

ECOWAS and Regional Security: A Study in the Settlement of the Internal Conflict in Mali

الإيكواس والأمن الإقليمي: دراسة في تسوية النزاع الداخلي في مالي

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Abstract:

This study seeks to analyze the strategy followed by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in settling and resolving the conflict in Mali, and the effectiveness of its security mechanisms in achieving a stable security environment in the region, by defining the ECOWAS as a security actor in West Africa region, and its different security structures, In addition to addressing the reasons for the emergence of the conflict in Mali, whose roots go back to the colonial period.

The study also aimed to clarify the role of ECOWAS in settling the conflict in Mali, whether at the political or diplomatic level, or military efforts in cooperation with the African Union and the United Nations, and it became clear that the ECOWAS strategy was effective in dealing with the problem of the coup, in contrast to its weakness in addressing the problem of the expansion of armed groups and terrorists.

Keywords: Regional security, ECOWAS, internal conflict, TUAREG rebellion, terrorism.

المخلص:

تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل الإستراتيجية التي تتبعها المجموعة الاقتصادية لدول غرب إفريقيا (الإيكواس) في تسوية وحلّ النزاع في مالي، ومدى فعالية آلياتها الأمنية في تحقيق بيئة أمنية مستقرة في المنطقة، من خلال التعريف بالجماعة الاقتصادية لدول غرب إفريقيا باعتبارها الجهة الفاعلة الأمنية في إقليم غرب إفريقيا، وهياكلها الأمنية المختلفة، بالإضافة إلى معالجة أسباب نشوء النزاع في مالي والذي تعود جذوره إلى الفترة الاستعمارية. كما هدفت الدراسة إلى توضيح دور الإيكواس في تسوية النزاع في مالي، سواء على الصعيد السياسي أو الدبلوماسي، أو الجهود العسكرية بالتعاون مع الاتحاد الأفريقي والأمم المتحدة، وقد اتضح أنّ إستراتيجية الإيكواس كانت فعالة في التعامل مع مشكل الانقلاب، في مقابل ضعفها في معالجة مشكل توسع الجماعات المسلحة والإرهابيين. الكلمات المفتاحية: الأمن الإقليمي، الإيكواس، النزاع الداخلي، تمرد الطوارق، الإرهاب.

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Introduction:

The Sahel region is currently witnessing serious security tensions, especially with the increasing problem of new security threats such as terrorism and organized crime.

In addition, the security environment is complicated with the emergence of internal conflicts, such as the conflict in Mali, so that the latter has become a threat to regional security in the Sahel region and West Africa as a whole, due to the possibility of its repercussions spreading to the rest of the neighboring countries.

On the other hand, ECOWAS as the regional security organization responsible for settling and resolving internal conflicts in the region, sought to intervene in Mali in order to find solutions to violence in it, through its security institutions, and the experience it gained from its previous interventions to settle internal conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau.

Study problem:

This study examines the security role played by ECOWAS in settling the internal conflict in Mali, whether on its own or through its cooperation with the African Union and the United Nations.

On this basis, we pose the following problem: **What is the extent of ECOWAS' ability to settle the conflict in Mali and achieve a stable security environment in its region?**

Sub-questions:

- What is the definition of regional security according to the perceptions of Barry Buzan?
- What are the security mechanisms that ECOWAS relies on in resolving conflicts in the West African region?
- What are the reasons for the emergence of the conflict in Mali?
- How did ECOWAS contribute to the settlement of the conflict in Mali?

Study hypotheses:

- The strategies adopted by ECOWAS in resolving the conflict in Mali are not commensurate with the complex nature of the conflict, especially with its overlap with the terrorist threat.
- The security mechanisms of ECOWAS have been relatively successful in addressing the problems of military coups in Mali, in contrast to their failure to address the expansion of armed groups.

Study methodology:

In this study, we relied on the case study approach, which helped us study the situation of the conflict in Mali and its various causes and the role of ECOWAS in its settlement, in addition to the institutional approach that was relied upon in order to identify the security structures on which ECOWAS relies in achieving security in its territory.

In addition to this, Barry Buzan's theory on regional security, which explains the importance of looking at the West African region as a regional security complex, requires



resolving conflicts and confronting security threats in a joint and collective way, given that they move quickly across borders.

