Tri-state Confederation and Reconfiguration of State Relations in ECOWAS Sub-region. A theoretical discourse

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***Abstract*—One of the fall-outs of the recurrent coups and security threats in West Africa is the union of three sovereign states into what is today regarded as a confederation. The confederation is made up of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso and dubbed the Alliance of Sahel States (AES). The alliance came into being amid a decade of escalating unrest in the Sahel which was fuelled by the aftermath of the NATO-led intervention in Libya in 2011 resulting from the instability caused by rampant arms trafficking and the rise of armed groups linked to al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. This has become a critical issue for discussion within and outside the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Thus, the present research paper is an attempt to theoretically x-ray Tri-state Confederation (AES) and the tendency of reconfiguring the nature and character of state relations within ECOWAS Sub-region. Specifically, the study seeks to appraise the operations of AES and its potential to intensify anti-western relations in ECOWAS member states; its role in shaping emerging state relations and the potential of AES to introduce ideological realignment in ECOWAS sub-region. Anchored on both Contagion and Balance of Power theories, the research adopted the qualitative approach of data collection which relies on secondary sources such as books, dossiers, journals, magazines, newspapers, official publications, press releases etc and content analysis for the data generated. Findings from the study show that recent coups and security threats in West Africa, exacerbated by the inability of ECOWAS to stem the tide, fuelled the formation of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) and the confederation, with a likelihood of expanding its operational space, membership and collaborations, will invariably undermine the legitimacy of ECOWAS and redefine state relations within the region. This is amplified by AES's rejection of ECOWAS's pro-west democratic norms and emphasis on military governance which has created a stark contrast between the AES bloc and the rest of West Africa states, leading to increased regional polarization. Based on these findings, the study recommended the emergence of a regional bloc driven purely by strong ideological nuances that negate the old order.**

***Index Terms*—Tri-state Confederation, State relations, anti-western relations, ideological realignment.**

I. INTRODUCTION

The term tri-state confederation appears to be a relatively new concept in the general lexicon of political discourses. This is partly because, there are currently no fully functional, formal tri-state confederations in the world and the confederal form of government that were, are now rare in modern world, as most have collapsed into contemporary systems either as unitary or federal systems. The term probably, was introduced to describe the coming together of states in Africa that have suffered similar fate that threaten their existential relevance albeit, as a long standing member of a body union. Accordingly, the Alliance of Sahel States (Alliance des États du Sahel), is a confederation formed by Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso in September, 2023 following the Bamako meeting of the Military Head of States of these countries and the subsequent signing of the Charter of Liptako-Gourma. The junta-led confederation is considered a mutual defense and political alliance mechanism whose aim is to strengthen regional security, promote sovereignty, and coordinate efforts against terrorism within member states which are also states in the West African sub-

region. This objective was lucidly conveyed in article VI of the charter which stipulated inter alia:

Any violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of one or more contracting parties shall be considered as an aggression against the other parties and shall give rise to a duty of assistance and relief by all the parties, individually or collectively, including the use of armed force, to restore and ensure security within the area covered by the alliance…

Exponents consider the formation of Alliance of Sahel States as a significant geopolitical development, representing a strategic realignment by the three countries to pursue their own regional integration and development, moving away from ECOWAS and tactically disengaging from the traditional Western partnerships usually adopted by ECOWAS. Thus, On January 28, 2024, the junta-led countries announced their formal withdrawal from ECOWAS citing concerns that ECOWAS has strayed from its founding principles and the spirit of Pan-Africanism. The AES noted specifically, that the Community has failed to assist the states (Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso) in their existential fight against terrorism, political unrest, and insecurity. 'It no longer serves the interests of its peoples but has instead become a threat to its member states and populations, whose happiness it is supposed to guarantee'…

