

## Nominalization in ECOWAS Peacekeeping Agreements

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### Abstract

*This study examines nominalization as a dominant grammatical strategy in Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) peacekeeping agreement texts. Drawing on Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar and the concept of grammatical metaphor, it analyses ten ECOWAS peacekeeping agreement texts totalling 26,509 words. Manual annotation yielded 1,917 nominalization instances (7.2%), with derived nominals (74%) and gerundive nominals (22%) predominating. Three functional roles are identified: promoting textual cohesion, enabling informational condensation, and intensifying obligatory force. The study also demonstrates that nominalization consistently deletes agent identity, constructing an appearance of institutional neutrality while creating structural ambiguity about post-conflict accountability. These findings contribute to Critical Discourse Analysis scholarship on African institutional language and carry practical implications for peace negotiation practitioners.*

**Keywords:** ECOWAS, Peacekeeping Agreement, Nominalization, Systemic Functional Linguistics, Critical Discourse Analysis, Agency

### Introduction

The escalation of conflicts in Africa has led to the expansion of formal peacekeeping and peacemaking activities across the continent. West Africa in particular experienced devastating civil and interstate conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau during the 1990s and early 2000s. These conflicts were complex, carried significant regional security implications, and produced transnational linkages that made resolution difficult. In response, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) emerged as a key institutional actor in brokering and formalising peace settlements in the sub-region.

Despite the centrality of ECOWAS peacekeeping agreements to West African political history, the language through which these agreements are constructed has received relatively limited scholarly attention. Peace and conflict research has traditionally been shaped by Western intellectual traditions, while scholarship on the discourse of African peace negotiations remains comparatively underdeveloped. Much of the existing literature reflects Euro-American worldviews, values, and rationalities rather than African institutional realities (see Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, & Miall, 2011). This gap is particularly evident in linguistic research.

To date, no published Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)-based analyses of nominalization have been devoted specifically to ECOWAS peacekeeping agreement texts as a distinct institutional genre. The ideological implications of nominalization within African peace mediation discourse have also received little scholarly attention.

The present study therefore contributes to this emerging area of inquiry by examining how nominalization functions within ECOWAS peacekeeping agreement texts and the implications of such linguistic choices for agency, accountability, and institutional representation. It is anticipated that this analysis will contribute to bridging the micro-macro gap in peacekeeping discourse studies, and provide linguists, communication scholars, and practitioners with a more nuanced understanding of how grammatical choices shape the meaning and force of peacekeeping agreements.

A terminological note is necessary at the outset. Peace processes produce several distinct document types, and scholars have not always employed these terms consistently. A ceasefire agreement records the immediate cessation of hostilities between armed parties; a peace accord (or peacekeeping agreement) establishes broader political and institutional arrangements for the resolution of a conflict; and a peacekeeping agreement governs the mandate, composition, and operational terms of an interposition or monitoring force. The corpus assembled for this study includes documents that span all three categories — ceasefire agreements (e.g., T1, T6), comprehensive peacekeeping agreements (e.g., T3, T5), and agreements defining the status and operations of ECOMOG forces (e.g., T4). Throughout this article, the term *ECOWAS peacekeeping agreement* (EPKA) is used as a genre label encompassing this range of peace-process documents brokered or formalised under ECOWAS auspices, following the convention in the ECOWAS mediation literature (see Duursma & Gamez, 2023). This terminological choice reflects the institutional umbrella under which all ten texts were produced rather than a claim that each document performs an identical juridical function.

## Literature Review

Scholarly interest in nominalization has continued to expand across Systemic Functional Linguistics, corpus linguistics, legal discourse studies, and institutional communication research. Recent scholarship has increasingly examined nominalization not only as a grammatical resource for information packaging but also as a mechanism through which institutions construct authority, manage agency, and frame social realities.

The theoretical foundation for analysing nominalization in institutional discourse is established in Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), who show that nominalization reconstrues processes and qualities as entities, producing the lexical density characteristic of formal and institutional registers. Eggins (2004) extends this account, demonstrating that the compression nominalization creates allows institutional writers to treat arguable propositions as settled facts rather than as contestable claims. These foundational insights remain central to how the phenomenon is understood across disciplines and genres.