Study plan:

1- The conceptual and theoretical framework of the study:

1.1 Defining ECOWAS as a regional security organization.

1.2- Barry Buzan's Regional Security Complex Theory.

2- The role of ECOWAS in settling the internal conflict in Mali:

2.1- The emergence of the conflict in Mali in 2012.

2.2- Political and military settlement of the conflict after its emergence in 2012.

2.3- The political settlement of the conflict after the two military coups in 2020 and 2021.

1- The conceptual and theoretical framework of the study:

This component aims to introduce ECOWAS as a security actor in the West African region, after shifting its interests from the economic aspect and seeking to achieve economic development, to the security aspect that aims to achieve security and peace in its member states, in addition to studying the West African region as a regional security complex according to what it was introduced by Barry Buzan in his theory.

1.1- Defining ECOWAS as a regional security organization:

The members of the West African Security Community are the fifteen countries that also make up the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) are: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo⁽¹⁾.

The ECOWAS has been shaped by the decision of the fifteen states to form an economic union as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on May 28, 1975 in Lagos, and there are many reasons that led to its establishment, which are:

- Economic motivation that perceived ECOWAS integration as national and regional development strategy.

- Politically, ECOWAS regionalism was assumed to serve as an instrument for foreign policy and a collective bargaining bloc and a motivation for south-south cooperation and collective solidarity, so the motivations for the formation of ECOWAS were economic development and regional security⁽²⁾.

Despite its primary objective of regional economic development, the fifteen member states realized the importance of addressing the security threats and conflicts that have emerged in the region⁽³⁾.

In order to achieve security goals, ECOWAS stresses in its revised treaty (in 1993) the need to adhere to the following principles:

- Non-aggression between Member States.

⁽¹⁾ A. Essuman, Johnson, "Regional conflict resolution mechanisms: A comparative analysis of two African security complexes", *African Journal of Political Science*, vol. 3, num. 11 (2009), p. 7

⁽²⁾ Ibid.

⁽³⁾ Ibid.



- Maintenance of regional peace, stability and security through the promotion and strengthening of good neighbor lines.
- Peaceful settlement of disputes among Member States, active co-operation between neighboring countries and promotion of a peaceful environment as a prerequisite for economic development.
- Recognition, promotion and protection of human and peoples' rights in accordance with the provisions of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights⁽¹⁾.

As a comparison between the objectives and principles contained in the treaty establishing ECOWAS in 1975 and the revised treaty of 1993, we note that ECOWAS in the treaty establishing did not address the security aspects, or the need for countries to cooperate to confront security threats (attention to the economic aspect), but in the revised treaty it indicated To the security aspects and their importance, as a result of the emergence of internal conflicts in the region.

1.1.1- The Non-Aggression Protocol:

First of all, ECOWAS established the Non-Aggression Protocol in 1978, and according to Article 1, member states were to refrain from the threat or use of force or aggression or from employing any other means inconsistent with the Charters of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity against the territorial integrity or political independence of other Member States⁽²⁾, However, this protocol fails.

1.1.2- The Protocol Relating To Mutual Assistance of Defense:

Then it was created the Protocol Relating To Mutual Assistance of Defense in 1981, which provides that Member States declare and accept that any armed threat or aggression directed against any Member State shall constitute a threat or aggression against the entire Community, and it resolve to give mutual aid and assistance for defense against any armed threat or aggression⁽³⁾.

The two protocols were unable to deal with the internal conflicts that have emerged in the region, because they only dealt with conflicts between states, and accordingly the member states decided to establish a new mechanism to address this deficiency.

1.1.3- The Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security:

The most important security protocol adopted is the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security signed in December 1999, this mechanism seeks to strengthen the sub-region's conflict prevention, management and resolution capacity, as well as build effective peacekeeping, humanitarian support and peace building capabilities, and it also addresses cross border crime which is becoming a major problem for the sub-region, and in a bid to realize these ambitious aims, the ECOWAS Security Mechanism establishes a number of institutions, arms and strategies which include

⁽¹⁾ Revised treaty of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), ECOWAS Commission, Abuja, Nigeria, 1993, p. 7.