As it were, the coups and conflicts in AES member states were blamed on incompetence and corruption of political leadership; the same argument that was earlier traded by those that championed the military takeovers that had occurred in other West African states in the last decades. That of Mali for instance, gave impetus to Guinea's coup in 2021 and that of Burkina Faso in 2022 setting off a chain reaction in other countries within the West African sub-region (Ukaegbu and Okoraofor, 2025). The attempted coup in Guinea-Bissau, in February 2024 led by a few armed men and its successful repeat in November, 2025 as well as the foiled coup in Benin Republic in December, 2025 raise the possibility of these kind of assaults in the nearest future. Thus, the sixteen countries that make up the West Africa region (Benin, Burkina-Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo had at one time or the other experimented different forms of coups leading to varied responses from ECOWAS. One of the result of these responses was the formation of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) in 2023. Thus, the formation of the AES appears to be a response to a trend and a mechanism to subvert terrorist invasion using coercive mechanism- a potent tool which ECOWAS as a body is said to lack (Ukaegbu, 2023, Ukaegbu and Okoraofor and Ogonna, 2025).

Historically, and as largely argued in Gleba (2002), Alliance of Sahel States is not the first regional alliance ever formed in the annals of political history across the world. Israel, Palestine and Jordan had formed similar Confederation as a proposed solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict similar to the Etruscan Dodecapolis which was a historical confederation of twelve Etruscan towns in central Italy. The Three Crowned Kings made up of three Tamil dynasties in South Asia is also another clear example. It was ruled as a triumvirate in a confederation from around 600 BC to 300 AD (Gleba, 2002). The same is true of the German Confederation which was a larger historical confederation that existed in the 19th century. However, our concern is the peculiarity of the AES weaved around the fact that, member states are members of an existing supra regional organization and its formation is borne out of existential threat resulting from security and conflict-based challenges (Ukaegbu and Okoraofor, 2025).

Accordingly, the present paper is worried of the effect of a Junta-led tri-state confederation on the contours of state relations in West African states. Specifically, the study seeks to appraise the operations of AES and its potential to intensify anti-western relations in ECOWAS member states; its role in redefining state relations in ECOWAS sub-region and the potential of AES to introduce ideological realignment in the region. This worry is heightened by the fact that AES has the capacity of widening its membership scope and strengthening its operational mechanism in the nearest future based on her collaboration with anti-western states and the fact that her withdrawal from ECOWAS has not fully complied with the provisions of Article 91 of ECOWAS Treaty which among other things provides a one year notice of withdrawal. It is this problematic (the potential of AES in reconfiguring state relations in ECOWAS sub-region that the present study sets out to investigate. To this end, the following questions are posed to guide the study: Does the operations of AES have any potential of enhancing anti-western relations in member states? How is the

present tri-state confederation a major determinant of emerging state relations in ECOWAS sub-region, Is AES capable of introducing any ideological realignment in ECOWAS sub-region that could significantly affect international relations? These questions are germane to the objective of the present study but first, let us appraise the theoretical framework on which the study rests.

II. THEORETIC AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The present study rests on two theoretical frames. They are Contagion and Balance of power Theories. The choice of the Contagion Theory as an analytical tool was informed by its far greater relevance and explanatory connotations that confronts the subject matter under investigation. The etymologically, the term 'Contagion' connotes, spontaneously spreading behaviour, emotions or conditions of a group through a group or network of groups. As a theory, it was developed in the late nineteenth century by Gustave Le Bon and popularized by Herbert Blumer in (1939). The theory posits that in a crowd, normal symbolic interaction is replaced by "circular reaction," leading to emotional contagion and a loss of individual judgment. Contagion Theory explores the dynamics of how emotions and actions can spread among individuals in group settings, transforming the behavior of individuals into a collective experience (Richard, 2021). The theory suggests that when individuals come together in groups, they tend to lose their sense of individuality, leading to behaviors that can be impulsive and uninhibited. This phenomenon is characterized by psychological concepts such as "contagion," where emotions or actions introduced by one member of a group can evoke similar responses in others, and "suggestibility," which refers to the influence of the group's collective emotion on individual actions.

