

ECOWAS's promotion of regional integration. Insights from the operations around the 2016 presidential elections in The Gambia

María Rodríguez Alcázar

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Orientadora:

Prof. Dra. Sílvia Andreia Mateus Roque, Professora convidada
Universidade de Coimbra

Co-orientadora:

Prof. Dra. Ana Lúcia Lopes de Sá, Professora Auxiliar
ISCTE-Instituto Universitário de Lisboa

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Abstract

Regional integration studies suffer from a Eurocentric bias, as low attention has been given to models different from the European Union. Through this research we will offer an analysis of the regional integration process developed by ECOWAS in West Africa, which, framed in the second wave of regionalism in Africa, was catalyzed by security cooperation in 1990. Its integration evolution is focused in three main axes: economy, security and rule of law. The ECOWAS operations around the presidential elections in 2016 in The Gambia demonstrate that by fostering common institutions sovereignty of States is also strengthened, as rule of law promotion mechanisms benefit the domestic capacity of Member States to provide respect of Human Rights and democratic governance.

Keywords: ECOWAS, regional integration, regionalism, security, rule of law, sovereignty

Resumo

Os estudos da integração regional sofrem com um viés eurocêntrico, pois pouca atenção foi dada a modelos diferentes da União Europeia. Através desta pesquisa, ofereceremos uma análise do processo de integração regional desenvolvido pela CEDEAO na África Ocidental, que, enquadrado na segunda onda de regionalismo na África, foi catalisado pela cooperação em segurança em 1990. A evolução do seu processo de integração está focada em três eixos principais: economia, segurança e estado de direito. As operações da CEDEAO nas eleições presidenciais de 2016 na Gâmbia demonstram que, ao promover instituições comuns, a soberania dos Estados também é fortalecida, pois os mecanismos de promoção do estado de direito beneficiam a capacidade doméstica dos Estados Membros de respeitar os Direitos Humanos e a governabilidade democrática.

Palavras-chave: CEDEAO, integração regional, regionalismo, segurança, estado de direito, soberania

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Abbreviations and acronyms

AAFC	Allied Armed Force of the ECOWAS Community
AEC	African Economic Community
AHSG	ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government
ALG	Liptako-Gourma Integrated Authority
APRC	Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction of The Gambia
AU	African Union
BCEAO ¹	Central Bank of West African States
CEN-SAD	Community of Sahel-Saharan States
CILSS	The Permanent Interstate Committee for the Drought Control in the Sahel
COMESA	Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa
CRC	Constitutional Review Commission
EAC	East African Community
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOMIG	ECOWAS Mission in The Gambia
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreement
EU	European Union
Franc CFA	Franc of the Financial Community of Africa
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IEC	Independent Election Commission
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IR	International Relations
MAD	ECOWAS agreement on Mutual Assistance of Defence
MIP	Minimum Integration Programme of the African Economic Community
MRU	Mano River Union
NBA	Niger Basin Authority
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRA	New Regionalisms Approach
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OMVG	Gambian River Basin Development Organization
OMVS	Senegal River Basin Development Organization
PEDRO	Political Economy Dynamics of Regional Organizations
REC	Regional Economic Community
SACU	South African Customs Union
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SSRG	ECOWAS Policy Framework for Security Sector Reform and Governance
TRRC	Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission
UDP	United Democratic Party of The Gambia

¹ Its official acronym comes from the French: Banque Centrale des Etats de l’Afrique de l’Ouest (BCEAO)

UEMOA ²	West African Economic and Monetary Union
UMA ³	Arab Maghreb Union
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNIDIR	United Nations Institute for Disarmament and Research
UNOWAS	United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNU-CRIS	United Nations University's Comparative Regional Integration Studies Centre
VBA	Volta Basin Authority
WAMZ	West African Monetary Zone
WB	World Bank

² Its official acronym comes from the French: Union Économique et Monétaire Ouest-Africaine (UEMOA).

