



# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

## **THESIS**

**WHY HAS ECOWAS NOT TAKEN THE LEAD ROLE IN  
ADDRESSING THE MALIAN CRISIS?**

by

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September 2018

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MALIAN CRISIS?**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was created in 1975 with the ambition of economically integrating West African countries so that they can achieve harmonious development. Successive crises in the region, however, have led to the realization that the absence of peace destroys all development efforts intended by the economic integration initiative. In order to prevent the breach of peace and to participate in conflict management, ECOWAS adopted two protocols in 1978 and 1981, after which, in 1993, the organization revised its founding text to broaden its action scope to political and security issues. The Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), considered the armed wing of ECOWAS, was at the beginning an ad hoc force. However, it gained permanent status in 1999 with the adoption of the Protocol on Mechanism for Prevention, Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security. ECOMOG intervened in Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, and the Ivory Coast. From the outbreak of the crisis in northern Mali, in January 2012, to the French intervention in January 2013, however, ECOWAS was not able to generate support for the troops of Mali to defend their national territory. Since it took French intervention for ECOWAS to act, this project addresses the question: Why did the regional organization fail to take the lead role and instead seemingly bandwagoned with the French?

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| AAFC   | Allied Armed Forces of the Community                             |
| AFISMA | African-led International Support Mission to Mali                |
| AQIM   | Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb                                  |
| AU     | African Union  |
| ECOMOG | Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group       |
| ECOWAS | Economic Community of West African States                        |
| ICG    | International Crisis Group                                       |
| MEND   | Movement of Emancipation of the Niger Delta                      |
| MOJWA  | Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa                    |
| NATO   | North Atlantic Treaty Organization                               |
| NGO    | Non-governmental Organization                                    |
| NLMA   | National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad                   |
| NPFL   | National Patriotic Front of Liberia                              |
| UN     | United Nations   |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNSC   | United Nations Security Council                                  |

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To my dear son, Hassane, Dad loves you...

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION**

In January 2012, the worst crisis Mali had ever experienced started. The severity of the crisis is equaled by its complexity. At first, the conflict appeared as a consequence of the Libyan civil war. After the overthrow of Kaddafi's regime, his Touareg mercenaries pillaged Libyan armaments and fled toward the Sahara Desert to join rebel movements in the north of Mali. Those armed groups allied with other terrorist organizations, such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MOJWA), as well as other narco-trafficker armed groups, and took control over the Malian towns of Aguel'hoc, Ménaka, and Tessalit. The Malian military's successive defeats in the north caused turmoil in the south, which finally resulted in the overthrow of the democratically elected government by a group of non-commissioned officers on March 22, 2012.

The coup, which disorganized the military and broke its chain of command, put Mali's entire northern region in the hands of rebel jihadists, who later proclaimed an Islamic state, on May 27, 2012, with "sharia" as the ruling law. Ten months later, on January 10, 2013, jihadists undertook an offensive toward the capital city Bamako. They were finally stopped by a French intervention, on January 11, 2013, which had been requested by the interim president. This intervention triggered the deployment of the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA), which is a military mission driven by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). It is worth noting that the United Nations (UN) Security Council had previously given this African-led mission a mandate to intervene, with Resolution 2085 of December 20, 2012. The Resolution meant that AFISMA helped Malian armed forces take control of the occupied territory and drive terrorists out of the area.

ECOWAS was first established with the aim of economically integrating the countries of western Africa, but it enlarged its objective to the security dimension, conflict prevention, management, resolution, and peacekeeping. ECOWAS is now considered "the

most prominent sub-regional organization in conducting peacemaking and peacekeeping missions in Africa”<sup>1</sup> and “Africa’s most advanced regional peace and security mechanism.”<sup>2</sup> Yet, surprisingly, it took French intervention for ECOWAS to act in Mali. This sub-regional organization therefore yielded its leadership in the settlement of the Malian crisis. This thesis project intends to address the question of why ECOWAS did not take a lead role in addressing the Malian crisis.

## **B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION**

The topic has real-world as well as scholarly significance. It offers real-world significance in making some diagnoses of ECOWAS as an organization and shedding light on factors that have prevented it from fulfilling its missions. If these factors are likely to more generally prevent any other sub-regional arrangements from acting on such matters. The Malian crisis, which is still ongoing, offers a concrete case for evaluating the organization. Heads of state and governments, as well as leaders of institutions, can seize the opportunity to better understand ECOWAS’s potential to serve as a stabilizing force for regional security. Second, this study integrates an academic significance by adding to the existing literature about obstacles encountered in the operationalization of ECOWAS missions. In this regard, the study explores potential factors that caused ECOWAS to be supplanted in the Malian case.

ECOWAS’s actions were uniquely articulated around political dimensions of the crisis, such as negotiating with Bamako about the transfer of power from the junta to civilian authorities, negotiating with rebel jihadists, and proposing resolutions for intervention to the UN Security Council. Virtually none of these actions scored major success. At Bamako, power remained in the hands of the military. Negotiations with the rebel jihadists were fruitless because rebels were only looking to gain time. The

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<sup>1</sup> Mohamed Belmakki, “African Sub-regional Organizations in Peacekeeping and Peacemaking: The Economic Community of West African State (ECOWAS)” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2005), abstract, [https://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/2319/05Mar\\_Belmakki.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/2319/05Mar_Belmakki.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y).

<sup>2</sup> Cyril I. Obi, “Economic Community of West African States on the Ground: Comparing Peacekeeping in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, and Côte D’Ivoire,” *African Security* 2, no. 2–3 (2009): 1, doi:10.1080/19362200903361945.



intervention resolutions submitted to the UN Security Council were also rejected three times by this body, which found them not accurate enough. Indeed, points 17 and 18 of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2056 indicated that the Council took note of the deployment permission submitted by ECOWAS and was ready to further consider the request as soon as it received more details on the objectives, means, and modalities of the proposed deployment.<sup>3</sup>

### **C. LITERATURE REVIEW**

If literature about the deficiency and limits of ECOWAS exists, academic works about the reasons ECOWAS did not intervene promptly and decisively to help Malian forces in their fight against rebel jihadist are not prolific. The recent timing of the event may play into that. From the existing literature on ECOWAS, two main tendencies seem to emerge in the analysis of its deficiency and limits to fully play its role.

First, some scholars argue that there is a difference between ECOWAS's official positions and the actual reasons for intervention in crises in West African states. That is Fredrick Söderbaum, Rodrigo Tavares, James J. Hentz, and Cyril I. Obi's point of view. These authors explain that there are unofficial triggers for intervention, which are different from rhetorical statements about human security protection. The unofficial triggers for intervention lay in national interests or personal linkages between the leaders. Thus, whether regional or sub-regional, Africa's security organizations are more about "sovereign boosting."<sup>4</sup> Equally, the likelihood of intervention is increased if the local hegemon favors it.

James J. Hentz argues that, "in general, national interests underwrite regional actions."<sup>5</sup> So, what can be national interests of ECOWAS members? According to Hentz,

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<sup>3</sup> "Document Officiel Des Nations Unies." United Nations, accessed July 24, 2018, [http://www.un.org/fr/documents/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2056\(2012\)](http://www.un.org/fr/documents/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2056(2012)).

<sup>4</sup> James J. Hentz, Fredrik Söderbaum, and Rodrigo Tavares. "Regional Organizations and African Security: Moving the Debate Forward," *African Security* 2, no. 2–3 (2009): 206, doi:10.1080/19362200903362109; meaning to support an ally or to promote one's own prestige and the reputation of the military, rather than "responsibility to protect."

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 212.

national interests can be to demonstrate to the broader community that a given state actor is a meaningful player, to prevent turmoil from spreading, or a reaction to humanitarian crisis like refugee flows. The argument of national interest determining intervention falls apart in the test case of the Malian crisis. Most or all of the states in the sub-region had a national interest in stopping the growing threat of rebel jihadists because of the risk of contagion. In effect, the same ethnic groups, Touareg, on whose behalf jihadist rebels symbolize their fight, exist in Burkina Faso, Niger, Mauritania, Algeria, and Senegal. Neither the sub-regional organization nor individual states undertook an intervention initiative, however. The national interest incentive seems to be insufficient in prompting intervention in the referred case. Therefore, although national interest may explain some cases of involvement, it does not fully shed light on the enigma of the Malian case, which called for the direct action of the former colonizer.

Personal relationships offer another potential explanation, since the personalization of politics is a reality in Africa. Empathy or animosity between heads of state dictate the conduct of their respective foreign policies toward each other. Hentz draws an example of this fact from the crisis in Liberia, where intervention occurred more for Liberian state security than human security. In the Liberian case, the friendship between Babangida, President of Nigeria, and Samuel Doe, President of Liberia, justified ECOWAS's intervention in the latter country. In effect, at least 80 percent of Economic Community of West African States Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) troops and 90 percent of the funding during the military intervention were provided by Nigeria.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Houphouet Boigny, President of Cote d'Ivoire, supported Charles Taylor, leader of the rebellion National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), because President Doe failed to prevent the murder of his adopted daughter's spouse, Adolphus Tolbert. Adekeye Adebajo observes that the intertwinement of personal linkages has influenced the dynamics of the Liberian crisis and ultimately led to its end "with the successful Nigerian policy of rapprochement with the NPFL."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Obi, "Economic Community of West African States on the Ground," 121–122.

<sup>7</sup> Adekeye Adebajo, *Building Peace in West Africa: Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 67.

Personal linkage is key in understanding the idiosyncratic policy choices of most African heads of state. There are some limits to that approach, however. When the Malian crisis began, many countries in the sub-region had acquired new leaders, thanks to the democratic elections or regime change. It is therefore improbable that the Malian president had developed any kind of personal linkage with them and vice versa.

Other scholars, like João Gomes Cravinho and Adekeye Adebajo, identify a lack of resources as one of the main factors rendering African regional organizations ill-equipped to act alone and stabilize hotspots on the continent. Cravinho argues, “African regional organizations have a significant opportunity to consolidate and develop their vision of peace and stability on the continent, but in general they still lack the depth of resources and experience to act alone.”<sup>8</sup> The author sees the European Union as a decisive partner for filling this gap. Although this argument is compelling at first sight, it is not specific about the resources or capabilities that African regional organizations lack or about the extent of the problem. In addition, if material resources like financial assets are the reason for inaction, it is worth noting that no organization, the UN included, can claim to have sufficient resources to fulfil all commitments. That is why, coming out of Cold War configuration and acknowledging that most states lacked sufficient funds to respond to crises alone, states promoted the creation of regional and sub-regional organizations to take care of regional security issues.

The concern of Adekeye Adebajo about resources and equipment was valuable in helping to explain earlier episode of ECOWAS intervention, specifically in the Liberian crisis, where the institution adopted an ad hoc operation. Since then, however, a lot of water has flowed under the bridge. First, ECOWAS institutionalized a real security mechanism with the signature of the Protocol Relating to Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security in December 1999. Second, ECOWAS intervened and so experienced several crisis management episodes, in Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Cote d’Ivoire. With 1999’s Protocol, ECOWAS is supposed to have a

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<sup>8</sup> João Gomes Cravinho. “Regional Organizations in African Security: A Practitioners View,” *African Security* 2, no. 2–3 (2009): 193, doi:10.1080/19362200903362091.

standby, multipurpose force, composed of elements from member states of the organization, permanently stationed in their respective countries and ready for immediate deployment. Therefore, they should have the resources and equipment needed to intervene in situations like the Malian crisis. Consequently, this explanation also seems insufficient.

**D. ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS: LACK OF TRUST AND INTERNAL INSTABILITY**

Current literature about ECOWAS's way of managing crises in the Western Africa sub-region summarizes factors that might impede its responsiveness and effectiveness as, first, personal politics; second, national interests; and third, insufficient capacity. Although there may be reasons to doubt the applicability of these hypotheses to the Malian case, they still have some merits. Knowing that there are unofficial triggers behind official speech, and that interventions of the sub-regional arrangement is more about national interest and sovereign boosting than real responsibility to protect, are clues that help to figure out states' perception of each other and of the organization per se.

An alternative explanation for the delay in ECOWAS's response is the lack of trust. Very likely, Mali did not fully place its trust in ECOWAS. That is evidenced by the fact that from the beginning to the climax of the Malian crisis, authorities in Bamako have always prohibited the presence of ECOWAS troops in the capital city. Therefore, mistrust within the organization, as evidenced by the target state resistance and restrictions on troop deployment, is another hypothesis explaining why ECOWAS failed in taking the lead for the settlement of the crisis in Mali.

By considering the sub-regional environment when the war broke out in Mali, one can realize that the whole place was at a boil and that most of the states faced internal security challenges. Leaders' legitimacy in key states was contested and there were insurgencies in many places. In Cote d'Ivoire, a ten-year civil war was reaching denouement with the dislodgement of Laurent Gbagbo and the installation of Alassane Dramane Ouattara as president. There were Boko Haram insurrections in Nigeria. Senegal was turning the page on a tumultuous presidential election. Guinea Conakry was also experiencing a profound crisis after the death of President Lassana Conte. Leaders were

facing internal dilemmas that might have reduced their margin of maneuver to be more decisive and conclusive in the Malian crisis. Therefore, distraction by internal instability is the fifth hypothesis explaining why ECOWAS did not take the lead in the settlement of the crisis in Mali.

## **E. RESEARCH DESIGN**

This thesis investigates more deeply these potential explanations to understand why ECOWAS leaders did not take the lead role in addressing the Malian crisis. In proceeding with this research project, I will first test previous authors' arguments to see whether personal politics, national interests, and insufficient capacity can also explain ECOWAS's role in the Malian case. If they do not apply to the Malian case, those explanations could be less viable.

