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The ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) in Focus of West African Integration Efforts

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Abstract:

The Economic Community of West African States, with French and Portuguese abbreviation: CEDEAO, abbreviated in English: ECOWAS, has currently fifteen members. The mainly political and economic regional cooperation, established in 1975 in the former French, Portuguese, and English territories, is the most significant form of integrated cooperation in West Africa. One of the eight African Regional Communities, and two of the six African Sub-Regional Economic Communities are members of the ECOWAS; it has eight members from the WAEMU (West African Economic and Monetary Community) and three out of fifteen members of the MRU (Mano River Union).

The aim of this paper is to outline the integration mechanism of the ECOWAS, from historical backgrounds (including colonial heritage) to the integration of the decolonization process, its organizational structure, economic and monetary role, and its role in Africa. The analysis also looks at the proactive role of the ECOWAS member states in the continent's integration efforts.

Keywords:

ECOWAS; WAEMU; MRU; integration; economy; monetary.

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Historical Background Based on the Colonial Approach

From French West Africa to decolonization efforts

The integration of the CEDEAO area, from present-day Senegal to Niger and from Mali to Ivory Coast, is largely due to the French colonization in these areas, apart from some historical and imperial antecedents.[2] French West Africa (Afrique-Occidentale française AOF, 1895-1958) – initially consisting of four colonies, namely Senegal, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, French Sudan (then Mali) and then having gradually gained the Upper Volta (future Burkina Faso, in the detached area of Sudan), Dahomey (future Benin), Mauritania, and Niger – was formed on June 16, 1895 as a federation of eight French colonies. At the time of its dissolution, 25 million people lived on its territory.

The aim of the AOF is to organize these areas under a unified French administration, with Saint-Louis (1895-1902) and then Dakar (1902-) as its capital in Senegal. In 1901, the Central Bank of Senegal was transformed into the (central) Bank of West Africa, operating in the form of a joint stock company with the authority to issue bonds. The AOF was governed by a French governor-general, who, in the early period, held the position of governor of Senegal and was also a representative of the (Parisian) Ministry of Colonial Affairs. Between 1957-1959, he was appointed High Commissioner and several lieutenant governors were subordinate to him. Over time, the basic unit of administrative organization became the district (*cercle*) and its subunits, headed by the district commander, who for the Africans essentially personified colonial power. They decided on the head tax, the levies, and organized the necessary public works. Indigenous people were virtually completely excluded from the decision-making process of the administration. The borders of the French West African colonies were established by conventions with the neighbouring powers and, in the case of the colonies by the Franco-neighbourhood, by a simple administrative decision (Lugan 2009, p. 607).

In 1946, France slightly transformed its relationship with its former colonies, creating the French Union (*Union française*) of the Fourth Republic, which was reorganized in 1958 by the Fifth Republic to the French Community (*Communauté française*). The African partners were disappointed in both, and the latter's efforts to integrate soon became futile[3] in the wake of the decolonization wave starting in 1960. Regarding the British colonial territories, the British Commonwealth was formed in 1949, providing a looser forum for cooperation, considering the Queen as the common head of state. From the region, Ghana became a member in 1957, Nigeria in 1960, and Sierra Leone in 1961.

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[2] Historical background: The area of Mauritania in Roman times was roughly the area of Morocco-Algeria. Between 300 and 1240, the Empire of Ghana covered parts of present-day Senegal, Mali and Mauritania, and between 1230 and 1545, the Empire of Mali covered parts of Senegal, the Gambia, Guinea, Mauritania, Mali and Niger. The Songhai Empire, from 1464 to 1591, roughly covered the territory of the Empire of Mali, supplemented by parts of present-day Burkina Faso, Benin, and Nigeria. Thus, the "integration effect" in the region could have been exerted by the previous historical imperial formations, but these, with the exception of the current eras, did not prove to be long-lived, partly because they seemed to be quite minimal in the political and economic spheres, and also because they were only temporary. (Source we used: Europa Varietas Institute CERPESC project databases: http://www.europavarietas.org/csdp/fr/geopolitique)

[3] The Community only operated *de facto* until the year of 1959, although *de jure* lasted until 1995.

The states of the region have played an important leading role in the establishment of the Organization of African Unity (OUA) on May 25, 1963, with their leaders at the forefront of this initiative: Presidents Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana) and Sékou Touré (Guinea). As leaders of the Casablanca Group, partly encouraged by the achievements of European integration, they called for the creation of a federation similar to the United States of Amercia (African Community), with the left-wing leaders of the UAR (United Arab Republic), Algeria, Libya, Mali, and Morocco supporting the idea. The African Common Market (MCA) was set up on April 2, 1962 with the participation of Algeria, the EAW, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, and Morocco, but this only operated until the OUA was set up. The Monrovia group included supporters of a more moderate cooperation effort; Of the 21 sub-Saharan states, I would like to highlight Senegal (President Léopold Sédar Senghor, leader of the group) and Nigeria in the region, but most of the Francophone states were included as well. This group envisioned a much looser, confederate form of cooperation that respected the (full) sovereignty of states, urging them to continue working closely with former colonial metropolises for the economic consideration of providing them with the capital they needed to start developing.

What conclusions can be drawn about the region from all this? Thus, the states here took the initiative, but on several fronts, they also differed significantly in terms of the depth of cooperation within the organizational framework: on the one hand, there were major divisions between those who wanted a close federation and those who preferred a loose confederation, and on the other hand, there have been major divergences in closer or looser relations with former colonial countries. The dilemma of what would happen to them after their independence, without any capital and political experience and with weak economic foundations, was marked. Can the regional cooperation(s) organized on the basis of the "blind leading the blind" method succeed whether the model of the European Economic Community, established in 1957 by the Treaty of Rome, can succeed, or is it simply indispensable long-term to “keep the umbilical cords” with former colonial states? The signing of the Organization of African Unity Charter, drawn up by the presidents Modibo Keïta from Mali and Sylvanus Olympio from Togo, also meant that the new African states would *de jure* recognize the finality and inviolability of the borders, previously completely arbitrarily established by the colonizers: Emphasizing political-economic stability with the inviolability of state sovereignty (principle of non-intervention). The latter resulted in serious problems – narrowing down to the examined area – in the crisis management mechanism in Nigeria of the Biafra`s separatist aspiration (1967-1970) supported by France (Türke 2021). In this context, the rivalry of the Francophone-Anglo-Saxon states and territories in the region should be singled out as a factor working against integration, and this opposition was often exacerbated from the background by the former colonizers on the basis of the *divide et impera* principle. In the Cold War era of the superpowers, this was further overshadowed by the intrusion of Soviet and American ideological divisions into the region, supplemented by non-aligned African states (Ghana and Guinea) that joined the strongly anti-colonialist movements. The new, independent states were characterized by strong ethnic and religious diversity, and in many cases artificial borders split (related) tribes and ethnicities (Benkes 1999, pp. 156-161).