⁽²⁾ Chris, kwaja, "The Role of Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS) in post-conflict Rehabilitation: Lessons from Liberia", **NUST Journal of International Peace and Stability**, vol. 1 (2017), p. 54.

⁽³⁾ Edouard, Benjamin, "Protocol Relating to mutual Assistance Of Defense of Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS)", Freetown, 1981, p. 3.



the Mediation and Security Council, an early warning system, and the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG)⁽¹⁾.

With regard to ECOMOG, it is a structure made up of several multi-purpose units (civilian and military) on stand-by in their country of origin and ready to be deployed in due course. ECOMOG conducts among others observation and peace monitoring missions, peacekeeping and restoration operations, humanitarian action support missions, missions to monitor the enforcement of sanctions, including embargos, preventive deployments, peace building operations, disarmament and demobilization, policing activities to fight fraud and organized crime⁽²⁾. These forces were transferred to ECOWAS Standby Force in 2010⁽³⁾.

1.1.4- Protocol on democracy and good governance:

In order to complete the shortcomings contained in the mechanism's protocol, members created a protocol on democracy and good governance in 2001, in which provisions related to issues such as prevention of internal crises, democracy and good governance, the rule of law, and human rights⁽⁴⁾.

1.1.5- The ECOWAS Framework for Conflict Prevention:

In 2008, members established the ECOWAS Framework for Conflict Prevention (ECPF), which defines conflict prevention as activities designed to reduce tensions and prevent the outbreak, escalation, spread or recurrence of violence, Conflict prevention strategies include operational prevention (measures applicable in the face of imminent crisis) and structural prevention (measures to ensure that crises do not arise in the first place or, if they do, that they do not re-occur), so the ECPF will focus on preventing the eruption, escalation and resurgence of violent conflicts⁽⁵⁾.

By clarifying the security structure that ECOWAS adopts in settling disputes, it turns out that every time it adds a security mechanism or security protocol commensurate with the nature of conflicts that appear in its territory, however, this indicates on the other hand, the failure of previous mechanisms in resolving disputes, and this is due to The lack of financial resources that support its work, in addition to the members' lack of interest in developing the organization's security structures as a result of their fear of Nigeria's hegemony over it, especially the organization suffers from divisions in views among members and internal conflicts between them regarding the leadership of the organization.

1.2- Barry Buzan's Regional Security Complex Theory:

⁽¹⁾ John, M Kabia, "Regional approaches to peacebuilding: the ECOWAS peace and security architecture", Paper presented at the BISA-Africa and International Studies ESRC seminar series: African Agency in International Politics African Agency in Peace, Conflict and Intervention, the University of Birmingham, 7th April, 2011, p. 5

⁽²⁾ Gilles, Olakounlé Yabi, "The Role of ECOWAS in Managing Political Crisis and Conflict: The Cases of Guinea and Guinea-Bissau", Original in French, translated by Roger Addah, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Regional Office Abuja, Nigeria, 2010, p. 11.

⁽³⁾ John Mark, Opoku, "West African Conflict Early Warning and Early Response System: The Role of Civil Society Organizations", the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre Paper, num. 19, Accra, Ghana, September, 2007, p. 11.

⁽⁴⁾ Protocol A/SP1/12/01 on Democracy and Good Governance Supplementary to the Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflicts Prevention, Management and Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, Dakar, December 2001, p. 13.

⁽⁵⁾ Thelma, Ekiyor, "ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF): A new approach to an old challenge", **WACSI Op-Ed**, vol. 01/06/2008, p. 6.



Regional Security Complexes allow us to focus upon groupings of states whose actions dominate the security considerations of other member states, to further enhance this approach, Buzan and Wæver in their work define a regional security complex as "...a set of units whose major processes of securitization, de-securitization, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another"⁽¹⁾.

For almost two decades, the "region" has been firmly established as an important dimension in the analysis of post-Cold War security matters, The "regional security complex" has become a term for understanding violent conflicts in the context of regional international security concerns, At the same time, ROs have increasingly been expected to deal with challenges to peace and security and subsequently have been studied in this regard, and the AU and African sub-regional organizations like ECOWAS or the Southern African Development Community have been described as regional "security mechanisms", "collective security systems", "peace and security systems", or "multilayered security communities"⁽²⁾.