In the absence of available data about personal linkage between former President Amadou Toumani Toure and his peers within the sub-region, I will conduct a general observation on the quality of the relationship between Mali and neighboring ECOWAS member states. If the relationship status looked good at the time, this would mean that the personal politics argument could not explain ECOWAS's slow intervention.

Talking about national interest, I will evaluate whether the crisis in Mali threatened neighboring countries' national security. If ECOWAS's members had an interest in Mali's stability, but that it did not prompt those countries' intervention, then the argument about national interest falls apart.

Approaching the previous authors' last point about the lack of capacity for ECOWAS to carry alone the mission of security in its jurisdiction, I will present ECOWAS's capacity improvement over time in the institutional dimension and the lessons it has learned from field experiences.

In the investigation process, I will refer to journalistic sources such as online news articles, media reporting, and official reports. I will also consult secondary sources like journal articles and books.

After having tested the existing arguments, I will examine the two alternative explanations to enhance understanding of ECOWAS's failure to act quickly in the Malian case. To do so, I will rely upon journalistic sources, specifically the ones that have covered critical phases of political interaction between authorities in Bamako and the ECOWAS organization, and officials' most important declarations. Through similar sources, I will also try to find out ongoing or recent internal troubles within other ECOWAS member states. Before tackling the research question, however, it will be wise, in first, to do a brief overview of ECOWAS's history in order to set the scene and give more background to readers.

## **F. THESIS OVERVIEW AND DRAFT CHAPTER OUTLINE**

The thesis intends to shed light on factors that may have prevented ECOWAS from being the lead actor in resolving the Malian crisis in 2012. After this introductory chapter, I will present an overview of ECOWAS's genesis and evolution in Chapter II, to give more background to readers and set the scene. This second chapter will also give me the opportunity to present some instances of ECOWAS intervention in order to highlight similarities or differences with the Malian case. Chapter III will be dedicated to presenting the Malian crisis. In Chapter IV, I will test previous authors' hypotheses and my own explanations in the Malian case. In the conclusion, I will provide recommendations on how to improve ECOWAS's effectiveness and responsiveness for future crises.

## **II. ECOWAS HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

After achieving independence, the states of the West African sub-region wanted to reconnect with their past of unity through regionalism. Two trends emerged: a maximalist tendency towards unity through the transfer of important sovereign powers of the states to a regional integration organization and a minimalist tendency, which promoted rapprochement between states through agreements in specific areas of activity. In other words, the minimalist trend supported the view that integration, as an end state, would be reached progressively by bringing the new independent states closer through economics and technical cooperation. The maximalist tendency failed quickly because of the self-interest of some states with respect to their own development advantage and because of external interference. The minimalist trend was relatively more successful. The treaty establishing ECOWAS was signed on May 28, 1975, at Lagos in this context. Originally conceived and designed as an economic integration organization, ECOWAS soon mutated to embrace the security and political dimensions.

### **A. THE DYNAMICS OF REGIONAL CONSOLIDATION IN WEST AFRICA**

To understand the integrative dynamic of the West African region, one needs to recall its history. West Africa was the cradle of many empires: kingdoms whose radiance spanned through the ages. The most illustrious among those political entities were as follows: the Empire of Ghana (3rd–13th centuries), the Empire of Mali (13th–15th centuries), and the Songhay Empire (15th–16th centuries). Divided ever since because of different colonial experiences, the newly independent West African states returned to historical patterns of forming again great political ensembles. The attempt to revisit regionalism was evinced by the increasing regional integration initiatives and agreements in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The living experience of the precolonial era, coupled with territorial, economic, and demographic handicaps inherited from colonization, made

the realization of unity<sup>9</sup> through regional integration an appropriate roadmap for the West African states engaged in the process of acquiring their independence. Thus, several regrouping initiatives were born.

A federal project, regrouping Dahomey (Benin), Upper Volta (Burkina Faso), Senegal and Soudan (Mali), was initiated during the Conférence of Bamako held on December 29 and 30, 1958. In 1959, however, Dahomey and Upper Volta, influenced by France and Ivory Coast, rejected the federation's constitution. The federation was therefore reduced to Soudan and Senegal. On April 4, 1960, the Federal Assembly elected Leopold Sedar Senghor as its president and Modibo Keita as its Chief Executive. After the birth of the Federation of Mali, however, divergences arose between its leaders and resulted in the Federation's implosion on August 20, 1960.

Another federal initiative was the creation of the Union of African States, sometimes called the Union Ghana-Guinea-Mali. The union started with Ghana and Guinea, on May 1, 1959; Mali then joined on December 24, 1960. The Union, which was the first of its kind to bring together a British colony and French colonies, aimed to develop among its members a common currency and a unified foreign policy. Since the Union had neither an administration nor permanent meetings, none of its proposals were implemented. No other states joined the union, even though it was opened to all independent states in Africa. The Union disbanded in 1963.

## **B. ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION AS A PROGRESSIVE VECTOR FOR INTEGRATION**

Besides the integration initiatives that have maximal political ambition for unity, meaning huge transfers of sovereignty from states to the regional integration organization, states pursued agreements of technical and economic cooperation that aimed to create partnerships between countries in some specific domain of activities. ECOWAS became the successor of the following Conventions: the Convention of the Western African

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<sup>9</sup> Another word for *unity* will be the achievement of Pan-Africanism ideology. Pan-Africanism is a philosophical concept representing African history, culture, arts, and sciences. Pan-Africanism pursues the goal of protecting African civilization through the unification of all continental Africa.



Customs Union (signed at Paris on June 9, 1959), the Convention of West African Economic and Customs Union (signed at Abidjan on June 6, 1966), and the West African Economic Community (signed at Abidjan on April 17, 1973).

The 1959 Convention between Côte d'Ivoire, Dahomey, Upper Volta, Mauritania, Niger, and the Federation of Mali (the Sudan and Senegal) had been intended to establish a total customs union, which extended to the entry and exit charges levied on goods and merchandise coming from or destined for those states. Although a laudable initiative in the economic cooperation policy between the member states of the Union, the mechanism put in place by this convention has proven to be ineffective. Indeed, a total customs union could not be based on the fragile foundations at the time and between countries still under construction, not to mention the fact that the members did not find an agreement for the distribution of the customs revenue collected on imports. This convention, therefore, never had a real application because the obstacles to the free movement of goods were frequent and the many violations eventually rendered it ineffective. The West African Economic and Customs Community replaced the customs union in June 1966 with the same membership. It established a trade and economic integration area in the region. This regional cooperation establishment lacked vigor and its achievements were negligible compared to the expectations. Similar problems persisted in varying degrees in the conventions that followed it, despite the advent of ECOWAS.

### **C. THE BIRTH OF ECOWAS AND THE STRENGTHENING OF WEST AFRICAN ECONOMIC INTEGRATION**

In Lagos in 1975, 16 West African states consented to reinforce further their link through the creation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The signatories of ECOWAS insisted that

It shall be the aim of the Community to promote co-operation and development in all fields of economic activity particularly in the fields of industry, transport, telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, commerce, monetary and financial questions and in social and cultural matters for the purpose of raising the standard of living of its peoples, of increasing and maintaining economic stability, of fostering

closer relations among its members and of contributing to the progress and development of the African continent.<sup>10</sup>

In order to achieve such goals, the Community, by stages, was expected to ensure the elimination of trade barriers between member states; the establishment of a uniform customs tariff and commercial policy towards third countries; the promotion of freedom of movements for peoples, services, and capital within the Community space; the implementation of common schemes for the development of equipment and transportation infrastructures; and the elimination of disparities in the levels of development.<sup>11</sup>

Indeed, the ultimate goal of the Heads of States and Governments who signed the ECOWAS creation treaty was to accelerate and sustain the member states' economic development, especially by suppressing obstacles to the free movement of goods, capital, and people. That said, West African integration would be realized through the creation of a common market that also would be a growth engine reducing disparities in the level of developments among the sub-region countries. The U.S. State Department correctly observes that

ECOWAS was conceived as a means toward economic integration and development intended to lead to the eventual establishment of an economic union in West Africa, enhancing economic stability and enhancing relations between member states. In actuality, ECOWAS was an attempt to overcome the isolation of most West African countries following the colonial period and the period of post-independence nationalism.<sup>12</sup>

If 1975 reflected the state of mind that West African regional integration should come primarily from economic bases, in the following decades ECOWAS evolved to adapt to contemporary challenges. The regional organization's mandate changed de facto before it changed de jure, however.

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<sup>10</sup> Treaty of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Concluded at Lagos on 28 May 1975. No 14843, <http://investmentpolicyhub.unctad.org/Download/TreatyFile/5560>.

<sup>11</sup> Treaty of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

<sup>12</sup> "Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)," U.S. Department of State, November 22, 2002, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/t/pm/rls/fs/22519.htm>.

#### **D. THE MUTATION OF ECOWAS TO EMBRACE A SECURITY DIMENSION**

The regional organization changed its mandate to embrace a security dimension in 1993, through the revision of the ECOWAS founding treaty. It is important to stress, however, that the process had been under way ever since the realities of the sub-region demanded it. The milestones for this revision were already poised. In effect, less than a year after ECOWAS's establishment, the heads of State of Nigeria and Togo proposed a defense treaty, from which emerged the Protocol of Non-aggression two years later. This Protocol was signed in Lagos on April 22, 1978. The preamble of this succinct document, just six articles long, recognized that ECOWAS "cannot attain its objectives save in an atmosphere of peace and harmonious understanding among the Member States of the Community."<sup>13</sup> The protocol committed the states of the community to refraining from any use of force for the settlement of their disputes and to privilege the voices of peaceful settlements. In the event of failure to settle the crises between member states peacefully, co-litigants should refer to a Committee of the Authority. The Protocol's Article 5 ends by stating that, "in the event of failure of settlement by the aforementioned Committee the dispute shall finally go to the Authority."<sup>14</sup> As a preventive measure against any use of force to destabilize one another, the member states must refrain from committing, supporting, or tolerating any attempt against the territorial integrity or independence of another member state. Thus, acknowledging the challenge of internal stability regarding African security, the protocol of non-aggression regulated relations within ECOWAS in a way that prevents and prohibits member states from engaging in subversive activities towards each other. The protocol created an institutional layering to prevent conflicts among and within member states.

Following the Protocol of Non-aggression, ECOWAS member states signed another separate agreement in 1981: the Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance of

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<sup>13</sup> Protocol on Non-aggression. Concluded at Lagos on 20 April 1978, [http://documentation.ecowas.int/download/en/legal\\_documents/protocols/Protocol%20on%20Non-aggression.pdf](http://documentation.ecowas.int/download/en/legal_documents/protocols/Protocol%20on%20Non-aggression.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

Defense. This second agreement, signed at Freetown on May 29, 1981, starts from the premise that economic progress, as intended with the creation of ECOWAS, “cannot be achieved unless the conditions for the necessary security are ensured in all Member States of the Community.”<sup>15</sup> In other words, economic progress will be achieved only if member states of the community get a sort of insurance and coverage against, this time, outside security threats. The state of mind of the moment seriously considered threats of aggression on the African continent, in general, and on the states of the community, in particular, with the presence of foreign forces and bases within the continent. In this context, to support countries’ national efforts in taking charge of their respective national security, ECOWAS offered mutual assistance for a greater effectiveness in a framework of a collective defense. To this end, the Protocol states in Article 2 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.”<sup>16</sup> As such, ECOWAS’s member states committed themselves to providing to one another mutual aid and assistance for defense in the case of armed threat or aggression against a member state. According to the provisions of the Protocol of 1981, especially its Articles 4, 16, 17, and 18, the Allied Armed Forces of the Community (AAFC)—ECOWAS’s envisaged command intervention force created by combining the Organization member states’ national forces—will intervene in two possible situations. First, it can intervene when all peaceful efforts to settle a dispute—routes provided by Article 5 of the 1978 Protocol of Non-aggression as well as the community authority efforts of mediation—have failed. Secondly, they can intervene at the request of the head of the state that is a victim of aggression. In this case, the request for assistance, addressed to the Authority’s chairperson with copies to other members, means that the Authority is “duly notified and that the AAFC are placed under a state of emergency.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Economic Community of West African States Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance of Defence. Concluded at Freetown on 29 May 1981, <http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/3827~v~Protocole d Assistance Mutuelle en matiere de Defense.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Economic Community of West African States Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance of Defence.

Basically, the Protocol on Mutual Defense, as the complement to the Protocol on Non-aggression, pursued three additional objectives: preventing and responding to external aggression; managing intra-ECOWAS conflicts; and countering internal armed conflicts that are supported and maintained by foreign actors, whether internal or external to ECOWAS. In the case of external aggression, member states would provide mutual aid and assistance in defense.

These two important Protocols, of 1978 and 1981, place equal emphasis on threats from outside and inside, including domestic splits. This is apparent in Article 4 of the 1981 Protocol relating to the mutual assistance of defense, which states that ECOWAS is compelled to intervene in “internal armed conflict within any member state engineered and supported actively from outside likely to endanger the security and peace in the entire Community.”<sup>18</sup> The focus on countering outside influence on domestic conflicts is easily understandable in the sense that internal armed conflicts are unlikely to prosper and threaten regional peace unless supported by the outside.