The use of this theory to explain the formation of Alliance of Sahel States is clear. First, is the fact that the governance collapse in West African countries has been a key factor driving military interventions. Thus, coups in ECOWAS sub-region are often framed as necessary actions to address the perceived failures of civilian governments in managing economic, security, and political crises. The erosion of democratic governance and the inability of elected leaders to deal with rising internal challenges, such as corruption, economic mismanagement, and growing insecurity, have provided the military with the justification to seize power and a perfect resting point for the formation and operations of AES (Smith, 2021). The coups in west Africa- even the most recent controversial and 'arranged' November (2025) and December, 2025 military take- over in Guinea Bissau and Benin republic respectively, are reflections of the broader trend in West Africa, where prolonged economic mismanagement and corruption have fueled popular discontent and eroded the legitimacy of civilian governments making way for military interventions as a corrective force to address civilian leadership failures. The success of one is a sufficient ground for the take-off of another (Ukaegbu and Okoroafor, 2025). This state of affairs fuelled the formation of enabling blocs and blocs for victims of common fate, with a possibility of expanded membership and external collaborations.

Inherent in the contagion theory is the assumption that recurring pattern of coups in West Africa is not detachable from the deep-seated political instability that arises from governance collapse. When civilian governments fail to deliver on security and economic development, public trust erodes, and military actors often step in and form alliances to consolidate their stay in power with a claim that only they can restore order. This trend is further exacerbated by the weakness of democratic institutions and organizations, which are frequently unable to check executive overreach or prevent constitutional manipulations…(Ahmadu, 2023). Thus, to gauge its implications on the reconfiguration of state relations in ECOWAS sub-region, we turn to the Balance of Power theory.

This theory describes the behavior of states as component units of the international system. As the international system is anarchic, so are regions. So, every country is worried about its security and ultimate survival. Accordingly, the theory contests the role of government and law at both domestic, regional and international levels. Hence, the prevalence of 'might is right' and the need to acquire this might by whatever means. Consequently, if this power is unequally distributed, power would naturally create the possibility of powerful countries or organizations swallowing up weaker ones. In this wise, Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso that are relatively weak states in

West Africa would, by being independent, become prone to subjugation but by confederative alliance, survive existential threats, both from within and outside its territory. By this token, the AES now has the chances of surviving where strong and weak states exist and operate (Giri, 2023).

III. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Based on the objective of the present paper, our review of related literatures shall proceed thus:

A. Junta-Led Confederation and the Rise in Anti-West Relations in ECOWAS Sub-region

One of the perceived fall-outs of the emergence of Alliance of Sahel is its tendency to exacerbate anti-west disposition among states in West Africa. This is partly because, AES promotes a form of regionalism that is inward looking and state-centric. The confederation prioritizes mutual defense and the non-interference principle which stands antithetical to mainstream western engagements across states in Africa. Thus, when announcing their departure from ECOWAS, the junta-led AES was adamant in breaking away from its former colonial powers. This has led it to increase her alignment with Russia in terms of military and technical support. This shift coincides with rising anti-French and anti-Western sentiment, exacerbated by the presence of Russian paramilitary groups such as the Wagner Group (now Africa Corps, Dossier, 2025).

Prior to the formation of AES, many actions from the advanced capitalist west were adjudged to negate the principles of territorial independence and sovereignty of states and leaders of these states with rather radical stands had made their positions known. Thus, anti-Western sentiments played a pivotal role in the formation of the AES and this alliance no doubt, has the tendencies to increase it among states in West Africa. Take for instance, the perceived failure of Western-led interventions fueled resentment among Sahelian populations and governments. This was heightened by the withdrawal of French troops from Mali in 2022 and the subsequent expulsion of French diplomats from Burkina Faso in 2023 (Ukaegbu, 2023 and Samkharadze cited in Turan, 2025). This sentiment has driven Sahelian states to pursue partnerships with non-Western actors, such as Russia, China, Turkey, and Iran on areas of arms procurement and intelligence sharing moving away from former Western partners like France, United states and other key members of the United Nations whom, it is felt, have held African states bound for years. Thus, the regional landscape in West Africa is increasingly divided into two global blocs- the west and the rest of non-western states in keeping with the fact that, in global politics, factions can settle their differences or remain entrenched in opposing global alliances (Sam, 2025).