³ Its official acronym comes from the French: Union du Maghreb Arabe (UMA).

Introduction

In the conference “Linking Peace, Security and Regional Integration in Africa”, organized in June 2003 by the United Nations University’s Comparative Regional Integration Studies Centre (UNU-CRIS) and the Africa Centre for peace and Conflict Studies of the University of Bradford, there were some suggested areas for following researches about the role of integration organizations in promoting peace. These topics were mainly the state of regional integration and its dynamics in Africa, as well as the development of a methodological framework for analyzing the foci of regional integration and rigorous multidisciplinary theorizing of integration projects (Wachira, 2003). Based on these suggested proposals, we will try to approach the regional integration process of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in order to analyze its state, understand which are the main foci of its integration process and figure out how or through which practices ECOWAS promotes and strengthens its regional integration.

There is a generalized mistrust on the regionalization processes in the African context and on how able it will be to achieve a highly developed institutional framework regarding economic and political integration. As Lombaerde et. Al. explain, existing regional integration studies are mainly focused in the European experience, in contrast, other models of regionalism are characterized as loose, informal or weak. “‘Progress’ in regional integration is defined in terms of EU-style institutionalization” and eurocentrism results in a false universalism (2010). From its part, scholars of integration processes from New Regionalism Approaches such as Grant & Söderbaum's , although sharing the criticism to the eurocentrism of the discipline, remark their lack of confidence in formal state-led regionalism in Africa (2003).

Through this research we will contest these ideas from a neofunctionalist approach. We will use Pentland’s three main tenets, understanding ECOWAS as a political system, being aware that political change is a vertical and horizontal process, where both States and common regional institutions play a role, and putting special attention to the development of common regional institutions (Diez de Velasco, 2010b). We will focus on the role and performance of the States and formal institutions, although we acknowledge the increasing importance of informal agents in integration processes, as the NRA reminds.

Although the debate about fundamentals of comparisons between integration schemas is still weak, in chapter 1 we will propose some concepts to which it could be useful to pay attention when studying different organizations seeking regional integration. Likewise, we will bring some of the existing models of regional integration already theorized and try to understand the correspondences with ECOWAS evolution. Previous considerations about the neglect of Africa in the general debate on regionalism, make us wonder if ECOWAS could represent a new model of regional integration or to what extent it has followed given standards of integration.

Chapter 2 will offer an overview of the state of regional integration in the African continent, explaining how its evolution was in the last decades and highlighting the main changes introduced from the first to the second wave of regionalism in Africa. We will take a closer look to West Africa to reflect on the proliferation of organizations and competition for integration in the region.

Although ECOWAS's noteworthy cooperation areas, the general literature on International Relations remains filled and focused on the EU example, and ECOWAS integration efforts have not occupied pages of research. Chapter 4 will be devoted to an analysis of the ECOWAS's axes for integration development, paying attention to the main mechanisms and institutions launched by the organization.

In order to have a complete picture, in chapter 5 we will move from theory to practice in the development of regional integration, analyzing the operations of ECOWAS around the presidential elections in The Gambia in 2016. Through a timeline we will provide an overview of the main facts and agents involved; deepening after that in the different stages of the operations, studying its deployment and functioning and remarking some practices already used to strengthen integration.

ECOWAS has proved solvency facing security challenges in West Africa. The positive reactions on the Gambian crisis management buzzed the word about the ECOWAS model's success and encourages us to think that ECOWAS can be promoted internationally as an example of regional integration. Some questions rise regarding the State's sovereignty, as some basic competences of the State, such as providing security, are now partly managed by ECOWAS's common institutions. Along the study we will further discuss about this issue.

Through this research we aim to contribute to the trend supporting that the European Union is no longer the only and benchmark example of regional integration, as elsewhere in the world other models of integration have taken place and may have a

strong impact in shaping the international arena. Understanding these non-Western patterns will provide us with tools to better analyze the ongoing regional-based international system.

Chapter 1: What does it mean regional integration?