In the midst of the decolonization wave, the former British Colony (*Gold Coast*) Ghana,[4] led by Kwame Nkrumah towards independence in 1957, was the flagship of both independence and cooperation on the continent, where between 1960 and 1980, nearly 200 forms of cross-border multisectoral economic cooperation and more than 120 forms of intergovernmental and bilateral cooperation emerged. The first major divisive factor between the Francophone states of West Africa was the attitude towards the French Community. A decision was made about it in a referendum on the new French constitution on September 28, 1958: Senghor Senegal and Keïta French Sudan supported it, while Guinea (Sékou Touré) and Niger (Bakari Djibo) voted against. In Guinea, the majority of the population also voted against the Community, making it completely independent of the other former AOF states that became autonomous states within the Community.[5]

From the Sahel-Benin Union to the Mano River Union

The first effort to cooperate in the region was the short-lived Sahel-Benin Union (1958-59), intended to create a platform of political, economic, and military cooperation. It was created by four former AOF members: Ivory Coast, Upper Volta, Dahomey, and Niger. Councils of Heads of State and Government, Commonwealth Ministers and Speakers of National Assemblies have been established. In their ambitious plans, just one year after the 1957 Treaty of Rome, they had already decided to set up a customs union and a repayment fund. However, the formation of the Federation of Mali significantly changed the plans. On December 29-30, 1958, Senegal (presided over by Senghor), French Sudan (the future Republic of Sudan: Mali), Upper-Volta, and Dahomey formed a similarly short-lived Federation of Mali.[6] Felix Houphouët-Boigny's Ivory Coast was also invited to the Federation, but it said it did not want to become the federation's "dairy cow". The grand politics of France has done everything to undermine the integration efforts that run counter to these interests: in 1959, President Maurice Yaméogo of Upper Volta, under Ivory Coast's (and French) influence,[7] withdrew from the federation and announced his need to join the French Community. In Dahomey, the supporters of the federation failed, and the country eventually did not join.

As a counter-pole, the response of the countries of the Sahel-Benin Union to the rival integration aspirations has been the expansion and significant reorganization of the union, essentially by abandoning and leaching out the original goals of close integration. In 1959, the Council of Agreement (*Conseil d`entente*) was established under French tutelage. This mainly economic organization is still the oldest of the existing forms of integrational cooperation in West Africa (Togo joined in 1966). Within the Federation of Mali, the main differences arose

[4] We should note that Liberia, a former American colony, was the first African colony to became independent in 1847.
[5] According to this version of the French Constitution, a member declaring its independence must leave the Community. This has been changed by the constitutional amendment on June 4, 1960, only after noticing the overwhelming wave of decolonization. This ammendment allowed members who had declared their independence to remain members of the Community by contract (and in fact allowed other independent states to join, but this scenario never happened).
[6] The Federation of Mali thus essentially existed earlier than the future Republic of Mali (1960-), while the eponymous historical Mali Empire (13-16th century) roughly covered the territory of present-day Mali. (Türke 2018, 16)
[7] Here we should mention the name of Jacques Foccart, the strong influence of the father of Françafrique in the region, who ran the General Secretariat for African and Malagasy Affairs (SGAAM) of the Palace of the Élysée from 1960 to 1974.

between Senegal and Sudan: the Sudanese urged for a merger of the two nations as soon as possible and opposed Senghor to replace Keïta as president. In August 1960, Keïta sharply condemned the French experimental nuclear explosions in the Sahara, which added tensions with the french-friendly Senegal as well. The Mali Confederation was absolutely pushed towards the edge, but he was pardoned by the fact that on September 22, 1960, Keïta proclaimed the independence of French Sudan, creating the Republic of Mali and joining the movement of non-aligned countries. Meanwhile, another important form of cooperation emerged in 1959, called the West African Customs Union (WACU, UDOA), which established a form of cooperation between the member states of the Council of Consensus and Mali and was essentially the forerunner and "ancestor" of ECOWAS. On May 12 1962, in addition to the WACU, another subregional economic community, the WAMU (West African Monetary Union, *UMOA*), lined up. The WAMU included former members of the AOF (with the exception of Mauritania but with the former Portuguese Guinea-Bissau), namely Benin (Dahomey), Burkina Faso, (Upper Volta), Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo. The headquarter of the community is in Abidjan, in Ivory Coast and its bank is the Central Bank of the West African States (BCEAO), which is authorized to issue the CFA franc (FCFA) of the African Financial Community (CFA: formerly AOF and AEF). Thus, according to some, the WAMU can be seen as a "restoration" of the AOF (and AEF) and has become an important tool for *Françafrique*.

On July 1, 1962, Mali left the WAMU, which generated new tensions between Paris and Bamako. The government has switched from the CFA franc to the self-issued non-convertible Mali franc. Ownership of the former was banned, making things extremely difficult for traders. The Malian franc began to inflate rapidly, a black market developed soon, traders sold their animals or seeds in neighbouring countries and bought imported goods for resale in Mali without paying any duties or customs fee. All these actions significantly disturbed the foreign trade balance and the state budget, the latter even plunged into deficit between 1960-68. The attempt at independence thus failed in the young state, which had just gained its independence and refused all kinds of attachment and regional monetary-financial cooperation (under French tutelage). Mali thus applied to the CFA for reintegration into the Franc zone in 1967. This attempt at independence provided a serious lesson for the rest of the region (Sylvestre-Sidibe 2019).

