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ZEI Zentrum für Europäische Integrationsforschung
Center for European Integration Studies

Regional Integration Observer

Vol. 5 No. 2 August 2011

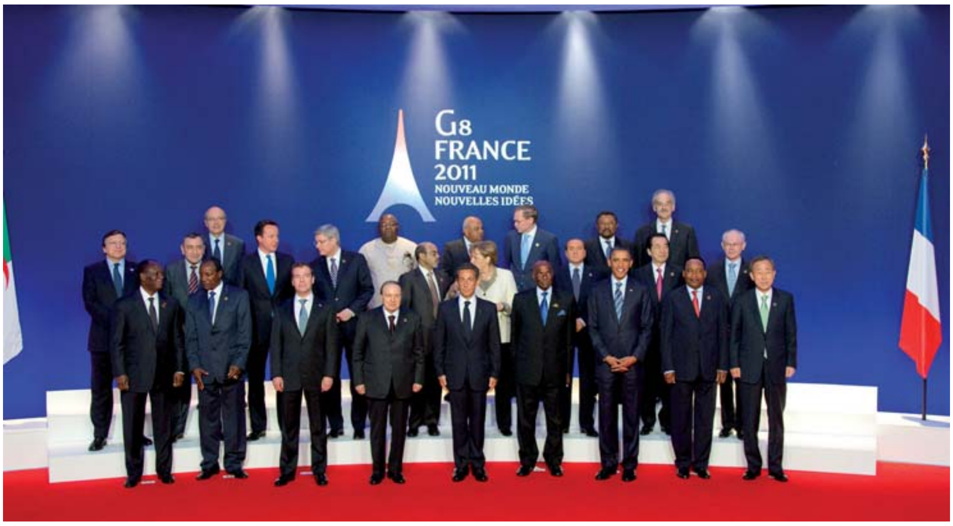
Editorial

As regional integration in Europe seems at the moment to be stumbling from one crisis to the next, a closer look reveals that it is not really a crisis of European integration but a crisis in some of the EU Member States. This crisis is portrayed in some media as a European crisis also because leaders of the stronger Member States do not act decisively enough or in true European spirit. This behavior reflects existing fear on the side of the Member States to give up even more of their sovereignty in areas like financial and economic policy in favor of the Commission or other supranational bodies. In this context, it is often overseen that the current crisis also harbors opportunities for a more efficient and more legitimate European policy.

In other regions like West Africa, the situation is in a way similiar. On the one hand, crises and resistance on the side of the nation-states to allow more integration and on the other hand also some positive developments. The current edition of the Regional Integration Observer (RIO) deals with the situation in West Africa. ZEI Junior Fellow Matthias Vogl discusses the conflict in Cote d´Ivoire and ECOWAS` inability to solve it and draws some general conclusions on the role of ECOWAS as a security actor. The other articles deal with the relationship between ECOWAS and AU in the framework of the so-called building-block concept, with the role of West Africa in the negotiations for Economic Partnership-Agreements and with ECOWAS` internal efforts for stronger economic integration. Moreover the concept of an "ECOWAS of the people" is explained in more detail. The last page of the RIO finally gives an overview over the advancement of the cooperation between the Center for European Integration Studies (ZEI) and the West Africa Institute (WAI) in Praia, Cape Verde, a new emerging research institute on regional integration in West Africa, with which ZEI is closely related.

Ludger Kühnhardt

Prof. Ludger Kühnhardt, Director at ZEI



Alasanne Ouattara (front row on the left) respresenting Cote d´Ivoire at the G8 Summit in Deauville, France, in June 2011. © European Commission

Challenges of an ECOWAS regional security policy for West Africa

** Matthias Vogl*

When in April 2011, the former president of Cote d´Ivoire, Laurent Gbagbo was captured by troops of his counterpart Alassane Ouattara, the media did not talk anymore of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) as a decisive actor in the solution of this conflict. It was rather the French military that had finally facilitated the turnover in the West African country by helping Ouattara´s supporters to gain ground within the city of Abidjan. The French acted on behalf of the United Nations (UN). Around Christmas 2010, after the denial of Gbagbo to resign from office following a controversial election process, the picture had been quite different. ECOWAS presented a self-image of resolve and of the will to even intervene militarily in Cote d´Ivoire if this should become necessary. However, the development that followed reflected a continuous drift away from this position.

In the context of the Cote d´Ivoire crisis, two fundamental questions with regard to the role of ECOWAS as a regional security actor in West Africa have come to the fore again:
1. How to formulate strategic objectives that correspond to existing problems but also to one´s own capabilities?
2. How to implement those strategies successfully on a regional level?

Following the end of the Cold War, ECOWAS had been one of the first regional organizations to be actively engaged in regional peace enforcement. In 1991, the ECOWAS Monitoring and Ceasefire Group (ECOMOG) was founded to intervene in the armed conflicts in Liberia and later in Sierra Leone. In fact, these efforts changed the whole rationale of ECOWAS, which had been formed with a clear economic focus. Against this background, it is reasonable to claim that ECOWAS was one of the frontrunners in regional security policy.

