

From the ECOWAS of the Heads of State to the ECOWAS of the peoples: what lesson can we draw from it?

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Abstract: *The resonance of the need to move from the ECOWAS of Heads of State to the ECOWAS of peoples in West Africa has its origins in the permanence of conflicts and the multiplication of sources of tension. Combined with constitutional putsches and military coups in West Africa, the permanence of conflicts and the multiplication of sources of tension are causing the dysfunction of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) as a result, the latter's loss of influence in its own area of jurisdiction. In the context of this situation of progressive loss of confidence of the peoples, ECOWAS is suffering the brunt of humiliation and disrespect in the exercise of its sovereign mission which consists in implementing the policy of the African Union (AU) in terms of integration at the level of the sub-region: "from the community of Heads of State to the community of peoples". To overcome these problems of disapproval of the supranational institutional order, a structural and institutional reform that endorses the promotion of good governance seems to be the best solution. Indeed, the challenges in terms of peace and security in West Africa mainly reflect problems of governance, such as the management of elections. This is why the problems related to terrorism, the management of diversity and development relates to governance. The inadequacy of public policies for the socio-professional integration of young people, which leads to rampant unemployment among the young, raises the question of the rural exodus which, without any real political will for the employability of young people (girls and boys), in turn poses the stinging problem of irregular and clandestine migration in the sub-region (Znaniecki , 1998). This article, thinking about the Pan-African dimension, exposes in depth, the real reasons for the disapproval of ECOWAS by the West African peoples and proposes ways out of this crisis, both structural and institutional.*

Keywords: ECOWAS, Heads of State, Community, geopolitics, geostrategic, regional integration.

Résumé

La résonance du besoin de passer de la CEDEAO des Chefs-d'Etat à la CEDEAO des peuples en Afrique de l'Ouest trouve son origine dans la permanence des conflits et la multiplication des foyers de tensions. Conjugées aux putschs constitutionnels et aux coups-d'Etat militaires en Afrique de l'Ouest, la permanence des conflits et la multiplication des foyers de tensions provoquent le dysfonctionnement de la Communauté Economique des Etats de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (CEDEAO) à la clé, la perte d'influence de celle-ci dans sa propre zone de juridiction. Dans le contexte de cette situation de perte progressive de la confiance des peuples, la CEDEAO subit de plein fouet, l'humiliation et l'irrespect dans l'exercice de sa mission régaliennne qui consiste à mettre en œuvre la politique de l'Union Africaine (UA) en matière de l'intégration au niveau de la sous-région : « partir de la communauté des Chefs-d'Etat à la communauté des peuples¹ ». Pour pallier à ces problèmes de désapprobation de l'ordre institutionnel supranational, une réforme structurelle et institutionnelle qui fait sienne la promotion de la bonne gouvernance semble être la piste de solution la mieux indiquée. En effet, les défis en matière de paix et de sécurité en Afrique de l'Ouest traduisent surtout des problèmes de gouvernance, tels que la gestion des élections². C'est pourquoi, les problèmes liés au terrorisme, à la gestion de la diversité et au développement ont trait à la gouvernance³. L'insuffisance des politiques publiques d'insertion socio-professionnelle de la jeunesse qui débouche sur le chômage galopant de la couche juvénile⁴ pose la question de l'exode rural qui, sans réelle volonté politique de l'employabilité des jeunes (filles et garçons), pose à son tour la cuisante problématique de la migration irrégulière et clandestine⁵ dans la sous-région (Znaniecki, 1998). Cet article pensé à la dimension panafricaine, expose de fond en large, les motifs réels de la désapprobation de la CEDEAO par les peuples ouest-africains et propose des pistes de sortie de cette crise à la fois structurelle et institutionnelle.

¹ Tel est le slogan des peuples ouest-africains vis-à-vis de la CEDEAO.

² *Charte Africaine de la Démocratie, des Elections*, et de la Gouvernance, 30 janvier 2007, Conférence des Chefs-d'Etat et de gouvernement de l'Union Africaine, Addis-Abeba en Ethiopie.