In 1973, the WAMU Treaty was revised, the BCEAO was given new status and the West African Development Bank (WADB, *BOAD*) was established, and new cooperation agreements were signed with France. The new texts include regulatory mechanisms, with passages guaranteeing the cohesion and stability of the Union. Due to the French background of the CFA franc (half of the central bank reserves of the states must be deposited with the *Banque de France*, from which it lends and pays interest), the common currency of the region, WAMU members had better economic performance on average than other countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The French franc was to be depreciated twice by 20% in June 1958, by 17.55% in December 1958 and by 11% on August 8, 1969. The strong French franc made it more difficult for states using the CFA franc to export to countries in the region, but the weakening of the franc in the 1970s also gradually "cut off" this disadvantage. Another positive factor is that the pace of economic development has generally outpaced the speed of demographic development, so the living conditions of the population have also improved. However, this period of positive economic activity has also ended with the end of the "*Trentes Glorieuses*"[8] in West African countries. In addition, the region was doubly affected by the negative effects: after the oil crisis in the 1980s, not only commodity prices (their primary income) fell, but even the French franc was devalued (several times),[9] leading to an automatic devaluation of the CFA franc. As a result, what previously created monetary stability in the region and guaranteed a relatively stable environment for foreign investment capital has now been reversed to the point where the weakness of the French franc, which has been helping exports so far, has fallen sharply.[10]

As a result, the macroeconomic and financial indicators of the WAMU states began to decline rapidly, culminating in a severe economic crisis. The organization found the answer to the challenge by further deepening integration, that is, supplementing monetary union by deepening economic integration. Monetary stability was therefore planned to be strengthened by economic reforms, which were entrusted to the governor of the BCEAO. After the redemption of the CFA franc into the French franc was suspended in August 1993, the CFA franc was halved on January 1, 1994 (1 franc = 100 FCFA), and on August 1, 1994, the WAMU was transformed into the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU). The devaluation was a severe shock to the urban population due to a reduction in their purchasing power, but it also contributed significantly to the recovery of coffee and cocoa production in Ivory Coast, for example. (It must be said that those who have benefited from it are foreign companies and not the local population.) The positive effect of devaluation has been greatly reduced thanks to corrupt regimes and foreign (French) politicians cooperating with them in their dubious dealings on the one hand, and newer, protracted local conflicts on the other (Larané 2018). With the introduction of the euro, the FCFA has also been pegged to the euro, and the region is once again facing export problems due to its strength.

In addition, as the precursors of ECOWAS-integration, the WARDA and the Mano River Union should be highlighted as active, living examples to this day. The West African Rice Production Development Association (WARDA, *ADRAO*) was established in 1971 and was the only major West African regional integration organization to bring together both the Francophone and Anglo-Saxon states before the ECOWAS was established. This functionalist organization covered a very limited area of activity, but in a sectoral area it "brought the

[8] The „Glorious Thirty" was the thirty years from 1945 to 1975 following the end of the Second World War in France.
[9] On October 4, 1981, it was 3% and on June 12, 1982, it was 5.75%. On March 21, 1983, the German mark and the Dutch florin were appreciated by 4.25% against all other currencies in the EMS, when the French franc was depreciated by 8% against the mark. (Türke 2021, I. 138-139)
[10] For a period of time, it has become "fashionable" to present the CFA franc zone exclusively as a means of "French exploitation" of the affected African states, citing sources of dubious origin (often hoaxes) in the Hungarian press as well. The zone has undoubtedly given France great influence, but as we can see, it is a much more complex phenomenon from an economic and monetary point of view, with its positive and negative effects which largely reflect the fluctuations in the world economy.

participants closer together" with essentially the same effectiveness as the ECSC in Europe. The area of cooperation has therefore not even affected the political and economic principles of the Member States. WARDA was transformed into *Africa Rice* in 2003 and now has 28 members, covering all regions of Africa and a research centre to do agricultural research and fight against hunger. It is currently headquartered in Abidjan, Ivory Coast.[11] The Mano River Union (MRU) was established in 1973 by Liberia and Sierra Leone, followed by French-speaking Guinea in 1980, and Ivory Coast in 2008. The aim was to promote economic cooperation. The Mano River originates in the Nimba Mountains (connecting Guinea and Ivory Coast) and functions as a border river between Liberia and Sierra Leone. As the former in the region was paralyzed by long civil wars in the 1990s, the Union essentially existed at its initial state – the staff of 600 people in 1986 has been reduced to 300 in 1993 and 48 in 2000. On May 20, 2004 the presidents of Guinea (Lansana Conte), Sierra Leone (Ahmad Tejan Kabbah), and Liberia (Gyude Bryant) decided to restart the cooperation. The union is run by a secretariat in Freetown (Sierra Leone), headed by the secretary-general's regional offices in Conakry (Guinea) and Monrovia (Liberia).

The Economic Role and New Perspectives of the ECOWAS/CEDEAO

Establishment, membership, structure, and budget of the ECOWAS

As shown above, the road to the creation of the CEDEAO has been rife with various levels of integration efforts, which have been largely unsuccessful, with the exception of the WARDA, which includes France's heavily patronized WAMU and the Anglo-Saxon states and is limited to sectoral cooperation. This is mostly due to the somewhat hasty nature of the creation of the organizations (as they were created by newly independent countries with little consolidation in their statehood) and overly ambitious goals and deepened integration goals among them. Influx of world political ideologies (Marxism) formed additional disintegration fault lines. Let us see why the ECOWAS has become a permanent formation, what the mistakes it did not make are and what it did, and what the key to its success is?

In 1968, in Monrovia, the Heads of State and Government of West Africa, in the absence of four members of the Cooperation Council and Sierra Leone, decided to set up the West African Regional Group (WARG, *GRAO*), the protocol of which included an association protocol with the West African Economic Community (WAEC, *CEAO*) for 1974. The latter meant a grouping of six ("Francophone") states, historically, geographically, and connected by a common language and currency, with the participation of Ivory Coast, Upper Volta, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal. Although this initiative still failed, the goal of uniting the states of the subregion into one economic community was not given up. The WAEC was soon

[11] It was originally centered in Bouaké, Ivory Coast, but was relocated to Cotonou, Benin, for some time due to political unrest. It has regional centers in Saint-Louis (Senegal), Ibadan (Nigeria) and Dar-es-Salaam (Tanzania). Of the Maghreb area, the only member is Egypt, but all states of Western and Central Africa are members. Sudan and South Sudan are not members, but Ethiopia is bounded on the south by the Gabon-Congo-DRC-Uganda-Kenya line; Mozambique and Madagascar (*Africa Rice* 2021).

attacked by an "Anglo-Saxon" rival in the region, the Mano River Union already outlined above. The two (rival) initiatives have since led to trade problems in the West African region, and with the exception of Ivory Coast, the WAEC states belong to the Sahel, which face specific, common challenges.

The ECOWAS, which classifies the WAMU as its "ancestors", was established on 28 May 1975 in Lagos, Nigeria, with the aim of establishing the West African Economic and Monetary Union. This treaty was revised in 1993 to include peace and security. The 15 members of the ECOWAS include the countries of the three regional blocs in the West African region, most of which have been members since 1975:

- among Sahel-African countries: Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger (Mauritania is not a member – withdrew in 2000[12] – as is Chad, which is sometimes included in this group);
- the totality of the so-called countries of the Far West Africa: Cape Verde[13] (member only since 1976), Senegal, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia;
- and the totality of the Guinean Gulf countries: Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria.

