierra Leone can support its flexibility to climate change effects, improve its food security, and encourage sustainable development within the wider regional situation. Addressing the problems related to capability, finance, and political will is vital for exploiting the success of this partnership.

4.1.4.2 Leveraging Technology for Collaboration:

Sierra Leone has accepted technology to improve its foreign policy appointment with ECOWAS. The country is using digital platforms and Information communication technologies to smooth information distribution, organize regional reactions to problems, and increase partnership on climate movement and development initiatives. This approach reflects recognition that technological advancements can play a crucial role in strengthening regional cooperation and addressing complex global issues. Therefore, leveraging technology for collaboration is crucial for shaping Sierra Leone's engagement with ECOWAS. By addressing the challenges and strategically investing in digital infrastructure and capacity building, Sierra Leone can harness the transformative potential of technology to accelerate its integration into the regional economy and enhance its socio-political participation within ECOWAS.

4.1.4.3 Regional challenges and Uncertainties:

Foreign policy of Sierra Leone towards ECOWAS is not without its encounters. The country practices national political volatility, economic susceptibilities, and continuing security threats. These dynamics can affect the achievement of Sierra Leone's partnership with

ECOWAS and its capacity to completely accomplish its foreign policy goals. Therefore, the foreign policy of Sierra Leone towards ECOWAS in current years is growing to address a changing regional situation noticeable by increasing security threats, economic challenges, and the urgent need for global trends. The country's partaking indicates a planned methodology, triggered by a promise to regional incorporation and acknowledgement that shared susceptibilities and prospects require shared management practices. However, seeking national political determinants, economic restraints, and developing security threats will continue to contemporary problems for Sierra Leone's foreign policy as it needs to leverage ECOWAS to improve its domestic interests. Generally, regional problems or challenges and instabilities meaningfully change the Sierra Leone's collaboration with ECOWAS. Sierra Leone can alleviate risks, leverage prospects, and strengthen its resilience to regional shocks; by dynamically partaking with the association. Addressing the insecurity requires practical preparation, flexible responses, and a promise to regional incorporation.

4.2 The Key domestic and international factors that shaping Sierra Leone's engagement with ECOWAS since 2018.

The participation of Sierra Leone with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) since 2018 has been fashioned by a collaboration of domestic and global factors. This evaluating causes these influences, discovering how national political determinants, economic conditions, and security issues within Sierra Leone participate with regional and intercontinental trends to determine the country's approach to ECOWAS. By investigating the interaction of these factors, this research aims to provide an inclusive understanding of the dynamics behind Sierra Leone's foreign policy interest towards ECOWAS. This section has discussed how domestic political affiliation, economic susceptibilities, and security challenges have interconnected with regional security initiatives, international development programs, and extensive geopolitical factors to modify the connection of Sierra Leone's with ECOWAS. The major goal is to underscore on the multidimensional forces determining Sierra Leone's partnership with ECOWAS and its consequences for regional incorporation and improvement. Generally, the appointment of Sierra Leone with ECOWAS since 2018 has been impacted by a cooperative action of domestic and global factors, prominent the country to navigate a multifaceted landscape of prospects and encounters.

4.2.1 National Drivers Since 2018

In 2019, Sierra Leone faced a major economic and humanitarian problem due to the outbreak of Ebola virus. Financial and logistical support, demonstrating solidarity and cooperation are provided by ECOWAS. In 2020, Sierra Leone actively engaged in regional discussions and initiatives to address the challenges that caused by COVID-19 pandemic. The relationship of Sierra Leone with ECOWAS, offers insights into regional politics and challenges faced by some states. Key events from 2018-2022, such as the democratic or political transition, the outbreak of Ebola, and COVID-19 pandemic, explain the importance of regional integration in promoting common issues. An Interviewee said that: Several key drivers are shaping the approach of Sierra Leone in terms of foreign policy. Nationally, the change in government in 2018 brought a revised focus on the diversification of economic and good governance, impacting its collaboration with the economic and political programs of ECOWAS. The domestic political division of Sierra Leone has been marked by a transition to a new government in 2018, with the election of President Julius Maada Bio. The new administration has sought to re-position the country within ECOWAS, emphasizing its commitment to regional collaboration and its role in promoting stability and development. However, domestic divisions of politics potentially impacting the government's ability to effectively collaborate with ECOWAS⁸⁹. According to interviewee, nationally, the change leadership in 2018 brought a renewed focus on the diversification of economic condition and strengthening governance. This greatly shaped their goals and priorities within ECOWAS⁹⁰. On the other hand, Sierra Leone's economy remains fragile and dependent on foreign aid and investment (World Bank, 2023).