These security measures were, to some extent, flawed, as they could not be used to address exclusively intra-state conflicts. Nevertheless, it should be known that, at this stage, the concern of the regional organization was not oriented to deal with the origin of domestic political disputes; rather, the objective was to contain disturbances. To contain threats from inside—specifically, domestic opposition—however, the most effective tool is naturally to improve governance. That is why it is accurate to say that the answers to defense and security questions are not only military, but also political. ECOWAS adopted this approach for the first time in its Declaration of Political Principles (Abuja, July 6, 1991). This Declaration affirms the member states’ attachment to human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as their willingness to promote political pluralism and representative institutions in each country. ECOWAS, therefore, added a political dimension, as well as a security dimension, to its initial economic mandate.

The expansion of ECOWAS’s mandate to military matters, through the 1978 and 1981 protocols, facilitated the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG)’s deployment to

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

Liberia in 1990, at the request of Liberian President Samuel Doe, who had faced a rebellion led by Charles Taylor since December 1981.<sup>19</sup> This deployment was notably ECOWAS's first military experience in an operation theater. ECOMOG, a multinational force, was set up on an ad hoc basis for peacekeeping and peace enforcement missions. As provided by the Protocols of 1978 and 1981, the failure of peaceful solutions, including a proposal for a ceasefire, propelled ECOWAS's decision body—the Authority—to create an intervention force to impose a ceasefire between the two fighting factions of Samuel Doe and Charles Taylor. The ECOWAS Conference of Heads of State and Government approved the deployment of the ECOMOG troops, mostly from Nigeria, in November 1990.<sup>20</sup> It is important to note that, when deploying, the intervention force did not have any mandate from the UN. The first UN Security Council resolution on Liberia was issued on January 22, 1991, to endorse the ECOWAS-sponsored peace initiative.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, at Cotonou, on July 14, 1993, ECOWAS members signed a revision to their founding treaty that adopted statutes related to the new realities. Chapter 10 of the revised treaty integrated the security dimension. Point 2 of Article 52, contained in Chapter 10, binds the member states that have signed the previous Protocols and the Declaration of Political Principles of the Community to cooperate with a view to achieving those security and political objectives.

The revised Treaty of 1993 represented the turning point for ECOWAS by reformulating both its goals and missions. The said reform incorporated security and politics within the aims of the organization, for the purpose of peace and security, guarantors of harmonious development. For these purposes, member states must co-operate with the community, in the context of the prevention and the timely resolution of interstate

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<sup>19</sup> ECOMOG was the first multinational peacekeeping/peace enforcement force to be established by a regional body.

<sup>20</sup> “1990–2003: Comment La Guerre Au Liberia a Fait Rentrer La Cedeao Dans Une Nouvelle Dimension [1990–2003 : How The War In Liberia Made Ecowas Come Into A New Dimension]” *JeuneAfrique*. December 16, 2016, accessed March 30, 2018, <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/384287/politique/1990-2003-guerre-liberia-a-rentre-cedeao-nouvelle-dimension/>.

<sup>21</sup> “Libéria: Derrière Le Chaos, Crises Et Interventions Internationales [Liberia: Behind Chaos, International Crises and Interventions],” Home, accessed March 30, 2018, <https://www.msf-crash.org/fr/publications/guerre-et-humanitaire/liberia-derriere-le-chaos-crises-et-interventions>.

or intrastate conflicts, through periodic consultations, the use of measures to settle peacefully their disputes, the establishment of a regional observatory for peace and security and, where appropriate, the establishment of peacekeeping forces. In addition, the revised treaty refers to the relevant protocols with regard to political cooperation, regional peace, and stability.

In 1999, ECOWAS members adopted the Protocol on Mechanism for Prevention, Management, Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security. This Protocol gives a permanent statute to the ECOMOG force by stating that it is a force whose elements are in their respective countries of origin and ready to be deployed as soon as possible (Article 21), its missions (Article 22), and its financing arrangements (Article 36).

In summary, multiple political crises<sup>22</sup> occurred in the West African sub-region in the decades following ECOWAS's creation, challenging the focus of ECOWAS's founding treaty. These events contributed to a shift in the organization's initial mandate. The community, henceforth, aware that economic development is difficult to achieve in a context of insecurity and lack of peace, devised successive legal instruments to manage the emerging political challenges in the area. ECOWAS, henceforth, would aim not only to foster interstate economy but also to strengthen their political and military cooperation. Prior to the revision of ECOWAS's founding text, however, the community had already intervened in the Liberian crisis of 1990. Beyond its diplomatic action, the Community created an intervention force that it deployed to Liberia, even before having a mandate from the UN.

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<sup>22</sup> Internal crisis in Liberia but also experiences of interstate wars, like wars that opposed Mali to Upper Volta (Burkina Faso).

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### III. THE MALIAN CRISIS

In January 2012, the insurgency of armed groups in the north of Mali made the country experience the worst crisis in its post-colonial history. The Republic of Mali had known previous insurrections and had been somewhat successful in containing them. Over time, however, Libyan influence enabled the armed groups to gain in vigor as well as in proficiency in asymmetric and psychological warfare, until they achieved a balance of forces vis-à-vis the Malian army or even a clear overtaking.

The turning point of change in the balance of power was in 2012, when armed groups—the ones motivated to gain independence of the so-called Azawad and the others desiring to turn Mali into an Islamic state—took advantage of opportunities offered in the Libyan crisis. In this regard, the complication of the 2012 Malian crisis stemmed from features such as the ease of access to armaments both from Libyan magazines and other sources, the imbrication of diverse insurgent groups (rebels, jihadists, smugglers), and the thinly veiled support of the Sarkozy regime to the secessionists' enterprise.<sup>23</sup> The insurgents have successfully attacked the positions of the Malian army several times. The most tragic event occurred in Aguel'hoc. On January 24, 2012, the garrison of Aguel'hoc, home to the 713th Nomadic Company, fell short of ammunition and food, after a week of combat with insurgents. The insurgents coldly killed hundreds of military prisoners, employing atrocious techniques like beheading and summary executions of disarmed

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<sup>23</sup> “Rébellion Touarègue: Pourquoi Le Mali Suspecte La France De Jouer Double Jeu [Tuareg Rebellion: Why Mali Suspects France to Play Double Game],” *JeuneAfrique*. March 09, 2012, accessed April 08, 2018, <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/177046/politique/r-bellion-touar-gue-pourquoi-le-mali-suspecte-la-france-de-jouer-double-jeu/>; In effect, concerning this last point, unlike ECOWAS and the African Union, which immediately condemned the insurgency in Mali, France, under the Sarkozy administration, never openly denounced this state of fact. Moreover, as fierce fighting took place in northern Mali, French Foreign Minister Alain Juppé declared on February 7, 2012, in front of the French Senate, “La rébellion touarègue a remporté récemment d’importants succès militaires au Nord du fleuve Niger...Un cessez-le-feu immédiat est pour nous impératif. [The Tuareg rebellion has recently won major military victories north of the Niger River....An immediate cease-fire is imperative for us].” Juppé’s troubling statement, which at the edge praises rebel aggression against a legitimate government forces, had led some to advance the idea of a compromise between France and Touareg rebel fighters who came from Libya to disengage their support to Kaddafi with the promise of France’s help in their claims in Mali.

soldiers, acts that are qualifiables as war crimes.<sup>24</sup> French Minister of Cooperation, Henri de Raincourt, qualified the tragic event in the terms of “des violences absolument atroces et inadmissibles [absolutely atrocious and inadmissible violence]”<sup>25</sup> committed against hundreds of Malian soldiers, who were captured and coldly executed.

The atrocities, described above, committed against the Malian military in the north provoked a mood change in the south, resulting in a blow against the regime in place. The disorder destroyed the command and control in the army and precipitated the fall of the entire northern area whose population then suffered martyrdom for thirteen months at the hands of armed groups until French President François Hollande decided to intervene militarily in January 2013. It was only then that ECOWAS also intervened.

The first section of this chapter analyzes Libya’s influence on Mali; the second makes a presentation of the Malian military’s defeat by the insurgents; the last section discusses the coup d’état and its repercussions.

## **A. LIBYA’S INFLUENCE ON MALI**

The Libyan crisis of 2011, with regard to the particularity of the overthrown regime and the nature of the war itself, had the greatest impact on the region’s equilibrium and strategic stability. Other major crises in the North African region did not occasion equivalent consequences. For example, the Algerian crisis of the 1990s had not overflowed among the neighbors despite the extreme violence that characterized it. The Tunisian revolution, in 2011, also had little strategic impact on the region.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Jeune Afrique, “Guerre Au Mali: Retour Sur Le Drame D’Aguelhok – JeuneAfrique.com [War In Mali: Back On The Aguelhok Drama],” *JeuneAfrique*. i, October 21, 2013, accessed August 31, 2018, <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/167687/politique/guerre-au-mali-retour-sur-le-drame-d-aguelhok/>.

<sup>25</sup> “Bataille D’Aguel’hoc: Il Y a 5 Ans, Le MNLA Et Ses Alliés Terroristes égorgeaient Des Soldats Maliens [Battle of Aguel’hoc: 5 Years Ago, MNLA and Terrorist Allies Slaughter Malian Soldiers],” *Maliweb.net*, January 29, 2017, accessed August 26, 2018, <https://www.maliweb.net/la-situation-politique-et-securitaire-au-nord/bataille-daguelhoc-y-a-5-ans-mnla-allies-terroristes-egorgeaient-soldats-maliens-2017122.html>.

<sup>26</sup> Flavien Bourrat, “L’impact De La Crise Libyenne Sur Les Autres Pays Du Maghreb [The impact of the Libyan crisis on other Maghreb countries],” 2013-N°27, 38.

Kaddafi's overthrowing impacted the Sahel-Saharan region, in general, and directly impacted the national security of Mali, in particular, because of his historical influence and the armaments proliferation that followed. In effect, the erosion of the Libyan state with all its power resources, combined with the porosity of borders in the Sahel, the lack of state control in parts of Malian national territory, and the presence of groups of all kinds (terrorists, irredentists, smugglers) in those areas were an explosive cocktail par excellence for Mali.

### **1. Libya's Historical Influence on Mali**

Without a doubt, Libya in Kaddafi's time was a regional power in North Africa and exerted a real influence on the politics of states in the Sahel region. This influence is reflected in Flavien Bourrat's<sup>27</sup> writing that Libya's neighbors feared "l'activisme et les ingérences extérieures d'un régime musclé, doté de gros moyens financiers et incarné par un dirigeant fantasque et imprévisible [the activism and external interference of a muscular regime, endowed with large financial means and incarnated by a whimsical and unpredictable leader]."<sup>28</sup> For the Malian case, Libya's influence goes back to the 80s when Kaddafi integrated Malian Touareg fighters in his Islamic legion. In effect, successive droughts, at this time, led Touareg young men to migrate to places like Libya. There, they were integrated in combat legions and exposed to revolutionary discourses.<sup>29</sup>

The integration of young Touareg combatants in Kaddafi's Islamic legion ensured him the allegiance of the Touareg,<sup>30</sup> as it offered the latter the possibility of acquiring a greater fighting ability. The hardening of those fighters, who previously served the projects

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<sup>27</sup> Flavien Bourrat is Program Manager at the Military School's Strategic Research Institute on the North Africa-Middle East region.

<sup>28</sup> Bourrat. "L'impact De La Crise Libyenne Sur Les Autres Pays Du Maghreb [The impact of the Libyan crisis on other Maghreb countries]," 2013-N°27, 38.

<sup>29</sup> Tor A. Benjaminsen, "Does Supply-Induced Scarcity Drive Violent Conflicts in the African Sahel? The Case of the Tuareg Rebellion in Northern Mali," *Journal of Peace Research* 45, no. 6 (2008): 819–36, doi:10.1177/0022343308096158, 819.

<sup>30</sup> For example, on April 9, 2006, during his visit in Mali, Kaddafi abandoned the Malian president on their way to Tombouctou. He wanted to be welcomed alone by the population there. Moreover, he received under his tent Hassan Ag Fagaga, a touareg rebel. One month later, in May 23, 2006, Fagaga launched his attack against the Malian military.

of Kaddafi in Chad, Lebanon, and elsewhere, was felt in the 1990s rebellion that infamous individuals such as Iyad Ag Ali and Ag Najim launched when they returned to Mali from Libya. Having this influence on the Touareg communities, the Libyan regime had a political lever on Mali, of which the ruler did not deprive himself. According to Yves Lacoste, Kaddafi considered “all the borders dividing Saharan land as completely spurious.”<sup>31</sup> As such, he pushed the Touareg of Algeria, Mali, and Niger to unite, and supported their revolt.<sup>32</sup> Thus, in April 2006, in Timbuktu, Kaddafi announced the creation of the Popular and Social League of the Great Sahara Tribes, which registered the adherence of Malian Touareg communities desiring independence. In fact, this initiative was part of Kaddafi’s much broader ambition of unifying the continent around his Jamahiriya.<sup>33</sup> If the Libya of Kaddafi made its neighbors afraid about being destabilized, as Bourrat wrote, the fall of Kaddafi’s regime did not have less destabilizing effect with regard to the armaments there and the porosity of frontiers in the Sahel.

## **2. The Influence of Kaddafi’s Overthrow**

Libya had one of the largest and most diverse armament stockpiles in the region, allowing the country to equip friendly governments and rebel groups not only across the continent,<sup>34</sup> but also in other theaters, like Lebanon. With the fall of the regime and the chaotic situation that ensued, this impressive arsenal of war fell into the control of rebel leaders. The armed groups took advantage of this situation to seize the weapons before retreating from the area subject to NATO intervention. William Lawrence, director of the North African region for the International Crisis Group (ICG), explains that “une quantité considérable d’armes a été volée durant la révolution. Il y en a des légères, comme des Kalachnikovs, mais aussi des mitrailleuses lourdes, des lance-roquettes et des missiles sol-

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<sup>31</sup> Yves Lacoste, “Sahara, Perspectives Et Illusions Géopolitiques [Sahara, Perspectives And Geopolitical Illusions],” *Hérodote* 142, no. 3 (2011): 12, doi:10.3917/her.142.0012, 9.