In 2017, although Morocco (Feb. 24), Mauritania, and Tunisia applied for (re)accession, they were granted observer status, but by September 2021, the situation has remained still unchanged. Both Morocco and the five commissioned states of the ECOWAS, which were entrusted with accession affairs, were in favour of the "general nonchalance". Even in 2021, Tunisia was not aware of what observer membership would entitle it to (it means a simple right to attend meetings or more). Enlargement is further hampered by the political attitude of Nigeria, which has traditionally befriended Polisario, which opposes Morocco. And economically, Senegal, Ghana, and Nigeria, which account for 40% of regional trade, are seriously afraid of the strong king-supported economic competition from Morocco. Not unjustifiably so, because Morocco has become the continent's fifth strongest economy and the number one investor country in West Africa (Kozlowski 2021). For the above reasons, Nigeria did not sign the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA, *ZLEC*, see below) on March 21, 2018, but by June 2018, it had refined its economic interests and signed a $25 billion Nigeria-Morocco 5,600-km gas pipeline project with Morocco, which offers an important alternative to Morocco, which has so far been heavily dependent on Algerian gas.

[12] Despite its founding membership, in order to become a member of the Maghreb Union (AMU), it was soon stranded because of the Western Sahara dossier. Then, in August 2017 in Lomé, an association agreement was signed with the ECOWAS at the Africa-America Forum, set up under the AGOA, where the question of the reintegration into the free trade area until January 2019 arose. But in January 2020, Mauritania was still ready to join and was asked to submit a new application (Barma 2017).
[13] Interestingly, along with Algeria (AMU) and Mozambique (SADC), only these three countries in Africa are members of only one regional bloc.

After the membership problems, let's review the main institutions of the ECOWAS (Communauté 2021):

- Conference of Heads of State and Government
- Council of Ministers
- Parliament of the Community
- Economic and Social Council
- Court of Justice
- Commission (The Executive Secretariat)
- The Cooperation, Compensation and Development Fund
- ECOWAS Investment and Development Bank
- West African Health Organization
- Special Technical Committees

At the Abuja Conference on June 14, 2006, the leaders of the Member States changed the structure, replacing the Secretariat with a 9-member Committee, appointed by the Member States on a rotating basis for four years each. The first committee, with representatives from Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo, became operational in January 2007, with the Ghanaian Vice-Presidency in Burkina Faso. In addition to the above, it has eleven specialized institutions, including the West African Monetary Agency (WAMA, *AMAO*) and the Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food (RAAF, *ARAA*). The ECOWAS is chaired by members on an approximately annual rotation. Nana Akufo-Addo from Ghana has been the chairman since September 7, 2020. The ECOWAS had a budget of $265.5 million USD in 2012 (and only 207 million in 2021, an increase of 6.5% compared to 2020 due to the COVID pandemic), 80% of which consists of contributions from Member States through a Community Levy (0.5% of the import duty outside of the Community). The organization employs 600 people, one director above them. By way of comparison, the WAEMU had a budget of $318 million and a staff of 232 in 2012, while the African Union had a budget of $250 million and other major African regional integration organizations a budget of $54-84 million (Mamaty, 2012, 22).

Plans for future integration: Eco and AfCFTA (ZLEC)

The ECOWAS Vision 2020 (Community Development Program), endorsed in June 2010, identified ten strategic axes: 1) Population integration; 2) Increased cooperation between Member States; 3) Agricultural policy and Community industry; 4) Interconnection of transport infrastructure; 5) Interconnection of TIC (Information and Communication Technology); 6) Interconnection of energy and hydraulics; 7) Financial and monetary integration; 8) Human development; 9) R&D and innovation; 10) Natural and environmental resources. The ECOWAS Vision 2050, which is still being developed, sets similar goals and is in line with the African Union's *Agenda 2063* ambitions.