³ De l'anglais, gouvernance, le terme « gouvernance » désigne un ensemble de décisions, de règles et de pratiques visant à assurer le fonctionnement optimal d'une organisation, ainsi que les organes structurels chargés de formuler ces décisions, règles et pratiques, de les mettre en œuvre et d'en assurer le contrôle.

⁴ *Charte Africaine de la Jeunesse*, 8 août 2009, Banjul en Gambie.

⁵ Mancur Olson, *Le passager clandestin*, 1965, Harvard Economics Studies.

Mots clés

CEDEAO, Chefs-d'Etat, Communauté, géopolitique, géostratégique, intégration régionale.

Introduction

From 1960, many African countries gained their independence but remained largely fragile politically, economically and militarily. The West African States which are generally part of this dynamic will quickly perceive the strategic need to regroup within a sub-regional organization. It is therefore with this in mind that the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) will be created on May 28, 1975 in Lagos, Nigeria. The organization thus created takes on the attributes of the body for the implementation of the sub-regional integration policy and with the primary objective of promoting cooperation and integration in the economic, social and cultural fields. The main mission enshrined in the vision of this sub-regional organization is to achieve an economic and monetary union through the total integration of the national economies of its Member States. Having for ancestor the Customs Union of West Africa (UDOA) created in 1959 by Dahomey (now Benin), Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso), Côte d'Ivoire and Niger, ECOWAS which today has the 15 West African States, is a Regional Economic Community responsible for implementing the policy of the African Union (AU) in the area of regional integration in Africa. However, the inside and outside dynamics⁶ of this integration have been influenced by foreign powers since time immemorial (Kaba, 2023). Indeed, combined with the lack of political will of the leaders, the political instability⁷ (Konaté, 2023), the bad faith of the political actors of the presidential movement and the opposition⁸, the instrumentalization of uncivilized civil society organizations and the lack of political maturity of the lower peoples, the interference of foreign powers influences the decisions of social, economic, cultural, military, scientific, technical, technological, geopolitical and geostrategic policies of West African States. Which, moreover, weakens the position of West Africa in the concert of nations. Thus, unable to respond effectively to the deep aspirations of the people, ECOWAS, subject to the dictates of its donors, seems to be in conflict with its own people. This is why the West African people are constantly asking to move from the ECOWAS of Heads of State to the ECOWAS of peoples, all adhering to military coups. In other words, starting "from the community of Heads of State to the community of peoples" (Cedeao, 2023). This article proposes to evaluate in a sociological approach, ECOWAS through the stages of regional integration, to grasp the necessity or the uselessness of starting from this transition so much desired by the people.

Study context

Regional integration in West Africa is a political, economic, social, cultural, military, scientific, technical, technological, geopolitical and geostrategic process aimed at bringing together the States and communities that make up the West African geographical space. Sixteen in number, these states agree to unite in a community of destiny controlled and regulated by supra-state and supranational institutions (executive, legislative and judicial), with the exception of Mauritania, which has slammed its door in⁹ year 2000 to join the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) of North Africa. West Africa is one of the five (5) geographical regions of the African continent. Made up of 16 countries, 15 of which are grouped together in a regional economic community (REC), which is none other than the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), this region has the largest number of country within it. These include: Guinea, Mali, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Gambia, Cape Verde, Niger, Sierra Leone, Mauritania, Guinea-Bissau and Liberia.

Thus, the integration regional integration in West Africa, like regional integration in general, is a process that is both methodical and technical, calling on a high level of proven expertise in various fields concerning an integrated geographical space and whose communities are linked by relationships of dependence and interdependence. It is more technical than political in the sense that it calls for more technicality and expertise. However, as the regulatory body of the¹⁰ (Friedberg, 1977) integration system in West Africa (responsible for the implementation at the sub-regional level of the AU's political strategy for African integration), ECOWAS seems to be in disharmony with his own people. This therefore raises the question of the relationship between the interference of foreign powers and West African regional integration. In this context, social distrust accelerates as it accumulates. When institutions fail, citizens judge them with increasing severity. When leaders act unethically, citizens become suspicious of

⁶Mohamed Lamine KABA, "Main-bass on the inside and outside dynamics of African regional integration", *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research (IJFMR)*, 08 June 2023.