<sup>32</sup> Lacoste, “Sahara, Perspectives Et Illusions Géopolitiques [Sahara, Geopolitical Perspectives And Illusions],” 9.

<sup>33</sup> Jamahiriya is an Arabic term meaning state of the masses.

<sup>34</sup> Support for the Polisario against Morocco in the 1980s, successive support for Toubou (Chadian nomads in the Tibesti region) against the Chadian government from the 1970s until 1987 when Kaddafi decided to directly invade the north of Chad with Libyan armored vehicles, to name only those.

air de type SAM. Des stocks de grenades et d'explosifs, dont du Semtex, ont également disparu [a considerable amount of weapons was stolen during the revolution. There are light ones, like Kalashnikovs, but also heavy machine guns, rocket launchers, and SAM-type surface-to-air missiles. Stockpiles of grenades and explosives, including Semtex, have also disappeared].”<sup>35</sup> Yet, the Libyan arsenal was no longer the only one available in Libya. In addition, France had dropped tons of arms to the rebels, supposedly to allow them to defend themselves against Kaddafi loyalists’ breakthrough. Jean-Christophe Notin, a French historian, novelist, and documentary filmmaker, asserts that forty tons of armament, including Kalashnikovs, rocket launchers, and explosives, were parachuted by French aviation to insurgents.<sup>36</sup> He goes on to advance the idea that those weapons might have ended up in the hands of Libyan Islamist groups who could have given or sold them to fighters now active in the Sahel.

Overall, Kaddafi’s regime was influential in Malian politics because it provided significant support, in terms of training, to Touareg groups who would be involved in successive insurgencies in the north of Mali, including the 2012 one. The fall of his regime provided extensive arms to insurgent groups whose return to Mali preceded the unprecedented insurgency that overwhelmed the capabilities of the Malian national army.

## **B. THE INSURRECTIONAL LEAGUE DEFEATING MALIAN MILITARY**

Since January 2012, Malian forces have been overwhelmed by the assaults of insurgents who were constituted as a league. Who were they? What did they want? What have been the consequences of their actions? This section gives those details. For the moment, the simple answers are as follows. The insurgents were the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (NMLA), constituted mainly of Touaregs; Ansar Dine, composed of Touaregs, Arabs, and members of Al Qaida in the Magreb (AQIM); and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MOJWA), a dissident group of AQIM

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<sup>35</sup> Luc Mathieu, “La Libye, Dépôt D’armes Jihadiste [Libya, Jihadist’ Armaments Depot],” *Libération.fr*. January 16, 2013, accessed April 03, 2018, <http://www.liberation.fr/planete/2013/01/16/la-libye-depot-d-armes-jihadiste> 874596.

<sup>36</sup> Mathieu, “La Libye, Dépôt D’armes Jihadiste.”

composed of jihadists from diverse countries. NMLA fought for the independence of the region it calls Azawad: that is, the portion of the Malian national territory including Tombouctou, Gao, and Kidal. Ansar Dine and the MOJWA were looking to establish sharia law in the country.

The successive attacks of those armed groups on the Malian military and the atrocities they committed during their assaults led the Malian population to accuse the government of not giving sufficient combat equipment to the army. The grievances would finally result in the overthrowing of the regime by a group of mutineers who were in the garrison of Kati.

### **1. The Insurgency**

Irredentist Touareg, grouped within the so-called NMLA that was created in October 2011, started an armed insurrection against the Malian military in January 2012. Not being representative of all Touareg and therefore having meager forces, NMLA allied with different armed groups present in the region such as AQIM, the MOJWA, Ansar Dine, and various criminal syndicates.

The alliance or even the mix of the NMLA with terrorist groups and other criminal organizations, although denied by the Movement, is certain. Their association essentially rests on financial reasons, since “smugglers are known to pay large fees to Touareg for protection as they run drugs, fuel, arms, cigarettes and migrants across Touareg territory.”<sup>37</sup> Scott Stewart, an American analyst of terrorism and security issues, suggests the idea of close associations between rebel leader Ibrahim Ag Bahanga<sup>38</sup> and AQIM for financial reasons. Not only have smugglers paid fees to Touaregs, but also Touaregs themselves have kidnapped westerners and sold them to AQIM. Stewart reports that, “Ag Bahanga clearly appears to have been plugged into these smuggling networks and to have

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<sup>37</sup> Stratfor, “Mali Besieged by Fighters Fleeing Libya,” *Stratfor*. February 02, 2012, accessed April 04, 2018, [https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/mali-besieged-fighters-fleeing-libya#/entry/jsconnect?client\\_id=644347316&target=/discussion/embed?p=/discussion/embed/&vanilla\\_identifier=235873&vanilla\\_url=https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/mali-besieged-fighters-fleeing-libya&vanilla\\_category\\_id=1&title=Mali\\_Besieged\\_by\\_Fighters\\_Fleeing\\_Libya](https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/mali-besieged-fighters-fleeing-libya#/entry/jsconnect?client_id=644347316&target=/discussion/embed?p=/discussion/embed/&vanilla_identifier=235873&vanilla_url=https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/mali-besieged-fighters-fleeing-libya&vanilla_category_id=1&title=Mali_Besieged_by_Fighters_Fleeing_Libya).

<sup>38</sup> Ibrahim Ag Bahanga, who passed away since, was the cousin of NMLA’s leader Mohamed Ag Najim.

used them, along with the patronage of Gadhafi, to fund and support his rebel movement.”<sup>39</sup> That is to say, rebels and terrorists had common interests and were members of the same insurrectional league that attacked Mali, even though initially NMLA’s goal was independence and the other terrorist groups wanted to establish sharia law in the country. Moreover, on Saturday, May 26, 2012, in Gao, Moussa Ag Acharatoumane, spokesperson for the NMLA, announced the official merger of his militia with the Islamic Faction Army Ansar Dine, led by Iyad Ag Ghaly, in view of the forthcoming creation of the Islamic Republic of Azawad.

On January 17, 2012, NMLA launched its first attacks on the Malian military garrison of Menaka, located in the Gao region in the northeastern part of the national territory. The attackers had to retreat from the intervention of Malian combat helicopters. The Malian Defense Minister’s statement on the incident reports one soldier and several assailants killed and several casualties.<sup>40</sup> Almost simultaneously, an attack occurred against Aguelhoc and Tessalit, both located in Kidal region. Dozens of vehicles headed towards the military base of Aguelhoc prior to opening fire, first with light weapons, then with heavy weapons. In the course of events, it was unclear who controlled the city, but a government statement released on January 20, 2012 indicated that rebels had held Menaka, Aguelhoc, and Tessalit for a short period. The governmental declaration explains rebels’ brief siege in those cities by the delay in the arrival of reinforcement troops occasioned by poor road conditions and the country’s limited air assets.<sup>41</sup>

In the following days, rebels, supported by jihadists, successfully cut off a supply convoy heading to the garrison, before attacking it on January 24 and forcing Malian troops, who ran out of ammunition, to abandon Aguelhoc. This withdrawal could also have been undertaken in order to redeploy force elements to Kidal to strengthen this city. Still, following the Malian troops’ retreat, strikes from the National Air Force on Aguelhoc would have resulted in the destruction of 40 rebel vehicles and the killing of dozens of

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<sup>39</sup> Stratfor. “Mali Besieged by Fighters Fleeing Libya.”

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

combatants.<sup>42</sup> On January 25, government troops retook Aguelhoc. “Subsequent reports suggest control of Aguelhoc has passed back and forth more than once since then,” however.<sup>43</sup>

The rebels pursued their armed assaults on the towns of Anderamboukane (in Gao region) and Lere (in Timbuktu region) on January 26. The *modus operandi* did not change. Stewart reports that, prior to NMLA’s incursion in Lere, military units had left the town already. Therefore, there was no resistance. After NMLA’s occupation of Lere, though, an army detachment headed toward it on January 28. The fog of war surrounded the confrontations, especially with respect to who was currently in control of the city.<sup>44</sup> Other reports indicated that, on January 31, NMLA attacked Niafunke, in Timbuktu region, in the far west of northern Mali, and Ntilit in Gao region.<sup>45</sup>

NMLA’s maneuver of mobility in important geographical scope was a simple, though smart, tactic, aiming to stretch to the maximum Malian forces across the vast desert north. The successive attacks of the insurgents and the atrocities they have committed on those occasions had impacts on both the troops’ morale and the nation’s feeling.

## **2. The Consequences**

This war of harassment and the successive setbacks suffered by the military created a nationalist fervor among the Malian population, who began to accuse the government of not giving sufficient combat equipment to the army to retaliate for this national humiliation. Such problems are predictable when recalling this wisdom: “If a government fails to find creative ways to minimize friendly casualties and defeat an adversary, usually by inflicting heavy casualties on him, then it will usually, and quite justifiably, forfeit the confidence of its people.”<sup>46</sup> Thus, there were street mobilizations in Segou and Bamako, followed by the

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Bryan-Paul Frost and Jeffrey Sikkenga, *History of American Political Thought* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2003), 181.



march of women in Kati, and finally a mutiny in Kati garrison on March 21, 2012, that resulted in the fall of the regime. On March 22, Captain Amadou Haya Sanogo<sup>47</sup> overthrew President Amadou Toumani Touré. This coup d'état, according to its perpetrators, aimed to put “an end to the incompetent regime of Amadou Toumani Toure.”<sup>48</sup>

The military's seizure of power was unexpected, not only for the Malian people and foreign governments, but also for the soldiers themselves who perpetrated the coup. Captain Amadou Haya Sanogo, the chief of mutineers, conceded on TV5 in the first hours of the coup that, “au tout debut ce n'était l'objectif recherché.”<sup>49</sup> Therefore, what had been a mutiny for demanding better equipment, better living conditions for the benefit of soldiers, and “peace in the north” turned into a putsch. The unplanned character of this event already, as a clue, tells something about the ensuing management.

The military who executed the coup were also low-ranking soldiers. They did not have any plan or agenda. As a consequence, the military chain of command was broken. That was, at the least, a confused situation for the military, which moreover has been subject to civil authority for about 20 years, thanks to the country's experience of democracy. In any case, the coup had the greatest repercussion on the sequence of events, by literally precipitating the fall of the north.

### **C. THE COUP AND THE FALL OF THE NORTH**

At this stage, it is important to recall that not all the military was associated with the coup. It was the mutiny of a handful of military living in the garrison of Kati. The coup created diplomatic problems, internal dissent, and structural problems within the military. Again, it marks the beginning of ECOWAS's involvement in the management of the crisis.

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<sup>47</sup> Before the coup, Sanogo was an unknown middle-rank officer in the army. He participated in the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program and received training in Georgia and at the Marine Corps base in Quantico, Virginia in the US. He also studied English at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas. Reports say that his American instructors never marked him out as a potential leader.

<sup>48</sup> Afua Hirsch, “Mali Rebels Claim to Have Ousted Regime in Coup.” *The Guardian*. March 22, 2012, accessed April 20, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/mar/22/mali-rebels-coup?CMP=NECNETTXT8187>.

<sup>49</sup> MrMadou84, “TV5 Monde Afrique\_Edition spéciale coup d'Etat au Mali [TV5 Monde Afrique\_Special edition coup in Mali],” *YouTube*. March 26, 2012, accessed June 08, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j3ONfPrhPws>; “At first, it was not the goal.”

## 1. Problems Emerged from the Coup

The coup raised diplomatic problems. It resulted in condemnations and the suspension of Mali's cooperation ties. The same day that the coup became a certainty, on March 22, ECOWAS condemned firmly "les actions mal avisées des mutins."<sup>50</sup> Likewise, ECOWAS reminded the mutineers of their responsibility according to the Constitution as well as the Organization's policy of "zéro tolerance à l'égard de toute tentative de prise ou de maintien du pouvoir par des moyens anticonstitutionnels."<sup>51</sup>

Condemning the coup as ECOWAS did, the African Union (AU) suspended Mali until the restoration of constitutional order. In addition, it decided to send a joint AU-ECOWAS diplomatic mission to Bamako to put pressure on the junta. Nigerian diplomat Paul Zolo, chairing the extraordinary meeting of the AU on the crisis in Mali, told the press at Addis Ababa on March 23, 2012 that, "le Conseil (de paix et de securite de l'UA) a décidé que le Mali sera suspendu de participation a toutes les activités (de l'organisation) jusqu'au retablissement de l'ordre constitutionnel [The (Peace and Security of the AU) Council decided that Mali will be suspended from participation in all activities (of the organization) until the restoration of constitutional order]."<sup>52</sup> At the same meeting, AU Commission Chair Jean Ping announced the sending of a delegation to Mali.<sup>53</sup>

Following the AU, on Thursday March 23, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) strongly condemned "the forcible seizure of power from the democratically elected government of Mali by some elements of the Malian armed forces,"<sup>54</sup> warned the junta about the protection of the President, and called the military to return to their

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<sup>50</sup> "Coup D'Etat Au Mali [Coup in Mali]," *Libération.fr*, March 22, 2012, accessed April 05, 2018, [http://www.liberation.fr/planete/2012/03/21/coup-d-etat-au-mali\\_804886](http://www.liberation.fr/planete/2012/03/21/coup-d-etat-au-mali_804886); "The misguided actions of the mutineers."

