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## Qualitative Content Analysis of Point Media Portrayal of ECOWAS Military Intervention in the Gambia

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### **Abstract**

*This study examines how the Point News Media portrayed the ECOWAS military intervention in The Gambia. ECOWAS intervened when former President Yahya Jammeh refused to step down after losing the 2016 election. Scholars and the media worldwide discussed the intervention's legality and legitimacy in promoting the democratic transfer of power in the region. Initially, the intervention was praised for successfully promoting democratic change in a region that is prone to coups. However, the public later requested the withdrawal of the intervention force. The study analyzed 64 news articles published between 2017 and 2023. Ten frames were identified: dissatisfaction, ECOMIG mandate, ECOMIG success, instability, legitimacy, reassurance, social service, support, uncertainty, and confrontation. The Point news media portrayed the intervention negatively, characterized by dissatisfaction and confrontation in implementing the intervention's mandate. This negative depiction may have contributed to the shift in public discourse towards requesting the ECOWAS military withdrawal. The study used qualitative content analysis as a data gathering and analysis method to explore the portrayal of the intervention. This method allowed the researchers to identify the different frames used to depict the intervention. By presenting the findings in simple language, the study increases accessibility and understanding of the topic.*

**Keywords:** content analysis, framing theory, military intervention

**Paper type:** Research paper

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## INTRODUCTION

ECOWAS military intervention in The Gambia was a result of the international communities (ECOWAS, AU, and UNSC) response to the December 1st, 2016 presidential election that ended the twenty-two (22) year old dictatorial regime of Yahya Jammeh, who came to power in 1994 through a military bloodless coup. But to the surprise of many, the incumbent conceded defeat in a televised broadcast and congratulated the opposition leader Adama Barrow, but only a week later, on 9th December, Jammeh declared that he did not trust the outcome of the election result based on election irregularities concerning one region and called for a new election to be conducted by a new electoral commission (Hartmann, 2017).

After a thorough investigation, I have decided to reject the outcome of the recent election. I lament serious and unacceptable abnormalities that have reportedly transpired during the electoral process; I recommend fresh and transparent elections that will be officiated by a god-fearing and independent electoral commission (The Guardian, 2016).

The African Union, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and The United Nations voiced out their support for the outcome of the election result and described it as a “peaceful, free, fair and transparent presidential election” and as the rightful expression of The Gambian People (Paul D. Williams, 2017). ECOWAS and AU were quick to react when Jammeh rejected the election result and called to abide by the constitution and international obligations (Hartmann, 2017). ECOWAS, AU, and the UN representatives called on the government to abide by its constitutional responsibilities and international obligations. It is fundamental that the verdict of the ballots should be respected and that the security of president-elect Adama Barrow and that of all The Gambian citizens be fully ensured (ECOWAS, 2016).

The United Nations Security Council issued Resolution 2337. “Operation Restore Democracy”, was put to a halt to allow diplomacy the last chance as troops were already in The Gambia to see to the peaceful transfer of power from Jammeh to Adama Barrow, (Kreß & Nußberger, 2017). Many Gambians fled to Senegal as the ECOWAS Military Intervention in The Gambia ECOMIG-Senegal-led forces entered The Gambian territory (Hartmann, 2017) . On 19th January 2017, Adama Barrow was sworn in at the Gambian Embassy in the

Senegalese capital Dakar, due to fear for his life, and on this same day, U.N. Security Council resolution 2337 (2017) was adopted and ECOWAS was recognized to solve the crisis (Svicevic, 2018b).

On 21<sup>st</sup> January 2017, the diplomatic mediation was done through the mediation efforts of HE. President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and HE. President Alpha Conde of the Republic of Guinea Conakry proved to be fruitful. A joint declaration was reached between ECOWAS, AU, and UNSC to give peace a chance in The Gambia (United Nations, 2017). This declaration also includes terms drawn by Jammeh to depart the country. The terms include respect, dignity, security, and rights as a former head of state of The Gambia by the 1977 Gambian Constitution. And also for ECOWAS, AU, and UN to work with The Gambian government to guarantee the dignity, security, safety, and rights of former president Jammeh's immediate family, cabinet members, government officials, security officials, and party supporters and loyalists, and also for Jammeh to return to his country as he wishes by international human rights (United Nations, 2017).

To assist a peaceful and orderly transition and transfer of power and the establishment of a new government, HE. Former President Jammeh will temporarily leave The Gambia on 21st January 2017, without any prejudice to his rights as a citizen, a former President, and a Political Party Leader (United Nations, 2017).

According to Finnemore, Military intervention is the deployment of military personnel across recognized boundaries to determine the political authority and structure in the target state (Finnemore, 2003). It can be motivated by various reasons, such as self-defense, humanitarian aid, regime change, or balance of power (Nicholas Tsagourias, 2020). However, military intervention is also subject to strict limitations under international law, which prohibits interference in the domestic affairs of sovereign states. Military intervention can also raise ethical questions about the legitimacy, morality, and effectiveness of using force.

Military interventions in the post-Cold War era have been criticized for their frequency and execution. The focus on intervention in sovereign states prioritizes the interests of the intervening parties. Some scholars contend that

interventions frequently promote the interests of wealthy governments or amplify global disparities. Critical theorists raise concerns about the motivations underlying interventions, noting the possibility of neo-colonialist economic exploitation and emphasizing the need to take into account the viewpoints of marginalized groups affected by initiatives and advocate for a more equitable global order (Chomsky, 2005). The only visible, consistent elements of military intervention in the post-Cold War era are that of “interest” sought by ruling elites of intervening parties or by international communities, for example, in this case, ECOWAS military interventions (Pugh, 2009).

Furthermore, Twain's metaphorical ‘Red Flecks on a White Suit: Mark Twain on Military Intervention and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P)’ asserts that the R2P principle on the international community has the responsibility to protect populations from genocide and war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. While noble in intent, atrocities might inadvertently create new problems or exacerbate existing ones, just as attempting to remove red flecks from a white suit could lead to further staining (Leitch, 2017). It highlights the potential moral dilemmas inherent in R2P interventions. When considering military intervention, policymakers must grapple with the possibility of unintended consequences such as civilian casualties, prolonged conflict, and destabilization of the region. Twain's perspective encourages us to critically evaluate whether interventions designed to protect can inadvertently cause harm, complicating the decision-making process.

Pro-interventionists emphasize the importance of international institutions, collaboration, and human rights as prerequisites for military intervention, as they can be justified in preserving human rights and sustaining democratic standards. The United Nations endorsed the "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P) principle and stressed the international community's obligation to avert mass crimes. Under certain situations, action can prevent or alleviate human suffering while also contributing to world stability (Bellamy, 2008). Under this pretext, scholars see the ECOWAS military intervention as a regional responsibility to prevent human suffering, which might happen in the Gambia as a result of an undemocratic hold on power by the former regime.

Scholars like Reisman assert that military intervention in certain circumstances, although illegal, might be necessary. In the ECOWAS case, all

necessary diplomatic channels were used but to no success, and military intervention became the last resort and proved successful. And this should be determined on a case-by-case basis and only when it morally demands intervening states to take action or even unilaterally. The question then becomes, when should military intervention be acceptable and when it should not be acceptable? The Fun for Peace FFP indicates that it becomes the responsibility of the intervening parties to influence the desired outcome in a target country, but intervention should not be by itself the solution but a combination of commitment to address the root cause of instability (funforpeace, 2001).

