

**Advisory Panel on the Question of
West Africa (APQWA)**

*The question of addressing the
military intervention of ECOWAS
states in Gambia*

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RESEARCH REPORT



Forum: Advisory Panel on the Question of West Africa (APQWA)

Issue: The question of addressing the military intervention of ECOWAS states in Gambia

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Introduction

The ECOWAS military intervention in The Gambia was a response to the Gambian constitutional crisis, which erupted in December 2016 after former President Yahya Jammeh refused to resign after losing the presidential election to Adama Barrow. The situation threatened to destabilize the entire West African area, causing ECOWAS to dispatch soldiers to The Gambia in January 2017. The intervention resulted in a peaceful transfer of power and the installation of President Barrow, confirming ECOWAS's commitment to regional democracy and stability. The intervention highlighted serious concerns about the use of military action to settle political problems, as well as the role of regional institutions in fostering peace and democracy. The Gambia intervention offers policymakers significant insights when examining the use of military action to resolve political crises and the role of regional organizations in fostering peace and democracy.

In the ongoing crisis, ECOWAS troops have still been stationed in Gambia at the request of the new president to stabilize the country. The desire for stability shown by the Gambian government and ECOWAS states links with Hisar JMUN's theme of "A World in Harmony: Creating a future of mitigated polarization by addressing ongoing crises"; such that experts will discuss how international organizations play a role in mitigating polarization.



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Definition of Key Terms

Regional Organization: Regional organization means the entity that will manage the regional greenhouse gas initiative on a regional basis and with which the State contracts for related service.(Law Insider)

Constitutional Crisis: A constitutional crisis occurs when a constitution is about to fail at its central purpose—to keep struggles for power within the boundaries of law and the Constitution.(Oxford Academic)

Military Intervention: A power relation between two states which entails the movement of forces of one or more countries into the land or water jurisdiction of another state, aimed at altering its political dynamics, while being limited in scope and time. (IGI Global)

General Overview

Constitutional Crisis

¹ BBC, Gambia Political Crisis(January 20, 2017): <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-38650266>

The Gambia constitutional crisis occurred in 2016 and 2017 when then-President Yahya Jammeh refused to accept the results of the presidential election, which he lost to Adama Barrow. Jammeh, who had been in power for over 22 years, initially conceded defeat but later changed his mind and challenged the results in court, alleging irregularities in the election.

Throughout his presidency, Jammeh kept a firm grip on power through the military and other security agencies, and his government was accused of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and torture of political opponents and human rights advocates. There were also accusations of violent crackdowns on peaceful marches and demonstrations, as well as reports of the military being employed to stifle dissent and frighten the civilian populace. Yahya Jammeh was also the president who initiated Gambia's accession to ECOWAS.

Despite international pressure and diplomatic efforts to address the situation, Jammeh announced a state of emergency and refused to step down. This resulted in a political standstill and widespread fear of violence and instability. Jammeh used the military in a number of cities around the country. Because of the political unrest, President-elect Adama Barrow fled to Senegal in fear for his life. Barrow was sworn in as president of the Gambian Embassy in Senegal.

ECOWAS Intervention

On January 19th, hours after Barrows was inaugurated in Senegal, the United Nations Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 2337 which opposed Jammeh holding his office and further encouraged and praised ECOWAS states for upholding democracy in the country. UNSC called for ECOWAS states to reach a solution by diplomatic means. However, on the same day Senegal forces entered the Gambia and other ECOWAS states put a naval blockade on the country's military. All of these actions were permitted by the inaugurated president Barrow. Senegalese forces also fought with separatist-Senegalese forces who entered Gambia to support pro-Jammeh forces. After the initial attacks, ECOWAS states called for Jammeh to step down again.

Jammeh was given a deadline to step down on January 20th. He missed this deadline and an extended deadline that ECOWAS gave on the same day. During this time the Gambian military pledged allegiance to Barrow as president and several ECOWAS leaders negotiated with Jammeh. Jammeh on the same day agreed to step down and went into exile.

After 2 days of ECOWAS military's active involvement in Gambia, the constitutional crisis was solved and Barrow was able to lead the country as the legitimate leader of Gambia. Barrow still asked for the protection of ECOWAS troops and extended the mission by 3 months in fear of insurgencies occurring due to the Pro-Jammeh force's involvement. A fear that would eventually come true as during this time ECOWAS troops would clash with Gambian military officials loyal to Jammeh. Continued protests supporting Jammeh and the Senegalese army clashing forces led to Barrow extending ECOWAS's mission until the present time. 6 years after these events some Gambians have called for the troops to withdraw. Barrow defends his choice as ECOWAS is providing security and the previous mission has evolved into training Gambian forces such that they can deal with future insurgencies. With Jammeh stepping down in 2017, his party which came into power by organizing the 1994 Gambian coup has lost

significant power and has not been on the political scene in The Gambia. The intervention also led to an ongoing humanitarian crisis with At least 45,000 people having been displaced and fleeing to Senegal, with at least 800 more fleeing to Guinea-Bissau according to the United Nations Refugee Agency. Most of these people are reported to be children and women.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

ECOWAS

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a regional intergovernmental organization founded in 1975 with the goal of promoting economic integration, political stability, and regional collaboration among its 15 West African member countries. The major goal of the organization is to form a single economic and trade bloc in the region in order to improve intra-regional commerce, decrease poverty, and promote long-term economic progress.