The legal genre has received sustained scholarly attention in this regard. Bhatia (1993) provides the canonical account, identifying condensation and all-inclusiveness as the primary functions of nominalization in legislative drafting. Thompson (2004) adds that nominalization renders propositions non-negotiable by removing the option of Mood from the grammatical structure of the clause. Mattiello (2010) confirms these patterns in English and Italian normative legal texts, finding that both languages use nominalization extensively to achieve formal register and precision. Together, these studies establish that nominalization is a defining feature of legal institutional language. What they share, however, is a focus on the pragmatic and structural functions of nominalization. None engages in sustained analysis of its ideological consequences in post-conflict or transitional institutional contexts, which is precisely the dimension the present study foregrounds.

The ideological dimensions of nominalization have been most fully theorised in Critical Discourse Analysis. Fowler (1991) argues that nominal constructions in official and media texts suppress the agents of events, replacing named actors with abstract processes. Van Dijk (1991) demonstrates how nominalization, alongside other syntactic transformations, mitigates the negative portrayal of powerful actors in press discourse. These foundational accounts establish the analytical principle that grammatical form is never ideologically neutral in institutional contexts.

Martin and White (2005), working within the SFL appraisal framework, develop this argument further. They show that agent deletion through nominalization is part of a broader attitudinal and interpersonal stance, one that positions an institutional author as a neutral arbitrator rather than a partisan actor. That framework is directly applicable to ECOWAS peacekeeping agreement texts, where the mediating institution's positioning is simultaneously a political and a linguistic concern. While the foundational literature established the grammatical, functional, and ideological significance of nominalization, recent empirical work continues to demonstrate its relevance across contemporary institutional and diplomatic discourse, confirming the enduring importance of examining how nominalized constructions shape authority, agency, and accountability in new institutional contexts.

In the field of diplomatic discourse, Zhang, Afzaal, Omar, and Altohami (2023) conduct a corpus-based multidimensional analysis of Chinese and American diplomatic texts. Their study demonstrates that corpus methods can reveal systematic differences in the stylistic and ideological orientations of institutional diplomatic registers, and that such differences are encoded in grammatical choices rather than in lexical content alone. That methodological finding supports the present study's use of corpus-based annotation to identify grammatical patterns in ECOWAS agreement texts as carriers of institutional positioning.

Research at the intersection of CDA and peace discourse has also developed in important ways. Chilwa (2024), in the introductory essay to a special issue of *Critical Discourse Studies* devoted to the language of conflict and peace, argues that CDA provides sufficient and productive methodological resources for analysing peace-process discourse, and notes that discourse types within peace negotiations remain underanalysed relative to conflict-oriented texts. That observation directly motivates the present study.

Recent African-focused scholarship further situates the present study within a growing body of empirically grounded inquiry into peace processes on the continent. Duursma and Gamez (2023), introducing the African Peace Processes (APP) dataset covering over 2,600 rounds of peace negotiations across Africa between 1989 and 2019, provide the most comprehensive empirical mapping of mediation dynamics on the continent to date, demonstrating the diversity of negotiation forms and third-party involvement that African institutional actors such as ECOWAS have employed. Their dataset underlines the institutional scale and historical depth of the phenomenon that the present study examines at the level of language. From an institutional communication perspective, the African Union's Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development framework, as analysed in the inaugural volume of the *African Union Journal on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development* (2024), foregrounds how regional institutional discourse shapes the framing of post-conflict obligations around concepts such as disarmament, demobilisation, and accountability — precisely the nominalized categories that the present study identifies as carrying the heaviest agent-deletion load. Together, these developments confirm that African institutional peace discourse is an active site of scholarly inquiry and that the linguistic dimensions of such discourse remain comparatively underexplored.

Taken together, these studies confirm that nominalization plays a central role in constructing authority, managing agency, and shaping ideological representation in specialised, legal, and institutional discourse. Two significant gaps remain, however. First, while nominalization has been examined in academic, legal, political, and diplomatic genres, African regional peacekeeping agreements have not been subjected to systematic SFL-based nominalization analysis. Second, while the relationship between nominalization and agency suppression is well documented in media and diplomatic discourse, it has not been applied to African peace mediation language, where the concealment of actor responsibility carries direct post-conflict accountability implications. The present study addresses both gaps.

## Methodology

The corpus was purposively assembled from the official records of the Mediation and Security Council of ECOWAS. Ten ECOWAS peacekeeping agreement (EPKA) texts were selected on the basis of two criteria: representativeness and accessibility. Representativeness ensures that the selected texts collectively reflect the range of ECOWAS peacekeeping mediation and negotiation discourse across different conflict settings and time periods — specifically, the three most significant West African conflicts in which ECOWAS played a direct peacekeeping role during 1993–2003 (Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau). Accessibility refers to the availability of authoritative, complete text versions from official ECOWAS records.