Nevertheless, the first operations were executed only by the Anglophone countries of ECOWAS together with Guinea and pushed mainly by a special, also economically motivated, interest of Nigeria that provided 70% of the troops. Furthermore, the Liberia mission was ad-hoc and did not have a clear political and legal mandate. It was composed of forces that had almost no experience in executing such kind of operations together.

Given these difficult circumstances, the engagement of ECOMOG facilitated ambiguous outcomes. In spite of several intensive peace negotiations, the goal to end the fighting could not really be achieved, neither in Liberia nor in Sierra Leone.

The two conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone were examples for what in academia has been called “new wars”. This includes the development of a war economy based on the struggle for raw materials and including actor constellations characterized by asymmetry and privatization. Therefore, finally, it was only with the support of stronger external actors like the UN and Great Britain, that some kind of stability could be restored and the disputes could be settled after more than one decade. The lack of an effective capability of action and the need for external help was again revealed by the failure of the ECOWAS mission in Guinea-Bissau in 1998 that occurred due to the fact that there was neither enough support by Nigeria nor by external actors. The acknowledgement of this mission was that Francophone states also now chose ECOWAS as a channel for conflict resolution.

Although the performance of ECOWAS in the 90´s can be criticized, the momentum for further conceptual development was maintained. Against the background of ECOMOG, ECOWAS agreed on a “Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-Keeping and Security” in 1999. With this instrument, a system of collective security was established that went even further than the UN-System. It theoretically allowed the intervention into the internal affairs of a country by a two-thirds majority vote.

This not only meant a break with the traditional emphasis on national sovereignty advocated by the Organization of African Unity (OAU), but also was reflected in the conflict resolution mechanism of the African Union (AU), which was founded three years later in 2002. The mechanism was, among others, a reaction to the fact that conflicts in Africa had primarily become internal conflicts and to the unresolved problem of ECOWAS mission mandates. As part of the mechanism, ECOWAS also established a special set of bodies including a Mediation and Security Council (MSC), an Early Warning System, a Panel of the Wise and a Military Committee. ECOMOG remained as the executing branch. The installation of this mechanism was an innovative step that helped to raise the legitimacy of ECOWAS as a security actor.

In the years following this process of norm-building in the security sector continued within ECOWAS with the “Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance“ in 2001 (that renewed the right for intervention in its article 75), with the “Declaration on a Sub-Regional Approach to Peace and Security“ in 2003, with the “West African Code of Conduct for Armed Forces and Security Services“ in 2006 and finally with the “ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework” in 2008. Hartman rightly describes that with these documents, ECOWAS created a `vision of a community of democratic states and of a regional order based on the protection of individual and human security.´

ECOWAS tried to stick to this set of aspirations by engaging in the conflict in Cote d´Ivoire in 2003 after the civil war had broken out. Still, as this engagement was again only small scale, external actors were the decisive players in the conflict resolution process. The gap between a developing structural and theoretical framework on the one hand and a substantial lack of capability of action on the other remained obvious.

Through the participation of ECOWAS in the so-called African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), conceptualized by the AU, this gap was about to be closed and thereby the division between anglophone and francophone countries, in the field of security, should be overcome. In this context, it was the aim to build up a mixed West African regional brigade (ECOBRIG), which forms part of the African Standby-Force and which should become operational by the end of 2010.

Bearing all these developments in mind, it seems that ECOWAS has kept its position as a frontrunner on the African continent in security matters. Especially the “ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework” (ECPF) is not only a summary of the norms that have been elaborated in the past years but goes beyond with a very ambitious set of objectives. Its approach is clearly striving to implement human security. The ECPF aims at combating structural as well as short-term security problems. ECPF demands parallel efforts in 14 different fields of action from military cooperation to peace education and youth empowerment. The Framework puts a special focus on the development of capacities but does not say how this is to be done, who is responsible and who is going to pay. It is not very concrete in terms of instruments and there is no real sign of prioritization against the background of obviously limited resources. An announced plan of action for the ECPF has not yet been revealed. Therefore it seems justified to ask if a concentration on the most pressing areas, - which would have to be identified - would be more pragmatic, especially because the different areas are tightly interconnected and positive developments in one could have positive effects on others.

Compared to the “new wars“ in the 1990´s, the main the problem in the last years was that of unconstitutional transition in some West African States like Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Togo, Niger and finally in Cote d´Ivoire. This has dominated the ECOWAS security agenda. ECOWAS has been actively trying to find a solution for all of these countries. On the one hand ECOWAS has suspended the membership of Guinea and Niger, on the other it could not gain control over the transition processes. Following Hartman, by its inaction, it has rather contributed to legitimizing the national armed forces as the coordinators of transition. Because of the unpredictable behavior of the military in such situations, this approach is dangerous and jeopardizes the principles of democratic change laid down in official ECOWAS documents. In Togo, the, as Hartman calls it, quasi-monarchist transition from the authoritarian leader Gnassingbé Eyadema to his son Faure Gnassingbé was criticized by ECOWAS and the AU but was finally accepted after internal dissensions.