Accordingly, the Sahelian junta-led confederation (representing non-western bloc) are working to reinforce shared identity and partnership with non-western states as seen in the unveiling of shared biometric passport to facilitate mobility within the AES bloc; increasing engagements with China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), maintaining China as a dominant economic actor in the region, signing of multiple MoU's for concessional loan agreement with Export-Import Bank of China to construct a 25 megawatt peak (MWp) solar power plant among others initiatives. ECOWAS, on the other hand, (representing the west), continues to pursue liberal ideals that revolves around zero-tolerance for undemocratic government in West Africa. To this end, ECOWAS enjoys strong military backing from the U.S. Congress, the EU, and international financial institutions. In 2020 for instance, the EU's European Peace Facility (EPF) allocated over €600 million for military support in the Sahel. But most of these funds were redirected to the Ukrainian conflict and only about 6% of the fund was used to support security initiatives in the Sahel (Sam, 2025, Ukaegbu and Okoroafor and Ogonna, 2025). Thus, the operations of AES which signals geopolitical shift does not only affect regional dynamics but, it also echoes the emerging diverging alignments in the international milieu.

As Sam (2025) observed and correctly too, ECOWAS was founded on Pan-Africanism and non-alignment values, striving for regional self-determination and independence from external superpowers. During the Cold War era, members adhered to this principle, resisting foreign interference, particularly by France. Today, the reverse has become the case; AES as a junta-led break-away confederation stands in opposition to the stance of ECOWAS in many ways. For example, months after its formal withdrawal from ECOWAS, the confederation conducted its first joint

military exercises, centred on coordinated counterterrorism operations and border security. In April, 2024, AES leaders participated in a Pan-African Security Forum, advocating for greater regional autonomy and African-led solutions to security challenges. By June, the alliance reaffirmed its commitment to resource sovereignty, highlighting the strategic importance of uranium in Niger, gold in Mali, and agricultural resources in Burkina Faso. In July, the AES rejected calls from the United Nations and Western powers for accelerated transitions to liberal democratic civilian rule, prioritizing stability over externally imposed timelines. The alliance also issued a statement condemning ongoing Western sanctions against member states, framing them as imperialist tools designed to undermine regional sovereignty (Dossier, 2025). This rise in anti-western relations has raised concerns in the West over the erosion of Western influence in the region, turning the Sahel into a battleground for international conflict and political permutations

This stance by implication, moves all states attuned to the ideals and guiding principles of Pan Africanism to the AES and all opposed to it towards ECOWAS and the neoliberal norms that promotes zero-tolerance for unconstitutional coups, rule of law, free elections, political pluralism, judicial independence, civil liberties etc. This is largely because, ECOWAS traditionally, acts as a regional enforcer of external interests, betraying its founding principles by falling 'under the influence of foreign powers'. Thus, West Africa, based on the relationship between AES member states and ECOWAS member states, is technically plunged into a cold war between two blocs based on the pursuit of overly opposing ideals. Our discourse on this subject shall provide greater insight.

B. Role of Alliance of Sahel States in Redefining State Relations in ECOWAS Sub-region

The emergence of Alliance of Sahel States' poses significant challenges to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). This is partly because, ECOWAS, whose modus operandi has rested heavily on mainstream liberal principles, has traditionally served as the primary regional body for economic and political cooperation. Thus, its alignment with Western powers, particularly through financial and military partnerships, contrasts sharply with the AES's anti-West stance. This divergence reflects broader tensions within West Africa's regional architecture, as countries increasingly adopt polarized approaches to governance and security nuances. Scholars such as Zounmenou (2024), Ukaegbu and Okoroafor (2025) argue that the AES represents a fundamental shift in the region's geopolitical identity, emphasizing localized solutions over externally driven frameworks. This approach has raised concerns about potential fragmentation within West Africa, particularly as ECOWAS continues to advocate for democratic governance and international collaboration contrary to the stance and approach of the rather radical AES; rooted on self-help approach to solving domestic governance and security challenges.