The State and International Relations

There is a consensus among the political science and International Relations theorists dating the beginning of the modern international system in 1648, with the Peace of Westphalia Treaties. The end of the Thirty Years' War brought the still present principles of international law: the so called Westphalian sovereignty, or national sovereignty, meaning that each State, which is legally equal, has exclusive sovereignty over its territory, and therefore, States agree on the principle of non-interference in the domestic issues of each State, respecting their borders.

This way the States components were defined and so were the way they interacted within each other. The rules of international relations were therefore based in a State-system. This model of international relations is still present, although the structure of the international system has developed from 1648, overall in the 19th and 20th century with the emergence and diffusion of international organizations and humanitarian law.

Exchanges among States have resulted in the establishment of trans-national political and economic structures, sometimes even with the shape of integration organizations, whereby interdependence grew among states. Before the expansion of international cooperation and regional integration efforts, States were the ones holding national sovereignty, with a legal independence and an exclusive right to control borders. When integration organizations start playing sovereignty, some legitimacy issues arose, as the State “loses”⁴ authority to perform specific tasks (Caporaso, 2000).

Interdependence decade of 1970s criticizes the statocentric model of International Relations, arguing that it is no longer valid to explain international phenomena. In this approach the interstate system is being replaced by a world system, producing a global society and contesting the classic distinction between national and international issues. Scholars like Morse argue that talking about a world of States exclusively has no longer sense. Morse speaks about interdependence, what has reduced the capacity of States to

⁴ The State never loses their competences, it can always ultimately exert them, but when joining an integration organization, the State transfers some competences to the organization, that means, the State “relinquishes” its authority to perform on certain topic and transfers this competence to the regional organization.

have a national autonomy. Due to their international commitments State's governments are decreasing their control to direct some changes in their own societies, meaning a loss of autonomy to act domestically (Morse, 1969).

International organizations

Since the creation of the Central Commission for Navigation of the Rhine in 1815 there was an expansion on the creation of international organizations all over the world. As Diez de Velasco (2010) says, the ideological and economic diversities in the world, as well as the need to manage common interests foster the creation of international organizations, in order to establish cooperative relations between States.

Co-operative relations with political consequences to the parts involved are increasing because of objective reasons – the “game theory” explains that individual interests are better and cheaper defended in a “common space”, what could be obvious addressing common problems in the global agenda (such as environment crisis or terrorism) – but also because of subjective reasons, such as the perception of common values and the “moral duty”. According to Holsti, the conditions that enhance cooperation relations are: 1) The existence of similar or complementary interests, objectives or needs; 2) the equitable distribution of costs, risks and benefits; 3) the trust on the partner delivering their obligations; and finally 4) that the interactions will take place on a reliable and reciprocal environment (Barbé, 2007).

Typologies and characters among international organizations can be very diverse from one another, although they all are defined by holding a legal personality under the international law. To better understand them, Sobrino Heredia proposes a fast classification regarding three topics: their goals, their composition and their competences (Sobrino Heredia, 2009a).

Their goals or issues of cooperation can be generalists or specific, addressing any topic estimated relevant, or focusing and limiting their cooperation to issues linked to a concrete area, such as security, economy, culture, or science. Regarding their composition international organizations can have a universal vocation (such as United Nations) or a regional scope, among which are some objectives or subjective affinities, such as the geographic contiguity, the most common. When these organizations occupy a limited geographical area, they compose a community of interests being a restricted group of States. There is a regionalization process based on variable geographical scales

(intercontinental, continental, interregional, regional or subregional). Since 1945 the world assists to an emergence of regional organizations, propelled by the decolonization process and the will to integrate economies. As a common feature of regional organizations, we can remark that their constitutive treaties establish the coordination or subordination to the United Nations.