The high “moral“ aspiration in official ECO-

WAS documents lacks a more precise manual of action for the transitional situations member states are facing more and more often. This again opens the door for political flexibility, vested interests and double standards within ECOWAS and impedes a coherent policy. In this context, the critique that it is hard to accept the demand for democratic change by non-democratic leaders cannot be easily disproved.

The fact that a manual of action is missing, became obvious again during the recent crisis in Cote d´Ivoire. This holds true not only for the approaches for the resolution of the crisis as such, but also for the distribution of competences between ECOWAS, AU and other international actors. Sperling claims that there has to be a clearer definition of who is responsible for what at what time. Furthermore, it is crucial to explain one´s logic of action to the media and the public.

With regard to the behavior of ECOWAS during the Cote d´Ivoire crisis, the old gap between rhetoric and substance appeared again.

At first, ECOWAS worked off the standard catalogue of crisis management: suspension of membership, an ECOWAS delegation consisting of representatives from Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone countries, trying to persuade Laurent Gbagbo to resign from his office and finally threats of a military intervention - which would have been a test case for the ECOBRIG. All these measures did not help to achieve the goal to install Alassane Outtarra in office. Because of the fact that this goal had been stipulated as the official ECOWAS position from the beginning, ECOWAS was inflexible with regard to other possible ways to a peaceful resolution of the situation, integrating all parties. Although admittedly the situation in Côte d´Ivoire was extremely difficult, the lack of effective ECOWAS instruments was obvious. The possibility of re-election with an improved election observation covering the whole country was not taken into account; a power sharing agreement or an inquiry mission were not really strongly debated.

The early denial of Ghana to provide his troops for a possible military intervention showed that ECOWAS was a toothless tiger. Moreover, the ability of ECOBRIG with its limited number of soldiers to guarantee peace in Cote d´Ivoire is more than questionable. It makes only sense to intervene militarily if the situation afterwards will be manageable and if there is a limited time-horizon and an exit-strategy at hand. This was not given in the case of Cote d´Ivoire. Furthermore, Gbagbo was supported by the army while Outtara had strong forces behind him with more or less independent militas also playing a role. This would have made an intervention all the more difficult and dangerous.

In fact, with regard to Cote d´Ivoire, ECOWAS has failed in the resolution of the conflict. Still, it was maybe prudent not to invade Cote d´Ivoire as ECOBRIG would have been far too weak and would, because of the support for Ouattara, possibly not have been perceived as a neutral force in a country which was and is deeply divided. This situation reveals again that there are serious instrumental shortcomings.

Coming back to the initial questions on the formulation of strategic objectives and their implementation, it is clear that ECOWAS is more succesful in formulating its norms and strategic goals and the problem apparently lies with implementation. Hence, what can be improved in the future?

For a crisis of Cote d´Ivoire´s scale, one has to admit that only the whole AU African Standby Force with its size of about 15.000 soldiers would have been helpful. As this force is still not operational, at the moment, Africa has to rely on external actors for larger operations. Those actors should act as neutral forces supporting African leader- and ownership and avoid any suspicion of involvement of former colonial powers into the internal affairs of African states on the basis of vested interests. Neutrality is an essential aspect of conflict resolution. Thus, it should be reasonable to think about a certain degree of flexibility with regard to the question who is going to act (regional or external African or international forces) and on which level (peace-enforcement, peace-keeping, SSR etc.). This does not contradict Sperling´s claim for a clearer definition of responsibilities.

In the meantime however, it has to be a priority for foreign donors to push forward the professionalization of the APSA and its capability to act in peace enforcement as well as in fields like SSR. In this context, ECOWAS should work to improve its practical capabilities here and also like Sperling recommends in the field of mediation techniques to be more effective in conflict resolution. The fact, that ECOWAS is not even capable of providing SSR in a country like Guinea-Bissau, because of a lack of financial and skilled human capacities, again sheds a dark light on ECOWAS` capability to act. Although ECOWAS has striking deficits in terms of capabilities, ECOBRIG is there. Against this background, the task is to define when it really makes sense to use it and when it is necessary to look for stronger partners. In this context, apart from mere capabilites, it would be an opportunity to refine even more ECOWAS` conceptual approach by projecting different conflict and transitional scenarios and designing respective solution strategies. Here, existing backdoors for national interests in the process of conflict resolution could be closed by tying actors to a more effective system of rules and priorities.

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Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS/CEDEAO)

Facts and Figures

General

ECOWAS was founded in 1975 as a forum to improve regional economic cooperation. The treaty of ECOWAS was reformed in 1993.

Members

15 West African States: Nigeria, Togo, Benin, Senegal, Niger, Mali, Ghana, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast. Mauretania left ECOWAS in 2001.

Principles and Objectives

- equality and inter-dependence of Member States
- inter-State co-operation, harmonisation of policies and integration of programmes
- maintenance of regional peace, stability and security
- recognition promotion and protection of human and peoples‘ rights
- accountability, economic and social justice and popular participation in development
- promotion and consolidation of a democratic system of governance
- equitable and just distribution of the costs and benefits of economic co-operation and integration

Institutions

Council of Heads of States
Council of Ministers
ECOWAS Commission (former Secretariat-General): President: Victor Gbeho/ Vice-President: Jean de Dieu Somda and 7 Commissioners.
ECOWAS Parliament
ECOWAS Court of Justice
ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development
The main ECOWAS institutions are based in Abuja. ECOWAS agencies are spread over the whole of West Africa.