Peacekeeping agreement texts are specialised institutional documents that are by their nature concise: they record settlement terms, not deliberative proceedings, and their brevity is a generic feature rather than a sampling limitation. The ten texts range from 228 words (T7) to 6,805 words (T3), with a total corpus of 26,509 words. This range reflects the genuine variation in scope and detail across ECOWAS agreements. The corpus is not designed to be statistically representative of all possible peacekeeping agreement language, but to provide a purposive, genre-delimited dataset for qualitative-interpretive analysis (Partington, 2004). It is acknowledged that the corpus comprises only English-language texts, and that analyses of French-language ECOWAS agreements might reveal different linguistic patterns. Full corpus details are provided in Table 1.

**Table 1: ECOWAS Peacekeeping Agreement (EPKA) Corpus**

Tag	Title of Agreement	Year	Words	Nominalizations (%)
T1	Agreement on Ceasefire and Cessation of Hostilities between the Government of the Republic of Liberia and Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia	June 2003	1,068	72 (6.7%)
T2	Joint Declaration of the Defence and Security Forces of Côte d'Ivoire and the Armed Forces of the Forces Nouvelles	July 2003	1,060	74 (7.0%)
T3	Peace Agreement Between the Government of Liberia (GOL), the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), and the Political Parties	August 2003	6,805	499 (7.3%)

T4	Agreement Defining the Operations, Composition and Status of ECOMOG on the Territory of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau between ECOWAS and the Republic of Guinea-Bissau	March 1999	6,039	441 (7.3%)
T5	Peace Agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone	July 1999	5,810	418 (7.2%)
T6	Ceasefire Agreement in Guinea-Bissau	August 1998	234	15 (6.4%)
T7	Agreement between the Government of Guinea-Bissau and the Self-Proclaimed Military Junta	November 1998	228	15 (6.6%)
T8	Economic Community of West African States Six-Month Peace Plan for Sierra Leone	October 1997	930	66 (7.1%)
T9	Abuja Agreement to Supplement the Cotonou and Akosombo Agreements as Subsequently Clarified by the Accra Agreement	August 1995	671	47 (7.0%)
T10	Cotonou Agreement	July 1993	3,664	270 (7.4%)
<b>Total</b>			<b>26,509</b>	<b>1,917 (7.2%)</b>

*Note: Nominalization frequencies per text are provided to facilitate assessment of corpus balance. The nominalization rate is consistent across texts (6.4–7.4%), indicating that frequency patterns are not an artefact of corpus imbalance.*

The study adopts Halliday's (1985, 2014) Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) as its primary analytical framework, supplemented by insights from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), particularly Fowler's (1991) and Van Dijk's (1991) work on nominalization as an ideological resource, and Martin and White's (2005) appraisal framework. SFG is chosen because it treats grammar as functionally motivated: language choices are not arbitrary but reflect the social and institutional purposes for which texts are produced.

Nominalization instances were identified through a systematic two-stage annotation process. In the first stage, all noun phrases in each text were screened for nominalizations, defined following Givón (1993, p. 287) as either (a) a verb or adjective converted into a noun (lexical nominalization) or (b) a verbal clause or verb phrase converted into a noun phrase (syntactic nominalization). Compound nouns (e.g., ceasefire) and fixed institutional terms where nominalizing morphology was not productive (e.g., agreement as a document title) were excluded. In ambiguous cases, the criterion applied was whether the nominal retained a recognizable semantic relationship to a verbal or adjectival process; borderline cases were resolved by consensus. In the second stage, each instance was coded according to its morphological type and grammatical function.

To establish coding reliability, a random sample of 10% of the corpus (approximately 2,650 words drawn proportionally from all ten texts) was independently coded by a second analyst. Inter-rater agreement was calculated using Cohen's Kappa, yielding  $\kappa = 0.87$  — above the 0.80 threshold required in corpus-based discourse studies (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Campanella, 2002). This procedure produced 1,917 nominalization instances representing approximately 7.2% of the total word count — within the 6–8% range reported by Bhatia (1993) for institutional legal documents.

## Findings

### Distribution and Types

Nominalization is a pervasive linguistic feature of EPKA texts. The annotation procedure identified 1,917 nominalization instances across the corpus of 26,509 words, constituting approximately 7.2% of the total word count. Table 1 shows that this rate is consistent across texts of widely varying lengths (6.4–7.4%), confirming that nominalization is a stable generic feature of ECOWAS agreement discourse rather than an artefact of a small number of lengthy texts.

