

# The Role of ECOWAS in the West African Integration Process and the Case of Mali

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## The Role of ECOWAS in the West African Integration Process

Historically, it is important to emphasize that regional integration in West Africa dates back to the 8<sup>th</sup> century. We can distinguish four main stages which mark this process:

1. from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the great Empires of Ghana, Mali, and Songhaï ensure the complementarity of ecological zones within the framework of trans-Saharan trade;
2. from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Slave Trade generated the fragmentation of West Africa now turned on its Atlantic coast;
3. from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the colonial conquest ensured the partition of Africa into zones of English, French and Portuguese influence to meet the needs of the economy of trade;
4. at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the challenges of regional integration in West Africa are closely related to this recent colonial history which has shaped the physiognomy of the fifteen current West African States.

The creation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)<sup>1</sup> through the Lagos Treaty of 28<sup>th</sup> May 1975 aimed at reaching the objectives of economic prosperity and social well-being for the people of the sub region in promoting economic integration, cooperation and development in all areas of the economic activity. ECOWAS encompasses today 15 Member States: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

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<sup>1</sup> ECOWAS: <https://www.ecowas.int>

The 1993 Revised Treaty<sup>2</sup> requires the Community's programmes to foster cooperation and integration towards the creation of an economic union in West Africa in order to raise the living standards of the peoples of West Africa and to contribute to the progress and development of the African Continent.

ECOWAS underlines the importance of creating a borderless, prosperous, peaceful and cohesive region and thus undertook to take relevant actions in order to achieve the goals of a sustainable regional integration, for instance: harmonize regional and sectoral policies, develop regional infrastructures, abolish trade restrictions and remove obstacles to free movement of persons, goods and services. It must be noticed that beside issues related to peace and security, the establishment of a common market and the creation of a monetary union, characterized by a single currency and a common central bank remain the major challenges for the sub-regional organization.

The priority given to peace and security issues in the region is due to the emergence of several conflicts within the ECOWAS space. The creation in 1990 of the Economic Community of West African Monitoring Group (ECOMOG)<sup>3</sup> aimed at fostering regional efforts particularly related to the promotion of good governance and justice, and the improvement of the mechanism for conflict prevention, management and resolution.

The adoption by the Heads of States and Government of ECOWAS Vision 2020, seeking «to create a borderless, peaceful, prosperous and cohesive region, built on good governance, and where people have the capacity to access and harness its enormous resources through the creation of opportunities for sustainable development and environmental preservation», was followed by the 2011-2015 Regional Strategic Plan (RSP) encompassing a mid-term roadmap.

The RSP 2011-2015 that was implemented by ECOWAS whole Institutions and Specialised Agencies, has guided ECOWAS operations for the period 2011 to 2015. It was sustained by other documents especially the Regional Medium-Term Action Areas, 2011-2015 (RMTAA). The RMTAA defined the various actions and actors responsible for the implementation of the goals and objectives of ECOWAS. A Directorate of Strategic Plan (DSP) and a Monitoring and Evaluation Unit (M&E) under the responsibility of the Vice President of the ECOWAS Commission were created to support the RMTAA.

The six priority goals of the RSP 2011-2015 to be achieved under the RSP were like follows:

- Free movement of goods and persons.

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<sup>2</sup> ECOWAS Revised Treaty. Retrieved from <https://www.ecowas.int/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Revised-treaty.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> ECOMOG: Klaas van Walraven (1999), Containing Conflict in the Economic Community of West African States: Lessons from the Intervention in Liberia, 1990-1997, Project Conflict Prevention in West Africa (CPWA)  
[https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/19990100\\_cru\\_paper\\_walraven.pdf](https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/19990100_cru_paper_walraven.pdf)

- Trade liberalization and the establishment of a custom union (ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS)) and Common External Tariff (CET)).
- ECOWAS Monetary Co-operation Programme (EMCP).
- Development of infrastructure.
- Implementation of common policies in agriculture, environment, management of water resources.
- Consolidation of peace, democracy and the promotion of good governance.

To achieve the objectives of a successful regional integration process in West Africa, ECOWAS has set up key Institutions and Specialized Agencies located in the different Member States. Because of the relevance of its tasks, ECOWAS will be compelled to play a more and more increasing role in the West African region.