WAEMU - A trump card to enhance internal trade within ECOWAS

** Jérôme Joubert and Samuel Priso-Essawe*

For several decades, ECOWAS's 15 Heads of States have reaffirmed their will to create an economic and monetary union. If the creation of a free trade area is theoretically effective as for national products, we have to admit that the commercial integration stagnates both on the internal as well as on the external level. On the internal level we find that intra-regional trade represents only 10% of the foreign trade of the ECOWAS's member states, although the importance of the informal sector in the area requires caution on the interpretation of statistics. One can nevertheless wonder whether this situation is due to the structure of the economies of these countries or to the effect of persistent obstacles to the free movement of goods within the area.

Most economies are poorly diversified and mainly produce agricultural products, while geo climatic conditions determine the nature of tropical products exported outside the area such as cotton and oilseeds. While there are coastal countries with manufacturing capacity, no real industrial specialization likely to raise significant inter-industry trade has occurred within the area. If the formal free trade area has been effective since the 1st of January 2000, many obstacles remain (Cernicky, R.I.O 2008). To sum up, the exchange potential was initially not high and the impact of regional agreements has remained relatively low.

On the external level, there is no common external trade policy at the moment. Regional organizations, legitimate to define and apply these policies, have neither the institutional capacity nor the political freedom to do it. Countries have not yet implemented the CET, and their import duties depend on different custom rates and procedures. When possible they prefer bilateral trade negotiations with major trading powers.

But the ambition of regional integration process such as the ECOWAS' is to change this situation. And thus one can note some results since 1975. The free movement of persons is quite effective; the custom union and many programs adopted in transport (PRTP, ISRTC), inter connection of infrastructures (electricity, communications) are progressing. The institutions have also been consolidated, especially the Court of Justice, which action is important to secure traders' rights. To enhance global integration, and specifically domestic trade between ECOWAS countries, the organisation may act on different topics: customs union, currency, financial instruments, and the global investment environment toward deep integration. On each of these aspects, some of the ECOWAS Member States have taken some steps forward within the UEMOA. Therefore, the possibilities for ECOWAS to develop internal trade must obviously take into account the measures achieved by the UEMOA.

Customs union. – As we noted, the customs union is not achieved, despite the adoption of the CET on 12th January 2006. We observe no tangible results in regulatory and tax harmonization, mutual recognition, external policy, trade facilitation and generally all issues related to deep integration. On this aspect UEMOA has valuable experience, which could be partially and pragmatically transferred to the entire ECOWAS zone thus avoiding focusing only on the fifth line of the CET rate.

Launching a Common currency. – It has not yet been proven that the ECOWAS region is an optimal currency area given the weakness of internal trade and factors movement, the weight of fiscal transfers between countries and the potential importance of asymmetric shocks. Nevertheless, the advent of a common currency area, which could reduce transaction costs, currency volatility and increase internal trade, is expected for 2020. Among the different paths in competition, an option is to gradually extend the UEMOA currency to neighbour countries with the eventual integration of Nigeria.

The finance regulation. – Internal trade between ECOWAS countries will be made easier by the possibilities for each to order or receive payments in a similar and secure way. There is no framework for this in ECOWAS, whereas the UEMOA's Council adopted the Regulation n°15 on systems of payment in September 2002, creating a legal context for the safety of payments within the Union. This is an important element to increase the capacities of the economic actors of the zone to enhance exchanges with other countries, and extending such a system to ECOWAS would absolutely be of great importance for the development of domestic exchanges. The fact that more than half of the ECOWAS's Member States are already in that regime is a good reason for this Community to take a step toward that direction.

Business law harmonization. – Nine of the ECOWAS's Member States, among which are the 8 of the UEMOA, are also Parties to the business law harmonization treaty in Africa (OHADA), signed in 1993 in Mauritius, by 16 French speaking African States (17 today); the experience turned out to be a success. It made investment easier among involved countries, as they share the same rules and regulations. Therefore, other ECOWAS's countries, such as Nigeria, intend to become parties to the OHADA.

Common policies or Acts. – ECOWAS recently adopted the West African common industrial policy, which objective is to "accelerate the industrialisation (…) through the promotion of endogenous industrial transformation of local raw materials; development and diversification of industrial productive capacity and (…) export of manufactured goods". One can especially mention the will to promote community enterprises, to develop technical capacities of ECOWAS's citizens, as well as encouraging the creation of SME having sub-contracting activities.

This industrial policy may be strengthened by the competition law principles, adopted by two Supplementary Acts of December 2008 on competition rules (n°1/06/08), and competition Authority (n°2/06/08). The experience of the UEMOA in this field may also benefit ECOWAS or, at least, be taken into consideration in the implementation of its regulations.