Laid the legal and legitimate foundation for the ECOWAS intervention (Hartmann, 2017) . He asserts that the ECOWAS treaty on the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, which the Gambia is a party to, has made it legally justifiable for the intervention's success (Hartmann, 2017) . However, this treaty alone cannot be used as a legal justification for intervention (Beatrice, 2019) , because the United Nations Security Council is still the sole authorizer of international interventions, and its resolution in 2017 does not authorize military intervention but endorses ECOWAS in its efforts by political means to find a solution to the Gambia crisis (Hartmann, 2017) . The focus has been on international norms as the motives behind the intervention as provided in ECOWAS treaties and protocols on justifying intervention (Kreß & Nußberger, 2017) . Furthermore, the literature on ECOWAS intervention has focused on international institutions in understanding the Gambian case; however, local perception of the intervention is lacking. One particular report stands out in this regard, which indicated that neglect of local perception of the intervention indicated a top-down approach study by scholars. The report found that a blind spot persists regarding people's perspectives on African regional organizations and their interventions (funforpeace, 2001).

While the ECOWAS intervention in its initial stages was widely viewed positively, it soon became seen as an occupying force. These contrasting perceptions regarding the intervention are the main concern in this study. This is important because it indicates a possible reaction in future interventions, where intervention is mostly top-down and not bottom-up. It also debunks the wider understanding that regional interventions are more acceptable, less coercive, or

even noncoercive. Legitimacy and justification of the intervention have been addressed, but insufficient attention has been paid to media portrayal of the intervention.

The emphasis on collective security within the UN is an outdated relic of the security challenges of the 1930s and 1940s, but as a form of supra-state violence, it fails to produce a genuine antithesis to state-level violence (MacMillan, 2016). For international relations to be more progressive, the emphasis must be on non-violence or a combination of both and the military as a last resort, as indicated in the report of Fun for Peace report. The use of force should be “only one tool in a continuum of measures designed to influence events and behavior inside a nation.” Military intervention For Mogami the emphasis is on developing the practice of non-violence as an alternative approach to questions of security and peace (MacMillan, 2016), whilst for Pugh the emphasis should be on the reform of capitalist and governance institutions (MacMillan, 2016).

Scholarly debate has developed around the legal justification of the intervention, the legitimacy of ECOWAS, and the success of the intervention, but there lacks an investigation of media portrayal of the intervention as part of the variables that can further explain the success of the ECOWAS intervention in the Gambia. (Perla, 2011) asserts that public support for military intervention depends on the public's perception of the policy's objective. However, it is difficult for the public to judge a policy's objective because they cannot directly observe a policy's true intention, and influential political actors offer competing frames to define it. These competing contestations are usually carried out through the media, thus setting the public's perception of military intervention and serving as a decision-making reference point. In this context, media portrayal of an intervention influences public discourse and public perception of an intervention.

In the Gambian case, there was a lack of contestation from political actors in The Gambia. The main opposition parties, except for the Gambia Democratic Congress Party, are part of the coalition that won the 2016 presidential election; former President Yahya Jammeh could not rely on his peers in the region to support his intention to stay in power; the Gambian armed forces were no longer on his side, he controls the media narrative at the time, and the only narrative that makes news was the international organization like the African Union, ECOWAS, UN Security Council, Countries like United States, United Kingdom. All are

calling on Jammeh to respect the will of the Gambian people, as expressed in the 2016 election. There exists one narrative, which is Jammeh to leave, and no contesting narrative that might influence Gambians or perhaps reject or be divided on regional military intervention in the country (Kreß & Nußberger, 2017). To determine public support and media influence on public discourse about the intervention, this study seeks to understand through qualitative media content analysis the Point news media portrayal of the intervention.

This study is interested in exploring media portrayal of the intervention and how it might have influenced public perception from welcoming it in its initial stages to requesting its withdrawal. This study set out to answer the question, how did the Point news media portray the military intervention and what frames do the Point news media use in portraying the ECOWAS military intervention in their news articles and coverages?

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and ECOWAS Military Intervention in Gambia (ECOMIG) are used interchangeably throughout this paper but refer to the same military intervention. ECOWAS is the regional organization and ECOMIG codename of the intervention operation or military contingent. With that being said, this article discusses the portrayal of media on the ECOWAS military intervention. It should be noted and acknowledged that the intervention at its initial stage received positive responses from across the country, but this changed when the intervention mandate was accomplished, that is, restoring the democracy and security of the new president and the Gambian population during the transition. However, the public became skeptical of the ECOWAS military presence in The Gambia. Faced with frequent protests from the public, especially in areas where ECOWAS contingents are present, opposition, and critics requesting the government to withdraw, all these attracted media attention and further gave rise to public discourse and debate about the continuity of ECOMIG on Gambian soil.

**Framing Theory.** This research uses framing theory as the appropriate theoretical framework. Gregory Bateson, in his book 'Steps to an Ecology of Mind,' defines framing as a process cognitive in nature or a process that involves, in this case, media, selectively concentrating on certain aspects of events while disregarding or excluding others. He further explained that framing is an essential

aspect of communication and that it plays a critical role in shaping our perception and or understanding of the world around us (Gregory Bateson, 1972). Different frames can lead to immeasurably different interpretations of the same event, and entities and cultures may have different frames shaped by experiences and contexts.

According to the framing theory, people's decisions regarding how to absorb information are influenced by how something is presented to the audience or readers (referred to as "the frame"). Abstractions called frames are used to shape or arrange the meaning of messages. The most prevalent application of frames is the framing that the news or media give to the content they present. The media introduces news items with a specific and limited contextualization, thereby creating a frame. Frames can be created to improve comprehension or serve as mental shortcuts to connect stories to a larger context. The main basis of framing theory is that the media draws attention to particular events and then places them within a field of meaning, be it negative or positive.

One of the earliest scholars, Todd Gitlin, whose renowned work 'The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left,' shed light on media framing in the United States anti-war movement in the 1960s. He observed framing as the process by which the media selects and emphasizes certain aspects of a story and this can affect how the public views an issue. He noted that the key elements of framing are selection, emphasis, interpretation, and exclusion. The media chooses which aspects of a story to focus on, gives more weight to certain aspects than others, provides a context for understanding a story, and ignores or downplays certain aspects of a story (Gitlin, 1980).

Entman points out that framing comprises two developments: selection and salience. In framing, media selects an aspect of perceived reality (selection), making them more relevant in communicating text in a way that promotes a specific problem definition (salience), causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation (Entman, 1993).

The frames, which media uses to draw attention or how something is presented to the reader, influence individual choices about how to process information, thereby not only telling the audience what to think about but also how to think about that issue presented by a media. The events media cover and



how they choose to present it, as well as the ideas, events, and topics, make up the frame. These frames, according to Fairhurst and Sarr, are practices that involve framing a topic via narrative vividly and memorably, framing a conceptual idea through comparison to something else, framing an object in catchy ways as in slogans, a concept conveyed to a value judgment be it positive or negative (Gail T. Fairhurst & Robert A. Sarr, 1996).