⁷Souleymane Souza KONATE, *Multifaceted crises and challenges: the inertia of ECOWAS in the face of authoritarian excesses that threaten security and democracy in the sub-region*, *Laguinée.info*, June 04, 2023.

⁸Groubera Tapé, *These African enemies of Africans*, MeduNeter, 2022.

⁹In the year 2000, Mauritania left ECOWAS for socio-cultural, geopolitical and geostrategic reasons to join the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU)

¹⁰CROZIER M. & FRIEDBERG E., 1977, *The actor and the system*, Editions du Seuil, Paris.

future leaders, even when they try to do the right thing. When disinformation proliferates, citizens view all information with skepticism. When citizens isolate themselves from others who do not look like them, their caution increases over time. This cascading social mistrust has consequences. Research in political sociology shows that in this context, governance becomes more difficult, markets become less efficient and prosperity is weaker and less inclusive ¹¹.

This approach justifies the current trend of regional integration in West Africa. Which integration has been confronted for decades with executive, legislative and judicial challenges. What lesson can we learn from the transition from ECOWAS of Heads of State to ECOWAS of peoples whose reverberation continues to disturb the sleep of more than one on the whole line of dirigisme?

The object of the study

In view of all the above, our study focuses on the transition from ECOWAS of Heads of State to ECOWAS of peoples. That is to say, the assent and the desolation expressed by the West African peoples vis-à-vis the governance of ECOWAS.

Goal of the study

We are pursuing a dual objective in this research. That is, one general objective (1) and three specific objectives (2).

Main objective

Overall, our study seeks to understand and appreciate the relevance or uselessness of the transition from the ECOWAS of Heads of State to the ECOWAS of peoples whose resonance is becoming increasingly strong.

Specific objective

Specifically, our study aims to assess the efforts of ECOWAS in terms of the integration of the West African sub-region. It's about :

Specific objectives 1

To assess the strengths and limitations of ECOWAS in terms of the integration of the sub-region, despite the key stages of regional integration.

Specific objective 2

To assess the implications and benefits of cooperation between ECOWAS and foreign powers.

Specific objective 3

Identify the real reasons why the West African peoples disapprove of the decisions of ECOWAS and are in line with the spirit of the transition from the community of Heads of State to the community of peoples.

Definitions of concepts

ECOWAS

Regulating body of the regional integration system in West Africa, ECOWAS is one of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) recognized by the African Union and responsible for the implementation at the sub-regional level of the policy of the latter in terms of the integration of the African continent. Its objective is to promote economic and political cooperation between the States of the sub-region. It has notable characteristics in terms of strengths and weaknesses. Indeed, despite the efforts made by ECOWAS within the framework of integration at the level of the West African sub-region, there are still wounds to heal to fully achieve the integration objectives set out in Agenda 2063 ¹²of African Union, including the influence of foreign powers on executive, legislative and judicial decisions. To do this, ECOWAS ¹³and the 15 states that make it up must free themselves from the diktat of so-called foreign powers. Because, it is practically impossible to use the West as an expert consultant in the development of our development projects, policies and programs and to compare ourselves to this West in terms of development. I think the logic is there.

¹¹Mohamed Lamine KABA, dissertation project (academic year 2022-2023); Institute of Governance, Human and Social Sciences of the Pan-African University located in Yaoundé II-SOA, Cameroon.

¹²African Union Agenda 2063, final edition, April 2015, African Union Commission: strategic action plan for an emerging and integrated Africa.

¹³ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States was created on May 28, 1975 in Lagos, Nigeria.

Heads of State

A Head of State is a person who embodies the continuity and legitimacy of the State. Various functions are traditionally attached to it: external representation, promulgation of laws, appointment to high public office. Depending on the country, he may be the most prominent holder of effective executive power, or on the contrary personify the supreme power exercised in his name by other political personalities. The expression comes from the Latin *caput regni*, the head of state, stemming from the Old Regime, and therefore referring to a concentration of power (Bordeaux), 2023).

We can deduce that the Head of State is a political personality who bears the attributes of the first magistracy of a State, a country or a territory geographically delimited by air, land and sea borders in the life of the communities forming a nation.