To conclude, we should keep in mind that more trade within ECOWAS would probably be the consequence as well as the cause of economic development of the region.

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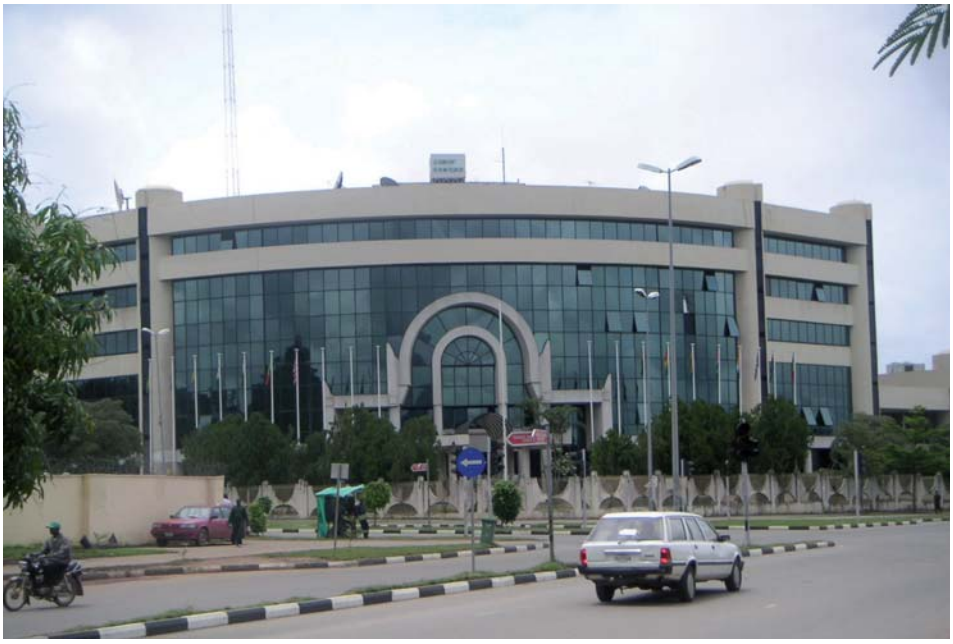
ECOWAS - An independent-minded Building-Block of the African Union

** Hélène Gandois*



Headquarters of the ECOWAS Commission in Nigeria´s capital Abuja.

The relationship between the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) is characterized by centrifugal and centripetal movements, as well as push and pull exchanges. This relationship soundly illustrates the difficulties the AU has had to face to implement its idea of a continental organization composed of several sub-regions as building blocks. In 1991, with the adoption of the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community (AEC), the idea was to build on existing regional economic communities, to harmonize and coordinate their policies in order to establish one economic community at the continental level. But this complementary role needs to be based on a strong relationship that the AU and ECOWAS seem to be lacking.

The building block idea was extended, also, to the field of security. The AU, just like ECOWAS, combines an economic integration agenda and a security mandate. Economic issues are often less politicized and controversial and have recently played second fiddle to conflict management that can be considered as the litmus test for the building blocks of the AU. The establishment of the AEC has been postponed sine die. Within the African Standby Force (ASF), sub-regional organizations (also called regional economic communities) are to complement the AU by establishing regional standby forces up to a brigade size. Currently, Africa‘s five sub-regions are in the process of setting up their regional brigades and agreeing on issues of harmonization and standardization between them. So, is ECOWAS truly acting as building block of the AU in the field of peace and security? Their relationship seems to be based more on competition than on cooperation.

Right from the start, the AU and ECOWAS followed parallel paths and had little dialogue with each other, but this changed in the 1990s, as they both underwent radical and similar reforms. The Organization of Africa Unity (OAU, that later became the African Union) was created in 1963 around the principles of functional economic cooperation and integration and of national sovereignty, non-interference and territorial integrity. Its main goal was to ensure the full decolonization of the African continent and to fight against apartheid. On the other hand, ECOWAS was created in 1975 because of particular West African dynamics that pushed the regional hegemon, Nigeria, to establish a sub-regional organization that went beyond the Anglophone/Francophone divide. Its goal was to encourage economic cooperation and developmental regionalism based on the European model, with Nigeria taking the leading role, both intellectually and diplomatically.

The 1990s was a decade of change, with old regional organizations being revitalized by the broadening of institutional agendas with a new emphasis on security and on the globalization of the world economy. In Africa, the onus was put on peace and security issues as the removal of superpower overlay contributed to a succession of crises on the African continent in the 1990s. African regional organizations were forced to react in order to prevent these conflicts from worsening and possibly engulfing the whole region. In West Africa, the Liberian crisis that soon spilled over into Sierra Leone forced the West African states into action under the leadership of Nigeria.