The act of placing news items and story information within a recognizable setting (frame) is similar to the tradition of defining an agenda, but it goes further by emphasizing the fundamental concerns at hand rather than a narrow range of topics. The basis of framing theory is that specific events and persons are highlighted by the media, who then contextualize them (Scheufele, 1999). This can be, for example, a news media focusing on protesters' stories and not on the narratives of officials, thereby selecting and salient and having a narrow conceptualization of the event.

Framing can also be a symbolic representation or expression, be it in words or visuals aimed at creating categorization and patterns in the minds of the readers or audiences (Kanakaner et al., 2020). Framing focuses on only the construction of a message and thereby makes it possible to change the audience's perception of an event (Abd Wahab, 2017). This message construction can be a deliberate and or narrow conceptualization of events, as observed by Kasim, Ismail, and Wahab 2018 in their finding on framing and strategic news in Malaysian media organizations. Overemphasizing events, be it deliberate or narrow conceptualization, also influences perceptions or even government policies (Clark & Nyaupane, 2020).

Framing is a symbolic expression that uses words or visuals to create a pattern or categorization in the readers' minds. It is also a cultural process that mirrors the decision on what is considered more important than the others, influenced by news space, work routine, and assumptions made by reporters and editors. It is a macro mechanism that has connections with internal and external factors (Zahar Kasim Adibah Ismail & Sazali Abd Wahab, 2018).

Framing analysis is a theory that examines selection and salience using images, stereotypes, metaphors, actors, and messages, which have been used and approached by scholars in different ways. Conceptualized news frames in

different ways at differing discourse units or units of analysis. Some studies use news items or articles as discourse units, as is the case in this article. Others focus on visual features and, for some, on propositions. Each of these units of analysis has its role. In the case of using news items as units of analysis, which is the focus of these studies, researchers apply codes to frames as they identify frames in a text and determine the degree to which those frames are featured in a story (Matthes, 2009).

Approaching framing as a theory (Selection and salient) and as a methodology (identifying codes inductive or deductive) (Matthes, 2009) can be applied to research simultaneously, as is the case in this research. This research adopts the framing theory to best answer the research question and to identify frames used by the Point News framing methodology through a deductive approach whereby the units of analysis, that is, point news stories, are identified, sampled, and observed to inform the codes used to identify frames. However, in the field of communications, framing theory is widely used to identify frames before the news is received by the audience. On the other hand, framing used to look at the framing-building process and frame setting in the news and mostly concerned with how frames create an understanding of events and how media framing influences audiences respectively (Kanakaner et al., 2020). Framing is, therefore, a process of news making, selecting, and ignoring, be it deliberate or narrow viewpoint, and the use of perception to influence the audience in portraying an event (López-Baucells et al., 2023).

In the context of Gambia, people are exposed to these media contents daily. This type of news affects how people live their daily lives because, after seeing or hearing a given news story on television, radio, or even reading a catchy title in the newspaper or online, people are frequently curious to learn more about the topic being covered. Their curiosity about why a particular news item made headlines grows, and the more they read about it, the better informed or more intrigued they get to seek out additional information on the subject. It is important to remember that our responses to various news stories appearing in the media vary based on what frame readers encounter or are portrayed by media. With that being said, this research will focus on one media, that is, The Point News, to be able to have a focused, one-theme frame towards the ECOWAS military intervention.

James A. Kuypers examines how the media presented the events preceding and during the Iraq War in "Bush's War: Media Bias and Justifications for War in a Terrorist Era." Through a selective framing of the issues and events surrounding the war, Kuypers contends that the media significantly influenced how the public felt about the conflict (Kuypers Jim A. 2006). He argues, in particular, that the media misrepresented the conflict as a "war on terror," essentially equating Iraq with the 9/11 terrorist attacks and defending the invasion as being vital for ensuring national security. The engagement of other frames, such as "weapons of mass destruction" terrorism, was presented as a clear and present danger to the United States. Ultimately, Kuypers' work emphasizes the significance of understanding how frames are used by the media to further specific goals or agendas, as well as the influence frames have on public opinion.

In a similar finding, Scott, Albright, Steele & Dyche (2018), in their work titled *Hero, Charity Case, and Victim: How U.S. News Media Frame Military Veterans on Twitter*, look at how fifty news media portrayed veterans on Twitter and their finding suggest that veterans depicted in a way that does not tell the overall reality of what it means to be a war veteran. "Charity" highlights cases where veterans received assistance from charitable organizations. "Hero" references World War II and depicts content that would provoke a sense of pride from audience members, and "victim" emphasizes the ill-treatment of veterans by the military and society in issues concerning mental health, politics, and the Gulf War (Parrott et al., 2019). Their result suggests that U.S. news consumers are provided with a narrow representation of what it means to be a veteran, thereby selectively ignoring the positives of what it means to be a war veteran.

Dimitrova & Strömbäck (2005) looked at the framing of the Iraq War in the Elite Newspapers in Sweden and the United States, and the findings show a huge difference between the two elite media using a content analysis. The study revealed that, for the American war coverage, the military combat frame predominated, whereas, for Swedish war coverage, the responsibility and anti-war protest frameworks predominated. Yet, the US daily leaned more on authorized government and military sources. Also, the two countries' war coverage took on different tones, with Swedish reportage having a generally more critical tone. Discussions focus on the implications of divergent war reporting as well as

potential causes that may be related to the national media and political structures (Dimitrova & Strömbäck, 2005).

In a similar study of the Iraq War, Dimitrova & Connolly-Ahern (2007) Employed qualitative content analysis. They analyzed websites of prestigious news media in the United States and the United Kingdom, as well as Egypt and Qatar. The research shows the differences in framing of the war. While Coalition media focused on the reconstruction of Iraq, Arab online news media were more inclined to employ military combat and violence of war framing. This significant revelation shows how media can selectively portray a particular frame differently from another media (Dimitrova & Connolly-Ahern, 2007)

The above literature Kuypers (2006), Parrott, Albright, Steele & Dyche (2019), Dimitrova & Strömbäck (2005), and Dimitrova & Connolly-Ahern (2007) provided a huge literature on the understanding of media framing. Both literatures are similar in identifying frames attributed to the subjects under study, and a comprehensive comparison of the two media and their differences in framing was made. However, in the case of this study, the data from local media in Gambia are too large to manually code everything, and to maintain consistency, this research focuses on one media, which is The Point.

Accordingly, the request for the withdrawal of the ECOWAS force in the Gambia after welcoming it to help settle the dust is worth investigating as it serves as a successful intervention in the region that stopped another conflict and the potential loss of lives, as in many West African states. How the ECOWAS intervention was successful was addressed; however, local perception of the overall intervention and how media play a role are important aspects to investigate as this will help policymakers, media, and scholars to pay attention to other narratives for future ECOWAS intervention. An inclusive local engagement in any future intervention is necessary to avoid local uprising and to address narratives, be they from media, that affect and influence public discourse against regional intervention.

This study is expected to be another link to the existing literature employing framing theory to reveal the underlying frames applied by media in portraying a certain narrative. Moreover, this research is a further addition to the range of research studies examining media frames, particularly in times of crisis, to address how media shapes public discussion and how it affects policies.