People

The word people is a polysemous notion whose meaning varies according to the context. Three main meanings emerge: "group of individuals constituting a nation, living on the same territory and subject to the same laws, the same institutions policies". Here, the people are determined by the nation they constitute, the territory they occupy and submission to the same rules of law (Rousseau, 2001). It is the most restricted vision of the people ¹⁴(1); "all humans living in society on a given territory and who, sometimes having a community of origin, present a relative homogeneity of civilization and are linked by a certain number of common customs and institutions" (Montesquieu, 1748). Here, the people are determined by their own territory and culture, but not by submission to the laws ¹⁵(2); "group of people who, not living in the same territory but having the same ethnic origin or the same religion, have the feeling of belonging to the same community" (Barrera, 2009). Here, the people are only defined by a culture, or even a common tradition. This is the broadest vision of the notion of people ¹⁶(3). For **Cicero**, "By people is meant, not a whole assemblage of men grouped in a herd in any way, but a numerous group of men associated with each other by their adhesion to the same law and by a certain community of interest (Cicéron, 1989).

Delimitation of the study

Spatial delimitation

As indicated by the research theme, the spatial framework of our study is mainly the West African geographical space falling within the remit of ECOWAS and, to a certain extent, the foreign powers that influence its decisions in terms of development. sub-regional integration. Since it is generally accepted that the games and challenges of West African integration are played out here ¹⁷(1) and there ¹⁸(2).

Temporary delimitation

Our study will start from the years 1975 (creation of ECOWAS) to the present day in the sense that this date constitutes the first half of the second decade of the landmark of the independence of African countries, even if in reality, no African country does not fully enjoy its independence from foreign powers. There is still a long way to go since gradually, new emerging countries tend to put African states under their boots. West African states are no exception.

Literature review

Research on the issue of regional integration in the ECOWAS region has always been carried out both by Africans themselves and by persons (natural and legal) foreign to Africa. The existing documentation on the problem is as vast as Egyptology and whose exploration has enabled us to detect the different orientations of scientific researchers. If for some, the stakes of regional integration in the ECOWAS area are played out exclusively within the borders of the States (1), others on the other hand think that they are played out outside the borders of the States (2).

¹⁴The nation, the territory and the rules of law as determinants of the people.

¹⁵Territory, culture and laws as determinants of the people.

¹⁶Culture and common tradition as a determinant of the people.

¹⁷The institutional dynamic of regional integration in the ECOWAS space is played out from within. That is to say, within the borders of the Member States.

¹⁸The institutional dynamic of regional integration in the ECOWAS space is also played out from the outside. That is to say, outside the borders of the Member States.

As far as we are concerned, it would be appropriate to appreciate the dynamics of the inside and the outside ¹⁹of West African regional integration, in order to situate the roles and responsibilities of the internal and external actors of this integration, in order precisely to grasp the need or the uselessness of the transitology of the "community of Heads of State to the community of peoples" whose resonance cuts the sleep of political leaders. The interest of this study consists in better identifying the gray areas of ECOWAS governance in order to define new perspectives oriented on new bases of cooperation between it and the rest of the world so that integration is effective. West African. Clearly, it will shed light on the scientific community (1) and will also guide the decision-making of political actors, civil society organizations involved in the control of public action by the citizen, bi-national partners and multilateral organizations, the private sector, international development aid organizations and technical and financial partners (2).

Problem

Considering the transition from the ECOWAS of the Heads of State to the ECOWAS of the peoples as a research theme amounts to placing at the heart of the reflections the achievements and shortcomings in the great project of West African integration. Being a matter for all concerned Africans, the issue of regional integration in West Africa is a problem with a sub-regional dimension which needs a well-coordinated sub-regional response. Being sociologically inherent in the nature of Africans, de jure integration ²⁰must be accompanied by de facto integration ²¹. Indeed, the central issue of West African integration lies at the level of the bilateral and multilateral relations that West African States weave with the outside world, in particular the former colonial powers. The influence of these powers is going crescendo under the effect of the complicity of certain Heads of State of the sub-region acquired for the cause thereof. Whereas for a long time supranational institutions have been created at the sub-regional level in order to ensure West African integration. How is it that we hear today in the cries of the heart of the West African peoples, the wish to leave the "community of Heads of State to the community of peoples" when it comes to ECOWAS.