The theory of the regional security complex can be applied to the West African region. Whereas, in the 1970s the sub-region of west Africa was faced with the constant threats of violent and bloody military coups d'états, interstate wars, border disputes, the Biafran civil war in Nigeria, extra regional interventions and foreign backed mercenary activities that occurred in Cape Verde, Benin and Guinea, and the international security environment was perceived as a threat to the survival of the regimes of the newly independent states⁽³⁾.

Conflict in the West African security complex has been intra rather than interstate and they have largely been the result of various struggles for power by various groups within the state rather than conflicts between and among states, like the conflict in Liberia and Sierra Leone⁽⁴⁾.

These West African states were bound together by these threats of the international security environment and the fact that most of them are also ruled by "weak" and "divided" states is what qualifies them as members of the same regional security complex, and conflict in any one-member state is very likely to spill over into the neighboring countries as happened with the Liberian and Sierra Leone civil wars⁽⁵⁾.

Accordingly, it can be said that through the nature of the security environment in the West African region, ECOWAS has realized that it is necessary to address these security threats and conflicts in order to ensure security and peace for all countries of the region, So that this can only be done if the West African region is dealt with as a regional security complex that requires resolving conflicts in a unified and joint manner.

Because the conflict that takes place in certain countries is very likely to spread its negative results and repercussions to the rest of the countries of the region, especially since the armed and rebel groups and terrorist groups do not recognize borders, and they can easily penetrate them and obtain support from countries neighboring the conflict areas.

⁽¹⁾ Fatmir, M. Xheladini, "Regional Security Complex: The Macedonian Context", **European Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies**, Vol. 1, num. 6 (2016), p. 36.

⁽²⁾ Katharina P. W. Döring, & Jens, Herpolsheimer, "New Regionalisms" and Violent Conflicts in Africa: The Politics of the AU and ECOWAS in Mali and Guinea- Bissau", Working paper series Collaborative Research Center (SFB) 1199, the University of Leipzig, num. 5, 2016, p. 6.

⁽³⁾ A. Essuman, Johnson, op. cit, p. 7

⁽⁴⁾ Ibid.

⁽⁵⁾ Ibid.



For example, through our studies on West African conflicts, it was found that the conflict in Sierra Leone was due to the transfer of the rebel groups that were in Liberia to Sierra Leone, known as the "United Revolutionary Front", which also expanded to Guinea, and caused security tensions there.

In addition, the conflict in Mali was due to the transfer of the TUAREG who were in Libya after the fall of the Muammar Gaddafi regime in 2012.

On the other hand, reality indicates an increase in conflicts in the West African region, and therefore this indicates that ECOWAS does not deal with settling disputes in a common way, but deals with each conflict in a special way, which contributes to the continuation and complexity of conflicts.

2- The role of ECOWAS in settling the internal conflict in Mali:

Since the emergence of the conflict in Mali and its threat to the security of the African Sahel and West Africa, ECOWAS decided to intervene in order to settle it. In this study, we will be addressed the method of settling the conflict from 2012 to 2022.

2.1- The emergence of the conflict in Mali in 2012:

There are several reasons that led to the emergence of the conflict in Mali, including the TUAREG rebellion in 2012 after the fall of the Muammar Gaddafi regime in Libya, as the Malian TUAREG returned from Libya to Mali, in addition to the increasing risks of security threats in Mali, including terrorism and the spread of organized crime, Accordingly, these two aspects will be addressed in this element.

On 17 January 2012, armed TUAREG attacked the Malian army's garrison, which led to heavy fighting with government forces throughout towns in the north, by the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) was reported. The MNLA, a merger of different groups of TUAREG sought to establish the independent territory of Azawad. In contrast, Ansar Dine ("defenders of the faith"), another armed group of TUAREG, was decidedly against a violation of Mali's territorial integrity and aimed instead at transforming the state according to the laws of their Islamic faith⁽¹⁾.