ECOWAS Primary Institutions are like follows:

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Location</b>
A	ECOWAS Commission	EC	Abuja, Nigeria
B	ECOWAS Parliament	EP	Abuja, Nigeria
C	ECOWAS Court of Justice	ECJ	Abuja, Nigeria

ECOWAS Specialized Agencies include:

S/N	<b>Name</b>	<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Location</b>
1	West Africa Health Organisation	WAHO	BoboDioulasso, Burkina Faso
2	West African Monetary Authority	WAMA	Freetown, Sierra Leone
3	ECOWAS Youth and Sports Development Centre	EYSDC	Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso
4	ECOWAS Gender Development Centre	EGDC	Dakar, Senegal
5	Water Resources Coordination Centre	WRCC	Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso
6	West African Power Pool	WAPP	Cotonou, Benin
7	Inter-governmental Action Group Against Money Laundering in West Africa	GIABA	Dakar, Senegal
8	ECOWAS Regional Centre for Renewable Energies and Energy Efficiency	ECREEE	Praia, Cabo Verde
9	ECOWAS Regional Electricity Regulatory Authority	ERERA	Accra, Ghana
10	West African Gas Pipeline Authority	WAGPA	Abuja, Nigeria
11	ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development	EBID	Lome, Togo
12	West African Gas Pipeline Company	WAPCo	Accra, Ghana
13	West African Monetary Institute	WAMI	Accra, Ghana

ECOWAS is also one of the five funding members and promoters of the West Africa Institute (WAI)<sup>4</sup>, based in Praia, Cabo Verde.

ECOWAS CSF 2016-2020 pursues the achievement of a borderless region governed on principles of democracy and the rule of law and calls for the creation of a «conducive regional environment in which West African citizens can move freely to conduct legitimate business.» Furthermore, the CSF «prioritizes the need for policies to provide ample opportunities for West Africans to engage in productive social, political and economic activities through the sustainable use of the region’s abundant natural and human resources.»<sup>5</sup> The main values of the Vision 2020 are:

1. Preservation and enhancement of efficiency for global best practice in economic and monetary integration.
2. Acknowledgement of, and respect for, ethnic and cultural diversity.
3. Utilization of community-based participatory approaches for policy development and decision making at all levels; and ensuring transparent mechanisms for the delivery of Community and national programmes and projects.
4. Providing appropriate responses to certain key development challenges facing the ECOWAS region, particularly violent extremism, illegal immigration, poverty and high illiteracy -rate.

Since 2018, ECOWAS has started reflecting on its Post 2020 Vision. Three proposals have been formulated:

<b>Proposal 1</b>	<b>Proposal 2</b>	<b>Proposal 3</b>
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<sup>4</sup> The West Africa Institute (WAI) is the first research institute of its kind in West Africa offering academic analysis of processes and institutions, concrete policy advice as well as a capacity development and the dissemination of knowledge and information about regional integration and social transformation in West Africa. Based in Praia, Cabo Verde, the institute was founded with the significant encouragement of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Government of Cabo Verde, the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU/UEMOA), UNESCO and ECOBANK. WAI Website: <https://wai-iao.ecowas.int/index.php/en/>

<p><b><u>Vision 2050</u></b> By 2050, ECOWAS shall be a borderless, peaceful, secured and cohesive region that is politically stable with an enabling environment for sustainable development driven by its own people</p>	<p><b><u>Vision 2040</u></b> A prosperous, peaceful region with highly integrated and inclusive economy driven by its people and incorporating wealth creation and sustainable development by 2040</p>	<p><b><u>Vision 2040</u></b> Positioning ECOWAS towards the creation of an economic union through fostering peace, regional cooperation to improve the living standards of its people</p>
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An assessment of the CSF 2016-2020 will be carried out to identify the challenges -associated with the full -achievement of the vision -before starting - the -design of the Post 2020 ECOWAS Vision document. The process will be participatory and all relevant internal and external stakeholders will be consulted through effective, efficient and innovative mechanisms and platforms. Eventually, the Post 2020 Vision will be aligned with the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063<sup>6</sup>, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the National Development Plans of Member States.

## **2. ECOWAS Facilitation in Mali: Towards an Intensification of Regional Integration?**

The second part of this paper addresses the case of Mali, more specifically the political situation currently prevailing in the country further to the popular uprisings from June to August 2020 requiring the resigning of the President of the Republic, Ibrahim Boubacar Kéita (IBK) and the military coup of August 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020 achieving the process.