After the intervention in Liberia and Sierra Leone, member states were able to take a step back and rethink the rationale of their regional organization in order to shift from an emergency response logic to a long term building logic by integrating these changes into the mandate of the organization. Nothing in the history of ECOWAS had prepared it to set up a peacekeeping force within one of its member states. As a regional economic organization, it lacked the institutions and procedures that would allow it to take the political and security decisions required by the Liberian crisis. It soon adopted the legal instruments necessary to take on a peacekeeping role; most notable is the 1999 Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security. It was based on this Protocol that the regional organization intervened militarily in Guinea-Bissau in 1999 and maintained a very active role as the principal peacekeeper (intervention in Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire in 2003) and mediator (in Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Cote d'Ivoire, etc) in the region. The OAU was transformed into the AU in 2000 along the same lines, most notably with a right of humanitarian intervention in its Charter (article 4 h) and has been particularly active militarily and diplomatically in Sudan (Darfur) and in Somalia (African Union Mission in Somalia – AMISOM).

This short history of ECOWAS raises several questions about its relationship with the African Union. As its experience in the 1990s clearly illustrates, ECOWAS could argue and has indeed argued in the past, that it has been leading the way when it comes to African regional organizations taking on a peacekeeping role. Some in the region feel that ECOWAS has little to learn from the AU. At the political level, there is also a strong desire to keep the upper hand when it comes to conflict management in West Africa. This has been clearly illustrated throughout the different mediation efforts during the conflict in Cote d'Ivoire. ECOWAS tried to take the lead of the mediation efforts after the stalemate following the November 2010 elections. It claimed that Ouattara had won the elections and called for Gbagbo to step down and did not necessarily welcome the more conciliatory tone adopted by the African Union.

It is difficult to reconcile this reluctance to see the AU intervene in what West African states, and especially Nigeria, consider their exclusive zone of influence with the desire to build up the African Standby Force. This reluctance towards the AU is, however, limited to its attempts to lead peace and security efforts in West Africa. At the continental level and for interventions in other sub-regions, West African states have been more cooperative. ECOWAS is indeed considered as the most advanced region in the setting up of a regional brigade with the certification of the ECOWAS Standby Force in 2010. Numerous Nigerian and Ghanaian troops have also been deployed within the hybrid UN-AU hybrid operation in Darfur.

A similar tension can be found between the AU and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The Western and Southern regions of Africa are the most structured of the continent, both dominated by a strong regional hegemon, Nigeria and South Africa respectively, that plays an important role at the continental level. It is thus not a surprise that the AU has been particularly active in Central and Eastern Africa – and also, to a certain extent, in the conflict in Libya – as there are no strong sub-regional organization that can take the lead in conflict management.

The relationship between ECOWAS and the AU shows that the building block idea on which the AU is based is both an inescapable and necessary concept because the AU cannot ignore the existing sub-regional organizations, however, it is also very difficult to implement considering the differing capabilities of each building block. The AU receives at the same time the greatest push back from strong regional organizations like ECOWAS, but also the greatest help as they are the ones that can help the continental organization build its future. The AU and ECOWAS will have to develop an ad hoc approach to make the current building block structure work, while filling in for weaker sub-regional pillars.

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The Community Development Programme - An ECOWAS for the People

** Mamadou Khoulé*

To achieve an effective regional integration and also lay a solid base for sustainable development in West Africa, much has been done by the ECOWAS since the signing of its founding Treaty in 1975. Given the many challenges that West Africa faces, the economic and social development of this region should be based principally on the fast tracking of the on-going integration process. In Article 2 of the revised Treaty of the ECOWAS, of July 1993, it is stipulated that ECOWAS is eventually destined to become the only Economic Community of the West African Region as far as economic integration is concerned, and for the realization of the objectives of the African Economic Community.

Banner announcing the Lomé I Convention in 1975. It vividly expresses the hope that was linked to the new ACP-EC partnership at the time. © European Commission

"… Moving from an ECOWAS of States to an Ecowas of People…"

Invested with this core mission, the ECOWAS pursues major goals and objectives mainly articulated around the four main phases of any integration process. These are: the free trade zone, the customs union, the common market and, last but not least, the economic and monetary union. ECOWAS is also engaged in the promotion of an environment of peace and security in the Community space. That is why in order to arrive at such a situation and to better cope with globalization, in 2006 the Heads of State and Governments embarked on major institutional reforms, notably by transforming the Secretariat of the ECOWAS into a Commission. It is within this framework that the Heads of State and Governments decided to inspire a new dynamism into the integration process by adopting the Vision 2020 in 2007 in Abuja (Nigeria). This vision is encapsulated in a vision statement thus: "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."

The ECOWAS CDP: Defining a West African long term economic development strategy

It is with the aim of implementing the Vision 2020 that the ECOWAS Commission has initiated the formulation of this ambitious Community Development Programme (CDP). The CDP is a framework for the development of the entire Economic Community of West African States insuring a coherence between development policies and programmes of all member states, ECOWAS and WAEMU/UEMOA commissions, all intergovernmental organizations operating in the region and above all, between ECOWAS sectorial policies.

This general strategic orientation is declined in ten (10) strategic axes, in line with the pillars of other major programmes of the Region. These strategic axes, selected to serve as the coordinating and convergence framework for regional action programmes are: i)Integration of people; ii)Cooperation among Member States; iii)Development of common agricultural and industrial policies; iv)Interconnection of transport infrastructure; v)Interconnection of communication infrastructure; vi)Interconnection of energy infrastructure; vii)Financial and monetary integration; viii)Human development; ix) Development research and innovation; x) Common policies for management of natural resources and the environment.