Research question

What lesson can we learn from the transition from the ECOWAS of Heads of State to the ECOWAS of peoples?

Research hypothesis

Main hypothesis

ECOWAS would be at the service of Heads of State and would seem to be at odds with the people.

Specific hypothesis 1

West African peoples no longer trust ECOWAS.

Specific hypothesis 2

ECOWAS seems to have lost control of its area of jurisdiction.

Specific hypothesis 3

ECOWAS decisions would be influenced by foreign powers.

Methodology

Theoretical frame

To study the transitology of ECOWAS from Heads of State to ECOWAS of peoples in the context of regional integration in West Africa, our theoretical framework will be based essentially on three sociological approaches which constitute for us analytical grids which are :

¹⁹Mohamed Lamine KABA, " African Regional Integration in the Era of Russian Federation Special Military Operations in Ukraine ", *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research (IJFMR)*, in publication.

²⁰De jure integration: refers to integration from below. That is to say, peoples and communities.

²¹De facto integration: political process of integration or integration from above.

The sociology of the revenge of African societies by Jean François Bayart

It is an approach to the analysis of African societies through an ideal type constituted by “politics from below in black Africa” (Bayart, 1992).

The sociology of state penetration in the bush by Jean-Marc Ela

This sociological analysis approach allows us to understand the internal and external dynamics of States in terms of the implementation of development projects, programs and policies (Ela, 1990). It also allows us to grasp the reasons for peasant responses to the crisis that affect de facto integration policy (Ela J.-M. , 1994).

The sociology of the “no” renewal of elites in sub-Saharan Africa by Jean-Pascal Daloz

This third sociological approach speaks to us of lifelong powers and the dictatorship that allows lifelong regimes to persist (Daloz, 1998). To stay in Africa, political regimes submit to the diktat of foreign powers which guarantee their survival at the peril of protesting citizens.

Workplan

To better address this research theme, we will first try to make a detailed presentation of the architecture of the actors of the governance of regional integration in the West African space (A) and, secondly, we will discuss the strengths and limitations of ECOWAS in terms of West African integration (B) and finally, in a third step we will talk about the need for structural and institutional reform of ECOWAS (C).

A. Presentation of the architecture of the organs and actors of the governance of the regional integration of the West African space

This first part of the article presents the state of the architecture of the organs and actors of the governance of the regional integration of the West African space. To do this, it would be appropriate to take an interest in ECOWAS by talking about its main institutions (1), its secondary institutions (2) and its specialized agencies (3).

1. The main institutions of ECOWAS

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is made up of three major bodies ²²: the Executive, the Legislative and the Judiciary. Indeed, let us recall at first glance that the Executive (a) of the Community is headed by the President of the ECOWAS Commission (Dr. Omar Alieu TOURAY) who is appointed by the Conference for a non-renewable period of four years. He is assisted by a Vice-President and 13 Commissioners. The legislative body (b) of the Community is the Parliament, which is headed by a President. President Umaro Sissoco Embaló is the current president of ECOWAS. The judicial organ (c) of the Community is the Court of Justice, which is also headed by a President. Judges are seconded from the national Supreme Courts to occupy the positions reserved for the countries.

a) The executive organ of ECOWAS

The executive comprises the following main institutions:

(1) The Conference of Heads of State and Government.

It is the supreme decision-making body of ECOWAS which gives the general guidelines for the smooth running of the organization ²³. The President of the Conference is the current President appointed by the other Heads of State and Government to manage the affairs of the organization for a period of one year. The current President of the Conference is HE Mr. Umaro Sissoco Embaló (President of Guinea-Bissau).

(2) The Council of Ministers

It makes recommendations on the conduct of the Conference of Heads of State and Government ²⁴. The minister in charge of ECOWAS affairs in the country of the President of the Conference automatically becomes the President of the Council of Ministers. And this country chairs all the other statutory meetings (ministerial, experts, such as technical committees) of ECOWAS during the current year.

²²Article 6, Revised ECOWAS Treaty, Abuja, February 16, 2010, pp.7-8.

²³Article 7, *ibid* , p. 8-9.

²⁴Article 10, *ibid* , pp.10-11.