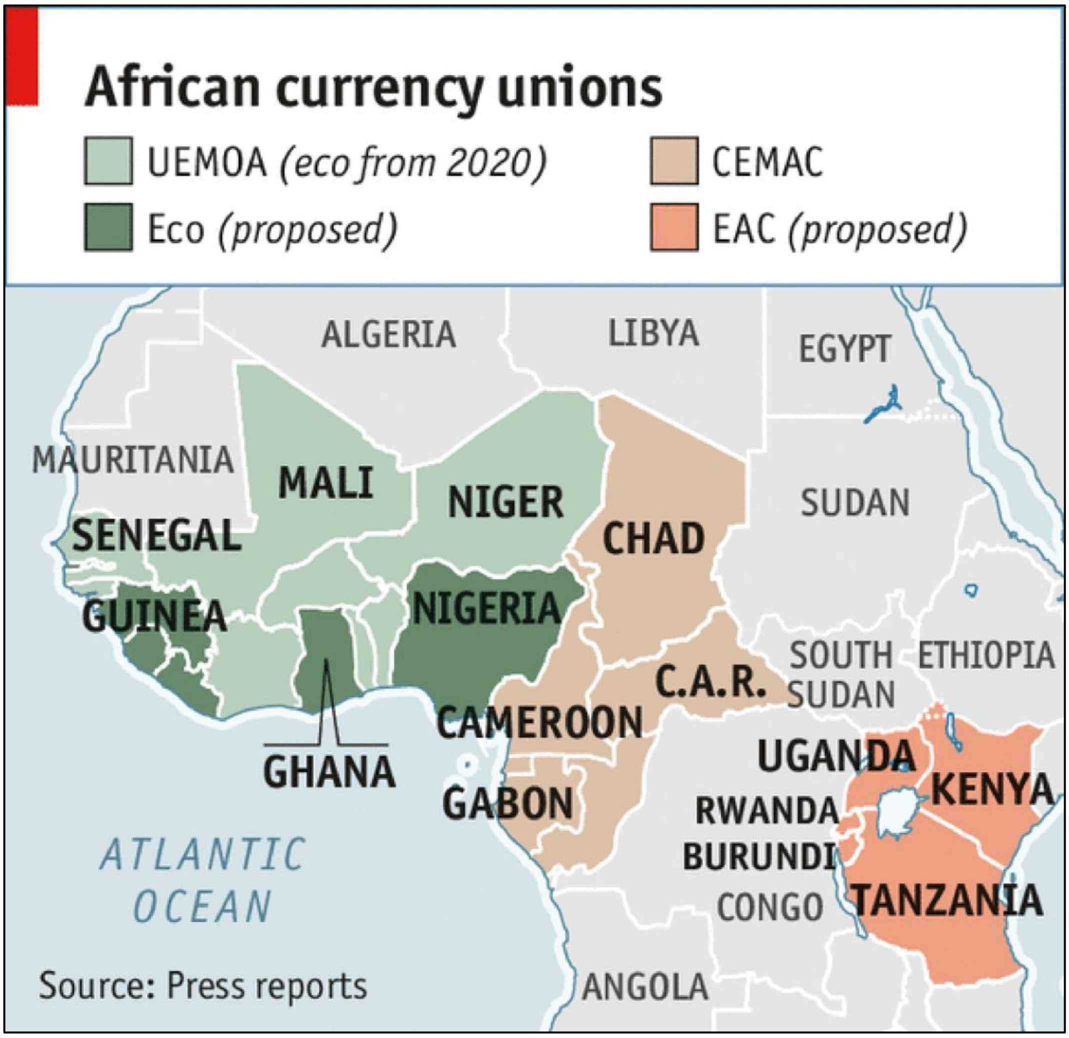

Figure 1. African currency unions. Source: Economist.com

Looking back to 1960, it was originally planned that in December 2009, the *eco*, modeled after the euro, would replace the CFA franc[14] as the future common currency of the ECOWAS member states, but the economic crisis has intervened, and the date has been first postponed to 2015. In 2018, they started designing a logo and applying for its name (the name *eco* was born in 2019). In the second half of 2020, its introduction was again postponed, now without a deadline. The area of *eco*-users is expected to merge two current monetary zones, one of which is the five members (Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria, Sierra Leone) of the West African Monetary Zone (WAMZ, *ZMOA*) – eco-project initiators currently use their own national currency and depend on the WAEMU (*UEMOA*). The other zone consists of the WAEMU member states, which are users of one or the other of the two versions of the CFA franc. These states joined the *eco* project in 2013. Within the framework of the African Union, negotiations are also under way to include additional economic zones (e.g. CAEMC, *CEMAC* – Central African Economic and Monetary Community and EAC – East African Community).

[14] The CFA franc was created on December 26, 1945 and depreciated in 1994. Note: Réunion used it until 1975 and Mayotte until 1976. 1 French franc was worth 50 CFA francs until the 1994 devaluation.

The establishing of the African Free Trade Area (AFTZ) was decided on October 22, 2008 by the SADC (Southern African Development Community), the EAC (East African Community), and the COMESA (Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa). In 2012, the idea arose to expand the zone to the ECOWAS in addition to the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS, *CEEAC*) and the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU). And then, negotiations began in 2015 to extend the free trade zone to the whole of Africa as the Continental Free Trade Zone (CFTA, *ZLEC*) until 2017. On January 1, 2015, common external tariffs entered into force within the ECOWAS (customs union), but only nine Member States were able to apply them *de facto*. These common customs tariffs are intended to replace the 2008 WAEMU tariffs. The CFTA (or AfCFTA) agreement of 21 March 2018 was eventually signed by 54 African states,[15] with the exception of Eritrea, and the agreement provided for the elimination of customs duties on 90% of Member States' products. The CFTA entered into force on 1 January 1 2021 as part of the ratification process (due to Covid-19 only).

Sequence of development and energy cooperation

In 2017, the GDP of the ECOWAS states totaled $565 million (2021: $557 million) – in 2013, this value was $674.34 billion and was accounted as the 20 largest economic powers. The organization makes a significant contribution to the development of regional infrastructure in the fields of transportation and telecommunications.

	Country	GDP 2020 (MILLION $)	GDP 2019 (MILLION $)	Growth
1	Nigeria	468 600,34	477 161,83	-2%
2	Ghana	57 430,58	57 193,54	+0,41%
3	Ivory Coast	45 226,63	44 419,77	+2%
4	Senegal	25 119,9	24 903,14	+1%
5	Burkina Faso	17 046,22	16 708,32	+2%
6	Benin	15 439,39	14 867,19	+4%
7	Mali	15 307,66	15 564,36	-2%
8	Niger	13 324,32	13 127,41	+1%
9	Guinea	12 607,20	11 783,69	+7%
10	Togo	5 733,08	5 634,32	+2%

[15] Benin, Botswana, Nigeria, Zambia, Guinea-Bissau only in 2019; the majority has ratified it already with the exception of Benin, Botswana, Cape Verde, Comoros, DRC, Eritrea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Morocco, Mozambique, Seychelles Islands, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan). Some tend to see the states' "suicide attempt" in their quest, saying the CFTA will only favor multinationalist corporations (Berthelot 2016).

11	Sierra Leone	3 737,17	3 819,77	-2%
12	Liberia	2 475,78	2 548,95	-3%
13	Gambia	1 913,89	1 913,89	-
14	Cape Verde	1 832,27	2 148,96	-15%
15	Guinea Bissao	1 161,50	1 190,06	-2%

Table 1. The biggest economies of the ECOWAS (2020) Source: Sikafinance.com

What is the ranking of forces within the ECOWAS and where in the world can its states be located? The 3 economically strongest states in the ECOWAS were Nigeria ($468,600 million USD), Ghana (57,431), and Ivory Coast (45,227), and the three weakest states were Gambia (1914), Cape Verde (1831), and Guinea-Bissau (1162). Nigeria's GDP alone is more than double the GDP of all other ECOWAS members (218,355). The organization is therefore quite "top-heavy", moreover, in the case of Nigeria, we are talking about an "Anglo-Saxon" state, while the performance of the strongest Francophone states is only sufficient for the 3rd-10th placements. The political weight of Nigeria and Ghana is also significant, Kofi Annan, for example, was a UN Secretary-General as a Ghanaian diplomat from 1997-2006. Benin produced the highest economic growth with 3.83% in 2002, the largest decline (due to the COVID-19 epidemic) was in the Cape Verde Islands (-15%), and the decline in Nigeria in 2020 was 2% (Yao, 2021).

Globally, Nigeria's GDP – as the most developed African state – is sufficient for the 27th place, while Guinea-Bissau is 192nd out of 213 in the 2021 IMF rankings. Adding to the economic gap is the demographic gap, with a population of 1.8 million in Guinea-Bissau and more than a hundred times the population at 190.8 million in Nigeria. In terms of GDP per capita, the IMF ranks Cape Verde as the lead in the region ($6,837), ranked 156th in the world, Nigeria is only the 172nd ($5,280) behind Ghana, Mauritania, and Ivory Coast, and at the end followed by Niger on the 220th place ($1,320). All this shows the huge economic disparities within the ECOWAS, which distorts integration mechanisms. The forms of internal cooperation between smaller states (such as the Mano River Union) are hardly able to be in political-economic parity with Nigeria, for example. While, according to historical examples, the requirement for successful integration lies in the cooperation of Member States with almost the same economic potential.