The CDP aims at translating the long-term development strategy of the region into coherent programmes of actions able to give concrete expression to the Vision. Its objective is to ensure coherence and build synergy at three levels: i)Between sector programmes within the ECOWAS Commission; ii)Between policies and programmes from the ECOWAS Commission and those of other regional institutions; iii)Between policies and programmes of ECOWAS and development strategies of the Member States.

The CDP seeks to become the benchmark development programme of the region. In this regard, the CDP is more long-term oriented, thereby ensuring consistency in terms of timeframe for development strategies in the region. In this context, through the particularity of its formulation process, the CDP envisions a greater involvement of the peoples for a better ownership of programs initiated by the region. To this end, the formulation process of the CDP pursues specific objectives, in relation with major areas of interests for the peoples and in line with national policies for poverty reduction, important strategies established to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and general objectives of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

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Is the West Africa-EU EPA in a Coma? Diagnosis and Prospects

** Sanoussi Bilal and Melissa Dalleau*

Nine years after the beginning of the negotiations, and running more than three years behind schedule, the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) agenda remains divisive and inconclusive in most African regions. This is particularly the case in West Africa, where fourteen (out of the sixteen!) countries of the EPA configuration – the majority of which eligible to the non-reciprocal 'Everything but Arms (EBA)' scheme – have not concluded any type of agreement with the EU. The two exceptions are Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana, which concluded in 2007 an interim EPA (IEPA), being worried about the risks of trade disruptions potentially affecting their exports. Neither of these two countries has, however, started to implement their agreement. While Ghana has not signed the IEPA it initialed, Cote d'Ivoire, has not yet started to deliver on the commitments it took when signing its agreement in November 2008.

The snail's pace syndrome

Since 2008 – date of the expiry of the WTO waiver which granted these countries "Cotonou preferences" – all West African countries have reiterated their willingness to conclude a regional agreement, which would supersede Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana's IEPAs. But as La Rochefoucauld wrote, 'We promise according to our hopes, and perform according to our fears'. Despite the decision by the parties in June 2009 to lower their ambitions and to only focus in the first phase of the negotiations on trade in goods and development provisions, progress towards the conclusion of a regional EPA has been very slow. Deadlines to conclude a regional agreement have been set and missed many times, but beyond nice words and promises, the hopes to see a regional EPA being concluded, have only been disappointed. Even on trade in goods only, great challenges remain. Among those, the definition of 'substantially all trade', which sets out the level of tariff liberalisation required by West African countries in their agreement with the EU, continues to constitute an important stumbling block in the negotiations. At the latest joint technical negotiation session, held in Dakar from 23 to 25 May 2011, West Africa presented a revised market access offer, which proposed to liberalise 70% in volume and tariff lines over a period of 25 years, with a reduction of tariff rates from 50 to 100%, according to the ECOWAS Common External Tariff (CET) bands. Although the EU promised to consider this offer, it is worth noting that until now, the EU has always made it clear in its negotiations with ACP regions and countries that it would like to see them liberalise at least 80% of value of trade within fifteen years. West Africa – where yet twelve out of sixteen countries are Least Developed Countries (LDCs) – has been no exception to the rule, despite the inclination of some EU member states to show some flexibility. In the same vein, rules of origin (notably with regard to cumulation provisions and to fisheries products), the question of the Community levy, the inclusion of the Most Favoured Nation clause, the non-exclusion clause, as well as the issue of additionality of funds when it comes to the EU support to the region's EPA Development Programme, continue to seriously hamper the pace of the negotiations.

Yet, judging from the situation in other regions, compromise solutions can be found on many of these issues. Both parties need however to be keen to capitalise on them. Unless there is a clear political signal of willingness to compromise on both sides, one could indeed hardly expect a way out of the current deadlock, the same causes usually leading to the same effects. Unfortunately, despite regular reassuring discourses coming from both EU and West African negotiators, the reality is that no such strong political message seems to be apparent. On the contrary…

The convenient yet unsustainable status quo

The current status quo seems indeed very convenient for West African countries since whether they have concluded an agreement or not, they all benefit from duty-free, quota-free market access to the EU, either on the basis of the EBA scheme or under the EU Market Access Regulation 1528/2007 related to EPAs. Nigeria is the only exception as it is currently trading with the EU under GSP's terms. Although the Regulation requires countries to sign, ratify and implement their (interim) EPA "within a reasonable period of time" in order to benefit from preferential EU market access, there seems to have been no negative consequences for any IEPA country so far, including Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana, which have both been able to benefit from improved market access without taking any reciprocal engagement. But as convenient as the situation may be for these countries, the status quo is certainly not perennial and both parties seem to be running out of breadth, patience and energy.

In October 2010, the EU released a "Reflection paper" discussing ways to move forward in the negotiations. Beyond the importance "to restore mutual trust and confidence into the EPA", the EU also reminded ACP countries of the temporary nature of the EU Market Access Regulation. Should it wish to do so, the EU has the means to flex its muscles, for instance by setting firm deadlines for the removal of EPA preferences to those countries or regions that do not comply with their commitment to sign, ratify and implement EPAs. In West Africa, such a decision could seriously disrupt regional integration processes at a critical time where the ECOWAS CET is being finalised.