Particularly to address the Point representation of the ECOWAS military intervention in Gambia, which might have disregarded the main objective of ECOWAS. Consequently, this might open up new horizons for further studies on the portrayal of the ECOWAS intervention by doing a comparative content analysis of two or more media framing of the intervention. It is without doubt that the framing theory, as shown above, will be the suitable theory to guide this research that deals with exploring how media portray the ECOWAS Military Intervention in the Gambia in the coverage of their news stories. The research relies on the point news portal as the case study in content analysis of the intervention.

## **METHODS**

This research uses qualitative content analysis, which entails the study of recorded human communications in the form of magazines, books, poems, web pages, newspapers, paintings, speeches, e-mail messages, letters, bulletin board postings on the Internet, laws, and constitutions, as well as any components or collections thereof (Babbie, 2005). For Bryman, it's the identification of specific characteristics in a written text in this context, news articles, using any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying detailed characteristics within or of messages (Bryman Alan, 2016).

It is common practice to employ content analysis as a traditional method in research studies that look at print newspaper content since it can spot communication patterns. The majority of the time, print-based content analysis research studies gather information from a variety of sources, such as newspapers, magazines, and advertising (Robinson & Callister, 2008) , documents, books, speeches, interviews, and even photographs and films (Krippendorff, 2019).

The use of qualitative content analysis methodology to conduct a thorough thematic analysis is a common research method in the study of international relations (Matthew B. Miles et al., 2018) . Thematic analysis is carried out by gathering data and reviewing the existing literature; then, the researcher will summarize, classify, and reduce the data into the most relevant materials to address the research question. To address the research question, the researcher will present its findings in a thematic format by using both main and sub-topics,

and finally, the research will lay out the conclusions to ascertain the findings following the data collected.

This research's use of qualitative content analysis as a methodology is to offer a more vivid knowledge of the portrayal of ECOWAS military intervention in The Gambia, and this will involve the preparation of news articles about ECOWAS intervention, identification of phrases of each article and categorization of specific characteristics in each news in categories to be identified as codes which will then be used to identify themes that portray the intervention. According to (Curry et al., 2009), the foundation of qualitative research is a knowledge of people's attitudes, which enables researchers to determine the significance and justification of what individuals do and why they do it, in this case, media. To ensure that the sampling frame chosen is appropriate for the current study and can serve as a representative sample of the general population, the study uses a purposive sampling technique (Tongco, 2007) in the use of qualitative content analysis, which focuses on the examination of how media, taking a case study of the point news, portrays the ECOWAS military intervention, but also the frames that the media often use between 2017 to 2023 portrayal of the ECOWAS intervention. Content analysis is a systematic, replicable analysis of text, videos, and or pictures. It also involves the classification of parts of a written text or video through the application of a well-structured, systematic coding scheme from which thematic conclusions can be drawn about the message content (Paek et al., 2012).

Sampling and data collection. This research uses a purposely selected sample and systematic analysis of content from the Point online news media portals that report on ECOWAS Military Intervention in the Gambia. There are sixty-four (64) selected news stories, articles, opinions, and headlines to represent the sample.

Articles related to the ECOWAS intervention were selected from the Point online news media platform. Then, a search of lead paragraphs and headlines was done by keying ECOWAS and ECOMIG into the media's website search and the relevant articles and opinions chosen to represent the research sample. These stories are then analyzed further and highlight themes using an open-source content analysis system called Baguette. There are 64 articles selected from the print news media for examination and analysis between the period of 2017 to

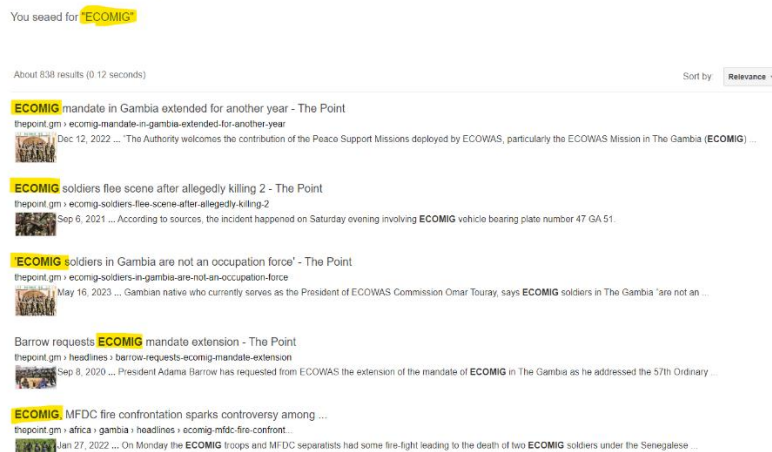
2023. The point is that news media have been chosen due to the overwhelmingly large amount of data if the two media are compared. The case here is to maintain consistency and have a vivid understanding of one media portrayal and, lastly, to avoid the exclusion of an insignificant number of frames that might otherwise be relevant if the study focus is on one media.

The unit of analysis is a single story, where Taguette coding web base application is used to highlight themes, then a second phase rechecking of overlapping themes, merged to form a final theme which will be used as the concluding finding and analysis of the framing.

Data processing, extraction, and cleaning. All data collected was a manual query, that is, a search of ECOWAS and ECOMIG, a code name for the ECOWAS military intervention in The Gambia. Any document that was shown from the point news media website containing the ECOWAS and ECOMIG keywords was read through, and relevant articles were downloaded to make up the data dataset and sample for further analysis.

Figure 1.

### Query Results of ECOMIG in the Point News Website Search Results



Source: From The Point, 2023. (<https://thepoint.gm/search?q=ecomig>) Copyright 2023 The Point.

Figure 2.

### The Query result of ECOWAS into the Point News Website

## Search Results

You searched for "ecowas"

About 8,350 results (0.40 seconds)

Sort by: Relevance

- GIZ **ECOWAS** FRSD boosts nursing school with equipment worth ...  
 thepoint.gm > africa > gambia > headlines > giz-ecowas-frsd-boosts-nur...  
 3 days ago ... The handing over of the materials to the school yesterday in Banjul was done by GIZ **ECOWAS** FRSD in their quest to support young people. ...
- NFTR members sensitised on **ECOWAS** Protocols - The Point  
 thepoint.gm > gambia > nftr-members-sensitised-on-ecowas-protocols  
 Mar 25, 2021 ... The Network of Financial and Tax Reporters (NFTR) Gambia Chapter on Wednesday convened a day's sensitisation for its members on **ECOWAS** ...
- GIZ **ECOWAS** FRSD launches expert group on agrig value chain ...  
 thepoint.gm > africa > gambia > headlines > giz-ecowas-frsd-launches-e...  
 Jun 16, 2023 ... GIZ **ECOWAS** Fund for Regional Stabilisation and Development (FRSD) Gambia pilot project, in partnership with CeprAss launched an expert group ...
- ECOWAS** seminar on recent economic situation, forecasts underway ...  
 thepoint.gm > africa > gambia > headlines > ecowas-seminar-on-recent-...  
 Oct 12, 2022 ... Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in partnership with the Economic Community of West African States (**ECOWAS**) yesterday began a four-day ...
- ECOWAS** renews commitment to maritime safety - The Point  
 thepoint.com > gambia > ecowas-renews-commitment-to-maritime-safety

Source: From *The Point*, 2023. (<https://thepoint.gm/search?q=ecowas>) Copyright 2023 *The Point*.