<sup>51</sup> "Coup D'Etat Au Mali [Coup in Mali]"; "Zero tolerance for any attempt to gain or maintain power by unconstitutional means."

<sup>52</sup> "L'Union Africaine Suspend Le Mali [The African Union Suspends Mali]," *Algérie1*, accessed April 05, 2018, <https://www.algerie1.com/actualite/l-union-africaine-suspend-le-mali>.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Al Jazeera, "International Condemnation for Mali Coup," *News/Al Jazeera*. March 23, 2012, accessed April 05, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2012/03/2012322234952301942.html>.

barracks.<sup>55</sup> The UNSC, through the voice of Britain's UN ambassador Mark Lyall Grant, the Council president for March, clearly called for the "immediate restoration of constitutional rule and the democratically elected government."<sup>56</sup>

Bordering countries also condemned the coup in the same way. The declaration of France, however, at the time, was even more disturbing. If Paris officially denounced the coup d'état that had just been held in Mali, its declaration was, at the least, overly subtle. "The devil is in the details," as it is said. In diplomacy, the truth is in the nuances. While countries, including the United States and international organizations—as it happens, the UNSC, the AU, ECOWAS—very clearly called for the reinstatement of President Amadou Toure Touré, France merely demanded elections as soon as possible. The French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alain Juppe, known for his adulatory speech about rebels' prowess, declared on the TV channel Europe 1, on March 23, "Nous sommes attachés au respect des règles démocratiques et constitutionnelles. Nous demandons le rétablissement de l'ordre constitutionnel, des élections, elles étaient programmées pour avril, il faut qu'elles aient lieu le plus vite possible."<sup>57</sup> This suggests that, from Paris's perspective, the history page of President Amadou Toumani Toure was immediately and irreversibly turned after the coup d'état announcement. It is curious to notice such an eagerness on the part of France, who knew well that it was unrealistic to hold elections at an early date.<sup>58</sup>

The coup created internal dissension within Mali. In the days that immediately followed, institutions established by the constitutions, as the parliament, were suspended. Soon opponents of the coup started to rise against the putschists and their supports. On March 29, for the first time, supporters of the putsch violently clashed with opponents gathered in a meeting on the Bamako Labour exchange; the throwing of stones resulted in several serious casualties, and the army intervened. Demonstrations were then banned and

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> "Coup D'Etat Au Mali [Coup in Mali]."; "We are committed to respecting democratic and constitutional rules. We demand the restoration of constitutional order, elections. They were scheduled for April, they must take place as soon as possible."

<sup>58</sup> To believe that France seriously wanted President Amadou Toumani Toure.

the military arrested 26 anti-putschist leaders. Six were detained in Kati's camp; the rest were released.<sup>59</sup>

The coup created an organizational problem within the military. That is, it abruptly broke the chain of command. Military forces, particularly the ones who were on the frontline, did not know who was in the control of what. As previously stated, not all of the military was associated with the coup. It was the mutiny of a handful of soldiers living in the garrison of Kati, the bulk of the Malian army being on deployment in the north. Therefore, the soldiers in the north started to demobilize. The army evacuated the localities of Ansongo and Bourem, likely to regroup and strengthen its positions in Gao. The insurgent groups seized the opportunity to further their offensive. On March 30, the NLMA and Ansar Dine took control of the city of Kidal. The capture of this strategic city in northeastern Mali pushed the junta to be alarmed by the situation, which it deemed critical, and to request the support of friendly countries in order to stem the rebel advance. Captain Amadou Aya Sanogo, the leader of the junta, declared “Les rebelles continuent à agresser notre pays et terroriser nos populations...notre armée a besoin du soutien des amis du Mali [The rebels continue to attack our country and terrorize our people...our army needs the support of the friends of Mali].”<sup>60</sup>

On March 31, 2012, the city of Gao fell into the hands of the NMLA; on April 1st, Timbuktu fell also.<sup>61</sup> Therefore, all the northern part was under control of insurgents, who declared the independence of this territory on April 6, 2012.

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<sup>59</sup> “Mali: Violents Heurts Entre Pro Et Anti-putschistes à Bamako [Mali: Violent Clashes Between Pro And Anti-putschists In Bamako],” *JeuneAfrique.com*, March 29, 2012, accessed April 05, 2018, <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/176744/politique/mali-violents-heurts-entre-pro-et-anti-putschistes-bamako/>.

<sup>60</sup> “Mali: La Ville De Kidal Aux Mains Des Rebelles, La Junte Appelle à L’aide [The City Of Kidal With The Hands Of The Rebels, The Junta Calls For Help],” *JeuneAfrique.com*, March 31, 2012, accessed April 06, 2018, <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/152432/politique/mali-la-ville-de-kidal-aux-mains-des-rebelles-la-junte-appelle-l-aide/>; “The rebels continue to attack our country and terrorize our people...our army needs the support of the friends of Mali.”

<sup>61</sup> “Les Grandes Dates De L’occupation Jihadiste Du Nord Du Mali [The Great Dates of the Jihadist Occupation of Northern Mali],” *RFI Afrique*, October 06, 2013, accessed April 06, 2018, <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20131006-chronologie-aqmi>.

## 2. ECOWAS's Responses

ECOWAS's involvement in Mali, since the coup, consisted of urging the junta to hand over power to civilian authorities. Following its condemnation of the coup, on March 22, ECOWAS president Alassane Dramane Ouattara, the head of a delegation, undertook a trip to Bamako in order to discuss matters with the junta. Having failed to land due to demonstrators' occupation of the runway, the aircraft were redirected to Abidjan, where a crisis meeting was held. The final communique of this meeting, held behind closed doors at Abidjan airport, gave a 72-hour ultimatum to the junta to restore constitutional order. After this deadline, the organization would resort to diplomatic and financial sanctions including an embargo against the country. The main envisaged sanctions were a travel ban and asset freeze for the members of the junta, the closure of borders and the denial of port access, and the freezing of Mali's accounts in the Central Bank of West African States.

Obviously, ECOWAS's menace of sanctions had an effect on Captain Sanogo, who, the next day, apologized to ECOWAS for the "incident malheureux indépendant de notre volonté."<sup>62</sup> The unfortunate incident he was referring to was the demonstrators' opposition to the aircrafts' landing in Bamako airport the day before. Also, on April 1st, Sanogo did decide to restore the Malian constitution: "Nous prenons l'engagement solennel de rétablir à compter de ce jour la Constitution de la république du Mali du 25 février 1992, ainsi que les institutions républicaines."<sup>63</sup> He added, however, "Toutefois, compte-tenu de la situation de crise multi-dimensionnelle que vit notre pays, et afin de permettre une transition dans de bonnes conditions et de préserver la cohésion nationale, (nous) décidons d'engager, sous l'égide du médiateur, des consultations avec toutes les forces vives du pays dans le cadre d'une convention nationale.... [Taking into account the multi-dimensional crisis situation that our country is experiencing, however, and in order to allow a transition

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<sup>62</sup> "Menac," *Abidjan.net*, accessed April 06, 2018, <http://news.abidjan.net/h/430527.html>; "Unfortunate incident beyond our control."

<sup>63</sup> "Mali: La Junte Rétablit La Constitution [Mali: The Junta Reinstates The Constitution]," *FIGARO*. April 01, 2012, accessed April 06, 2018, <http://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-actu/2012/04/01/97001-20120401FILWWW00091-mali-junte-veut-retablir-la-constitution.php>; "We make the solemn commitment to restore from this day the Constitution of the Republic of Mali of February 25, 1992, as well as the republican institutions."

in good conditions and preserve national cohesion, (we) decide to engage, under the aegis of the mediator, in consultations with all the forces of the country in the framework of a national convention....”<sup>64</sup> Visibly, the declaration did not satisfy ECOWAS, which was looking for power to be handed over to the president of the Parliament. Thus, considering that the junta had not reestablished the constitutional order as requested, ECOWAS decided, on April 2, on the immediate preparation of ECOMOG and a total embargo on Mali. Having taken note of the decision, Amadou Haya Sanogo declared that “l’urgence est le recouvrement de l’intégrité territoriale [The urgency is the recovery of territorial integrity].”<sup>65</sup>

On April 6, the junta signed an agreement with ECOWAS in which it undertook to return the power to civilian authorities after the resignation of the overthrown president. Then, the president of Parliament became president for the transition period. The agreement provided for the appointment of a prime minister with “plein pouvoir” and that elections would be organized within 40 days. It also provided that an amnesty law be adopted against the perpetrators of the coup. On this basis, ECOWAS decided, on April 8, to lift all the sanctions.

As a result, President Amadou Toumani Touré formally handed his resignation letter to Burkina Faso’s foreign minister, Djibril Bassolé. On this basis, the Constitutional Court recognized power vacancy on April 10 and, as provided in the Constitution, invested Dioncounda Traoré, president of Parliament, to serve out the office of president for the transition period. In its judgement, the Constitutional Court stipulated that a presidential election must be held at least 21 days and not more than 40 days from that date.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> “Mali: La Junte Rétablit La Constitution [Mali: The Junta Reinstates The Constitution],”; “We make the solemn commitment to restore from this day the Constitution of the Republic of Mali of February 25, 1992, as well as the republican institutions.”

<sup>65</sup> “Mali: La Cédéo Décide D’un «Embargo Total» Contre La Junte [Mali: ECOWAS Decides "Total Embargo" Against Junta],” *20 Minutes, Information En Continu, Actualités, Politique, Sport...*, April 03, 2012, accessed April 06, 2018, <https://www.20minutes.fr/monde/909977-20120403-mali-cedao-decide-embargo-total-contre-junte>.

<sup>66</sup> “Mali: Le Président De L’Assemblée Désigné Comme Chef De L’Etat Intérimaire [Mali: The President Of The Assembly Appointed As Head Of The Interim State],” accessed April 06, 2018, [https://www.romandie.com/news/n/Mali\\_le\\_president\\_de\\_lAssemblée\\_désigné\\_comme\\_chef\\_de\\_lEtat\\_interimaire36100420121705.asp](https://www.romandie.com/news/n/Mali_le_president_de_lAssemblée_désigné_comme_chef_de_lEtat_interimaire36100420121705.asp).

For the smooth running of the transition, on April 26, ECOWAS invited the Military Committee to submit to civilian authorities and its members returned to the barracks. In addition, realizing the impossibility of organizing the presidential election by the required date, ECOWAS decided to extend the mandate of the transitional authorities from 40 days, as provided by the accord, to 12 months. To this end, ECOWAS advanced the idea of sending a regional military force to Bamako in order to secure “les organes de la transition et le gouvernement intérimaire en attendant que le processus arrive à son terme [the transitional bodies and the interim government until the process comes to an end].”<sup>67</sup> That military force should also counter rebel incursions in the south.

Faced with these demands, the putschists were restless at Kati garrison. At the end of his meeting with the foreign minister of Burkina Faso and the African Integration minister of Cote d’Ivoire—who had come especially to Bamako to inform him about ECOWAS’s decisions—Captain Sanogo rejected the transitional authorities’ mandate extension: a decision made without consultation with the junta. He also believed that a consensual personality must succeed the president to date. Captain Sanogo stated “Monsieur Dioncounda Traoré restera président par intérim, comme prévu, pendant les quarante jours—pas une heure de plus—aucun militaire ne foutra les pieds ici si ce n’est sur la demande du gouvernement malien et on a un gouvernement en bonne et due forme. Et j’en profite pour dire ici que le gouvernement ne le demandera pas. Si la Cédéao...veut nous aider, cette aide est la bienvenue, mais à une condition: c’est à nous d’en exprimer le besoin...[Mr. Dioncounda Traoré will remain acting president, as planned, during the forty days—no more than an hour—no military man will kick his feet here except on the request of the Malian government—and we have a government in due form. And I take the opportunity to say here that the government will not ask for it. If ECOWAS...wants to help us, this help is welcome, but on one condition: it is up to us to express the need...].”<sup>68</sup> He

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<sup>67</sup> RFI. “La Cédéao Précise Son Rôle Et Le Calendrier Dans Le Processus De Transition Au Mali – RFI [ECOWAS Clarifies Its Role And Timing In Mali’s Transition Process],” *RFI Afrique*, April 27, 2012, accessed April 06, 2018, <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20120427-cedeao-precise-son-role-le-calendrier-le-processus-transition-mali>; “transitional bodies and the interim government until the process is complete.”

<sup>68</sup> RFI. “Mali: Le Capitaine Sanogo Rejette Le Plan De La Cédéao [Mali: Captain Sanogo Rejects the ECOWAS’ Plan],” *RFI Afrique*, April 29, 2012, accessed April 06, 2018, <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20120429-mali-le-capitaine-sanogo-rejette-le-plan-cedeao>.

continued, “Je n’accepterai pas la présence d’un soldat étranger sur le sol malien [I will not accept the presence of a foreign soldier on Malian soil].”<sup>69</sup>

On April 30, 2012, about a month after the 2012 military coup initiated by Captain Sanogo, soldiers from the 33rd Parachute Commando Regiment (PCR) tried a counter-coup, which failed.