Together with the other 5 regional cooperation organizations, the ECOWAS is pushing for the establishment of a common energy network,[16] the local institution of which is the West African Power Tool (WAPP / EEEOA[17]), established in 1999. The West African Energy

[16] The other four regional energy agglomerations are: COMELEC (*Comité Maghrébin de l'Electricité*)> AMU; CAPP (Central African Power Pool, *PEAC*); EAPP (East African Power Pool)> COMESA; SAPP (Southern African Power Pool)> SADC

[17] It includes the following energy companies interested in energy production, transmission and distribution: NAWEC, SENELEC (Senegal) - EDSA (Sierra Leone) - LEC (Liberia) - EDM-SA, SOGEM (Mali) - CIE (Ivory Coast) - SONABEL (Burkina Faso) - VRA,

Distribution System was set up by decree A/DEC.5/12/99 in 1999, at the 22nd conference of the ECOWAS heads of state and heads of government. The Convention on the Organization and Operation of the WAPP was adopted at the 29th Conference in Niamey by decree A/DEC.18/01/06, at the same time as decree A/DEC.20/01/06, which granted it the status of a specialized institution. It therefore aims to integrate national electricity systems into a unified regional energy market, with a view to ensuring a regular and reliable supply of electricity to the population of the ECOWAS Member States at competitive prices in the medium and long term. The WAPP has been based in Cotonou (Benin) since 2006 (Türke 2018, 61-66).

The Role of the CEDEAO in the Security Architecture of the Region

The ECOMOG's controversial crisis management activities

Chapter VIII of the UN Charter refers to the role of regional organizations in maintaining peace and security. Although initially its role was purely economic, the ECOWAS was soon involved in peacekeeping issues. The problems between Member States as well as their internal problems made it clear soon that a union could hardly succeed if it ignored security policy aspects. As we have seen, the Organization of African Unity has previously virtually withdrawn itself by recognizing state sovereignty and proclaiming the principle of non-interference. As early as 1978, the ECOWAS adopted the Protocol on Non-Aggression, followed by the 1981 Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance on Defense, – signed in Freetown (Sierra Leone) – and the Declaration of Political Principles of July 1, 1991. An even more significant factor is that in 1990, the jurisdiction of the community was extended to preserve regional stability. The ECOWAS Defense Assistance Protocol on the Establishment of an Allied Armed Forces of the Community (AAFC, *FAAC*) is the first protocol signed by African states which can be used in internal conflicts.

It was then that the ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group, ECOMOG (ECOWAS 2014, Assemblée 204, 36), was set up to somehow control the first Liberian civil war (1989-1996). During the ethnic and economic conflict, Charles Taylor's guerrilla troops overthrew the regime of Samuel Doe in September 1990, who came to power with a coup d`état in 1980 as a representative of the local population (*khran* ethnic). A long struggle of six major military groups began with this, causing 150,000 deaths and the collapse of an economy based on iron ore and raw rubber. The peace plan drawn up by the ECOMOG in August 1995 was violated by the parties in 1996. A new peace plan was signed in August 1996 with the active participation of the heads of state of Nigeria and Ghana, which led to the start of the disarmament and the conversion to parties of the fighting sides in 1997 (Fage – Tordoff 2004, 472-477). During the intervention, the ECOMOG gained a very bad reputation, and it was not

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NEDCO, GTS Engineering Service, KARPOWERSHIP, ECG, GTG Energie, CENIT Energie, GRIDCO, CENPOWER, (Ghana) - CONTOURGLOBAL, CEET, CEB (Togo) - SBEE (Benin) - NIGELEC (Niger) - NBET (Nigeria) + ONE (Morocco).

without reason that the nickname ECOMOG ("Every Car or Movable Object Gone") got attached to it. Its troops were poorly prepared and equipped, unpaid, and completely demoralized, and also suffered significant losses (Faria 2004, 13, 18-20). In addition, there was a lack of political will to sustain the ECOMOG in the longer term. In September 1998, another coup attempt was made in Liberia, where President Taylor suspected Guinea and Sierra Leone in the background, and since troops from both countries had participated in the ECOMOG, the latter was accused of interfering in Liberian internal affairs. Meanwhile, the diamond issue has escalated. Taylor was interested in doing business with the Sierra Leone insurgents (Revolutionary United Front) to receive some of the profit from the Sierra Leone diamond fields occupied by the RUF in exchange for arms shipments. The peacekeeping attempt of the ECOWAS has thus been discredited by the intervention of the militants of non-neutral neighboring states and the common political settlement in the Community has been overridden by mediation through bilateral channels, which seems to be truly (more) neutral.

The ECOMOG came into being as formation with weak authority, similarly to Article VI of the UN Charter, but as a result of the events, it quickly transformed into being similar to Article VII of the UN Charter, an up to 20,000-strong peacekeeping force, deployed in Sierra Leone (1997) and Guinea-Bissau (1999) in addition to Liberia. In Sierra Leone, President Joseph S. Momoh introduced political reforms in October 1991, allowed the multi-party system, but was removed by Valentine Strasser 6 months later. The struggle between the RUF and government troops led to a humanitarian disaster. Strasser eventually saw the calling of the ECOMOG as a solution to the problem, but he was also overthrown by a coup d`état before the 1996 presidential election. Thanks to the mediation of Ivory Coast, in November 1996, the RUF and the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), led by Tejan Kabba, who returned to power at the elections, signed a peace agreement. In 1997, the army carried out another coup, and Colonel Johnny Koroma entered an alliance with the RUF. The ECOMOG troops, mandated by the UN Security Council on October 8, 1997 to impose an oil and arms embargo, stood in vain this time with a vast majority of neutral (and distant) Nigerian troops (while to a lesser extent still made up of neighboring Guinean troops). The ECOWAS peacekeepers, allied with the popular militias behind Kabba, have been essentially active in intervening with one of the warring parties, violating the requirement of neutrality for peacekeeping. But at least this time the performance was crowned with success, Koroma forces (AFCR) were expelled from and around Freetown, and Kabba was allowed to return by March 1998. However, the civil war continued – mainly over the possession of diamond fields –, and the conflict was eventually resolved by 2002, not by the ECOMOG, but by the 6,000-strong, although initially struggling UN mission (UNAMSIL).