Regarding their competences, there can be organizations intended to coordination or to integration, depending on the transference of sovereign competences made by the states. On the one hand, coordination or cooperation organizations are those through which state want to achieve a common goal through inter-governmental coordinated actions. Decisions are adopted unanimously, are directed to the member states not being their decisions applicable until authorization and mediation. The main feature is that Member States preserve their sovereignty untouched.

In organizations intended to integration or unification, on the other hand, there is a transference of competences from the States Members to the common institutions, providing them with sovereignty in some fields to adopt decisions. Decisions in the intergovernmental body does not need to be taken unanimously, but by majority. It is distinctive that decisions in the selected fields can be directly applicable in the national juridical systems. Their key is the transfer of sovereign competences, so that in their common institutions resides the competence on issues traditionally reserved to the State.

Amplifying this last classification, we suggest taking into account the intensity of the cooperation made by international organizations. It can range from punctual diplomatic coordination to integration, that is for Barbé “the extreme form of cooperation” (2007). Integration is commonly understood as the creation of an international organization to face any issue and share sovereignty in all domains. Having their functions in the executive, legislative and judicial field, these organizations can adopt general, compulsory and directly applicable decisions. They have a real organic independence regarding the member states and their governments and can also have representants elected by the peoples. Its juridical system is autonomous, as well as their financial system; and has the possibility to participate in international relations representing itself. Therefore, integration overcomes the State-based model of IR, as integration organizations are actors with agency in the international arena, which opens the floor to think on current and future IR based on interrelating regional blocs, instead of States.

In the intensity range from coordination to integration, integration can be reduced to concrete domains, depending on the transferred competences. In those cases, the applicable decisions are limited to the competences attributed.

Furthermore, international organizations distinguish also because of their formalization level, from highly formalized to informal (Barbé, 2007). Arenal (2007) highlights as the main feature of integration the creation of an enabling situation to overcome differences and conflicts between political units not resorting to war. It is clear that integration refers to a cooperative unification, non-coercive. It is here where there is a close connection between integration theories and conflict studies. The International Relations' model portrayed by Barbé is defined as a *continuum* featured with conflict on the one side and cooperation on the other. War is the furthest exponent of conflict; integration is for cooperation.

Theoretical approach to regional integration

Integration theories have their origin in the period between World Wars, with the contribution of Mittrany. It is after the World War II when the theories get a scientific conception and there is a convergence between theory and practice.

There are two approaches in the integration theories: which understand integration as a process or as a result (Arenal, 2007). We will work with the second approach, understanding integration as the terminal situation of a process. Nevertheless, we will study the process until achieving that final state, the regionalism or regional building process.

Díez de Velasco proposes the classification of integration theories distinguishing among the federalist; the functionalist and the neofunctionalist approaches; and the revisionist or multidimensional approaches (Diez de Velasco, 2010b). We will briefly go through them, seeing their main characteristics. It is important to note that most of the theorist of integration have focused their studies on the model of Western Europe (Arenal, 2007).

Federalism

It is understood as the highest level of integration, with a complete harmony of interests between all the composing parts. For Laursen (2004a) the process leading to integration finishes with an organization composed by Federal States, and shows as follows: first

States agree on conventions, after they coordinate in international regimes; they cooperate inside of international organization on specific topics; what leads to supranational politics, transferring competences and ruling in some common domains; and finally that leads to a wide transfer of competences, ruling the common institutions on most of the topics, and maintaining the States composition in the form of federal states with some autonomy. In a federalist approach, integration requires the development of a common institutional and legal framework, preserving the different units some autonomy.

Functionalism

It is framed in the institutional theory of International Relations, which focuses on the role of institutions (formal and informal rules, norms, practices, and conventions) shaping the international politics.

The functional approach was born in the inter-war period and has David Mitrany as a great exponent. Arenal shows that functionalist approach has a predominant position in the integration theories, as it has been paid much attention. Functionalism since its beginning has been focus on the study of the European Community. It is more pragmatic than theoretical, and its basic tenet is that the State, basic political unit of the international relations, is inadequate to satisfy the needs of humanity. For Mitrany, the integration process in one field will generate cooperative relations in others, generating a spillover effect, able to change the inner national sovereignty and, by that, the current international system. It poses the question if the economic integration will lead to a political integration.