Figure 1 and Figure 2 shows the query results for ECOMIG and ECOWAS, with a total result of 178 articles. Each article was read through to look at its relevance to the ECOWAS military intervention in The Gambia. Relevant articles considered are 64, downloaded as the sample, and uploaded to Tauguette for further coding.

Coding. This research uses Taguette for systematic coding to achieve validity and reliability in the data analysis. Coding is the process of transforming raw data into a standardized form or categories. In content analysis, communications, oral and written, are coded or classified according to some conceptual framework (Babbie, 2005). For Taguette to analyze the raw input data, data samples are transformed into highlighted themes suitable for processing and analysis by the application.

An inductive approach has been used in the coding process, whereby data itself (selected articles) is the basis for creating the codebook as there is no prior code. To code the dataset, this research employs line-by-line coding, simultaneously reading through each article, highlighting sentences, phrases, and paragraphs, and coding them into categories. These codes are then narrowed down to create themes, which are then used to answer the research question in the analysis.

The coding process is two-fold. The first is an initial coding process where codes are applied to themes across a document in the sample, and the second, overlapping codes are merged. Recorded if necessary, and in some instances, a code may apply to two or more themes in a particular article.



Figure 3.

### Initial Generated Coding Process

#### 2 ECOMIG soldiers arrested over birthday party

3/1/23, 4:22 PM

2 ECOMIG soldiers, dozen others arrested over birthday party [confrontation] - The Point

Sep 18, 2020, 11:01 AM | Article By: Sankulleh Gibril Janko & Momodou Jawo ECOMIG soldiers are reportedly found dining and wining with dozens of women at the Senegambia/Bijilo area in the early hours of Thursday morning, thus violating the regulation governing the curfew in The Gambia. [confrontation]

An eyewitness confirmed that he saw the ECOMIG soldiers being bundled by the security forces from the Police Intervention Unit (PIU) [confrontation] to the Police Headquarters.

It is reported that the police went to the said area and found the ECOMIG soldiers with some people including women at a birthday party where they were arrested and taken to PIU Headquarters [confrontation].

A source who is familiar with the matter and spoke to The Point on the condition of anonymity confirmed that the birthday party cake was confiscated by the PIU personnel.

However, an eyewitness said: "At the Police Intervention Unit I was there watching them till they were taken to the Police Headquarters in Banjul.

These people were there and they were in civilian clothes; they were not even dressed as soldiers at the time of the arrest.

The eyewitness who could not ascertain the exact number believes there were quite a dozen.

It's more than 10 people; the girls alone are 10 or more not to talk about the ECOMIG.

It is believed that the arrested soldiers are Senegalese nationals.

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Source: Adapted From 2 ECOMIG soldiers, dozen others arrested over birthday party, S. Janko & M. Jawo, 2020. Copyright 2023 The Point.

Figure 4.

### Initial Generated Coding Process

Police Spokesperson Superintendent Lamin Njie confirmed the incident but gave a lesser number of ECOMIG soldiers [confrontation] involved than the eyewitness' account.

<https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/2-ecomig-soldiers-dozen-others-arrested-over-birthday-party-1/3>

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2 ECOMIG soldiers, dozen others arrested over birthday party - The Point "On the 16th of September, 2020, our officers on patrol got a tip off about certain individuals throwing up a birthday party at Bijilo thereby violating the regulations," the police spokesperson said. "The team arrived at the venue where they found a crowd attending a birthday pool party."

He continued: "Individuals were arrested together with the proprietor of the venue.

"Among the arrested people, two individuals identified themselves as members of the Senegalese ECOMIG Contingent. [confrontation]

"They are all being processed for appropriate actions," he said. President Adama Barrow in August 2020 imposed a night curfew from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. for 21 days throughout the Gambia to contain the spread of Covid-19. Many Gambians have been fined for violation of the emergency regulation. And many are calling on the authorities to ensure there is no exception in serving justice.

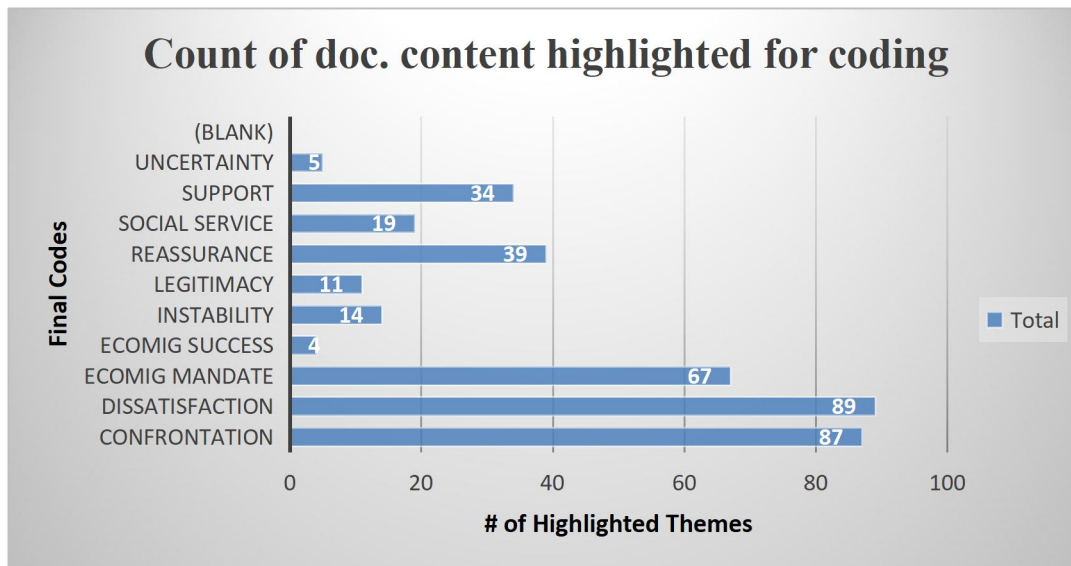
Source: Adapted From 2 ECOMIG soldiers, dozen others arrested over birthday party, S. Janko & M. Jawo, 2020. Copyright 2023 The Point.

Figure 3 and Figure 4 Show an initial coding process of how each document sample was read line by line, with themes in sentences, paragraphs, and phrases highlighted to create a code. Confrontation, as the code in these figures indicates, ECOMIG forces the confrontation with The Gambia armed forces, police, MFDC rebellion in Casamance, or protesters. This pattern was followed through every document making up the sample. Some codes were later merged into subsequent codes, which made up the final codes in some cases.

The initial codes generated are Dissatisfaction, ECOMIG Incidents, ECOMIG Mandate, ECOMIG Success, External Support, Instability, Interesting, Law Abiding, Legality of ECOWAS (ECOMIG)), Opposition to ECOMIG, Praised ECOMIG 2017, Protest, Reassurance, Responsibility to Protect, Social Service and Uncertainty. These codes are then narrowed down and merged after revisiting the dataset to help generate codes that are necessary to answer the research question. The final codes generated are Confrontation, Dissatisfaction, ECOMIG Mandate, ECOMIG Success, Instability, Legitimacy, Reassurance, Social Service, Support and Uncertainty.