The recent social and political crisis in Mali, which peaked from June 5, 2020, involved an important actor already known for its decisive intervention in the crisis of March 2012, but who until then had remained quite withdrawn from the issues of governance and security that have been troubling the country for several months now: the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

In fact, it is the legislative elections of March 2020 rigged by the Constitutional Court that will be the trigger of riots in several regions of Mali and give birth to the M5-RFP (Mouvement du 5 Juin - Rassemblement des Forces Patriotiques (June 5<sup>th</sup> Movement - Rally of Patriotic Forces)), an entity bringing together several organizations, in particular: 1) the Coordination of Movements, Associations and Sympathizers (Coordination des Mouvements, Associations et Sympathisants (CMAS)) of Imam Mahmoud Dicko, moral authority, true figurehead of the popular uprising and ally of the equally influential Sharif from the locality of Nioro, Bouyé Haidara, 2) the EMK (Ensemble pour le Mali Koura (Together for the New Mali)) of Cheick Oumar Sissoko, 3) around

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<sup>6</sup> African Union Agenda 2063. Retrieved from <https://au.int/en/agenda2063/overview>

ten political parties issued from the democratic movement of March 26, 1991, 4) a large number of actors of the Civil Society and 5) Malians from abroad.

The unique slogan of the protesters was the immediate resignation of President IBK and his regime, on account of "catastrophic" governance, high treason, corruption, nepotism and - the growing countrywide insecurity, 2/3 of which are currently occupied by jihadists and rebels from the CMA (Coordination des Mouvements de l'Azawad (comprising -the MNLA (Mouvement National de Libération de l'Azawad (National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad), the HCUA (High Council for Unity of Azawad , and the MAA (Arab Movement of Azawad) thus prohibiting the return of the national army and public administration in the northern and central regions of Mali.

Praised during the second round of the 2013 presidential election and re-elected much less triumphantly in 2018, IBK began to be publicly disowned in 2017 when he wanted to change the 1992 Constitution in order to facilitate the application of the Peace and Reconciliation Agreement in Mali, resulting from the Algiers process, better known as the "Algiers Agreement". Concluded in 2015 between the Malian state and rebel groups, the agreement had been established in order to put an end to the 2012 armed rebellion.

However, several clauses of the document are rejected by a part of civil society who considers that it consecrates the split of Mali, grants enormous advantages to the region as well as to the rebel groups of Kidal and eludes the question of a fair justice for crimes committed over the past three decades. In addition, the modification of the Constitution gives rise to suspicion of a 3rd mandate, an option more and more opposed by the people.

From 2019, Imam Dicko, who unconditionally supported IBK during the 2013 presidential campaign, begins to destabilize the regime, which was severely weakened by several corruption cases, including the controversial purchase of a presidential plane in 2014, the handover over-the-counter market in the amount of CFA francs 80 billion<sup>7</sup> for the purchase of military material and equipment intended for the Malian armed forces (FAMA), the illicit sale of the State's real estate assets and - lastly, nepotism for the benefit of the family of President IBK whose main offender was his son Karim Kéïta, pompously elected president of the Defense Commission of the Malian National Assembly at an extremely critical time for security in the Sahel, while he neither holds theoretical qualification, nor practical knowledge of the field to deal with the situation. The consequence is that from June 2020, IBK and his son Karim crystallized all the resentments of the Malian people and be the subject of all criticism for their disastrous management of power.

On August 18, 2020, a group of senior officers led by Colonel Asimi Goïta, takes the power under the name of National Committee for the Salvation of the People (Comité National de Salut du Peuple (CNSP)) by obtaining the written resignation of President IBK as well as the dissolution of the Constitutional Court, of the Government and of the National Assembly without bloodshed. National consultations have been launched, a Transition Charter is born by Decree No.2020-0072/PT-RM of October 1, 2020, retired Colonel Major Bah N'Daw is appointed President of the Republic, Colonel Assimi Goïta, Vice President and Moctar Ouane, Prime Minister. A transitional

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<sup>7</sup> Approximatively 143 million US dollars

government of 25 members including four women was formed on October 6, 2020 for a period of eighteen (18) months. Article 2 of the Charter sets out the missions of the Transition in these terms:

- restoration and strengthening of security throughout the national territory;
- recovery of the state and the creation of the basic conditions for its refoundation;
- promotion of good governance;
- reform of the education system;
- adoption of a social stability pact;
- launch of political, institutional, electoral and administrative reforms;
- organization of general elections;
- implementation of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, resulting from the Algiers process.