(3) The ECOWAS Commission

She takes care of the day-to-day administration of the organization. Its president is appointed by the Conference for a non-renewable period of four years. He is assisted by a Vice-President and 13 Commissioners. The current President of the Commission is Dr. Omar Alieu TOURAY .

b) The Legislative Body of ECOWAS

Parliament is the legislative body of ECOWAS which is headed by a President .²⁵Pending elections by direct universal suffrage, parliamentarians are seconded from national parliaments to the Community Parliament for a period of four years. It is empowered to examine, among other things, questions relating to the human rights and fundamental freedoms of citizens.

c) The judicial organ of ECOWAS

The judicial organ of ECOWAS is the Court of Justice²⁶which is also headed by a President. Judges are seconded from the national Supreme Courts to occupy the positions reserved for the countries. The Court sees to the interpretation and application of Community laws, protocols and conventions.

2. Secondary institutions of ECOWAS

a) The Economic and Social Council

It has an advisory role and is made up of representatives of the different categories of socio-professional activities of the Member States²⁷.

b) The ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID)

The purpose of EBID is, among other things, to grant loans and guarantees for the financing of investment projects and programs in the Member States, to mobilize resources inside and outside the Community intended for the financing of its projects and programs of investment, to manage all the special funds of the Community relating to its object²⁸. Its headquarters are in Lomé, Togo.

c) The West African Health Organization (WAHO)

Its objective is to offer the highest level of health care delivery to the populations of the sub-region on the basis of the harmonization of the policies of the Member States, the pooling of resources and the cooperation between Member States and third countries, with a view to collectively and strategically finding solutions to the health problems of the sub-region²⁹. The head office is in Bobodioulasso (Burkina-Faso).

d) The Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing in West Africa (GIABA)

Among other missions, it is responsible for protecting the national economies and the financial and banking systems of the signatory States against the proceeds of crime / combating the laundering of the proceeds of crime and the financing of terrorism. Its headquarters are in Dakar, Senegal.

3. ECOWAS Specialized Agencies

The specialized agencies of ECOWAS are:

- ✚ West African Monetary Agency (WAMA): headquarters are in Freetown, Sierra Leone;
- ✚ West African Monetary Institution (WAMI). Headquarters are in Accra, Ghana;
- ✚ Water Resources Coordination Unit (UCRE). The head office is in Ouagadougou in Burkina-Faso;
- ✚ Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food (ARAA). The headquarters are in Lomé, Togo;
- ✚ ECOWAS Regional Electricity Regulatory Authority (ERETA). Headquarters are in Accra, Ghana;
- ✚ ECOWAS Center for Renewable Energies and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE). The headquarters are in Praia, Cape Verde;

²⁵Article 13, Ibid , p-11.

²⁶Article 15, Ibid , pp.11-12.

²⁷Article 14, Ibid , p-11.

²⁸Sub-regional financial institution for financing community projects and infrastructures.

²⁹Sub-regional instrument to respond to health and pandemic emergencies.

- ✚ West African Power Pool (WAPP). The headquarters are in Cotonou, Benin;
- ✚ ECOWAS Brown Card. The headquarters are in Lomé, Togo;
- ✚ ECOWAS Center for Gender Development (CCDG). The headquarters are in Dakar, Senegal;
- ✚ ECOWAS Youth and Sports Development Center (CDJSC). The head office is in Ouagadougou in Burkina-Faso;
- ✚ The ECOWAS Infrastructure Projects Preparation and Development Unit (UPDPD). The headquarters are in Lomé, Togo.

B. The strengths and limitations of ECOWAS in terms of West African integration

This second part of the study proposes to approach without risk of falling into the reductionist trap and that of generalization, the strengths (1) and the limits (2) of ECOWAS in terms of the regional integration of area under its jurisdiction.