A civil war[18] broke out in Bissau-Guinea on June 7, 1998 between forces loyal to President Nino Vieira and the insurgents led by Ansumane Mané, and lasted until May 7, 1999. In order to deal with the growing tension, on December 26, 1998, at the request of the President, the ECOWAS headed the ECOMOG to Guinea-Bissau to monitor compliance with the ceasefire

[18] For Guinea-Bissau's modern history and the detailed presentation of the conflict see (Türke 2009)

agreement. Once again, the "peacekeeping" battalion was not neutral: neighboring Senegalese and Guinean troops provided support to forces loyal to the president, as most of the armed forces lined up alongside General Mané (ECOMOG 2014). Vieira called on Senegal and Guinea-Conakry to intervene militarily in support of him, in accordance with the reciprocal defense agreements signed by the three countries, but those agreements would have provided military assistance only in the event of external aggression, which was not the present case. The conflict in Guinea-Bissau and its outcome were extremely important for Senegal,[19] anticipating the victory of the military dictatorship, it took part with greater enthusiasm in the fight against the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC), being that a secessionist movement in the area wanted to join the related Guinea-Bissau, detached from Senegal since the war that started in 1982. After the news of the summoning of foreign troops, the support of the rebels gradually increased. In 1999, France organized a Senegalese-French operation involving the secret commando of the warship TCD Foudre, with the aim of Senegal occupying a neighboring country. Paris has officially denied its involvement as well as the real purpose of the action, which is to overthrow its "new ally" (Verschave, 2000, 76), Vieira, and to inaugurate General Mané. Paris only officially acknowledged that during the military operations in the Gulf of Guinea (*Corymbe, Recamp Bissau, Aramis*) between January and March 1999, TCD[20] Siroco (and Foudre) warships transported the ECOMOG troops to Guinea-Bissau and evacuated residents. After a short period of defeat by the rebel forces during the fighting, a peace agreement was reached under the auspices of the Francophone Member States of the ECOWAS, which was signed on November 1, 1998 in Abuja (Nigeria). The peace treaty provided for a ceasefire, the withdrawal of foreign troops, and the deployment of the CEDEAO peacekeeping troops on the Senegalese border (which took place on March 17, 1999). The 600-strong peacekeeping force was tasked with monitoring the withdrawal of Guinean and Senegalese troops and overseeing the election. However, opposing the Abuja peace treaties, Vieira's presidential guard (a new "army" of 600 militiamen, *Aguendas*) was trained by French officers, and Paris and Dakar continued to maintain a base on the island of Bubaque.

In 1999, as a result of the various civil wars, the ECOWAS Member States decided to set up a stand-by force, retaining the ECOMOG name, whose main tasks included monitoring and reviewing ceasefire agreements, peacekeeping, humanitarian intervention, preventive presence, peace building, disarmament and demilitarization. On October 1, 2003, under pressure from the United States, the ECOWAS launched a similar mission called ECOMIL (ECOWAS Mission in Liberia) to reclaim Monrovia from rebel forces and then work for peace in the Second Liberian Civil War (1999-2003). The problem was that while CEDEAO deployed "principally neutral" contingents of a total of 3,563 from Nigeria, Mali, and Senegal on an "integrated level" (initially acting as a UN blue helmet), other members did not remain neutral

[19] The intervention of Senegal bore the name "Gabu operation", the contingent was led by Colonel Abdoulaye Fall. In the case of Guinea-Conakry, the intervention was mainly due to the good relationship between Vieira, President Lansana Conté and Force Commander Samy Tamba. Samy Tamba lost his life during the fights.

[20] Special military cargo ships, predecessors of BPCs.

in the conflict at all. As President Charles Taylor's sovereignty shrunk to one-third of its country, Ghana (and to a lesser extent Sierra Leone) actively supported the insurgent organization MODEL. The UN mission, the UNMIL, also had the task of settling between the warring parties and quickly reached its goal (Türke, 2016, 160).

The ECOMOG's activities during the civil wars in Liberia (1990-97, 1999-2003), Sierra Leone (1997-2000), Guinea-Bissau (1998-99), and Ivory Coast (2002) were therefore of limited success. Nigeria's political and military weight has heightened fears and rivalries between English and French-speaking countries, and the deployment of the ECOMOG has proven rather slow. The Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces was unable to fully control the various national contingents and only Nigeria had naval and air military transport capacity. Another problem was the language differences, as well as the lack of air defense missiles, logistical support, financial resources and, in some cases, internal consensus (Faria 2004, 18-20). In 2000, a Security and Defense Policy Committee was established in Monrovia to set up a "Community of West African States Expeditionary Corps" (Sourd, 2005, 13). On June 18, the ECOWAS decided in Abuja, Nigeria, to set up a 6,500-strong force to be deployed in crisis situations. This force also included a rapid reaction force of 1,500 (Türke, 2016, 43). On December 14, 2009, the ECOWAS offered the CNDD junta, which took power in Guinea after the death of Lansana Conté in December 2008, to send an intervention force here as well, but it rejected the offer.

On December 7, 2010, Laurent Gbagbo, the former President, considered the winner by the Constitutional Council of Ivory Coast, did not want to hand over power after the presidential election to Alassane Ouattara, who was recognized by the Independent Electoral Commission, the majority of states, the UN, and the AU as the winner after the 2010 presidential election. The ECOWAS then suspended Ivory Coast's membership and all work in progress with it, and the country was only reclaimed with Ouattara's April 2011 victory. On October 12, 2012, the UN Security Council mandated ECOWAS countries to jointly develop a plan for the military recapture of northern Mali (Besenyő, 2013), occupied by the Tuareg and the extremist Islamist armed groups AQMI, MUJAO, and Ansar Dine (between 2012-2013 Azawad, an internationally unrecognized state). The ECOWAS mission was planned for 3,000 people with the participation of Senegal, Nigeria, Niger, Burkina Faso, Togo, and Benin, and at first France seemed to be confident that this force would be able to recapture Azawad and keep peace there, albeit with French logistical support. On January 11, 2013, however, Ansar Dine (AQMI, MUJAO), with its all-terrain-mounted machine guns and small heavy artillery, reached the border between Azawad and "Remnant Mali", and even occupied Konna, a strategically important point in defending the capital, Bamako. It then became clear to France that it was no longer possible to delay and wait for the ECOWAS to resolve the problem, so they took over with *Operation Serval*. In addition, at the urging of President Ouattara, the ECOWAS set up its own 6,000-strong international mission, MISMA, on January 16, 2013, in which all countries of the community (except Gambia and Ivory Coast) were joined by Chad, Kenya, and Burundi, but it then molded into the MINUSMA UN mission in July 2013. The community did not have a scenario to deal with the crisis in Mali, they did not know how to act (Türke, 2021, I. 357).