The Sierra Leone continues to face different problems in economic diversification, addressing sustainable growth, and minimizing poverty (IMF, 2022). As result the country seeks to use ECOWAS to increase its economic opportunities, including through engaging in regional trade initiatives and accessing development supportive programs (ECOWAS, 2023).

Based on the inters of Security Threats, unlike many other West African nations, Sierra Leone, faces ongoing security threats, including terrorism, transnational crime, and political insecurity. The engagement of Sierra Leone with ECOWAS has been modified by the need to address these threats through collaborative security initiatives and joint responses. Based

⁸⁹ Ibid19

⁹⁰ Respondent from Embassy of West African Country: Addis Ababa, Oct 12, 2004

on the fact that, Sierra Leone actively integrates in ECOWAS's efforts to avoid terrorist activities, combat against organized crime, and promote political security within the region.

Additionally, the problem Climate change poses a growing threat to Sierra Leone and the whole West African region. The country's participation with ECOWAS has become highly focused on achieving shared climate impacts, promoting adaptation mechanism, and seeking international support for climate action. Therefore, Sierra Leone is actively engaged in regional climate change initiatives, recognizing the need for interacted action to reduce the effect of climate change.

Sierra Leone's domestic politics, shaped by its history of conflict and fragile statehood, underscores the realist approach to its engagement with ECOWAS. The new government under President Julius Maada Bio (elected in 2018) prioritizes national security and stability. The realist perspective is evident in Sierra Leone's active participation in ECOWAS peacekeeping missions and its commitment to regional security initiatives. The country seeks to leverage its participation in ECOWAS to minimize external threats and strengthen its national security⁹¹

National dynamics politics also influence country's liberal aims within ECOWAS. The government focused the need for good governance, democratic reform, and a commitment to human rights. This Liberal Perspective Drives, Sierra Leone's collaboration in ECOWAS initiatives fostering democratic governance and the rule of law. The government sees ECOWAS as a platform to promote for democratic values and to foster a more peaceful and prosperous West Africa.

The engagement Sierra Leone's within ECOWAS is also modified by common norms and identity within the regional community. The country's engagement in ECOWAS can be conceived as a manifestation of its goals to belong and contribute to a shared regional identity⁹². The constructivist perspective demonstrates that country's willingness to engage in collective action for the collective good, upholding common values and promoting regional solidarity⁹³.

⁹¹ Ibid39

⁹² Ibid32

⁹³ Ibid19

Therefore, Sierra Leone's engagement in ECOWAS is shaped by rational calculations of domestic interests and the potential importance of engagement⁹⁴. The country aims to leverage its membership to access resources, attract foreign investment, and secure international support for its development goals. The government likely calculates the costs and benefits of its participation in ECOWAS, seeking to maximize its gains while reducing potential limitations.

The Bureaucratic Politics model revealed that the relationship between competing interests and bargaining processes within the government⁹⁵. The decision-making of Sierra Leone regarding to ECOWAS may be affected by the domestic dynamics of various government ministries, each seeking to advance their own agendas and increase their influence on the foreign policy of Sierra Leone⁹⁶. The process of formulating and implementing ECOWAS-related policies could include bargaining, compromise, and the influence of specific interest groups within the government. The Government-in-a-Box Model, suggests that different government agencies, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Defense, may operate with different perspectives and priorities, influencing the final decision of Sierra Leone's participation with ECOWAS. Understanding these domestic dynamics is important for understanding the nuances foreign policy choices of Sierra Leone⁹⁷.

According to the Organizational Process Model, the engagement of Sierra Leone with ECOWAS might be modified by existing protocols, procedures, and cultures of organization within government agencies. The Sierra Leone's responses to regional challenges might be influenced by pre-existing programs, policies, and established practices, leading to predictable outcomes even in the face of changing circumstances (GSL, 2023). The Prospect Theory Model: suggesting that decision-makers are influenced by cognitive biases and heuristics⁹⁸. Therefore, country's engagement with ECOWAS might be shaped by framing effects, emotional factors, and decision-making under uncertainty, potentially leading to choices that deviate from purely rational calculations.