Grammatically, two nominalization types predominate: derived nominals and gerundive nominals. Derived nominals are formed through morphological suffixation (e.g., *establishment*, *disengagement*, *implementation*, *cessation*), while gerundive nominals retain the –ing suffix while functioning as noun phrases (e.g., *signing*, *reopening*, *recommitting*). Of the 1,917 instances, derived nominals account for approximately 74% and gerundive nominals for approximately 22%, with the remainder consisting of mixed and clausal nominals. Functionally, nominalization operates as the subject of a verb, the object of a verb, and the complement of a preposition, with derived nominals performing most subject and prepositional complement roles.

**Table 2: Nominalized Expressions in the EPKA Texts**

Tag	Nominalized Expression	Grammatical Function	Type
T1a	To refrain from committing any act that might constitute or facilitate a violation of the ceasefire as provided for in paragraph 9 of this agreement.	Object of 'facilitate'; complement of 'of'	Derived nominal
T1b	The signing of this agreement shall be followed immediately by the engagement of the GOL, LURD and MODEL with all other Liberian political parties and stakeholders in dialogue...	Subject of 'shall be followed'; complement of 'by'	Gerundive; Derived nominal
T2a	Considering that partitioning Côte d'Ivoire, even briefly, would not be to the advantage of any of the parties...	Complement of 'considering'	Gerundive nominal
T3a	Immediate disengagement at the initiative of all military units shall be limited to the effective range of direct fire weapons.	Head of noun phrase; subject of 'shall be limited'	Derived nominal
T3b	The Parties agree on the need for the establishment of an Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR).	Complement of the preposition 'for'	Derived nominal
T4a	AWARE ALSO of the need to establish in Guinea-Bissau a climate of stability and security without which the integration of the sub-region cannot be realised.	Complement of the preposition 'of'	Derived nominal
T4b	The Republic of Guinea-Bissau reaffirms its acceptance of the extension of ECOMOG's scope of activity to its Territory.	Object of 'reaffirms'; complement of 'of'	Derived nominal

T5a	Recommitting themselves to the total observance and compliance with the Cease-Fire Agreement...	Complement of 'to'	Derived; Gerundive nominal
T7a	This withdrawal shall be done simultaneously with the deployment of an ECOMOG interposition force...	Subject of 'shall be done'	Derived nominal
T8a	It is considered that cessation of hostilities should come into force immediately.	Subject of the embedded noun clause	Derived nominal
T8b	...a minimum of 30 days would be required to conduct effective disarmament and demobilization of combatants.	Object of the infinitival 'to conduct'	Derived nominal
T10a	The ECOMOG and the United Nations Observer Mission shall supervise and monitor the implementation of this Agreement.	Object of 'supervise and monitor'	Derived nominal

Note: The table presents representative examples selected to illustrate variation in nominalization type and grammatical function. All twelve examples are discussed in the analysis below.

### Pragmatic Functions of Nominalization

Three primary pragmatic functions emerge from analysis of nominalization in EPKA discourse. Each is examined below with illustrative examples from the corpus.

#### *Text-Oriented Function: Promoting Cohesion*

Nominalization in EPKA texts frequently serves a cohesive function, enabling the drafter to refer back to earlier propositions through a condensed nominal expression. This is particularly evident in T7, where the nominalized form *this withdrawal* retrieves and encapsulates a process described in a preceding clause:

*This withdrawal shall be done simultaneously with the deployment of an ECOMOG interposition force which will take over from the withdrawn forces. (T7)*

Here, *this withdrawal* functions anaphorically, providing a stable reference point from which the sentence can predicate new information. This is consistent with Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) account of nominalization as a device for thematization and textual progression: by encapsulating an event as a noun phrase, the writer makes it available as a topic for further comment. A congruent rewriting such as 'After ECOMOG forces withdraw, they shall be replaced simultaneously by an interposition force' would distribute the same information across two clauses with explicit agents, sacrificing the economy and cohesive precision of the nominal form.