In January 2017, the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF, *FAC*, changed from ECOMOG) of 5 national contingents was deployed in the Gambia as part of the ECOMOG mission. Its task was to restore democracy with an UNSC and ECOWAS mandate, after President Yahya Jammeh, who lost the December 2016 presidential election, refused to hand over the power. The ESF of 7,000 people was assembled from Nigerian, Senegalese, Ghanaian, Togolese, and Malian contingents, sown under Senegalese command.[21] It was launched in a surprisingly short time, under strong political pressure from Senegal, according to a previously developed scenario, not using the traditional (slow) offering capability generation system: According to the current scheme, each Member State is required to maintain a 500-strong, in 30 days deployable contingent for ESF – organized since 2004 –, trained for peacekeeping, made up of military, police, and civilian personnel. Nigeria remains the main contributor and the mechanism continues to be hampered by chronic money shortages. The mandate of ECOMOG has been extended until the end of December 2021, despite protests from half of the Gambian population (Carlier 2017).

Cooperation between the ECOWAS and the European Union

On the African stage, the European Union is the initiator of regionalism in West Africa and its main sub-regional partner in the region is the ECOWAS. Cooperation in the military field was launched in the framework of the 1997 RECAMP (Strengthening African Peacekeeping Skills) program initiated by France. In doing so, France handed/is handing over to its African partners the skills needed for peacekeeping. Above all, the program involves the training of military observers and the training of battalions and brigades. Several multinational exercises (RECAMP I-V) were carried out (Faria 2004, 22-23) as part of the multi-ethnic training with regional objectives, for which France provided the teams and equipment, as well as financial support and logistics.[22] Following the closure of some of the French military bases in Africa, the bases in Senegal, Gabon and Djibouti may continue to operate (Besenyő - Hetényi 2011). French military schools operate either in the capitals or in a peacekeeping school relocated from Zambakro (Ivory Coast) to Koulikoum (Mali). France was less and less capable of funding this program on its own, so it needed the support of other donor countries (Assemblée 2004, 22-23). Of the five cycles of the RECAMP program, the preparation of the ECOWAS was concerned with:

- 1996-1998: Guidimakha exercise in Senegal, mainly with the participation of the ECOWAS, in the framework of RECAMP I in February-March 1998, organized by

[21] Senegal had previous experience of intervention in Gambia after intervening in 1981 to defend President Dawda Jawara to prevent a coup d`état.
[22] In terms of asset disposal, France had three warehouses in Africa in 2002: one in Dakar, one in Libreville and one in Djibouti. These warehouses containing French-made weapons were used to equip and supply a 600-strong infantry battalion. Assault rifles, light machine guns, vehicles, and other equipment were stored in the warehouses.

France, Senegal, Mali, and Mauritania, the 2,600-strong international force was contributed to by Cape Verde, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Ghana.
- 2004-2005: Military exercise in Benin with the participation of the ECOWAS in the RECAMP IV framework.

The RECAMP program was raised to the EU level in the framework of the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership at the 2007 Lisbon Conference under the name EURORECAMP, with the aim of enabling African (sub)regional communities[23] to set up their own potential peacekeeping forces within the foreseeable future. Complicating matters is the fact that there are several African countries that are members of two regional economic communities at the same time. The partners for each workshop/brigade team (SBRIGs) are as follows: In all cases, with the exception of the ECOWAS and the SADC, a decision by the African Union authorizes their deployment. The ECOWAS Brigade was initially called WASBRIG and was renamed ECOBRIG (West African Brigade; *FAAO*) or more commonly used as ESF (Standby Force). This force has been in the planning stage for a long time and the European Union is supporting its existence; without this financial source, it would still be inoperable today. The goal was to set up an action group of 1,500 soldiers ready to be deployed in 30 days and a brigade of 5,000 soldiers ready to be deployed in 90 days. Together with the four brigades of the other four African (sub)regional organizations, they could be deployed in the following six scenarios:

Scenario 1 – political mission (example: Ivory Coast) – within 30 days;
Scenario 2 – joint AU/regional cooperation and UN monitoring mission (e.g. UNMEE,[24] African Union Liaison Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea; Sudan) – within 30 days;
Scenario 3 – independent AU/regional cooperation monitoring mission (e.g. Burundi / AMIB, Comoros / AMIC) – within 30 days;
Scenario 4 – AU/regional co-operation regional peacekeeping force under Chapter VI of the UN Charter (for example: Burundi / AMIB) – within 30 days;
Scenario 5 – AU peacekeeping force for multidimensional complex peacekeeping missions – within 90 days (within 30 days for military components);
Scenario 6 – African Union intervention, for example in the event of genocide, if the international community fails to respond appropriately – within 14 days.

The implementation of the first three scenarios requires minimal management skills and few financial resources, and the implementation of the first four scenarios can be carried out by a single regional brigade (Laborderie, 2008). In contrast, Scenarios 5 and 6 require a higher level of management capacity as well as continental participation. These missions can only be carried out in the second phase.

[23] In addition to CEDEAO, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CAEMAC), established in 1994 and operating since 1999, and the Economic and Social Committee of West Africa Monetary Union (WAMU, 1962)
[24] African Union Liaison Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE)

Conclusion

The relative success of the ECOWAS is due to the fact that it was created at a later, more mature stage in the African integration process, following the (relative) consolidation of new state entities that have not existed in this form previously, with more moderate, achievable goals and within a looser cooperation. As a result, despite huge demographic, economic (etc.) differences between members and the Francophone-Anglo-Saxon fault line, a relatively effective form of cooperation has been established. ECOWAS member states have been able to act as engines of pan-African integration efforts, remaining open to in-depth cooperation with integration bodies in other regions, such as the introduction of the *eco*. Steps towards security in the region are also significant, but they are still almost 100% dependent on external funding and, in the event of a major crisis, need the help of the UN, the EU, or even a former colonizing state of the region. Contrary to the peacekeeping principles of the 2000 Brahimi Report, states providing ECOMOG/ESF contingents are involved in a significant number of cases as neighbors and as parties with a strong interest in the conflict or on their own side, in violation of the principle of neutrality. In fact, they often intervene alongside their political allies completely arbitrarily in the domestic political struggles of one state or another, in several cases in a kind of gendarmerie role.

Conflict of Interest

The author hereby declares that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

Notes on Contributor

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