**Figure 5.**

**Final Generated Codes Categories and Highlighted Theme Counts.**



*Figure 5* Indicates the final codes generated from the entire sample. The largest themes are dissatisfaction and confrontation, making up 89 and 87 themes, respectively, across the research sample. Uncertainty and ECOMIG success being the least. This indicates that Point News portrayed the ECOWAS ECOMIG military intervention negatively, thereby portraying it in a certain way. The Points report on the ECOMIG presence did not report much on the mandate, its success, and the overall motive of the intervention but rather reported on a narrow context, that is, reporting on ECOMIG confrontations with the Gambia security forces, protesters, MFDC rebellion, and also opposition political parties' standpoint on the ECOMIG presence in the Gambia and not much on ECOMIG officials' explanation of events.

Data Analysis. Data gathered from the point media stories were analyzed using the content analysis tool Taguette. Then a descriptive analysis of means that are the most frequent themes in the stories, standard deviations, and percentages were considered. In addition, thematic analysis was also applied to extract the meaning from the codes that were generated from the stories relating to the portrayal of ECOWAS Military Intervention.

Findings. While examining the Point News Media in their portrayal of the ECOWAS military intervention, I searched for story articles published in the Point online platform from sections ranging from the editorial, opinions, news stories, and feature stories as well as catchy headlines involving news-related to the ECOWAS military intervention between 2017 to 2023. This period was chosen because there has been an ongoing debate, especially in late 2022 to the early part of 2023, concerning the ECOWAS military intervention, and it has been extensively covered by most local news media in The Gambia.

This analysis depended on answering questions about the stories found on the news. Among these included what kind of subjects are focused on in a particular story, what they say about ECOWAS military intervention, whether or not the stories written are facts or fiction, do the stories have an ECOWAS side of the story concerning the intervention to show some objectivity, do they address specific issues relating to the intervention, do the stories address a specific trend of issues about the intervention? And many other relevant questions concerning the intervention.

With the above questions in mind, sixty-four (64) articles were identified from the point news. Sentences or phrases are highlighted to make up themes. The articles identified generated themes like dissatisfaction, ECOMIG mandate, ECOMIG success, instability, legitimacy, reassurance, social service, support, uncertainty, and confrontation. This analysis included excerpt text from articles used in portraying the ECOWAS Military intervention and their hidden meanings. Highlights in an article can be several, in making up different themes across articles generated in this study.

Figure 6.

## Code Categories and Number of Theme Highlights and Description

**Taguette Codebook****Support**

34 highlights

ECOMIG praised and welcomed in supporting Gambia and Gambian communities during the transition period. External support and internal support for the ECOMIG presence in The Gambia

**confrontation**

87 highlights

ECOMIG Soldiers involve in incidents like defying state law, killed someone, fire exchange with GAF or MFDC Separatist in the Casamance region of Senegal, of which, the ECOMIG contingent involve in these MFDC clashes are Senegalese Soldiers etc.

**Uncertainty**

5 highlights

questioning the presence of ECOMIG even after stability in the country achieved. ECOMIG Senegalese Contingent is a branch of the Senegalese military to launch attack on MDFC separatist thereby creating instability in Gambia borderline communities

**Instability**

14 highlights

ECOMIG presence undermines Gambia's own security, as their clash with MFDC makes the borderline communities insecure. ECOMOG forces (Senegalese contingent), are deployed to a close proximity at the border with MFDC who they are fighting back at home creating instability in The Gambia borderline.

**ECOMIG Success**

4 highlights

Indicators that determine becoming progress in Gambia and how the Gambian success can be applied across the region

**Social Service**

19 highlights

ECOMIG involve in Social services to communities in order to strengthen relations that has been soared by incidents across the country.

**Legitimacy**

11 highlights

The legality and legitimacy of ECOMIG presence in Gambia in accordance with UN Charter, ECOWAS Protocol and The Gambian Constitution. Opposition parties and activist requesting and protesting the legitimacy of the intervention, legality of the extension.

**Reassurance**

39 highlights

Government assurance concerning ECOMIG incidents to calm the population who feel affected by the ECOMIG presence and those protesting and see ECOMIG as an external force that need to end and reinstate Gambia Arm Force in control of the Country's security ECOMIG assuring and being criticized by opposition political parties and citizens to abide by Gambia's domestic laws

**Dissatisfaction**

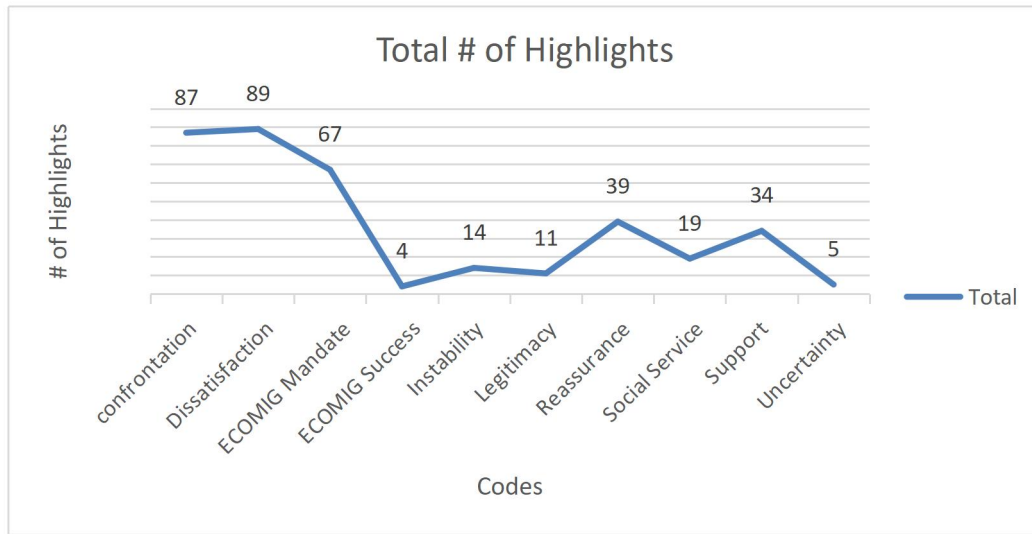
89 highlights

The table in Figure 6 is an illustration of all codes and their description. The number of highlighted phrases, sentences, and paragraphs that make up a code.

**Portrayal of the ECOWAS Military Intervention by the Point News**

The most used theme across all the sample articles generated is dissatisfaction, identified in articles that portray the dissatisfaction of citizens, parliamentarians, opposition members, or civil activists. One particular headline article written by Yusupha Jobe on February 1, 2021, featured Dodou Jah, deputy spokesperson for Alliance, Patriotic, Re-orientation and Construction (APRC), one of the biggest political parties in the country, a Facebook post of Mai Ahmed Fatty, the leader of the Gambia Moral Congress Party (GMC), and an activist Madi Jorbateh, all showing their dissatisfaction of the President's decision to extent the ECOWAS military presence in the country.