In the aftermath of the M5-RFP rallies on June 5, 2020, ECOWAS Heads of State appointed their representative, former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan, at the head of a good offices mission responsible for initiating the talks with the M5-RFP strategic committee with a view to reaching a consensus on the maintenance of IBK at the head of the Malian state. Following the military coup of August 18, after the resignation of IBK and its categorical refusal to return to power, ECOWAS will impose a partial embargo on Mali, a landlocked country whose population is facing economic hardships and the effects of the covid-19 pandemic<sup>8</sup>, and demand the formation of a civilian government and the dissolution of the CNSP.

ECOWAS Heads of State and Government, convened in Accra, Ghana, by the new President in office Nana Akufo-Addo on September 28, 2020, in a mini-Summit on the political crisis in Mali, clearly stated through the voice of Nigeria President Muhammadu Buhari that the embargo could be tightened, if the post of Vice-President of the Transition was still held by a serving soldier, who is in addition one of the leaders of the coup and if the upcoming Prime Minister was not a civilian.

The fact that the CNSP members immediately after the coup, and the President and the Prime Minister of the Transition during the inauguration have all made the commitment under the watchful eye of ECOWAS and the Union Africa, to continue collaboration with the International Community, the MINUSMA (United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali), the Barkhane Operation in the Sahel and the G5-Sahel constitutes a significant guarantee for Mali's international partners who feared to witness the breach of commitments made in the fight against terrorism and the restoration of peace and security in the region.

The case of Mali is a first that should push ECOWAS to change its modus operandi in terms of sanctions relating to the seizure of power due to bad governance and high treason at the highest level of the state. Indeed, its Protocol of Good Governance<sup>9</sup> protects a Head of State guilty of abuse

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<sup>8</sup> USAID Awards \$4 Million to WFP for COVID-19 in Mali. Retrieved from <https://ml.usembassy.gov/usaaid-awards-4-million-to-wfp-for-covid-19-in-mali/>

<sup>9</sup> Protocol A/SP1/12/01 on Democracy and Good Governance Supplementary to the Protocol relating to the Mechanism For Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security. Retrieved from

of power and does not recognize the legitimacy of the people to defend the Homeland in danger and to take legal actions to put an end to a corrupt regime.

To this end, and in the face of attempts to violate the Constitution by those who are its guarantors, the 1993 ECOWAS Revised Treaty must be updated and take into account the right of peoples to sanction the non-respect for democratic principles and the rule of law by the top representatives of the executive, legislative and judiciary power, if the Organization is willing to implement its Vision 2020 centered on the motto "Move from an ECOWAS of States to an ECOWAS of Peoples"<sup>10</sup>.

The Malian people, in particular, young people and women are now determined to make their voices heard to demand that their specific needs be taken into account, especially a virtuous governance, the respect for democratic principles, social justice, gender equality, fair sharing of the country's resources, a "win-win" partnership with its international partners and the withdraw of the French colonial tax<sup>11</sup>.

ECOWAS is completely fulfilling its role when it condemns military coups. However, the Organization should also be prepared to consider the fundamental requirements of the West African population. In doing so, it will have the support of the Malian people and by extension of all the peoples of the Member States who will support it in the successful completion of the integration process.

On October 6, 2020, further to the formation of a Transition government and the updating of the Transition Charter<sup>12</sup> regarding the restrictions of the role of the servant military Vice President (not allowed to replace the President in case of power vacancy), the formal announcement of the end of the embargo on Mali decreed by ECOWAS is an encouraging path for taking into account the will of the Malian people to decide their own destiny.

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[http://www.internationaldemocracywatch.org/attachments/350\\_ECOWAS%20Protocol%20on%20Democracy%20and%20Good%20Governance.pdf](http://www.internationaldemocracywatch.org/attachments/350_ECOWAS%20Protocol%20on%20Democracy%20and%20Good%20Governance.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> ECOWAS Vision 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.ecowas.int/about-ecowas/vision-2020/>

<sup>11</sup> KOUTONIN Mawuna (2014). 14 African Countries Forced By France To Pay Colonial Tax For The Benefits Of Slavery And Colonization. Retrieved from <https://siliconafrika.com/france-colonial-tax/>

<sup>12</sup> Mali: Adoption of Transition Charter. Retrieved from <https://africadiplomatic.com/2020/09/13/mali-adoption-of-transition-charter/>

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