⁹⁴ Ibid 40

⁹⁵ Ibid 36

⁹⁶ Ibid 19

⁹⁷ Ibid 52

⁹⁸ Ibid 56

4.2.2 International Drivers Since 2018

Foreign policy is influenced by global factors. External factors include the international system, international law, international organizations, alliances, and military strength. International law, a set of rules created by states, regulates relations between states and provides a binding framework for interaction. However, there is debate among international relations theorists about the consequences of international law, with Realism supporters arguing for little independent effect.

International organizations like the UN, IMF, and World Bank significantly influence foreign policy. However, their effectiveness is debated. Realists argue that these institutions reflect power distribution and have minimal effect on state behavior. Constructivists and liberals focus on how international organizations impact state foreign policies. ECOWAS functions within a socio-political and economic environment, which is heavily influenced by international political and economic order. Therefore, ECOWAS functions within a complex environment in Sierra Leone, shaped by internal dynamics. Its effectiveness depends on its ability to align its objectives with national priorities, build strong partnerships, address resource constraints, and navigate the complexities of the international political and economic order. Because, success needs a collective approach involves ECOWAS, civil society, government, and global development associates.

The collaboration of Sierra Leone within ECOWAS is also modified by wider international trends and global corporations. The foreign policy of Sierra Leone has become highly associated with global programs on issues such as environment, human rights, and sustainable ecological improvement. Sierra Leone wants to use global collaboration and partnership to increase the power of its stand points within ECOWAS and increase its domestic desires.

The foreign policy of Sierra Leone on the way to ECOWAS refers to an interaction of the West African countries or member states of ECOWAS, shaped by common values and a commitment to addressing peace, security, and development⁹⁹. The country's association with ECOWAS can be observed as a manifestation of its promise to regional amalgamation and its willingness to contribute to the shared good.

⁹⁹ Ibid 63

The participation of Sierra Leone within ECOWAS is also improved by mutual norms and unique characteristics within the member states. The country's participation in ECOWAS can be recognized as a manifestation of its goal to belong and contribute to a shared regional identity¹⁰⁰. The constructivist view stated that country's interest to participate in joint action for the shared good, upholding common values and strengthen regional commonality¹⁰¹.

From the Realist Perspective, the foreign policy of Sierra Leone is also modified by global security issues. The growing threat of terrorism, international crime, and political uncertainty in West Africa has caused country's promise to regional security initiatives, as seen in its involvement in the ECOWAS special Force. The country wants to search the regional power determinants and maintain its national desire through the wider situation of worldwide economic, political and environmental security¹⁰².

International situations in encouraging worldwide partnership and development also determine the foreign policy of Sierra Leone. It has greatly engages in ECOWAS programs to solve mutual problems like the challenges of climate change and to achieve sustainable economic improvement. Engagement of Sierra Leone towards the Paris Agreement and its involvement in regional climate change controlling activities implies its obedience to international system and obligations.

International system and mutual interest progressively modify country's appointment within ECOWAS. The Sierra Leone's membership in regional political activities supporting human rights, democratic political system, and sustainable economic and environmental development demonstrates its engagement in international system and its interest to partaking to a fairer and reasonable international political system.

The participation of Sierra Leone within ECOWAS is also caused by interest to meet intercontinental support for its economic, environmental and political development main concern. The country wants to develop its partnership in ECOWAS to create good situation for attracting foreign investment, increase development assistance, and negotiate suitable trade conventions. This rational calculation demonstrates the meaningful importance that Sierra Leone wants to extract from its commitment with the regional alliance.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid32

¹⁰¹ Ibid39

¹⁰² Ibid67

Generally, the participation of Sierra Leone within ECOWAS since 2018 is a reproduction of its promise to regional incorporation while searching a multifaceted environment of national and global factors. The country's interests are determined by the seeking to alleviate security problems, bring economic improvement, and react to the problems of environmental issues. The success of Sierra Leone's interaction will be based on its capacity to searching and identifying domestic political determinants, participating in regional corporations, and adapt to the developing difficulties fronting West Africa.