In The Gambia's situation, ECOWAS was critical in resolving the political crisis that arose in December 2016. The situation, which threatened to destabilize the entire West African area, prompted ECOWAS to engage in January 2017. The intervention of ECOWAS resulted in a peaceful transition of power and the installation of President Barrow, demonstrating the organization's commitment to democracy and regional stability. The successful intervention in The Gambia demonstrated ECOWAS's relevance and efficiency in resolving West African political crises.

The Gambia

From 1994 until 2016, The Gambia was ruled by President Yahya Jammeh, who took power in a bloodless coup in 1994. Jammeh was accused of widespread human rights violations during his 22-year reign, including extrajudicial killings, torture, and the suppression of political opposition and free expression. Jammeh's reign was characterized by a lack of democratic institutions and procedures, as well as election irregularities and fraud. Jammeh's party dominated the country's National Parliament, and the court was subject to political meddling.

The current president of Gambia is Adama Barrow who won the election in 2016 with a coalition. Barrow's term as president has seen mass humanitarian reforms. Barrow has also seen extensive protests from some coalition and Jammeh supporters which have led to questionable use of force from his government. Currently, in his second term, his persistent protection of ECOWAS has led to Gambia's future becoming uncertain.

Pro-Jammeh Forces

After the constitutional crisis in 2016 many military and civilians pledged allegiance to ex-president Jammeh and his undemocratic leadership. Among these forces were also separatist extremists coming from Senegal to take advantage of the political chaos in the Senegal-Gambia borders where pro-Jammeh forces were located in. The separatist group's involvement with pro-Jammeh forces fastened ECOWAS's

military operation into the Gambia. After Jammeh stepped down, protests organized by these forces continued with ECOWAS forces and led to Barrow extending ECOWAS's operation.

United Nations Security Council(UNSC)

The United Nations Security Council is the most powerful organ in the United Nations. Its five permanent states have significant influence over world politics. UNSC has shown support for ECOWAS's promotion of Democracy in West Africa. The resolution passed by UNSC has called for diplomatic solutions in the Gambia.

Senegal

Senegal is a member of ECOWAS just like the Gambia. During the ECOWAS intervention, it was the state that was the most active on land. Senegal's military is not generally considered strong and its involvement in the border has led to Separatist Movements getting into conflict with ECOWAS forces. Senegal is also very important in the refugee situation as most Gambians influenced by the conflict have sought asylum in Senegal. Likewise, Senegalese affected by separatist movements escape to Gambia and the northern border with Senegal.

Timeline of Events

Date of Event	<i>Description of event</i>
December 1, 2016	Presidential elections held in The Gambia
December 9, 2016	Jammeh rejects the election results and calls for a fresh election
December 13, 2016	ECOWAS leaders meet in Abuja, Nigeria to discuss the crisis
December 17, 2016	ECOWAS leaders travel to The Gambia to mediate
January 10, 2017	ECOWAS leaders meet with Jammeh but fail to persuade him to step down
January 19, 2017	Barrow is sworn in as president in the Gambian embassy in Senegal
January 21, 2017	ECOWAS troops enter The Gambia from Senegal
January 22, 2017	Jammeh steps down and goes into exile in Equatorial Guinea
January 26, 2017	ECOWAS troops are welcomed by Gambian citizens in Banjul
February 2017	ECOWAS forces remain in The Gambia to stabilize the situation
April 2017	The Gambia formally rejoins the International Criminal Court

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

The ECOWAS states' military intervention in The Gambia in 2017 was ultimately effective in ending the political crisis and ensuring a peaceful transfer of power from former President Yahya Jammeh to President Adama Barrow. But, the intervention was not without difficulties, as prior diplomatic attempts to resolve the problem generally failed.

Possible Solutions

With the successful intervention of ECOWAS in The Gambia, it is critical to focus on stabilizing the country and assisting in its growth. Domestic investments inside Gambia's agricultural industries such as Cotton and Fishing may result in achieving diplomatic economic development in the rural areas of the country. Increased economic and political collaboration with regional and international partners, as well as the promotion of democratic institutions and the rule of law, can help to achieve this. Furthermore, it is critical to address the needs of refugees who have been displaced as a result of the crisis by providing humanitarian relief and assistance with their safe return and reintegration into society.

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