**Figure 7.**  
**Code Categories in their order frequency**



This chart in **Figure 7** Shows the highlighted themes in each document that make up the code. Dissatisfaction was the highest number of themes across the data sample, with a total number of highlights of eighty-nine (89) themes in the point news, and ECOMIG success was the lowest with the lowest highlighted themes.

“The decision by President Barrow poses a threat to the country’s sovereignty,” “such a terrible decision that undermines national security and national unity,” and “one of the social security fears I have is that those planned police units from the ECOWAS countries never have the social, cultural and political experience of our country.” From these comments of opposition and activists.

You get to see how the story singled out the different aspects of the ECOWAS Military Intervention, and it entirely lacks the bigger picture of why ECOWAS was requested to extend its presence for an additional year. This single selection of a narrative conforms with Entman's point that framing comprises selection and salience, as media selects an aspect of perceived reality, making them more relevant in communicating text in a way that promotes a specific problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation (Entman, 1993). The story singles out the different aspects that brought about the request for the extension of the intervention and primarily focuses on comments of dissatisfaction of opposition parties and activists in an interview and social media post. This story thereby, has a narrow

contextualization (Gregory Bateson, 1972) as put forth by Bateson Gregory, hence directing the reader not to the wider picture of the entire scenario, or a representation of views from both official and non-official narrative being objective in their reporting.

This study generated eighty-nine (89) highlights under the theme of dissatisfaction, all identified in stories featuring opposition political parties, citizens, parliamentarians, and activists, showing their dissatisfaction with the ECOWAS intervention or presence in the country. This pattern of a single selection of a part of a story as Scott Parrott, David L. Albright, and Steele observed how U.S. News Media Frame Military Veterans on Twitter, veterans labeled “charity,” highlighting the instances in which war veterans received assistance from charitable organizations. “hero,” referencing being honored for their part in World War II, “victim” highlighting the mistreatment of veterans by the military and society, mental health issues, politics, and the Gulf War. These frames feed U.S. news audiences a narrow depiction of what it means to be a veteran (Parrott et al., 2019).

Themes under confrontation contain eighty-seven (87) highlights across different stories in instances where the ECOMIG forces had a confrontation with citizens and, in some cases, leading to loss of life, a firefight between ECOMIG and Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) rebellion in neighboring Casamance region of Senegal, a confrontation with the Gambia national army and Gambia police.

The catchy headline reads, “ECOMIG soldiers flee the scene after allegedly killing 2,” written by Pa Modou Cham on February 28, 2023. The title is indicative of ECOMIG's deliberate killing of protesters who then fled the scene without taking any responsibility. The point did not give any explanation as to what brought about the killings, indicating the objectivity of the reporting, which is the media's responsibility. The entire story circles violence, with ECOMIG killing two protesters without further explanation. The story continues and points a finger at the government despite not demanding an explanation for the incident. “Gambia government has been extending the mandate of the soldiers despite peace and stability in the country,” undermining the overall mandate of the intervention and portraying that the ECOMIG mandate should have come to an end after the Country experienced “stability,” but instead, the government keeps

extending their stay and as a result confrontation with protesters who are asking the withdrawal of ECOMIG as they see them as an occupying force, thus, leading to loss of life.

Another theme identified second after dissatisfaction and confrontation, dominant amongst themes, is the ECOMIG Mandate, making up sixty-seven (67) highlights in the article samples. This theme entails the mandate of the intervention and the legitimacy that surrounds the intervention. It also highlights the intervention as part of a regional strategy in dealing with potential political instability in its member states, human rights violations, and unconstitutional means of taking power. “Given the reforms underway and the need to protect the fragile democracy in The Gambia, I avail myself this privilege to request for the extension of the mandate of ECOMIG in The Gambia. “It should be noted that our Security Sector Reform is at an advanced stage and, for the first time, an audit exercise has been conducted in the army and a policy developed,” “The reform process remains sensitive, noting that the previous government had melded the security apparatus of the country to serve as a repressive mechanism.” This story makes up a highlight dated February 28, 2023, indicating the mandate of ECOWAS intervention, including helping the Gambia in security reform and putting the country back on track to a democratic transition, which was halted by the coming of former President Jammeh to power in 1994.

Of the ten (10) themes driven by the article samples, only four (4) highlights mention the success of the ECOWAS intervention out of sixty-four (64) articles. This narrow selection of narratives not only limits public awareness about the ECOWAS intervention but also shapes their views about the intervention, thereby contributing to more negative than positive outcomes. For Kuypers, the media misrepresentation of frames has a significant influence on how the public may see an event, in this case, the ECOWAS military intervention in The Gambia.

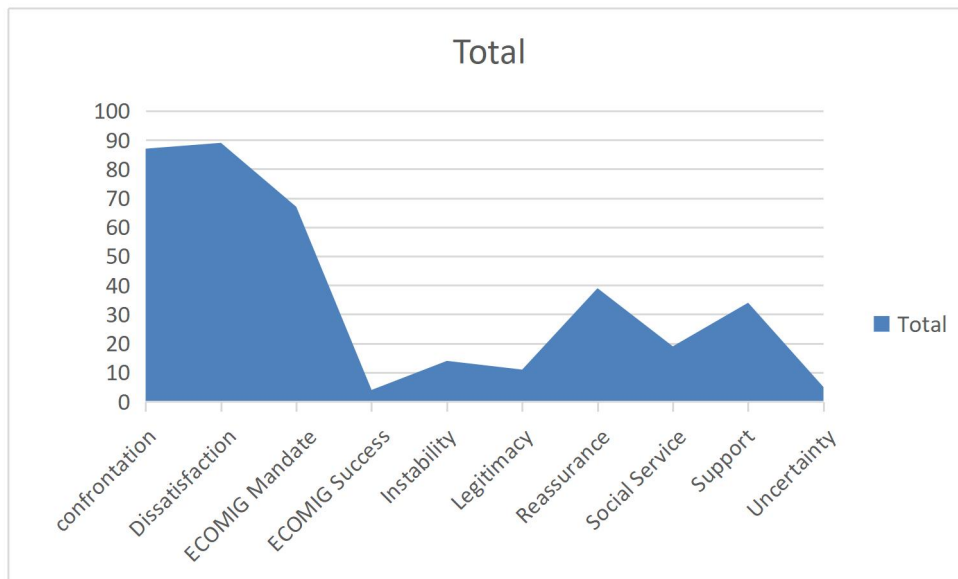
Under the themes of success, an opinion piece by Sheikh Tijan M. D. Salla on January 31, 2017, highlighted why the ECOWAS military intervention should not be seen as an “invasion force” but a force that comes to the help of Gambians to put an end to the reign of a dictator and give chance to the winner of the 2016 presidential election. This opinion piece more objective in nature, tried to explain how the intervention came about and why it is important for Gambians to work

hand in hand with ECOWAS to help a successful transition to democracy thereby eliminating the potential risks to conflict as evident in other countries.

Another story dated March 2, 2023, is a news covering of a statement from the office of the president, highlighting the success of the ECOWAS intervention, that the intervention units have integrated into the Gambia National Army, a “significant role in ensuring that the incumbent concedes to a peaceful solution of the political impasse that gripped the country through preventive diplomacy”, therefore, under the theme of ECOMIG success, which received less attention, almost all articles found in the point rests around dissatisfaction, confrontation, and ECOMIG mandate, although it tries to reflect the other themes, but dissatisfaction, and confrontation being dominant.