4.3 Evaluating Sierra Leone's Foreign Policy Effectiveness: Achieving National Interests through ECOWAS

The success of Sierra Leone centers prominently on its incorporation within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). This assessment appraises the degree to which the foreign policy of Sierra Leone actions within ECOWAS has successfully improved its domestic desires. This research work evaluates the achievements of country's planned activities in achieving its objectives across several determinants, including political stability, sustainable economic improvement, and regional collaboration. This assessment will undertake the accomplishments and drawback of Sierra Leone's interaction within ECOWAS, taking in to consideration both noticeable results and the wider effect on the country's standpoint within the regional situation. The examination will observe the relationship between Sierra Leone's national agendas, its planned goals within ECOWAS, and the real outcome accomplished, providing a deep assessment of the effectiveness of its foreign policy approach.

Measuring the efficiency of Sierra Leone's foreign policy towards ECOWAS seeks assessing its achievement in advancing its domestic goals through appointment with the regional partnership. For example, Liberia and Sierra Leone have made significant post-civil war governance gains and have successfully organized peaceful, free, and fair presidential and general elections, as recognized by international bodies (ECOWAS), and other international bodies. While Sierra Leone has consistently sought to leverage ECOWAS for its benefit, the effectiveness of its approach is a complex and multifaceted issue, influenced by a range of factors. A comprehensive impact assessment was conducted in Sierra Leone after the 1999 Revolutionary United Front attack, supporting ECOWAS's mediation and peacekeeping efforts. This led to discussions with civil society groups and key stakeholders, influencing key leaders to disband their forces and propose negotiated peace through dialogue. This

collaborative approach encouraged NGOs to form the Network for Collaborative Peace-building, fostering regional stability, peace, and economic development.

As an interviewee suggested that, Sierra Leone has achieved some successes, notably in bolstering national security through collective action within ECOWAS's security frameworks. However, Sierra Leone still faces significant problems in converting its collaboration into tangible economic benefits. While engagement in regional trade initiatives is positive, significant hurdles remain in terms of infrastructure development, minimizing non-tariff barriers, and attracting substantial foreign direct investment. The progress on issues like climate change adaptation and mitigation is equally challenging, dependent on securing sufficient funding and collaborative regional efforts. Therefore, while progress has been made, it's fair to say that the full potential of Sierra Leone's engagement with ECOWAS has not yet been realized¹⁰³

According to a respondent they have seen some success in security cooperation but have yet to fully capitalize on the economic potential of ECOWAS membership. The translation of trade agreements into actual economic growth and job creation has been slow¹⁰⁴. Also, another respondent suggests that, their proactive participation in security matters has been relatively effective, contributing to regional stability.

However, achieving their economic goals within ECOWAS requires stronger national economic reforms and a more targeted approach to attracting foreign investment. Their ambitious climate agenda through ECOWAS faces a significant problem in securing sufficient funding and translating commitments into on-the-ground actions. Rational choice theory assumes that states act rationally, seeking to maximize their gains while minimizing costs. Sierra Leone's foreign policy choices within ECOWAS can be analyzed as strategic decisions made based on calculations of costs and benefits.

The country's participation in regional security initiatives, economic programs, and climate change initiatives can be understood as rational responses to minimize threats, enhance economic opportunities, and protect its long-term interests. As a result, Sierra Leone's post-conflict engagement with ECOWAS has been largely successful in bolstering national security. The country's active participation in peacekeeping missions, such as ECOMOG in

¹⁰³ Respondent from Embassy of West African Country: Addis Ababa, Oct 16, 2024

¹⁰⁴ Respondent from Embassy of West African Country: Addis Ababa, Oct 18, 2024

Liberia, and its commitment to regional security initiatives have contributed to a more stable West African region¹⁰⁵. Therefore, Sierra Leone's involvement in these efforts has arguably reduced the risk of cross-border conflict and contributed to the country's own stability¹⁰⁶.

A comprehensive impact assessment helped ECOWAS's mediation and peacekeeping efforts in Sierra Leone after the 1999 RUF attack. Key leaders disbanded their forces for negotiated peace, and the Civil Defense Forces proposed a joint conflict resolution committee. The Network for Collaborative Peace-building by NGOs has aided in efficient coordination of civil society in West Africa. This role of civil society in peace building is another success of Sierra Leone engagement in ECOWAS.

On the other hand, ECOMOG's military intervention in Sierra Leone, primarily led by Nigeria, aimed to restore the democratically elected government of Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, who was deposed in a coup led by Major Johnny Paul Koroma in 1997. The UN established the UN Mission in Sierra Leone after Nigerian troops withdrawn from ECOWAS peacekeeping, despite criticisms of ineffectiveness and exacerbating conflicts due to inadequate resources and political support.