#### *Addresser-Oriented Function: Condensation and All-Inclusiveness*

A second major function of nominalization in EPKA texts is the compression of complex, multi-part obligations into dense nominal constructions. Bhatia (1993, p. 101) identifies condensation and all-inclusiveness as the hallmarks of legislative nominalization, and these properties are strongly evident in the EPKA corpus. Example T4b packs complex institutional relationships into a single nominal chain:

*The Republic of Guinea-Bissau reaffirms its acceptance of the extension of ECOMOG's scope of activity to its Territory. (T4)*

Three nominalizations (*acceptance, extension, scope*) are embedded within a single clause. Each substitutes for a potentially lengthy verbal description; together, they convey a precise

institutional position with minimal syntactic elaboration. The parallel gerundive constructions in T5a (*Recommitting themselves to the total observance and compliance*) and T8b (*effective disarmament and demobilization*) perform the same condensing function, achieving all-inclusiveness while maintaining formal brevity.

**Addressee-Oriented Function: Non-Negotiability and Obligation**

The third function concerns the imposition of obligations on the parties to the agreement. Thompson (2004, p. 230) argues that nominalized propositions are structurally non-negotiable: because the nominalized form lacks Mood, it cannot be questioned or rejected in the way that a finite verbal clause can. Example T8a illustrates this:

*It is considered that cessation of hostilities should come into force immediately. (T8)*

The nominalization *cessation of hostilities* encodes a complex normative concept in a form that presents it as a given rather than an arguable claim. Example T10a (*implementation of this Agreement*) similarly presents a central obligation as a nominalized entity whose existence and necessity are presupposed. In speech act terms, the nominalized construction shifts the illocutionary force from suggestion to obligation, structuring the addressee's options as compliance or non-compliance rather than acceptance or rejection.

**Ideological Implications: Agency, Accountability, and Institutional Neutrality**

Beyond their pragmatic functions, nominalization patterns in EPKA texts carry significant ideological implications. The most consequential is the consistent deletion of agents. When actions are nominalized, the grammatical structure of the sentence no longer requires a subject to perform those actions: the agent either disappears or is absorbed into a post-nominal prepositional phrase, where it appears as an optional and subordinate element rather than a foregrounded participant.

To demonstrate concretely what agent deletion removes, Table 3 presents three examples from the corpus alongside hypothetical congruent rewrites that restore explicit agents and verbal processes. This controlled comparison, following the method recommended by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 696) for demonstrating the discourse effects of grammatical metaphor, makes visible what the nominalized form conceals.

**Table 3: Congruent Alternatives Demonstrating Agency Suppression**

Nominalized Version (EPKA text)	Congruent Rewriting (hypothetical)
Immediate disengagement at the initiative of all military units shall be limited to the effective range of direct fire weapons. (T3)	All military units shall disengage immediately. Their movement shall not exceed the effective range of direct fire weapons.
The Republic of Guinea-Bissau reaffirms its acceptance of the extension of ECOMOG's scope of activity to its Territory. (T4)	The Republic of Guinea-Bissau reaffirms that it accepts that ECOWAS will extend ECOMOG's activities to its territory.
...a minimum of 30 days would be required to conduct effective disarmament and demobilization of combatants. (T8)	At least 30 days would be required for designated forces to disarm and demobilize combatants effectively.

*Note: Congruent rewrites are hypothetical reconstructions for analytical purposes only. They are not proposed as superior drafting choices; agent-preserving language may be politically impractical in peace mediation contexts.*

As Table 3 makes clear, the nominalized versions suppress not merely individual agents but the entire agentive structure of the clause. Actions such as *deployment*, *cessation*, *implementation*, *disarmament*, and *demobilization* are presented as processes-in-themselves rather than as actions performed by specific, named actors. The discourse effect — though not necessarily the conscious intent of any individual drafter — is twofold. First, agent deletion appears to function rhetorically as a marker of institutional neutrality: by presenting obligations as impersonal processes rather than as demands made by one party upon another, the texts position ECOWAS as an impartial facilitator. Halliday and Martin (1993, p. 84) describe this as an "attribute of detachment" — the impression that no individual or institution is personally invested in the propositions being advanced.

Second, however, the same agent deletion that produces detachment also produces accountability ambiguity. In post-conflict contexts, agreements must ultimately be implemented by identifiable parties, and violations must be attributable to specific actors. When the language of the agreement renders obligations impersonal, it creates structural uncertainty: who exactly is responsible for *implementation*, for *disarmament*, or for *cessation of hostilities*? Fang, Schleppegrell, and Cox (2006) note that nominalization creates greater cognitive demands on readers because it requires them to reconstruct, from context, the agents that the grammar has suppressed. In the specific context of peacekeeping agreements, this reconstruction may be contested or incomplete, with direct consequences for compliance and enforcement.