Thus, the AES's focus on self-reliance and regional solidarity resonates the Pan-Africanist ideologies of leaders like Kwame Nkrumah and Thomas Sankara. Pan-Africanism has historically sought to unify African nations against foreign domination, advocating for collective self-determination and sustainable development. As such, the emergence and operations of the AES is adjudged to resonate the spirit behind Pan-Africanism. While some scholars perceive it as an ideology that is utopia, others look at it as a movement or a philosophy that is achievable; driven by indigenous blacks in Africa and in the diaspora for the purpose of racio- cultural and political emancipation (Aziz, 2010 in Akombe and Ngah, 2022). This definitive variation notwithstanding, Pan-Africanism re-echoes the re-birth of the Black race and African states after centuries of dehumanizing experience from the phenomena of trans-Atlantic slave trade, European imperialism and colonization in Africa and its resurgence by other means.

Recent academic works, such as Olorunfemi (2023), suggest that the AES embodies a contemporary iteration of these ideals, adapted to the specific security and economic challenges of the Sahel. Its ideological foundation also highlights the enduring impact of historical neo-colonial structures on African governance. The AES's rejection of Western influence, amplified by its rejection of ECOWAS and subsequent formation of a confederation, is not merely a reaction to current security issues but also a broader critique of the post-colonial order that has often marginalized African agency. To this end, the AES offers a compelling vision of sovereignty and regional cooperation. However, its long-term viability remains uncertain as critics argue that the alliance reliance on

military juntas, which often face internal legitimacy challenges and passive rejection by other regional organizations, complex international relations, balancing its anti-Western rhetoric and the need to maintain economic and diplomatic ties with global powers can work together to undermine its broader goals (Abdullahi, 2023, Ukaegbu and Okoroafor, 2025). With the possibility of expanding its membership base, one of the critical issues before AES confederation is the need to address internal disparities among intending member states. For instance, disparities in economic resources and military capabilities could hinder collective decision-making and implementation. Scholars like Keita (2024) suggests that the AES must prioritize capacity-building and institutional development to ensure its sustainability.

As the Sahel continues to evolve, the AES's impact on West Africa's political and security landscape will not end any time soon. The tri-state Confederation formed by Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger creates a political bloc that seeks to counterbalance the influence of external powers (such as France and the United States) in West Africa, leading to a reconfiguration of international relations in the region. As this is expected, one of its effect would be that Economic sanctions imposed by ECOWAS on the confederation members due to their military governance will lead to economic isolation, significantly reducing trade flows and increasing reliance on informal or illicit trade networks (Akombe and Ngah, 2022).

This has profound implications for protocols like the ECOWAS Free Movement agreement, which relies on shared responsibility and legal uniformity across borders. As argued by Kurt (2024), the AES disrupts this uniformity by rejecting regional norms and advancing a security-first logic that sees cross-border mobility as a liability rather than an asset. Moreover, the tension between sovereignty and regional commitments is intensified by the fact that national security threats in the Sahel are increasingly transnational. Terrorist groups do not recognize borders, and instability in one state often spills into another (Ukaegbu, 2023). In this regard as noted by unilateral approaches to security—no matter how sovereign—are likely to fall short. Yet, from the perspective of AES leaders, regional bodies like ECOWAS have failed to provide adequate security support, and have instead imposed punitive measures that aggravate national vulnerabilities (Segun, Ochoga and Isah, 2025). As Traoré (2023) contends, the emphasis on procedural democracy within ECOWAS has, in certain cases, come at the expense of genuine security collaboration and this has serious impact in redefining state relations in ECOWAS sub-region.