The Mali Armed Forces (FAMA) was unable to contain the conflict in the north, and a group of unsatisfied and mutinous soldiers at a military base near Bamako staged a coup, ousting the democratically elected president Amadou Toumani Touré on 22 March 2012. By the end of March, the rebelling groups had gained control of the three main cities in northern Mali: Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu. On 6 April 2012, the MNLA claimed northern Mali's independence as the state of Azawad. However, the MNLA's occupation was short-lived; after the declaration of Azawad's independence, Ansar Dine, AQIM and MUJAO took over the major cities in the north. In November 2012, AQIM and MUJAO drove out the MNLA from Kidal and Timbuktu, and Ansar Dine took control of Kidal⁽²⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Katharina P, W. Döring, & Jens, Herpolsheimer, op. cit, pp. 8-9.

⁽²⁾ Farah, Hegazi, & others, "Climate-related Security Risks and Peacebuilding in Mali", Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2021, p. 6.



The coup was "unanimously condemned" by the international community, including the United Nations Security Council, the African Union, and the Economic Community of West African States⁽¹⁾.

2.2- Political and military settlement of the conflict after its emergence in 2012:

Before addressing the strategy adopted by ECOWAS in resolving the conflict in Mali, we first make sure of the legitimacy of its intervention, based on its security protocols.

The conflict in Mali is an internal conflict that threatens the security and safety of neighboring countries and regional security, and therefore ECOWAS can intervene according to Protocol 1999. Also, the army's coup against power is illegal and overthrew a democratically elected government, which contradicts the legal articles of the democracy and good governance protocol.

on 27 March 2012, ECOWAS convened an Extraordinary Summit of Regional Leaders in Abidjan to deliberate on a how to ensure a rapid return to a constitutional order in Mali as well as formulate measures to protect and preserve its territorial integrity. Mali was also suspended with immediate effect from participation in all decision-making bodies of ECOWAS in accordance with the provisions of the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance as well as the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance⁽²⁾.

the Economic Community of West African States announced that the chairman of the new National Committee for the Restoration of Democracy and State (CNRDR) had 72 hours to relinquish control before landlocked Mali's borders would be closed by its neighbors, its assets would be frozen by the West African Economic and Monetary Union, and individuals in the CNRDR would receive freezes on their assets and travel bans⁽³⁾.

The summit, which was attended by representatives of Algeria and Mauritania, named President Blaise Campaore, the former president of Burkina Faso as mediator in the Malian crisis with the mandate to interact with relevant stakeholders and engage them in fruitful dialogue for the restoration of peace⁽⁴⁾.

Accordingly, ECOWAS gave importance to the coup at the expense of the rebellion, because it focused strongly on condemning the coup and ensuring the return of the government, as stipulated in the Protocol of Democracy and Good Governance, and then dealing with the rebellion, which was the reason for prolonging the period of negotiations and conflict, as the rebel attacks hindered the diplomatic path. And it threatened regional security, especially the movement of armed and terrorist groups to other neighboring countries, such as Niger.

By using its power to impose sanctions while maintaining a dialogue, it was able to reach an agreement on 6 April 2012 with the coup leadership to re-establish civilian rule, and Less than a week later, Dioncounda Traoré, who had previously served as Mali's parliamentary

⁽¹⁾ Edward, Emeka Bristol, "the role of the united nations security council in the maintenance of international peace and security in Mali", (PhD thesis in laws in the school of postgraduate studies, department of public law, faculty of law, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria September, 2018), p. 164.

⁽²⁾ Michael, Addaney, "ECOWAS mediation in the Malian political crisis", **Journal on Contemporary Issues of Law (JCIL)**, vol. 2, Issue. 2, p. 5.

⁽³⁾ Edward, Emeka Bristol, op. cit, p. 164.

⁽⁴⁾ Michael, Addaney, op. cit, p. 5.



speaker, was sworn in as interim president and Cheick Modibo Diarra was appointed interim prime minister shortly thereafter⁽¹⁾.

On 26 April 2012, at an extraordinary summit in Côte d'Ivoire, ECOWAS decided that if the coup leaders wanted to avoid sanctions, elections had to be held within 12 months and the transition to constitutional order needed to be finalized. During that meeting ECOWAS also agreed to immediately deploy troops from the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF) which is called "the ECOWAS Mission in Mali (MICEMA)", in reaction to the independence declaration of the MNLA and the occupation of major towns in the north of Mali by armed groups⁽²⁾.

However, the deployment of the forces failed, due to the lack of logistical resources, and the refusal of Algeria and Mauritania, the two non-ECOWAS neighbors of Mali, to engage in the conflict militarily⁽³⁾.