It is worth noting that nominalization in legal genres is not in itself illegitimate or manipulative: it serves real and valued communicative functions. The argument advanced here is not that ECOWAS drafters deliberately conceal accountability, but that the discourse effects of the grammatical strategies employed — effects built into the genre conventions of formal legal drafting — produce a structural tension between neutrality and accountability that has not been previously identified in the literature on African peacekeeping agreement discourse.

### Limitations

Several limitations of this study should be acknowledged. First, the corpus is relatively small (26,509 words, ten texts) and restricted to a single decade (1993–2003). While peacekeeping agreements are by nature concise institutional documents, the findings cannot be straightforwardly generalised to all ECOWAS discourse or to other African regional organisations without further comparative research. Future studies would benefit from larger, multilingual corpora — incorporating both English- and French-language ECOWAS texts alongside agreements brokered by the AU, IGAD, and SADC — which would enable cross-institutional and cross-linguistic comparison of the nominalization patterns identified here. Second, the corpus comprises only English-language texts, excluding ECOWAS's French-language agreements. Whether nominalization patterns and their accountability implications differ across the two official languages of ECOWAS is a question the present study cannot address.

Third, while inter-rater reliability was strong ( $\kappa = 0.87$ ), manual annotation of nominalization necessarily involves some interpretive judgment, particularly for borderline cases. Fourth, the ideological analysis is an interpretive claim about discourse effects, not a finding about drafters' intentions. CDA maintains this distinction, and so does the present study; readers should not infer that ECOWAS or its agents deliberately sought to obstruct accountability through grammatical choices.

## Conclusion

This study has examined nominalization as a dominant grammatical strategy in ECOWAS peacekeeping agreement texts, drawing on a corpus of ten EPKA texts totalling 26,509 words and Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar framework. The analysis identified 1,917 nominalization instances (approximately 7.2% of the total word count), with derived nominals accounting for approximately 74% and gerundive nominals for approximately 22% of all instances. Three principal functional roles were identified: a text-oriented cohesive function, an addresser-oriented condensation function, and an addressee-oriented non-negotiability function.

Beyond these pragmatic functions, the study demonstrated through controlled congruent alternations (Table 3) that the pervasive use of nominalization in EPKA discourse produces a structurally significant discourse effect: the deletion of agents from the grammatical surface of agreement provisions. This agent deletion appears to serve the institutional purpose of constructing ECOWAS as a neutral mediator, but simultaneously creates structural ambiguity about who bears responsibility for implementation and compliance — a tension between institutional neutrality and post-conflict accountability that has not been previously identified in the literature on African regional peace discourse.

These findings carry practical implications for those involved in drafting and negotiating peacekeeping agreements. Agreement drafters face a genuine tension: the impersonal, nominalized register of formal legal language serves vital functions — projecting institutional impartiality, compressing complex obligations, and producing text that neither party can refuse on linguistic grounds — but the same register structurally suppresses the named actors who must ultimately implement each provision. A productive balance between neutrality and accountability may be achieved through targeted drafting strategies. Where clauses assign disarmament, implementation, or monitoring obligations, drafters may supplement nominalized frames with appended agent specifications in prepositional or relative clauses (e.g., *the disarmament of combatants, to be conducted by designated ECOMOG units within the timeframe specified in Annex B*). This preserves the formal register while anchoring the obligation to an identifiable responsible party. In provisions governing post-conflict accountability — human rights monitoring, transitional justice mechanisms, and compliance verification — drafters should be especially attentive to agent deletion, since these are precisely the clauses most likely to be contested in implementation. Institutional actors such as ECOWAS may also consider developing internal drafting guidelines that flag systematically agent-less nominalized constructions in accountability-sensitive provisions, so that the structural tension identified here can be managed consciously rather than left as an unexamined artefact of genre convention.

Future research might extend this analysis in several directions. A comparative study of nominalization patterns across ECOWAS, IGAD, SADC, and AU peacekeeping agreements would allow scholars to assess whether the neutrality-accountability tension identified here is specific to ECOWAS or characteristic of African regional institutional discourse more broadly. A longitudinal analysis examining whether nominalization densities or agency deletion patterns differ across agreements that were successfully implemented versus those that collapsed would help assess whether the grammatical features identified here correlate with practical outcomes. Researchers might also examine whether French-language ECOWAS texts display comparable nominalization patterns, given the different grammatical resources available in French for institutional condensation.

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