Will Regional Integration collapse?

Should Cote d'Ivoire and/or Ghana have to reduce their tariffs on a unilateral basis to fulfil their IEPA commitment, the UEMOA's and the ECOWAS' customs unions would collapse. EU imported products to the region could bypass the CET by entering the region through Cote d'Ivoire and/or Ghana under the EPA market opening. The options are thus as follows: (i) the two IEPAs stand alone, which seriously undermines the regional integration process; or (ii) Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana abandon their IEPA, which preserves regional integration at the cost of loss of EU preferences for these two countries; or (iii) all West African countries conclude a regional EPA, which remains still the declared ambition.

This delicate situation emphasizes the importance for West Africa to take common decisions. In this context, all countries will need to assess the pros and cons of concluding an EPA. Should West Africa and the EU stick to their respective positions and fail to reach a compromise, it is perhaps preferable for both parties to let the EPAs die all together. This would safeguard the prospects of deeper economic integration in the region and appease the relations between the EU and West Africa.

A matter of political choice

Despite some signs of faint sign of activity, EPA negotiations in West Africa seem to simply have slowly fallen into a state of coma, out of which they are very unlikely to come this year unless some clear political signal of a willingness to compromise on both sides becomes apparent. The problem is that consequences of year-long comas are rarely benign. In the present situation, not only have the EPAs lost momentum; but if the existing tensions are not resolved, the process may also have deeper negative consequences on the overall relationship between West Africa and the EU, well beyond trade and economic considerations. It is thus important at this point in time to conduct a reality check, and assess which type of agreement, if any at all, is most likely to effectively support the regional integration and development objectives. And if disagreement persists, EPA negotiations should be suspended and Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana should consider abandoning their individual EPA.

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ZEI and WAI set the course for future cooperation

The ZEI delegation together with West Africa Institute (WAI) stakeholders at the seat of WAI in Praia. From left to right: WAI Project Coordinator, Dr. Corsino Tolentino, ZEI Fellow Matthias Vogl, WAI Director Prof. John Igue, Chairman of the Board of WAI and former Foreign Minister of Cape Verde, José Brito, ZEI Director Prof. Ludger Kühnhardt, ZEI Fellow Claudia Rommel and WAI Administrative Assistant Renato Frederico.

The future of the West African regional integration process and the priorities for research in this field have recently been discussed during the third working group meeting in the framework of the cooperation project between the Center for European Integration Studies (ZEI) and the West Africa Institute (WAI), financed by the German Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), which took place in the capital of Cape Verde, Praia, from 10-13 July 2011.

The discussion was held between a ZEI delegation headed by ZEI Director Prof. Ludger Kühnhardt and several stakeholders from WAI, among whom was the Chairman of the WAI Board and former Foreign Minister of Cape Verde José Brito.

In the course of the meeting the two institutes paved the way for the structure of a longer-term cooperation between WAI and ZEI until 2015. ZEI will on the one hand forward its expertise in setting-up sustainable research structures to WAI and on the other hand joint research will be conducted. The thematic focus of this cooperation will lie in three fields: “Regional Integration and Policy Formulation Process”, “Economic Integration and Regional Trade” and “Institutional Capacity Development for Regional Integration”.

The WAI-ZEI approach is based on equal partnership and a comparative perspective. As a West African-European effort for bi-regional research cooperation, the project is innovative in its kind.

WAI and ZEI also presented the current results of their work: a “Reader” on sustainable regional integration and the “Joint WAI-ZEI Discussion Paper” with contribution of West African and European authors.

West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU/UEMOA)

Facts and Figures

General

WAEMU was founded in 1994 by seven West African States using the same currency, the Franc CFA. The WAEMU Treaty entered into force on 1 August 1994.

Members

Senegal, Cote d´Ivoire, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali and Togo. Guinea-Bissau joined WAEMU in 1997.

Principles and Objectives

- To reinforce the competitiveness of the economic and financial activi ties of Member States in the framework of an open and competitive market and a rationalized and harmonized legal environment;
- To assure the convergence of the economic performance
- To create a Common Market between the Member States based on the free movements of persons, goods, services and capital and the right of establishment of persons exercising an independent activity or receiving a salary, as well as on a common external tariff and a common trade policy;
- To install a permanent coordination of national sector policies
- To harmonize to a necessary degree for the purpose of a proper functioning of the Common Market.

Institutions

Conference of Heads of States
Council of Ministers
WAEMU Commission in Quagadougou
Court of Justice
Court of Auditors
Interparliamentary Committee
Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO) in Dakar

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Zentrum für Europäische Integrationsforschung
Center for European Integration Studies

IMPRINT

ISSN1996-9678
Center for European Integration Studies
Walter-Flex-Str. 3
53113 Bonn, Germany

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The Regional Integration Observer is published three times a year.
Authors are responsible for the views expressed in their contributions.