C. Alliance of Sahel States and the emergence of Ideological realignment in ECOWAS Sub- region.

One of the great fears in the formation and operations of the Alliance of Sahel States is the tendency to introduce ideological realignment in ECOWAS sub-region. Ideological realignment in a broad sense describes a change in the core foundations of political beliefs within an electorate, an organization or a state. A Nation or group of nation-state may realign their ideology through complex interactions between domestic political changes, pursuit of national interests, and or evolving geopolitical factors. This process can involve shifts in the ideology of the dominant class per time or their practical responses to internal and external pressures or even the reinterpretation of core national values to fit emerging regional or global context and realities. Thus, the tilting of Alliance of Sahel States towards non-liberal ideals is in itself a shift in ideological leaning that is perceived to have significant impact on regional permutations. Broadly, this new formation appears to be an example of anti-imperialist regionalism within the broader context of how Global South states navigate sovereignty, dependency, and internal-external security challenges by making their case along ideological lines.

In this wise, the formation of the junta-led confederation is said to underpin Pan African ideology and the fight to reclaim popular sovereignty across West Africa. The ideological struggle rooted in popular frustration with state institutions across Africa, hollowed out by decades of neoliberal restructuring, foreign interferences and domination erupted into mass mobilizations in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger between 2017 and 2022. It really started with protests against the Communauté Financière Africaine (CFA) franc framework in Senegal in September 2017 to large-scale protests in April 2019 in Mali, to mass mobilization in Burkina Faso against President Roch Kaboré's ineffective security policies since 2018. The protest in Mali reached a turning point in November 2021 when protesters in Kaya and

elsewhere blocked French military convoys, suspecting them of complicity with terrorist groups. This sustained unrests brought down what is adjudge pro-west governments in this state and other African states. Thus, the military governments that came to power in these states differ extensively on the basis of class origins, active participation of popular organizations, the development of endogenous Pan-African, anti-imperialist national programmes that would be driven by popular non-western ideology and radical orientations.

Accordingly, Dossier (2025) observed inter alia, that popular organizations have continued to make inputs in shaping the core elements of the national agenda and its reconstruction. When the coup in Niger took place in July 2023, mass organizations across all sectors laid siege to French military bases and the French embassy – not only to celebrate the toppling of a flailing regime and defend the coup, but also to assert long-standing demands to eject the French neocolonial forces. Prior to the coup, social movements had already begun to build a mass front against imperialism, a process that can be traced to popular organizing in 2022 building upon decades of political organization and education. When Niger's military government broke with France, it signaled to the people that their interests were being advanced. As such, grassroots leaders continued to call for the AES to uphold its anti-imperialist commitments emphasizing the need for institutional mechanisms that ensures both accountability and popular participation.

As it affects the development of endogenous Pan-African, anti-imperialist national programmes. The tri-state governments have initiated new national programmes that have a distinctly anti-imperialist orientation based on endogenous development models and the region's social and intellectual heritage. Mali's *National Strategy for Emergence and Sustainable Development* (SNEDD 2024–2033) outlines a medium-term programme for national renewal rooted in a historical rupture with externally imposed models of governance and development. SNEDD 2024–2033 is informed by *Mali Kura ɲɛtaasira ka bɛn san 2063 ma* (A New Mali: A Vision for 2063), a government-issued foresight report that articulates a broader vision for the country's future. Together, these frameworks seek to re-anchor national reconstruction in precolonial African political thought and ethical traditions. As part of its redefinition of national identity and institutional priorities, these traditions serve as foundations for a new anti-imperialist tendency that rests on social justice, collective governance, and civilizational dignity. As such, the AES focuses on holistic transformation of African state that is centred on a 'new endogenous development model (*Kura Taasira*)' that marks a clear departure from neocolonial donor-driven frameworks of the past.