ECOWAS’s effort, although salutary to some extent and crowned by the return of the constitutional order, did not end the institutional crisis in Bamako. Power remained within the hands of the junta, who also warned that not an hour would be added to the transition time. Knowing that the elections could not be held to date, the junta plotted to oust the interim president and take formal power after the 40-day interim time. That is how, on May 21, the 40th day of transition time, the junta let crowds of pro-putschist protesters enter the offices of the acting president and severely beat him. Only in the face of the emotion that this event inspired within the national conscience and abroad, did the junta refrain from returning to the front scene to seize power after that. Thus, Prime Minister Cheick Modibo Diarra fulfilled his executive responsibilities until the president came back from the hospital Val de Grace in France and retook office. Even after the president’s return, however, the reality of state power remained within the hands of the junta. Captain Sanogo became general.

Meanwhile, in the north, the population was suffering from jihadists’ occupation. Amputations, stoning, lashes, and destruction of local sites of cultural heritage, also classified by UNESCO as World Heritage sites, became their daily lot. Jihadists finally chased NMLA from Tombouctou and Gao on June 28, 2012 and became the only authority in the north regions. NMLA was no longer militarily present on the ground, but its political wing compensated for this absence with media campaigns on French TV channels. Moussa Ag Assarid, who was NMLA’s representative in Europe, did this media work. In reality, though, most of NMLA’s combatants only bandwagoned with jihadists who were stronger, both in term of financial assets and military equipment.

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.



ECOWAS seemed to lose initiative in favor of the insurgents who proposed to enter into negotiations with Bamako. On November 16, 2012, emissaries from Ancar Dine and NMLA met Blaise Compaore, ECOWAS's designed mediator for the Malian crisis, in Ouagadougou, and announced their readiness to engage in political dialogue with Bamako. Two days earlier, Ancar Dine had promised to renounce the imposition of sharia in the country, with the exception of Kidal, and to help to rid the north of terrorism and foreign movements. This was only a maneuver to distract both Mali and the international community's attention from the movements' real purpose, which would soon be unveiled. The insurgents just wanted to save time and prepare themselves for their next operations. On January 11, 2013, they launched an assault on Malian forces in Konna, with the goal of advancing towards the capital and definitely taking control of the whole country. It was in view of the incapacity of the Malian forces to face the jihadist breakthrough that President Dioncounda Traore, in power at Bamako, called France to help. Meanwhile, Sarkozy had lost the elections. A new leader, with different sentiment, different perspective, and different political thought on the Malian crisis, came to power in France. In sum, a new idiosyncrasy inhabited the Elysée.

Francois Hollande decided to involve French forces on January 13, 2013, at the demand of Malian President Dioncounda Traore, to prevent Mali from being captured and becoming a Salafist state and sanctuary for terrorists. That would pose grave security problems both to West Africa and to Europe. Chadian troops followed, then ECOWAS troops. Why had ECOWAS not taken the leading role in addressing the Malian crisis? The next chapter addresses this question.

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#### **IV. TESTING EXPLANATIONS FOR ECOWAS'S NON-INTERVENTION IN THE MALIAN CRISIS**

As described above, the Malian crisis caused a rather superficial involvement of the sub-regional organization. The bulk of its task had been to force the junta to return to constitutional normalcy; which was, definitively, more apparent than real. During the ten months of the occupation of two-thirds of Malian national territory by rebel jihadists, ECOWAS did not succeed in generating a force that could support the Malian army in its struggle against rebel jihadists. Yet, the principle of subsidiarity as well as ECOWAS text provisions—notably Article 4 of the 1981 Protocol relating to mutual assistance on defense, and Article 22 of the 1999 Protocol relating to the mechanism for conflict prevention, management, resolution, peace-keeping, and security—called for its intervention. At the time, Benin's president, Yayi Boni, was warning that time was playing against ECOWAS and that there was urgency to intervene in Mali without any need for UN mandate, as was the case in Liberia, “Nos textes nous y autorisent...pas besoin d'un accord de l'Onu [Our texts allow us...no need for a UN agreement].”<sup>70</sup>

The French intervention on January 13, 2013 had a spillover effect, leading to AFISMA's deployment. Why such bandwagoning? Why did ECOWAS not intervene in the war in Mali before the French intervention? Are previous authors' theories applicable in this case? Did the Malian crisis not present a threat to the national interests of the ECOWAS member states? Did the relations between the states of ECOWAS and Mali not present a good configuration for the engagement? Did ECOWAS lack sufficient resources for implementing the adequate policy? This chapter will test these hypotheses.

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<sup>70</sup> “INTERVENTION DE LA CEDEAO AU MALI: Sanogo Refuse, Yayi Boni Pressé! [ECOWAS INTERVENTION IN MALI: Sanogo Refuses, Yayi Boni Pressed],” Malijet Hommages Au Président Modibo Keita: La «mort» Du Général Moussa Traoré! Bamako Mali, accessed July 26, 2018, [http://malijet.com/la\\_societe\\_malienne\\_aujourd'hui/actualite\\_de\\_la\\_nation\\_malienne/50739-intervention-de-la-cedeao-au-mali-sanogo-refuse-yayi-boni-presse.html](http://malijet.com/la_societe_malienne_aujourd'hui/actualite_de_la_nation_malienne/50739-intervention-de-la-cedeao-au-mali-sanogo-refuse-yayi-boni-presse.html).

## **A. HYPOTHESIS 1: NATIONAL INTEREST**

The hypothesis that national interest triggers intervention argues that states act primarily for their own sake. The official speech may be to protect or rescue peoples in danger but their real motivations for interventions are to promote their own interests in quelling preventively the risks and preemptively the threats. National interest can even become less serious sometime, as just for gaining personal prestige.

The national interest hypothesis predict that Mali's neighboring countries would intervene quickly in the fight against rebel jihadists because of the threat of contagion. Although neighboring states had manifestly a national interest in doing so, however, as we will see below, the predictions were not realized, at least not immediately.

It was presented and illustrated in the literature review that there was a difference between the official discourses and the real motivations for ECOWAS-led interventions. James J. Hentz argues that, "in general, national interests underwrite regional actions."<sup>71</sup> According to the author, national interests can include supporting an ally, demonstrating to the broader community that a given state actor is meaningful player, preventing turmoil from spreading, or reacting to humanitarian crises like refugee flows. The idea of the national interest is very relevant in the political action and its stakes turn out to be even more serious and immediate in the Malian case. The Malian crisis, which undoubtedly has an internal dimension affecting the sovereignty of the country, national cohesion, and territorial integrity, also posed serious threats to a large part of the Sahel and West African States whose viability become questioned. Beyond the geographical, cultural, and sociological proximity, the states of the sub-region face similar constraints. Those constraints stem from factors such as the fragility of national unity and the existing favorable conditions for conveying radical religious discourses. What can be considered as active patterns in the Malian crisis are dormant in many neighboring states. A possible success of the insurrection in Mali would have, undoubtedly, brought to other West African countries the Islamist and separatist danger. Therefore, acting proactively in Mali would

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<sup>71</sup> Hentz, Söderbaum, Tavares, "Regional Organizations and African Security," 212.

have been in accordance with their national interest as it could have prevented them from hosting similar conflicts within their territories in the near future.

West African countries are for the most part fragile nation states. The cycle of violence, opposition to central authorities—whatever their forms, identity movements, or simple rebellion—remains regular throughout the region. If one form is absent, the other very likely exists. In Senegal, there is Casamance conflict; Niger experienced the same rebellion as Mali did; Algeria struggles with the Kabyles' case; Cote d'Ivoire experienced violent rebellion and lost control of its north for about a decade; and tensions are palpable between Peulhs and Malinkes in Guinea Conakry, to name only a few. An insurgency in Mali, in one way or another, has potential to inspire, in other places, other actors, whether their discontents were identity-based or not. If an event like the Touareg rebellion succeeded, even *de facto* as opposed to *de jure*, that would very likely be emulated in other countries like Niger. Not to mention, several other communities like the Movement of Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the separatists of Casamance, and many others not heard yet would not hesitate to follow suit.

One can go further in exploring the contagion effect hypothesis by asking how far the ambition of jihadists present in Mali for the region was. Were they about to be satisfied by turning solely Mali into an Islamic state with sharia as ruling law or did they have greater ambition? Observers will attribute to those jihadists higher ambition for two reasons. First, appetite comes with eating and empirical evidence, from Germany's territorial ambition in World War II to the rise of contemporary ISIS in the Middle East, would not go against that truth. Oumar Ould Hamaha, AQIM and Ansar Dine's high-ranking combatant who was killed by Serval Aviation on the night of March 7 to 8, 2014, hinted that "le djihad est sans fin et sans limite"<sup>72</sup> ["jihad is endless and limitless"]. This can be taken as a clear warning for everyone. Second, all the principle of republicanism, norms, and good neighboring between Mali and its neighbors would not be relevant anymore because the

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<sup>72</sup> LeBuzzAfricain, "INTERVIEW - La Mission De Ançar Dine Presentee Par Le Djihadiste Oumar [INTERVIEW - The Mission Of Ançar Dine Presentee By The Jihadist Oumar,]" *YouTube*, August 03, 2012, accessed July 24, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vkWuKVK-BYL>.

state type that was about to stand would have ignored them all and all previous engagements. What about the possibility of jihadist relays or dormant cells in other countries ready to continue or facilitate terrorist penetration from Mali? The same Oumar Ould Hamaha, envisioning an eventual confrontation with ECOWAS stated that,

On est prêt a affronter n'importe quelle armée...nous prévenons d'avance tous les Etats qui tenteront de nous agresser d'une punition impitoyable et que nous transmettrons cette guerre au sein de leur propre capitale et qu'ils sachent d'avance que nous avons des centaines de fidaiin élu au premier rang, c'est pas n'importe qui hein, élu au premier rang, prêts pour les opérations martyres et n'attendent que l'ordre à exécuter. Et ne soyez pas curieux si je vous dis qu'ils sont déjà dans toutes les capitales avec leur explosif qui est déjà préparé là-bas chez eux. Nous on n'a pas besoin de missile. Avec les simples engrais nous on peut faire des explosifs, détruire presque toute la planète [we are ready to confront any army...we anticipate in advance all the states that will attempt to attack us with ruthless punishment and we will transmit this war within their own capital and that they know in advance that we have hundreds of fidaiin elected in the first rank, it is not anyone who is eh, elected in the first rank, ready for martyrdom operations and only waiting for the order to be executed. And do not be curious if I tell you that they are already in all capitals with their explosive that are already prepared there at home. We do not need a missile. With simple fertilizers we can make explosives, destroy almost the whole planet].<sup>73</sup>

Thus, the worrying raised from the question about insurgents' ambition is seen to be justified and even more concerning is the fact that there are actually favorable conditions for radical religious discourses to spread. In effect, the usual practice of Sufi Islam in West Africa, tolerant and anchored in the local traditional values, more and more, becomes challenged by the breakthrough of Wahhabi Salafist movement and speech of Saudi emanation.

Definitely, the states in the Sahel had national interest—as did ECOWAS—to act, beyond the political speech, decisively against the usurpers who attacked Mali and threatened them as well. The threat to those national interests are, on one hand, the danger that the war crosses Mali's borders and, on the other hand, the risk of ideological or

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<sup>73</sup> Satiguisidibe, "Les Islamistes Prêts Au Combat Contre La CEDEAO Et L'OTAN [Islamists Ready to Fight Against ECOWAS And NATO]," *YouTube*, October 22, 2012, accessed July 24, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X3YNn6FATog>.

psychological emulation for jihad. Things did not go that way, however. One can infer then from the Mali case that when states' national interests actually are not directly threatened, they remain risk averse as long as possible. An indirect threat to national interests in the referred case was still important, to arouse rhetorical statement at the least, but not sufficient to engender a decisive military action.

## **B. HYPOTHESIS 2: PERSONAL POLITICS**

Personal politics are typically shaped more by a leader's preference of supporting his relatives or clients than by institutional or impersonal social forces. Arguing about politics, President Leopold Sedar Senghor, once, said, "When I say 'politics,' ...it is not a question of the art of governing the State for the public welfare in the general framework of laws and regulations. It is a question of politician politics: the struggles of clans—not even [ideological] tendencies—to place well oneself, one's relatives, and one's clients in the *cursus honorum*, that is the race for preferment."<sup>74</sup> Senghor's statement takes up the essence of personal politics in the sense that it operates both in the domestic politics and in international politics, especially in West Africa. In the case of personal politics, the norms affecting political action are more rooted in friendship, kinship, factional alliance, and ethnic fellowship than in broader consideration of general wellbeing.

The very relationship between leaders—whether friendliness, empathy, or animosity—is one key, among others, that can help in better understanding their political decisions and actions towards each other, as such, in any framework. Hentz' study of the Liberian crisis provides us with evidence. The author explains that the commitment of Babangida, Nigeria's President during the Liberian crisis of the 90s, was motivated by his friendship with Samuel Doe, President of Liberia. Equally, Houphouet Boigny, President of Cote d'Ivoire, supported Charles Taylor, leader of the rebellion National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), because President Doe failed to prevent the murder of President Robert Tolbert's son Adolphus Tolbert, the husband of Boigny's adopted daughter named Daisy.

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<sup>74</sup> Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg, "Personal Rule: Theory and Practice in Africa," *Comparative Politics* 16, no. 4 (1984): 421, doi:10.2307/421948.

Lastly, the support that Blaise Compaore, Burkina Faso's President provided to Taylor, was justified by the fact that Compaore married Daisy, the widow of Adolphus Tolbert.

The personal politics hypothesis predicts that ECOWAS would be quick to intervene in aid of Malian President Toure if the latter shared personal ties with the leaders of any of the organization's members, preferably the powerful ones. Alternatively, ECOWAS would not intervene fast if Toure had enmity with any of the leaders. Yet, the research did not identify these types of special relationship between President Amadou Toumani Touré and his peers in the region, and the geography of Mali and the chronology of events suggest low probability for enmity. Nonetheless, the experience of wars with Burkina Faso could be the one exception.