ECOWAS's peacekeeping successes in West Africa are largely attributed to Nigeria's financial, logistical, and diplomatic support, as a founding member, in developing a collective regional peace mechanism. Many ECOWAS member states cannot make significant financial contributions to peace missions due to domestic economic and development challenges. Funding is a major challenge for the AU, ECOWAS, and other African sub-regional organizations. As a result, ECOWAS commitment to West Africa's peace and security has despite the region's poverty and underdevelopment. The success of ECOMOG in Liberia and Sierra Leone has led to significant changes in mandate, objectives, institutional structure, and ideological foundations.

Despite regional diplomacy and military intervention, ECOWAS policies have not been fully implemented in core areas like trade, economic cooperation, energy, and social development. Obstacles to free circulation of people and goods persist, and the Sahel faces destabilization from cross-border crime, drug trafficking, the Tuareg conflict, terrorism, and Al Qaeda. The region ranks low in human development indicators, with 13 countries classified in the low

¹⁰⁵ Ibid15

¹⁰⁶ Ibid39

category and 60% of the population living on less than one dollar a day. ECOWAS's economic integration failures, including insufficient industrial projects, resulted in West Africa falling behind other regions in the UN's Human Development Index and negatively impacted its peacemaking agenda. ECOWAS has shown a poor record with regard to the community programmes.” ECOWAS's visa-free policy for community citizens faces challenges from politico-security restrictions, terrorism, and insurgency in key member states, with Boko Haram's threats directing attention.

The Nigerian economy's poor health and constitutional checks make foreign ventures difficult for the president. The elite's isolationist tendencies and complaints about past foreign adventures in Liberia and Sierra Leone have led to criticism¹⁰⁷. Nigeria faces security and socio-economic challenges due to the northeast insurgency and Niger Delta militancy, making it difficult to engage decisively in future ECOWAS-led military missions in West Africa. As a result, ECOWAS has failed to develop the region's “real sectors” upon which national and regional economic development and prosperity hinge.

In other way, ECOWAS's success in peacemaking in West Africa has led to a static classical approach to economic integration, hindering its ability to engage decisively in “lethal” peace support operations. This shortcoming is compounded by its tendency to mirror similar experiments in Western Europe, notwithstanding the vast differences in their historical, socio-economic, geographical, and political dynamics; a situation that Sesay (2008) described as “symbolism and impersonation.” Despite ECOWAS's efforts to manage conflict and stability in the West African region, it still lacks essential mechanisms to address terrorist threats, military coups, and political instability.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of Sierra Leone's foreign policy through ECOWAS engagement is determined by the following three factors:

The first one is Economic Integration and Development: Sierra Leone's efforts to promote economic integration through ECOWAS have yielded mixed results. While the country has benefited from participation in regional trade agreements, such as the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS), the full potential of these initiatives remains untapped. Challenges persist in reducing non-tariff barriers, fostering regional investment, and achieving greater economic convergence. However, the active participation of Sierra Leone

¹⁰⁷ Amadu Sesay, ECOWAS and the limits of peacemaking in West Africa, 2016.

within ECOWAS has paved good ways for economic integration and increased regional trade interaction¹⁰⁸. Generally, the economic and development success of ECOWAS in Sierra Leone is diversified it related to environment, politics and economy. While ECOWAS has made some constructive contributions on regional trade interaction and challenges remain on infrastructure development, and peace building. Its influence on the poverty minimization and the reasonable allocation of benefits has been inadequate. Addressing carrying out gaps, building organizational capability, and increasing private sector participation are essential for increasing the efficiency of ECOWAS in Sierra Leone. A comprehensive assessment would require detailed empirical analysis of specific ECOWAS agendas and their influences many economic and social indexes in Sierra Leone.

Second, Climate Change and Shared Vulnerabilities: Sierra Leone's appointment with ECOWAS on climate issues has been practical but faces significant difficulties. The country has promotes for motivated regional climate strategies and highly engaged in activities to reduce common susceptibilities. However, the practical application of these programs and the mobilization of resources for climate change controlling mechanism face difficulties. The efficiency of Sierra Leone's climate change issues negotiation within ECOWAS will depend on the institution's capacity to transform its effort to action into practically tangible results. Overall analysis, ECOWAS plays important role in promoting regional collaboration on environmental issues and common susceptibilities in Sierra Leone. However, its success is highly determined by resource shortage, weak government organization ability, and operation gaps. To increase its achievement to be high, ECOWAS needs meaningfully developed funding, high institutional capacity; strengthen management with domestic governments, and should give high attention on controlling mechanism personalized to the exact vulnerabilities of Sierra Leone. Highly productive way would comprise stronger incorporation of climate change attentions into all features of ECOWAS's work, not just devoted climate agendas. Additionally, high monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are needed to track progress and ensure accountability.