Due to these difficulties, the African Union intervened to help ECOWAS, and it played an important role containing the reluctance of Algeria regarding MICEMA when it turned such option into a continental initiative, transforming ECOWAS' mission in the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA)⁽⁴⁾.

The AFISMA strategic objectives include:

- Achieve full operational capability of AFISMA through coordinated support by stakeholders for force generation, training, equipping, technical assistance and funding.
- Support the Malian authorities in the restoration of State authority and preservation of Mali's national unity and territorial integrity.
- Protect the population with respect to international human rights and international humanitarian and refugee law, and with adherence to the United Nations Human Rights Due Diligence Policy.
- Reduce threats posed by terrorist groups and transnational criminal networks in Mali.
- Establish a safe and secure environment in Mali.
- Support the Malian authorities in implementing the road map for the Transition⁽⁵⁾.

Despite the cooperation between the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union to settle the conflict in Mali, their efforts failed and did not find a solution to the conflict, which led to the French intervention, and Transforming the International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) which gave way to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali^(*) (MINUSMA).

Whereas, after this period, the efforts of ECOWAS in Mali began to diminish, and the settlement efforts were dominated by the United Nations and France, and the military forces

⁽¹⁾ Katharina P. W. Döring, & Jens Herpolsheimer, op. cit, p. 12.

⁽²⁾ Ibid.

⁽³⁾ Ibid.

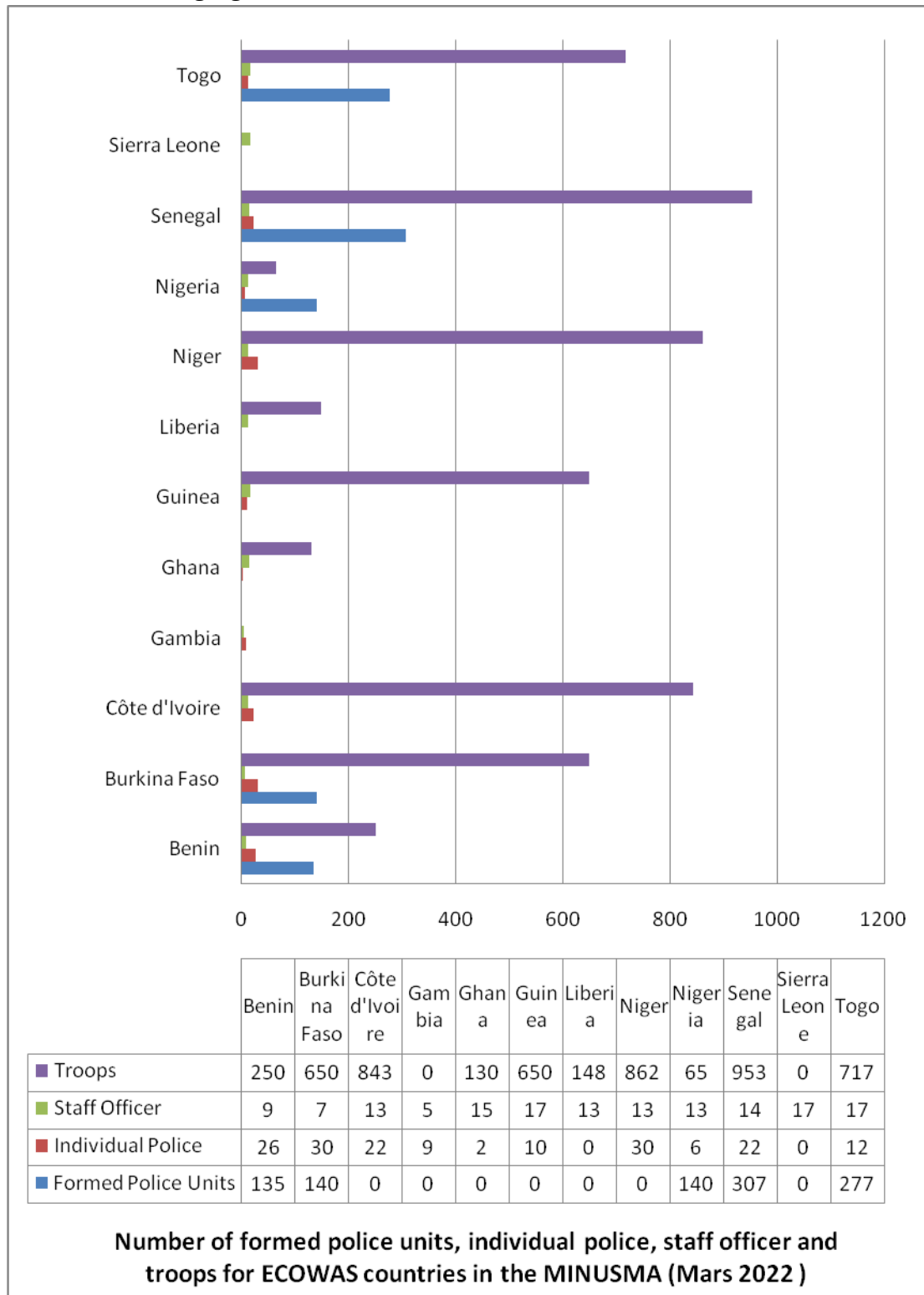
⁽⁴⁾ Willian, Moraes Roberto, & others, "The Situation in Mali", **UFRGSMUN, UFRGS Model United Nations Journal**, vol. 1 (2013), p. 85.