Mali's geographic situation and the chronology of events suggest a low probability of contention feeding enmity between President Amadou Toumani Touré and his regional peers. Good neighborliness is a geopolitical imperative for Mali, since the country is enclaved without opening to the sea, and surrounded by seven neighbors. With an underdeveloped industrial sector, Mali imports a large part of consumer goods; therefore, it depends on neighbors' seaports. The geographical position of Mali and its economic imperatives impose a foreign policy that promotes peaceful relationship and good neighborliness with bordering countries. This is why maintaining good neighborliness is one of the main strategic axes of Mali's diplomacy, implying not to interfere in the internal affairs of other states and not to take part in factions' opposition, in any form whatsoever.

By the time the Malian crisis began, many countries in the sub-region had acquired new leader figures, or were about to, thanks to the democratic alternation or regime change. It is highly probable that the Malian president, at the time, had not had time to develop any kind of personal linkage with most of them and vice versa. For example, the president of Niger, Mahamadou Issoufou, and the former president of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan, were elected less than one year before Mali's crisis broke out. The presidents of Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea were elected only a year before. As for Senegal, the country was in the midst of organizing its presidential election: a less likely time for a big move in international politics. There was a dean among the heads of state in the sub-region,



however: Blaise Compaore, who had already spent 25 years in the presidency of Burkina Faso by 2012.

Mali experienced wars with Burkina Faso and, at the time, the acting president of this country, Blaise Compaore, personally took part in the last war between the two countries. The balance of power was definitely with Mali during the war of the Agacher Strip, in December 1985.<sup>75</sup> He might have held some resentment against Mali since. Compaore was also the designated mediator of ECOWAS in the Malian crisis. In April 2011, the rebels whom Compaore had long supported against Laurent Gbagbo, the president of Côte d'Ivoire, succeeded in removing Gbagbo from office, following a contested presidential election with Alassane Dramane Ouattara. Thus, Ouattara became President of Cote d'Ivoire in 2011 and, on February 17, 2012, was elected President of the Conference of Heads of State of ECOWAS.<sup>76</sup> Since Compaore had supported the rebels that removed Laurent Gbagbo from office, a privileged personal relationship may have existed between Ouattara and Compaore, giving the latter greater freedom in his initiatives for Mali.<sup>77</sup> Compaore, in fact, was suspected of providing assistance to rebel movements, to the detriment of Mali. This point will be discussed later in the section dedicated to the trusting question and the questioning of ECOWAS's real commitment for the sake of Mali's territorial sovereignty.

To sum up, personal politics worked slight differently in the Mali case. There were not any particularly positive relationships between Touré and other West African leaders. There was also no particular personal antagonism between President Touré and most of his counterparts in the region. The president of Burkina Faso, however, likely held resentment

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<sup>75</sup> The War of the Agacher Band, also called Christmas War, took place from December 14 to 30, 1985. It opposed Mali to Upper Volta (actual Burkina Faso) about the ownership of a strip of land 275 km long and 50 wide located at the frontier of the two countries.

<sup>76</sup> Jeune Afrique, "Alassane Ouattara, Nouveau Président De La Cedeao [Alassane Ouattara, New President of ECOWAS]," *JeuneAfrique.com*, February 17, 2012, accessed August 10, 2018, <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/177287/politique/alassane-ouattara-nouveau-pr-sident-de-la-cedeao/>.

<sup>77</sup> That seems all the more likely because after Blaise Compaore's fall, on October 31, 2014, he was exiled in Cote d'Ivoire.

because of the defeat his armies experienced in combat against Mali in 1985.<sup>78</sup> Compaore's personal relationship with the acting president of ECOWAS ensured him more freedom in his Machiavellian schemes with Mali. Thus, personal politics, one can say, acted in the Mali case as a corruptive element that prevented vigorous and timely response from the regional body, in the face of jihadist invasion and occupation of the country.

### C. HYPOTHESIS 3: ORGANIZATION RESOURCES

The resources of the organization refer to all the means available to this organization to face problems falling within its jurisdiction and competence. These means are human, economic, and legal but also experience gained in practicing similar activities. If the organization had those resources, it would intervene quickly but, if resources were more constrained, it would not.

ECOWAS, although not the most effective organization, has a reasonable level of resources. ECOWAS, as we saw in the introduction, was not intended to be a specialized security organization, unlike others like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which is a military alliance for collective defense. In effect, the security mandate came later, in addition to ECOWAS's initial mission of economic integration. That was done over time with the adoption of successive protocols, then the organization's founding treaty revision, and lastly the entry into force of supplementary riders. Today, ECOWAS, like NATO, has its own mechanism to ensure collective security for its member states.

Unlike NATO, however—which has its own force and equipment and does exercises regularly for the purpose of successful deployability—ECOWAS's standing force (ECOMOG) is not distinct from the units that compose the national armies of the organization's member states. This standing force does not have its own operational resources or permanent command organism operating in peacetime, let alone conducting

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<sup>78</sup> “Guerre De Noël Mali-Burkina De 1985: Blaise Compaoré, L’homme Au Cœur De La Résistance Héroïque Du Burkina Faso [Mali-Burkina Faso Christmas War 1985: Blaise Compaoré, the man at the heart of the heroic resistance of Burkina Faso],” *GenTwenty*. December 26, 2016, accessed August 10, 2018, <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:RIqawhgVBLsJ:netafrique.net/guerre-de-noel-mali-burkina-de-1985-blaise-compaore-lhomme-au-coeur-de-la-resistance-heroique-du-burkina-faso/&cd=11&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us>.

regular exercises. Nonexistent operational resources create inevitable logistical shortcomings, the lack of a permanent command organism engenders command and control problems, and the absence of regular exercises generates problems of coordination and harmonization between troop-contributing states.

Some scholars<sup>79</sup> estimate that African regional bodies, like their member states, are ill equipped to act alone and stabilize hotspots on the continent. As far as ECOWAS is concerned, this argument was accurate, until the almost spontaneous intervention of ECOMOG in Liberia in 1990. Since then, however, ECOMOG has gained in maturity and experience. In 1994, ECOMOG was able to mobilize a staff of nearly 20,000 men, officers, and soldiers.<sup>80</sup> In 1997, it intervened in Sierra Leone, before giving up the place to a UN mission in 2000. It successfully contributed to the return of peace to Liberia in 1999. ECOMOG also deployed in Guinea Bissau, in 1999, and in Cote d'Ivoire, after the signing of the Marcoussis Agreement in January 2003. The organization therefore intervened several times in crises in West Africa with varying degrees of success. It also acted based on ambiguous text provisions, at best, in most of these interventions.

In addition to the experience gained and the operational prowess achieved, one must not forget factors of institutional and legal evolution. ECOMOG was initially an ad hoc force, but became a permanent force in 1999, with ECOWAS's adoption of the Protocol on Mechanism for Prevention, Management, Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security. This Protocol conceived of ECOMOG as a permanent force whose elements are on reserve in their respective countries of origin and ready to be deployed as soon as possible (Article 21). ECOMOG objectives are essentially ceasefire supervision, peace maintenance and construction, preventive deployments, and disarmament of irregular armed forces (Article 22).

The financing mechanism is also well integrated. In effect, the Protocol's Articles 36 and 37 provide a comprehensive budgeting for the mechanism's activities. Article 36

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<sup>79</sup> Cravinho and Adebajo.

<sup>80</sup> FRANCE, "L'Ecomog, Bras Armé De La Cédéao [Ecomog, Armed Wing of the ECOWAS]," *France 24*, January 07, 2011, accessed July 24, 2018, <http://www.france24.com/fr/20101228-ecomog-bras-arme-cedeao-cote-ivoire-nigeria>.

provides annual budgeting arrangements that includes the Community Levy; UN, AU, and other international agencies' funding; voluntary contributions; grants; and bilateral and multilateral cooperation. Article 37 provides the pre-financing option. In this regard, states providing units may be asked to cover the costs of operations in the first three months and ECOWAS will reimburse them within a maximum period of six months, as well as ensuring the continuation of the financing of operations.

In the Malian crisis, ECOWAS had clear text provision to act and a substantial wealth of experience, having intervened in several crises before. The organization also had an appropriate financing system. Therefore, it had sufficient capabilities to intervene. ECOWAS did not intervene until the French move in January 2013, however, in response to the rebel jihadists' offensive toward the south of the country.

To conclude, the evidence does not support the organization resources hypothesis, since ECOWAS has previously intervened in crises without clear text provisions or equivalent terrain experiences. Moreover, no international body—universal, regional, or transregional—can claim to have all the needed resources to do whatever its mandate calls for. I argue, instead, that political will is more important.<sup>81</sup>

#### **D. HYPOTHESIS 4: DOMESTIC INSECURITY IN MEMBER STATES**

Domestic insecurity consumes national resources, which ultimately affect states' power. Domestic insecurity forcibly directs leaders' focus more on internal affairs that leave fewer resources for commitment abroad. The hypothesis, here, predicts that the more stable are other ECOWAS member states, the more are they willful and able to undertake military intervention in other hotspot places in the region to restore peace. Conversely, if they themselves face internal security dilemmas, they are less likely to dare to adventure. While member states are committed, in theory, to making forces available for ECOWAS interventions, those forces may not be available in practice.

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<sup>81</sup> A proverb from Mali says that, "Before asking for help to kill a dangerous lion that threatens you, you must first have mastery of its head." This means that you should begin the task first with the means you have, then others may come in aid to you.

There is a clear link between strong political leadership and effective state action abroad. Frédéric Charillon suggests that, when a solidity or strength is observable in the executive—as a recognized legitimacy, a stability of the internal political situation, a popularity, a perspective of long-term action, including a renewal of the mandate—it may contribute in many ways to the development of an effective foreign policy. During the Mali case, Charillon’s criteria for effective foreign policy were not met. Knowing that the decision of intervening flowed from the national capitals to regional headquarters, and that “the likelihood of regional or subregional organizations intervening is exponentially increased if the subregional hegemon favors it,”<sup>82</sup> this author tests Charillon’s criteria—of leaders’ legitimacy and domestic stability—on the cases of Cote d’Ivoire and Nigeria, two important ECOWAS member states.

West Africa has experienced a turbulent period during the last decades. The Malian crisis came abruptly at a time when other hotbeds of tensions were just ending in some countries like Cote d’Ivoire (the post-electoral crisis), while they were underway in others like Nigeria (the Boko Haram insurgency). The security problems were alive within key ECOWAS states. Since power projection requires a stable domestic situation and a reasonable measure of legitimacy for the leaders, problems of domestic politics may have impeded a number of West African leaders from risking the adventure of Mali, where insurgents had substantial military capabilities. The risks posed by the crisis in Mali to their national security appeared, then, far away in comparison to more direct security threats hanging over their persons and their regimes. Consequently, they needed to focus attention and concentrate forces on their domestic issues, rather than abroad.

In Cote d’Ivoire, in 2012, President Alassane Dramane Ouattara was dealing with a post-election crisis. He himself came to power in 2011 following the election described above. The context of his accession to the presidency naturally augurs that the country’s pacification would not be easy task, since he was not fully accepted and his legitimacy was continuously questioned. Toto Jérôme Balou Bi, an Ivorian scholar, argued that Alassane

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<sup>82</sup> Söderbaum and Tavares, 143.

Dramane Ouattara was illegally invested in the function of President of Cote d'Ivoire. According to the author,

au regard de la Constitution Ivoirienne, ce sont les résultats définitifs du scrutin qui confèrent la qualité de Président de la République (Articles 39 et 94). Or la décision du Conseil Constitutionnel du 04 mai 2011, proclamant Monsieur OUATTARA, Président de la République, ne fait aucune référence aux résultats définitifs du scrutin du 28 novembre 2010; le Conseil se contente de dire qu'il «fait siennes, les décisions du Conseil de Paix et de Sécurité de l'Union Africaine, sur le règlement de la crise en Côte d'Ivoire» [under the Ivorian Constitution, it is the final results of the vote that confer the status of President of the Republic (Articles 39 and 94). The decision of the Constitutional Council of May 4, 2011, proclaiming Mr. OUATTARA President of the Republic, however, makes no reference to the final results of the election of November 28, 2010; the Council is content to say that it “adopts the decisions of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, on the settlement of the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire.”]<sup>83</sup>

Therefore, Ouattara, who began his presidential mandate in a difficult context—the hostile feelings of many of his compatriots and the demobilization of rebels—could hardly mobilize a fighting force and project power at this time. Naturally, his priority, his attention, and all his energy were focused on the domestic issues. Moreover, the rebels, then integrated into the reformed Ivorian Army, named the Republican Force of Cote d'Ivoire, continued to resort to mutinies to obtain advantages from Ouattara. In regard to all of this situation, one concludes that Cote d'Ivoire did not have the structured force able to undertake the sort of military campaign needed in Mali's north.

Nigeria, meanwhile, faced the ravages of the Boko Haram insurgency that started in 2009. First, the Nigerian army crushed the insurrection in 2009. In 2010, however, Boko Haram reorganized itself and took the initiative against the Nigerian forces. The substantial military means committed by Nigeria in the war against Boko Haram, nevertheless, seemed insufficient. As such, the Nigerian president of the time, Goodluck Jonathan, in an interview with the Wall Street Journal, said, “Si le Nigeria a un problème, et bien j'attends des Etats-Unis qu'ils viennent nous aider [If Nigeria has a problem, I expect the United

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<sup>83</sup> NET, CIVOX, “Alassane Ouattara, De L'illégitimité à L'inéligibilité. Par BALOU BI Toto Jérôme\*[Alassane Ouattara, From illegitimacy to Ineligibility. By BALOU BI Toto Jérôme],” [www.civox.net](http://www.civox.net), accessed August 10, 2018, [https://www.civox.net/Alassane-Ouattara-de-l-illegitimite-a-l-ineligibilite-Par-BALOU-BI-Toto-Jerome\\_a6686.html](https://www.civox.net/Alassane-Ouattara-de-l-illegitimite-a-l-ineligibilite-Par-BALOU-BI-Toto-Jerome_a6686.html).