The third factor is Domestic Constraints and Political Dynamics: Sierra Leone's foreign policy towards ECOWAS has been hindered by domestic political instability and economic problems. The country's ability to successful participation within ECOWAS and put impacts on regional decisions can be limited by these national factors. The government's capability to

¹⁰⁸ Ibid 63

formulate and implement articulate and operative foreign policy approach is decisive for exploiting Sierra Leone's interest from its appointment to ECOWAS.

Generally, Appraising Sierra Leone's foreign policy towards ECOWAS exposes a hybrid record of achievement. While the country has accomplished prominent development in increasing regional political security and developing economic amalgamation, challenges remain in addressing the influences of environmental problem, coping national challenge, and totally increasing its domestic interests through the regional alliance. The success of Sierra Leone's foreign policy will continue to be modified by its ability to navigate complex domestic and regional dynamics, strategically leverage ECOWAS initiatives, and effectively advocate for its priorities within the evolving political landscape of West Africa.

Chapter Five

5.1 Conclusion

This critical assessment of the foreign policy of Sierra Leone towards ECOWAS from 2018-2022 exposes a multifaceted and growing affiliation modified by both domestic and global determinants. Examination of this period shows inconsistent appointment with ECOWAS, formed by changing domestic interests and impacted by the interaction of internal political determinants, economic susceptibilities, and the wider worldwide political and economic system. The major domestic dynamics of foreign policy of Sierra Leone including, governance difficulties, economic depression, and the long history of civil war, significantly impacted Sierra Leone's ability to successfully leverage ECOWAS for domestic interests. Concurrently, global influences such as international economic shocks, shifting geopolitical dynamics, and the availability of international development assistance influenced the scope and effectiveness of Sierra Leone's engagement. Sierra Leone also has benefited from ECOWAS effort in peacebuilding, regional trade facilitation, and capacity building, the assessment reveals weaknesses in the success of national interests through ECOWAS, mainly regarding poverty lessening, just distribution of benefits, and effective application of regional initiatives. Addressing these weaknesses requires increasing the capacity of domestic institutions, improving governance, improving private sector appointment, and securing greater alliance between internal priorities and ECOWAS objectives. Further research should focus on specific policy areas to provide more granular insights into the effectiveness of Sierra Leone's engagement with ECOWAS and identify concrete recommendations for improvement.

5.2 Recommendation

Recommendations to enhance Sierra Leone's role in promoting regional integration and development within ECOWAS:

One of the interviewees stated that, strengthening the foreign policy of Sierra Leone necessitates a multi-pronged approach. Firstly, domestically, improving governance, enhancing institutional capacity, and fostering public support for ECOWAS initiatives are crucial.

Secondly, a stronger emphasis on strategic planning and coordination within the government is vital to ensure a coherent and effective approach to ECOWAS engagement.

Thirdly, Sierra Leone needs to actively advocate within ECOWAS for policy reforms that address its specific needs, particularly in areas of trade facilitation, infrastructure development, and climate change adaptation¹⁰⁹.

Finally, fostering stronger diplomatic integration with key ECOWAS members and actively engaging in regional decision-making processes will be crucial for realizing the full potential of Sierra Leone's relationship with ECOWAS. It is strongly believed that greater collaboration and stronger regional partnerships are essential for achieving sustainable development across West Africa.

Sierra Leone needs a stronger domestic foundation. This means, improved governance, enhanced capacity within relevant government ministries, and a clear, well-articulated national strategy for engaging with ECOWAS. The country also needs to prioritize strategic partnerships and advocate more assertively for their interests within ECOWAS decision-making structures.

An interviewee suggested that, the Strategic planning is key, coupled with successful integration across government ministries. Additionally, fostering strong public awareness and support for ECOWAS initiatives within Sierra Leone is essential. Greater investment in infrastructure development and addressing bureaucratic hurdles related to trade are also critical for realizing the economic benefits of regional integration.