**Figure 8.**

**Themes in their order of Frequency**



This area chart in **Figure 8** shows the codes with the highest highlighted themes to the lowest across the sample. Confrontation, dissatisfaction, and ECOMIG mandate scored above 50 themes, where reassurance and support above 20 themes while the rest, uncertainty, support, legitimacy, social services, and instability below 20 themes.

Most of the articles where these themes are driven include quotes from non-government organizations, members of the opposition, the point, activists, bystanders, and eyewitnesses in the case of events, to which their statements carry a lot of weight in news coverage and are easily believable by the public that



consumes the news written by the Point News. It is worth noting that, the narrow selection of the narratives of the above-mentioned, can dominate a frame and thereby stories lacking objectivity. These stories then shape and influence public discourse.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The general perception of the ECOWAS Intervention**

The wider public perception at the initial stages of the ECOWAS military intervention in The Gambia was positive, welcoming, and praised for considering Gambia in its political crisis. However, as the intervention entered different phases, public discourse became sceptical and people's perceptions started to change. This change in perception was a result, according to a report by the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF), a "genuine feeling of being overwhelmed and left in the dark when it came to understanding the context of the interventions". Indicating that the intervention was "high-level" and exclusive, on the other hand, the general citizenry was a passive recipient of the interventions (Birchinger et al., 2023). There is a huge potential for the disruption of the still ongoing phases of the intervention if public discourse is dominated by dissatisfaction and confrontation and influenced by the narrow media reporting on the ECOWAS military presence in the Gambia.

Another observation by PRIF is that, due to a lack of public knowledge on the rule of engagement and mission statement of the intervention, which has not been available to the public (Birchinger et al., 2023), as reflected in respondents during their research. Another lack of knowledge is the wider perception that the Senegalese contingent is not part of the ECOMIG and criticized Senegal for meddling in the affairs of Gambia. This indicates the lack of knowledge and information regarding the contingent that make up the ECOWAS intervention. There are media reports regarding protests against the very Senegalese contingent, who are stationed in Foni District, the hometown of former president Yahya Jammeh. However, it lacks clarification and objectivity as the report considered only the stories of protesters, bystanders, and opposition officials. Therefore, in media reporting in light of the increased criticism of the intervention, attention should not only be paid to the protests, confrontations, and dissatisfaction of

people but to the overall domestic and regional political dynamics, composition, and deployment of troops, as these will shape the perceptions regarding the intervention, and thereby have a balance influence on public perception, opinion and public discourse as a whole.

The overall lack of public knowledge and media reporting on the intervention play a significant role in how the intervention is perceived. The information not available to the public in understanding the role Senegal played could have prevented criticism if reported by the news because what is being reported is what shapes perception and public discourse, as evident in the PRIF report. People's lack of knowledge about Senegal being part of the intervention created dissatisfaction and hostility towards the contingent. In such a situation, if the media reported on the overall ECOWS intervention arrangement and not only on the protest, accounts of bystanders and protesters, public opinion and perception would have seen the overall intervention through a different lens.

A 2016 survey of Afrobarometer, a pan-African, independent, non-partisan research network that measures public attitudes on economic, political, and social matters in Africa, reported that The African Union and regional economic communities, that is ECOWAS in the case of West Africa, are generally seen as helpful among those who know enough to have an opinion (Markus Olapade et al., 2016) and mostly these are people who consume from the media. In line with this, media not only serve the purpose of informing citizenry but, most importantly, the frames employed in their stories and their influence on public discourse cannot be overstated. By selecting which issues get covered, how they're presented (framing), and who gets a say (sourcing), media platforms significantly influence public opinion. By privileging some facts, arguments, or points of view over others, the media can shape how the public thinks about and reacts to a story (Entman, 1993).

With that being said, this article answers the question in this research, **1.** How did the Point news media portray the military intervention in The Cambia? **2.** What frames do the Point news media use in portraying the ECOWAS military intervention in their news articles and coverages?

This article identified that the point of news media, through its narrow conceptualization and portrayal of the ECOWAS Military Intervention, lies in a negative aspect. Selecting which issues get covered, how they are presented

(framing), and who gets a say (sourcing) significantly influence public opinion. By privileging some facts, arguments, or points of view over others, the media can shape how the public thinks about and reacts to a story (Entman, 1993). These portrayals are identified in frames employed to view the intervention through a particular lens as identified in themes across sample articles. These themes, dissatisfaction, ECOMIG mandate, ECOMIG success, instability, legitimacy, reassurance, social service, support, uncertainty, and confrontation, inform the readers of the negative aspects of the intervention. Although there are themes that portray ECOWAS in a positive sense, the negative is dominant across all identified themes.

The implication of frames portraying the intervention informing and influencing public discourse and perception can shape the ideas of people about the intervention. As indicated by Afrobarometer in their 2016 survey (Markus Olapade, Selormey, & Gninafon, 2016), those who see the African Union and regional organizations as helpful are among those who consume the media enough to know and have an opinion. Although this survey only looks at the general source of information that influences people's perception of an event, in this case, an organization, it tells that people's perceptions can be shaped by what they read from the media. Hence, the portrayal of ECOWAS intervention in a narrow contextualization by the point, no doubt influenced people's perception of the intervention. It might take another research to determine to what extent media portrayals influence perceptions of the intervention in The Gambia, which is out of the scope of this research.

## **CONCLUSION**

This qualitative content analysis of The Point newspaper's coverage of the ECOWAS military intervention in The Gambia provides valuable insights into the role of the media during the Gambia political transition. The study reveals that The Point news media portray the intervention in a predominantly negative sense through their narrow selection of narratives, which not only limits the public awareness about the ECOWAS intervention but ends up shaping their views about the intervention, thus contributing to negative positive, by relying heavily in their news coverings, on oppositions, bystanders, and protesters narratives. Military

intervention in the ECOWAS region has the potential compared to extra-regional organizations to maintain democracy and good governance in the region. This is not because of the widely perceived cultural proximity, but it will depend on how inclusive it is in accommodating local perspectives and a bottom-up approach to address any future crisis in regional intervention. This inclusivity has the potential to complement ECOWAS or other regional organizations in addressing regional crises through engagement and communication with the wider populace within and beyond the intervention context alone, as this limits criticism and makes intervention mandate implementation easier. Furthermore, as this study has shown, media plays an important role in communicating policy and policy agendas, and one of the observations in this study is the lack of knowledge the public has about ECOWAS and AU and their role in the region. Media engagement to communicate their role will reduce friction and build public awareness about regional initiatives to be seen as helpers in times of crisis and not as an occupying force. It is important to recognize the study's limitations, that is, its emphasis on a particular news source and the precise duration of the intervention. To acquire a more thorough understanding of the media's involvement in depicting military interventions and their impact on public opinion in the Gambia, future studies could broaden the analysis to include other news outlets, social media platforms, or a longer period. A limited number of narratives not only prevent the general population from learning about the ECOWAS intervention and its mandate, but it also ends up influencing public opinion and public discourse about an intervention, which tends to be more negative than positive.

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