⁽⁵⁾ Edoward, Emeka Bristol, op. cit, pp. 237-238.

^(*) The mission performs the following tasks: Cease fire, Support in the application of the Agreement for peace and reconciliation of Mali, Good offices and reconciliation, Protection of civilians and stabilization, Promotion of defence of human rights, Humanitarian aid and projects in favour of stabilisation. For more see: Moussa, Djiré, & others, "Assessing the EU's conflict prevention and Peacebuilding interventions in Mali", université des Sciences Juridiques et Politiques de Bamako, 24 March 2017, p.17.



of ECOWAS were operating within the peacekeeping missions of the United Nations, as shown in the following figure:



This figure was prepared by the researcher, based on the statistics provided on the official website of United Nations peacekeeping operations, in:

<https://bit.ly/3uJ8SOS>

Through the table and based on the latest statistics provided through the United Nations peacekeeping website: Senegal, Togo, Burkina Faso, Niger, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea are among the top ten countries contributing to the MINUSMA mission with military forces, with the absence or decline in the numbers of Nigerian and Ghanaian forces, which They have always been the first contributor to peacekeeping missions within ECOWAS, which explains the decline of Nigerian military dominance in the financial dispute in exchange for the increasing role of Burkina Faso.

We note through the official website of the United Nations that the security contributions of the military forces and individual police of West African countries within MINUSMA are greater than the contributions of Western countries.

2.3- The political settlement of the conflict after the two military coups in 2020 and 2021:

In August 2020, Colonel Malek Diaw and a group of military soldiers carried out a military attack, arresting and forcing the resignation of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta. The coup d'état leaders, calling themselves the National Committee for the Salvation of the People (CNSP), declared their goal as primarily to prevent Mali from slipping into chaos, and denouncing Keita's inability to tackle overlapping violence, in addition they called for a civil political transition leading to credible general elections⁽¹⁾.

During the aftermath of this coup d'état, ECOWAS and AU demanded a restitution of a civilian government. However, on 22 September, the junta named Bah N'Daw as interim president and Goïta as interim vice-president in contradistinction to the demands by ECOWAS and the AU⁽²⁾.

ECOWAS has condemned the coup and decided:

- Demanding the immediate release of the President and all officials arrested.
- Categorically denied any kind of legitimacy to the coup-makers, and demanded the reinstatement of the constitutional order.
- Suspended Mali from all ECOWAS decision-making bodies.
- ECOWAS closed all land and air borders and blocked all economic, trade, and financial flows between its member states and Mali⁽³⁾.

The CNSP agreed to hold elections by February 2022 during initial negotiations with ECOWAS in 2020. However, in late 2021 another military coup took place, and officials proposed extending the transition period for up to five more years. In response, ECOWAS imposed broad economic sanctions on Mali, closing their borders with the country, banning commercial transactions (exempting essential goods and medications), and freezing Mali's sovereign assets held in ECOWAS banks⁽⁴⁾.