1. The strengths of ECOWAS in terms of regional integration in its area of predilection and jurisdiction

Integration into this space has many advantages ³⁰: The expansion of sub-regional markets gives sub-regional producers and consumers more opportunities, well beyond the sometimes restricted markets of their own countries (CEA, 2019). The strengths so far agreed are among others:

- ✚ The possibility of traveling without a visa in ECOWAS has been acquired since 1986 for nationals of the community and the right of residence is now practiced in several countries;
- ✚ Quite productive mediations by ECOWAS in the resolution of several conflicts in the sub-region;
- ✚ Unanimous condemnation and suspension by ECOWAS of unconstitutional regimes, thereby restoring political stability and constitutional order;
- ✚ ECOWAS military intervention for the stabilization of countries at war or in socio-political crisis;
- ✚ Positive results were recorded in the field of electrical and road interconnections;
- ✚ Customs barriers are gradually being lifted on certain products to facilitate intra-community trade;
- ✚ Application of the Common External Tariff (TEC) which harmonizes customs policies in the area;
- ✚ The creation of an ECOWAS traveler's check in July 1999 to facilitate trade and payment operations in space.

Note that regional integration expands markets and trade, improves cooperation, mitigates risks and promotes socio-cultural cooperation and sub-regional stability. Financial integration in this area can be defined as a process of strengthening interactions between national financial systems (banks and/or financial markets), operating at both sub-regional and national levels (UA, 2019). We can also address the forces of integration of this region of Africa at the institutional, political and economic level. However, compared to the key stages ³¹of regional integration, we would say that the above-mentioned efforts of ECOWAS are less than commendable even if at the continental level, it presents the best prospects. It should be remembered that regional integration in West Africa promotes the strengthening of commercial ties between member countries and would make them better able to participate in world trade. It also promotes the harmonization of national policies and creates larger markets. However, the lack of financial means means that the organizations rarely achieve their objectives. The absence of a common currency hinders economic integration. Difficulties in the movement of people and goods (closing of borders). The fragility of economies that depend on aid from rich countries. To overcome these problems, good governance is the solution for the sub-region. The challenges in terms of peace and security are mainly reflected in governance problems, such as the management of elections. Even issues related to terrorism, diversity management and development relate to governance ³².

2. The limits of ECOWAS in terms of regional integration of its area of predilection and jurisdiction

Despite the strengths of ECOWAS in terms of regional integration in its area of jurisdiction, it also records a low level of intra-community trade. Socio-political unrest linked to coups, elections and anti-democratic constitutional changes weaken ECOWAS integration efforts ³³. Inter-state tensions disrupt regional integration programs (VEDIE, 2021). By way of illustration, the weaknesses of integration in West Africa are, among others:

- ✚ The regional integration process is limited by the nationalism of member states;
- ✚ The financial resources available to ECOWAS are very insufficient because several States are in arrears with their contributions;
- ✚ The diversity of currencies hinders not only intra-community trade, but also the process of sub-regional integration;
- ✚ Communication and telecommunication infrastructure in the sub-region is insufficient, dilapidated and unsuitable;
- ✚ Low level of intra-community trade;

³⁰AUC, ECA and AfDB, *Africa Regional Integration Index* , 2019 Technical Report.

³¹The key stages of regional integration are: the constitution of a free trade area (first level of economic integration (ZLE)), the customs union, the common market, the economic union, the economic union and monetary-UEMOA and political union.

³²Africa Regional Integration Index, 2019 Report.

³³Henri-Louis VEDIE, *Strengths and weaknesses of ECOWAS in 2021*.

- ✚ Socio-political unrest linked to coups, elections and anti-democratic constitutional changes weaken ECOWAS integration efforts;
- ✚ Interstate tensions disrupt regional integration programs;
- ✚ The rise of terrorist movements (Boko Haram-Aqmi) and cross-border crime undermine the political and economic integration efforts of ECOWAS.

THE nationalism/sovereignty sentiment of Member States is detrimental to the normal functioning of the institutions listed above. Thus, the dysfunction of the institutions (regulators of the system) is an obstacle to regional integration in the ECOWAS space. Despite the efforts made by the States of West Africa within the framework of integration at the level of the sub-region, there are still flaws to be resolved in order to fully achieve the integration objectives. The inability of the supporters of ECOWAS to take into account the deep aspirations of the communities which are expressed in these terms: "From the community of Heads of State to the community of peoples" "Together, let us ³⁴build the Community of peoples" . This denotes the harmful and significant consequences of vertical integration on the process of regional integration in West Africa. This is an integration that is more political than technical. Reflection on the problems and prospects for the development of aquaculture (a growth sector par excellence) in West Africa has highlighted two major difficulties ³⁵: (1) the contradiction between the objectives and the evaluation of the programmes; and (2) the lack of competent personnel to take charge of the production programs (Ronnås, 2005). Indeed, the major drawback at the scale of a country remains the abandonment of some of its economic policy instruments. For example the exchange rate in the context of monetary integration, budgetary constraints or the management of migratory flows in the context of integration economic.