States to come help us].”<sup>84</sup> There, also, insecurity and instability at the domestic level could annihilate the potential to mobilize the required forces and resources for conducting a military campaign abroad.

Definitively, instable domestic situations consume national resources and corrode states’ power. Domestic insecurity also makes leaders more concerned about internal issues, rather than outside problems. Those two effects that come from internal instability, one can definitely say, contributed to ECOWAS’s slow response in the Mali’s case.

## **E. HYPOTHESIS 5: DISTRUST OF ECOWAS**

The chapter has tested several hypotheses on factors influencing ECOWAS’s responsiveness and effectiveness in the Malian cases. National interests and organizational resources do not seem to perform very well, while personal politics seem somewhat valid but do not fully explain ECOWAS’s failure to act. Domestic insecurity contributed to ECOWAS’s slow response. To fully explain ECOWAS’s slow response, however, we need to consider a fifth hypothesis: distrust of ECOWAS. The will of the states is the foundation of any intergovernmental organization. The will is a process of faith in organizational morality. When this faith in the morality of the organization is shaken, it can result in the paralysis of the organization itself. The awareness of other engines for ECOWAS’s actions—outside the sole promotion of states’ general interest—erodes that trust, which in turn has a paralytic effect on the organization’s decision process and ultimately its action. In the Mali case, distrust was noticeable regarding Bamako’s posture towards ECOWAS. This suspicion seemed justified, regarding both ECOWAS’s inaction and actions.

Since the coup, the new authorities in Bamako had requested logistical and intelligence support from ECOWAS, hoping to liberate the north, using Malian armed forces. The acting President of Mali, Dioncounda Traore, wanted neighbors’ logistical support, and later their participation, in the maintenance of order, once the cities of the north were taken back from the jihadists. In this regard, at the end of the extraordinary

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<sup>84</sup> Léa Baron, “Boko Haram: Vers Une Réponse Militaire D’ampleur [Boko Haram: Towards a Military Response of magnitude],” *TV5MONDE*. November 11, 2017, accessed August 17, 2018, <https://information.tv5monde.com/afrique/boko-haram-vers-une-reponse-militaire-d-ampleur-17739>.

meeting of the sub-committee of the chiefs of staff of ECOWAS, held in Abidjan on August 24, 2012, his General Chief of Staff, Colonel Major Ibrahima Dembélé, said, “Personne ne fera cette guerre à la place du Mali, mais les autres viendront en appui, surtout en aviation, en logistique [Nobody will make this war instead of Mali, but the others will come in support, especially in aviation, logistics].”<sup>85</sup> For the General Chief of Staff, a foreign military presence would be justified only if Malian forces were insufficient. Regarding the size of this support force, he suggested that “ça pourra aller jusqu’à deux, trois bataillons sur le territoire malien...Pas à Bamako, mais sur les premières lignes pour la reconquête, au cas où les troupes maliennes ne suffiraient pas [it can go up to two, three battalions on the territory of Mali...Not in Bamako, but on the first lines for the reconquest, in case the Malian troops would not be enough].”<sup>86</sup>

ECOWAS, on the other hand, estimated that logistical support was insufficient to resolve the crisis and wanted West African troops not to be confined to a passive position. Instead of sending them directly to the battlefield, where the invaders were, however, ECOWAS wanted to position those forces in Bamako, supposedly to secure the city and its institutions. Discussions between Malian authorities and ECOWAS about the issue of stationing troops in the capital city took eleven months, from April 2012 to the French intervention in January 2013.

Meanwhile, the types of support that Mali requested were not given and the population in the north continued to suffer the ravages of occupation. ECOWAS said at the time that it was waiting for Bamako’s official request for assistance. Thus, in an official correspondence dated September 4, 2012, the president addressed the Chairperson of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS, Alassane Dramane Ouattara, saying, “Reconquérir le Nord est le défi majeur et pour cela une assistance est nécessaire pour remettre à niveau rapidement les unités de l’armée [Reconquering the north is the

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<sup>85</sup> RTI Groupe. “Force Militaire Régionale Au Mali: La Sécurité De Bamako Doit Être Confie Aux Maliens [Regional Military Force In Mali: Bamako Security Must Be Entrusted To Malians],” accessed July 26, 2018, [http://www.rti.ci/actualite\\_article.php?categorie=Afrique&id=1142&titre=force-militaire-regionale-au-mali-la-securite-de-bamako-doit-etre-confiee-aux-maliens&page=80](http://www.rti.ci/actualite_article.php?categorie=Afrique&id=1142&titre=force-militaire-regionale-au-mali-la-securite-de-bamako-doit-etre-confiee-aux-maliens&page=80).

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.



major challenge and for this assistance is needed to quickly upgrade the units of the army].”<sup>87</sup> President Traoré asked for five battalions that will be “graduellement engagés à partir d’une ligne de front pour contrôler les villes reconquises [Gradually engaged from a front line to control the reconquered cities].”<sup>88</sup> Concerning the security of Bamako, the correspondence stated, “le déploiement d’une force militaire et de police est sans objet pour sécuriser les institutions de la transition à Bamako [the deployment of a military and police force is irrelevant to secure transitional institutions in Bamako].”<sup>89</sup>

This scenario presumably was in discordance with ECOWAS’s plan to send forces to Bamako before eventually reconquering the north. ECOWAS, thus, opposed Bamako’s terms of intervention, asking the Malian government to revise its position. On September 19, 2012, Blaise Compaoré, president of Burkina Faso and mediator in the Malian crisis, announced that the conditions imposed by Bamako jeopardized an effective deployment of the ECOWAS troops in Mali. Ivorian Foreign Minister Daniel Kablan Duncan and African Integration Minister Ally Coulibaly traveled to Bamako on September 20, 2012 to hand over this response to Mali’s acting president, Dioncounda Traoré.

Given that the security situation in Bamako was not as concerning as that in the north, sending troops to Bamako seemed unjustified. Moreover, the securing of the capital came to be a matter of national pride for the Malian people.<sup>90</sup> In the view of ECOWAS’s uncompromising position to establish a foothold in the capital and its obvious weaker commitment to tackling the crux of the problem in the north, Bamako’s suspicion has a foundation. This suspicion in turn made Bamako more uncompromising in its opposition

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<sup>87</sup> Olivier Dion, “Le Capitaine Sanogo: ‘‘Pas De Soldats De La CEDEAO Sur Notre Sol’ [Captain Sanogo: “No Soldiers from ECOWAS on Our Sol],” *La Nouvelle Tribune*, accessed July 26, 2018, <https://lanouvelletribune.info/archives/international/12064-le-capitaine-sanogo-pas-de-soldats-de-la-cedeao-sur-notre-sol>.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> RFI. “Mali: Ce Que Demande Dioncounda Traoré à La Cédéao [Mali: What Dioncounda Traoré asks for to the ECOWAS],” *RFI Afrique*, September 05, 2012, accessed July 26, 2018, <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20120905-mali-dioncounda-traore-cedeao-aide-nord-bamako-lettre-président-transition>.

<sup>90</sup> This pride sense is not a typical Malian sentiment, however. One remembers that General DeGaulle, when it came time to liberate France from German occupation, asked General Eisenhower to allow the French forces to enter Paris first and occupy it. Eisenhower agreed and the liberation efforts were concentrated, as directly as possible, on different German pockets of resistance throughout France.

to hosting ECOWAS troops in the capital. Viewed in this light, mistrust has been a crippling factor for ECOWAS's action.

The suspicion did not proceed exclusively from divergent deployments plans. Additional elements strengthened Bamako's suspicion. First was ECOWAS's blockade of Guinea's seaport of armaments that Mali had bought.<sup>91</sup> Second was the rescue operation that Blaise Compaore did in favor of Bilal Ag Chérif, the head of NMLA.<sup>92</sup> Compaore sent a military plane to evacuate Ag Chérif in Burkina Faso, after he was seriously injured following clashes with other insurgent movements.<sup>93</sup>

Definitely, Bamako distrusted ECOWAS, since the organization seemed simply to delay and drag things on, while appeasing invaders. Therefore, it refused to subscribe to ECOWAS's scheme. Mistrust, therefore, worked to curb the action of ECOWAS.

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<sup>91</sup> RFI, "Les Armes Destinées Au Mali Toujours Bloquées En Guinée Par La Cédéao [Weapons Destined In Mali Still Blocked In Guinea By The ECOWAS]," *RFI Afrique*, September 07, 2012, accessed August 10, 2018, <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20120907-armes-mali-guinee-cedeao-afrique-ouest-toumani-toure>.

<sup>92</sup> "Intervention De La Cedeao: Pourquoi Sanogo Hésite [ECOWAS Intervention: Why does Sanogo Hesitate]," *Maliweb.net*, September 24, 2012, accessed July 26, 2018, <https://www.maliweb.net/armee/intervention-de-la-cedeao-pourquoi-sanogo-hesite-93910.html>.

<sup>93</sup> "Le Président Du MNLA Evacué Par L'armée Burkinabè [The President of the MNLA evacuated by the Burkinabe army]," *Maliweb.net*, July 02, 2012, accessed August 10, 2018, <https://www.maliweb.net/insecurite/le-president-du-mnla-evacue-par-larmee-burkinabe-77160.html>.

## V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ECOWAS started as an organization with a vocation of integration and promotion of the economies of the states of West Africa through the harmonization of sectoral policies and the facilitation of the circulation of people, goods, and services through space. With the advent of civil war within many member states, however, as well as the occurrence of interstate wars, the organization has observed the impact of insecurity and instability on the pursuit of its development goal. To this end, the organization adopted two important additional protocols: the 1978 protocol banning the use of force and the promotion of peaceful settlement of disputes between member states, and the 1981 protocol providing the framework for a collective defense mechanism. Although incomplete, in that they did not directly address the problem of civil war or internal state conflicts, the 1978 and 1981 protocols contributed to the creation of the ECOMOG force, which was first introduced in Liberia in November 1990. This practice led to ECOWAS's founding treaty revision in 1993, to integrate the peace and security dimension into the organization's objectives. To date, the collective security mechanism—the provisions for the prevention, management, and settlement of crises by ECOWAS—can be considered as finalized, at least textually on a legal level.

It is clear that ECOWAS has not fully played this role in the Malian crisis, however. The organization has focused more on the institutional management, with varying degrees of success: specifically, the return to a semblance of constitutional normalcy, although the reality of power remained in the hands of the junta. Hence, one notices a total failure of ECOWAS to support the Malian forces for recovering the zones under occupation. ECOWAS intervened only following the French offensive.

This thesis has tested five possible explanations for ECOWAS's slow response. The hypothesis of national interest fails because all the states in the region clearly had a national interest in stopping rebel jihadists and stabilizing Mali regarding the threat that this crisis posed to their national security. This threat did not prompt their intervention, however. Personal politics—considering Mali and Burkina Faso's war history and the particular relationship between Blaise Compaore and Alassane Dramane Ouattara—could

have acted in the Mali case as a corruptive element that prevented vigorous and timely response from the regional body. The hypothesis of organizational resources does not perform well because ECOWAS had the wealth of experience, legal basis, and an appropriate mechanism of financing by the time the Malian crisis broke out. Therefore, domestic insecurity and the distrust of ECOWAS seem better explanations for understanding why ECOWAS did not intervene in a timely fashion in Mali. Domestic insecurity consumes states' national resources and, ultimately, states' power; it forces leaders to focus more on internal issues than on external commitment. The justified doubts that Bamako had in relation to ECOWAS's operation plan showed a distrust that affected the decision-making process and ultimately ECOWAS's action. This study discovered that personal politics, its corollary distrust, and domestic security challenges impeded ECOWAS's responsiveness in the Mali case. If those problems are not addressed, one can expect in the future that in the same conditions, the same causes will produce the same effects. That is, ECOWAS will not be as reactive as its texts design.

From this observation come several recommendations. The first recommendation is to strengthen the mechanism for crisis prevention. ECOWAS has already set up monitoring and early warning units in its respective states. It is about strengthening the capabilities of these cells so that they are better equipped and effective in the analysis of precursors to internal conflicts. There is also a need to strengthen the culture of democratic governance so that all the sensibilities in the different countries can participate fully in the debate and public management. To remedy the problem of the loss of confidence in ECOWAS, a real and long-term effort must be made. ECOWAS must once again become the international organization that promotes peace, stability, and development in the West African continent. It must avoid the habit of protecting or abandoning a leader due to greedy games of self-interest. This is possible if the spirit and the letter of the different texts are applied. Finally, ECOWAS must become a people's organization and not a kind of leaders' union.

Beyond these recommendations, it is necessary for the organization's effectiveness in security matters that all states members built solid and standardized defense apparatuses. As the Malian Prime Minister Soumeylou Boubeye Maiga once said, the addition of the

number zero a thousand times will remain zero. Secondly, ECOWAS forces should be given a permanent headquarters, placing forces under regional command, in peacetime as well as in time of war, in order to favor interoperability and unity of command and control.

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