¹⁰⁹ Respondent from Embassy of a West African Country: Addis Ababa, Oct 19, 2024.

Finally, fostering strong diplomatic ties with other ECOWAS member states is paramount for effective collaboration.

An interviewee suggested that Sierra Leone should develop a holistic domestic strategy for ECOWAS engagement, focusing on increased institutional capacity, fostering inter-ministerial integration, and promoting transparency and accountability. The strategy should also prioritize regional trade initiatives, cross-border infrastructure development, and attracting foreign direct investment. It should also address shared challenges such as climate change mitigation and adaptation, strengthen security cooperation, and advocate for effective regional peacekeeping.

Additionally, strengthening diplomatic relations within ECOWAS, advocating for the interests of developing countries, and promoting public awareness about ECOWAS role and its impact on Sierra Leone are also recommended. These measures aim to align the engagement of Sierra Leone with ECOWAS and increase regional collaboration and development.

Generally, by implementing these recommendations, Sierra Leone can play a more active and effective role in promoting regional integration and development within ECOWAS. This will require a concerted effort to strengthen national capacity, leverage economic opportunities, address common challenges, and integrate strategically with regional partners. By taking these steps, Sierra Leone can contribute to the overall success of ECOWAS and upgrade its domestic interests within a more collaborated and prosperous West Africa.

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Appendix 1:

Interview Questions and Group Discussion guidelines:

These questions are designed for interviews with Key informants.

1. How would you characterize the evolution of Sierra Leone's foreign policy towards ECOWAS between 2018 and 2022? Have you observed any significant shifts in priorities or approaches?
2. Can you identify specific policy changes or initiatives undertaken by Sierra Leone during this period that reflect its engagement with ECOWAS?
3. To what extent has Sierra Leone's foreign policy towards ECOWAS been consistent with its broader national development goals?
4. How has the leadership's approach to ECOWAS influenced the country's engagement during this period?
5. What key domestic factors (political, economic, social) have shaped Sierra Leone's engagement with ECOWAS since 2018?
6. How have internal political dynamics influenced the prioritization of ECOWAS-related initiatives?
7. What international factors (global economic trends, geopolitical shifts, donor influence) have impacted Sierra Leone's relationship with ECOWAS?
8. How has the influence of international development partners shaped Sierra Leone's participation in ECOWAS programs?

9. How effective has Sierra Leone's foreign policy been in achieving its national interests through ECOWAS? Provide specific examples.
10. What are the key successes and failures of Sierra Leone's engagement with ECOWAS during this period?
11. In what areas has Sierra Leone's participation in ECOWAS yielded the most significant benefits? Where has it fallen short?
12. How would you assess the coherence and consistency of Sierra Leone's foreign policy towards ECOWAS?
13. What recommendations would you offer to enhance Sierra Leone's role in promoting regional integration and development within ECOWAS?
14. What specific steps could Sierra Leone take to improve its engagement with ECOWAS and maximize the benefits of membership?
15. How can Sierra Leone better align its national priorities with ECOWAS's regional goals?
16. What role should civil society play in shaping Sierra Leone's foreign policy towards ECOWAS?

Group Discussion Questions:

These questions are designed to stimulate discussion among a group of experts or stakeholders.

1. To what extent has Sierra Leone's engagement with ECOWAS been driven by strategic national interests versus reactive responses to regional challenges?
2. How effectively has Sierra Leone balanced its national interests with the collective goals of ECOWAS? Are there instances of conflict or tension?
3. What are the most significant obstacles hindering Sierra Leone's effective participation in ECOWAS initiatives? How can these be overcome?
4. How can Sierra Leone leverage its strengths and address its weaknesses to become a more influential and effective member of ECOWAS?

5. What are the potential long-term implications of Sierra Leone's current approach to ECOWAS for its economic development and regional standing?
6. What innovative strategies could Sierra Leone employ to enhance its collaboration with other ECOWAS member states on key issues such as climate change, security, and economic development?
7. How can ECOWAS better support Sierra Leone in achieving its national development goals while promoting regional integration?

Appendix 2-List of table

Table1: Status of regional economic integration, by regional economic community

Table 2: Regional integration ranking: ECOWAS

Table 3: Primary and secondary macroeconomic convergence criteria compliance (%) 2005-2016

Appendix 3: Map of Sierra Leone