West Africa has impressive natural and human potential. To accelerate its integration process, it is necessary to put in place mechanisms intended to promote the virtues of regional integration and to encourage governments to harmonize their national development policies with the objectives clearly assigned to ECOWAS ³⁶.

C. The need for structural and institutional reform of ECOWAS

Adequate response to the political instability of the sub-region , structural (1) and institutional (2) reform at all levels of ECOWAS decision-making will certainly improve the political climate and the atmosphere socioeconomics of member countries.

1. The structural reform of ECOWAS

When the unanimous condemnation and suspension ³⁷by ECOWAS of unconstitutional regimes collides with the massive support of the peoples for the coups d'etat that took place in Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso, the supranational institutions are on the way to being bloated in West Africa. We mean by structural reform in the context of ECOWAS, a reform that could be undertaken by the Member States and the public administrations of the community in order to modify the modes and processes of functioning of the said ECOWAS or of the economic system at the level of its structures. . This could lead the West African peoples who love freedom and progress, to trust ECOWAS to lead the destiny of the sub-region.

2. The institutional reform of ECOWAS

The current institutional dynamics of ECOWAS seem to be at odds with the deep aspirations of the peoples. We note a sort of institutional gesticulation (1) or an ambiguous adventure of ³⁸ECOWAS's ³⁹penetration into the bush (ELA, 1990)(2). It is therefore crucial that ECOWAS rehabilitate its institutions, organs, specialized agencies and financial instruments in the context of good governance while advocating political liberalization within its member states. Appointment to ECOWAS functions must be based on the principle of meritocracy and the promotion of youth ⁴⁰(men and women). The mode of selection of conflict mediators also deserves to be changed while opening the field of mediation and negotiation to all the necessary skills in the sub-region.

³⁴ECOWAS Club, 2022 report.

³⁵Per Ronnås , *Limits and Challenges of Integration regional in West Africa* , 2005

³⁶ *Africa Regional Integration Index* , 2016 report.

³⁷ The condemnation and suspension of unconstitutional regimes allows a rapid return to constitutional order and political stability.

³⁸ *Institutional gesticulation* is for Claude ABE, "the fact of pretending to move forward being on the spot".

³⁹Jean-Marc ELA in ' *When the State enters the bush* ' addresses the failure of public policies and initiatives that take development aspirations into account.

⁴⁰According to statistics from the African Union, Africa has the youngest population in the world with over 400 million young people between the ages of 15 and 35.

Conclusion

In West Africa, coups d'etat tend to become more and more a quasi-ordinary mode of access to power. These acts of force obtain in most cases the massive adhesion of the populations because the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), body in charge of the implementation of the policy of the Union (AU) in terms of integration at the West African level, seems to be in conflict with the communities. Considered by some as a community of Heads of State instead of deserving to be a community of peoples, ECOWAS is increasingly losing its influence in its own area of jurisdiction. This is explained by the fact that it reserves different treatment when it comes to the coup d'etat of Mr. X and that of Mr. Y, whereas in law, a coup d'etat is never different from a coup. But it is not too strange for those who know how to read the political history of Africa, to see ECOWAS behave in this way, since the African Union itself does not take the same view of the blows -of State in Chad, Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso. While military coups often result from a constitutional coup⁴¹, ECOWAS, like the AU, seems to have always tolerated constitutional coups. The third mandate of **Alpha Condé** in Guinea, of **Alassane Ouattara** in Côte d'Ivoire, of **Macky Sall** projected in Senegal and many more are illustrative examples of ECOWAS Heads of State.

Perspectives for future research

The management of disaster risks and environmental emergencies in the ECOWAS space seems to be a privileged area for future research in the sense that climate distress is becoming more and more acute there.

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⁴¹Electoral hold-up and coercion.