Dossier (2025) also opined that many of the key coup leaders and those that now lead the new tri-state confederation are of a different ilk compared to other officers that have led coups in the Sahel region in the past. The coups simply rested on the competition for power in weak institutional environments. Thus, corruption, inadequate public services, and the exclusion of marginalized groups undermined state legitimacy and deepened public distrust calling for the introduction of an entirely new brand of leadership that rested purely on strong ideological convictions. Accordingly, the archetypal coups of the 1960s, 1980s and 1990s were largely Western-backed and targeted national liberation leaders to curtail the spread of anti-imperialist or left-aligned governments and social forces. In those cases, the survival of a military government and the unlikely formation of any was more tied to securing support from civilian elites and foreign backers than any set of well-articulated ideological concerns (Ukaegbu, 2023, Dossier, 2025). Thus, these recent coups that preceded the AES confederation do not fit that mould of the former.

As Prashad, cited in Dossier (2025) observed; People like Burkina Faso's Captain Ibrahim Traoré and Mali's Colonel Assimi Goïta represent class fraction and perhaps committed class suicide…they had no real or imagined political platforms to operate; no class or dominant interest to pursue or even reputation to consolidate. They simply rely on the support of the large sections of the country that have rallied behind their patriotic intentions based on the ideology that endeared them to power. In this sense, the pivoting of AES towards non-Western partners and the ideals they pursue implies that cross-border and international trade within West Africa's supply chains could be disrupted. By direct implication, the EU would be more and more isolated, and struggles to offset rising Russian and Chinese influence with the U.S. would be on a decline. As certain Western actors attempt to

adjust their approaches, rising powers, including Türkiye, India, and the Gulf states would reinforce their positions as alternative partners.

This raises the possibility of selective cooperation, in which shared interests on the basis of ideological compatibility may overcome strict bloc dynamics and political calculations. What is clear from the discussions above, is the fact that the junta-led AES confederation introduces a new dynamic to regional fragmentation, potentially creating parallel blocs within West Africa, with differing ideologies, governance models, and security strategies which could further complicate cooperation on transnational issues such as migration, border management, and economic integration on the basis of ideological leaning above all other considerations. The tri-state junta-led alliance, is not merely seeking new patrons; rather, its posture is purely ideological. The alliance seeks what is largely seen as a 'sovereignty offensive' region– a condition in which states, confronted by the constraints of a hyper-imperialist order, assert policies and institutional strategies that aim to break with dependency and reconfigure their place in the global system based on the ideological goal they pursue. By formalizing their alliance, Angalapu (2025) noted that Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso have signaled a deep mistrust in ECOWAS structures and a shift towards a self-determined political path, raising critical questions about the future of regionalism and collective security in West Africa.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The study x-rayed the nuances of the confederation formed by Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso dubbed Alliance des États du Sahel. The Alliance promotes a form of regionalism that is inward looking and state-centric. It prioritizes mutual defense and the non-interference principle which stands antithetical to mainstream western engagements across states in Africa. This has significantly impacted state relations within West Africa. The AES's rejection of ECOWAS principles weakens regional unity and pose a direct challenge to the future of democratic governance in West Africa. ECOWAS alignment with Western powers, particularly through financial and military partnerships, contrasts sharply with the AES's anti-West stance. This stance by implication, moves all states attuned to the ideals and guiding principles of Pan Africanism to the AES and all that are opposed to it towards ECOWAS. This divergence reflects broader tensions within West Africa's regional architecture, as countries increasingly adopt polarized approaches to governance and security challenges. This has increased the tendency to change the core foundations of political beliefs within states in West Africa. To this end, the tilting of the junta-led tri-state confederation towards non-liberal ideals is in itself a shift in ideological leaning that have had significant impact on regional permutations. It is an anti-imperialist regionalism within the broader context of the struggles of Global South. In this wise, the junta-led confederation underpins Pan African ideology and the fight to reclaim popular sovereignty across West Africa. This ideological wave currently championed by the AES is rooted in popular frustration with state institutions and their operations across Africa, hollowed out by decades of neoliberal restructuring, foreign interferences and domination. What is clear from the study, is the fact that the junta-led confederation introduces a new dynamic to regional fragmentation, potentially creating parallel blocs within West Africa on the basis of ideological leaning. Thus, West Africa, based on the relationship between AES and ECOWAS, is technically plunged into a cold war between two blocs that pursue overly opposing ideals.

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