ECOWAS completed its tasks regarding monitoring the preparation period for the elections by sending a mediation mission to Mali from 5 to 7 September 2021, in order to

⁽¹⁾ Ilana, Zelmanovitz Axelrod, & Kwesi, Aning, "Mali, Democracy and ECOWAS's Sanctions Regime", policy brief 9, Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC), Accra, Ghana, October 2020, p. 1.

⁽²⁾ Ibid, p. 3.

⁽³⁾ Ibid, p. 4.

⁽⁴⁾ Alexis, Arieff, "Crisis in Mali", version 15, the Congressional Research Service (CRS), May 23, 2022, p. 2.



assess the situation and supervise the preparations, which were not satisfactory. Therefore, ECOWAS requested the interim government to provide a timetable to clarify it⁽¹⁾.

At the 4th Extraordinary Session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States held in Accra, Ghana, on January 9, 2022, to review the political situation in Mali, additional sanctions were imposed on the country due to the failure of the transitional authorities to take the necessary steps to organize presidential elections before February 27, 2022⁽²⁾.

The latest sanctions include the recall of ECOWAS member states ambassadors accredited to Mali; closure of land and air borders; suspension of all commercial and financial transactions except for food products, pharmaceutical products, medical supplies, and equipment, including materials for the control of COVID-19, petroleum products and electricity; freezing of Malian assets in ECOWAS central banks; and the suspension of all financial assistance and transactions⁽³⁾.

Accordingly, it is clear from the foregoing that the conflict in Mali has inevitably drawn neighboring and proximate states into the emerging zone of instability, through its regionalization. Whereas growing tensions and transnational crime spread across Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, Mali's conflict has directly expanded along its porous borders facilitating the smuggling of migrants, drug trafficking, and terrorism. Similarly, as Mali gradually became the epicenter of regional instability, accounting for 64 percent of all jihadist violent episodes in the Sahel, in 2019, large influx of refugees fleeing armed conflict has episodically been threatening the national security and stability of its neighbors⁽⁴⁾.

Conclusion:

ECOWAS has played many positive roles in resolving the conflict in Mali, most notably the restoration of stability in the region in 2013, through the signing of the Ouagadougou Agreement, and its military contribution to the African Union mission and the United Nations, but its financial and logistical weakness has led to the weakening of its diplomatic and military role. This led to the intervention of foreign parties such as France, and on this basis the study reached the following results:

- The conflict arose in Mali in 2012 due to the TUAREG rebellions, who wanted an independent state, and as a result of the government's inability to deal with this violence, the armies rebelled against the president.
- ECOWAS intervened in Mali and sent a mediation mission to conduct negotiations with the military council, which reached an agreement for the return of the government. However, on the other hand, ECOWAS strategies were not effective in dealing with the TUAREG rebellions and armed groups.
- Due to the failure of ECOWAS to settle the conflict in Mali, the United Nations intervened and sent the MINUSMA mission in order to restore stability to Mali and

(1) "Communique of the ECOWAS Mediation Mission to Mali", ECOWAS Commission, Bamako, 7th September 2021, pp. 2- 3.

(2) Festus, Kofi Aubyn, "ECOWAS Sanctions Against Mali Necessary, but May Be Counter-Productive", IPI International Peace Institute, February 2, 2022, in: <https://bit.ly/3WYfPIp>

(3) Ibid.

(4) Ilana, Zelmanovitz Axelrod, & Kwesi, Aning, op. cit, p. 3.



- protect human security, in addition to France, which intervened in order to eliminate terrorist threats in the region.
- After the coups in Mali in 2020 and 2021, ECOWAS tried again to activate its diplomatic efforts in order to find a final solution to the problem of coups in Mali and to prepare for the elections, but the interim government every time does not abide by the decisions of ECOWAS, which led to the continuation of the conflict and terrorist attacks.
 - The failure of ECOWAS to settle and resolve the conflict in Mali led to the continuation of the conflict and its impact on the rest of the neighboring countries, and thus it has become a threat to the security and safety of the African Sahel region and West Africa, which necessitates the need for ECOWAS to adopt a new strategy based on a balance between addressing the problem of coups in Mali and confronting the problem of Terrorism and new security threats in the region.

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