This approach speaks about achieving integration though a gradual change, a natural process generated by spillover. Spillover seem, therefore unstoppable and uncontrollable.

Neofunctionalism

Neofunctionalism was born as a development of functional approach in the 1950s, combining the federalist idea of political and economic unification with the functional emphasis on the accumulative and gradual change. With this approach, the spillover is less natural and more political, having the focus on the political process, more than the content or consequences. It is more theoretical than practical.

Pentland, illustrative from the neofunctionalist theory, stated three main tenets: the region in an integration process constitutes an only political system; political change is a vertical and horizontal process⁵; attention must be put in the central institutions which aspire to rule the regional system.

Haas defends that more than a political integration, there is political interdependence of States. That leads to the idea that integration is not an unstoppable process, but it can collapse and fail, depending the will of the Member States. Spillover can take place promoted by diverse reasons. Haas and Schmitter did some effort trying to apply those theories to Latin America.

In the 1990's some argued neofunctionalism still have explanatory power, some seeked alternatives with intergovernmentalism theories, such as Andrew Moravcsik developing the "liberal intergovernmentalism", which showed international organizations as a process by which States first define their interest, bargain with others in order to get greater outcomes and then make the more suitable institutional choice to achieve real commitments from the States.

There are two approaches in these theories framed in institutionalism: the researches about the functioning of the organizations, its membership and the features that characterize them. And studies about the role of international organizations in the international system and how they contribute to world' integration, their efficacy preserving world's peace and security. From Arenal's point of view, recent studies on international organizations are overcoming the juridical and institutional approach, to focus on power structure, which functions are exerted in reality and how is the decision-making process (Arenal, 2007).

Critic revisionism

In the 1970s greater interest raised on integration processes beyond the European Union. These theories are those called by Diez de Velasco as critic revisionism.

Giving another turn of the screw, New Regionalism Approach challenges the dominant theoretical constructs of the post-Cold War used in the study of regional integration and allows us to think about the State out of the Weberian straitjacket⁶. NRA

⁵ Classically it is understood that international relations are horizontal, as there was a big difference between the international and domestic policy. Now it is not possible, as there are processes diffusing the borders between political systems and generating vertical relations.

⁶ They are critic with the initial thesis of Haas, with the leading role of national leaders which support or not the integration process depending on their will; because of not taking attention to the effects and external

is defined by Söderbaum as a diffused school of regionalism espoused by scholars of critical and non-orthodox International Relations/International Political Economy, emerged from the research project “New Regionalism” sponsored by World Institute for Development Economics Research of the UN University, by scholars like Hettne, Söderbaum, Mittelman, Shulz and Thompson. It must be said that inside the NRA⁷ there are diverse approaches to regionalization processes.

The “old regionalism” took the image of the European project. The new regionalism shifted its approach towards a more global and diverse phenomenon (Grant & Söderbaum, 2003). The NRA defend integration as a multidimensional phenomenon, developing a concept that takes into consideration different dimensions and components which explain integration. It acknowledges differences in the content and the conditions of integration in different parts of the world and recognizes the value of Southern contemporary regionalization processes, with a pluralistic and informal nature. Keohane and Nye developed this view, trying to avoid the euro-centric approaches of neofunctionalism. Nye analyzed the conditions for integration from western and not western societies and the potential of subregional economic organizations to develop a federation.

In contrast with the neoliberal institutionalism, which focuses on formal institutions and the study of decision-making and rules production, New Regionalism shifted the focus from formal institutions to the study of informal sectors, parallel economies and non-state actors. Ihedru (2003) remarks a consensus in the NRA that informal regionalization flux has been given inadequate attention by traditional state-centric approaches. Other actors apart from States are gaining strength in regionalization processes. The focus is now on the “informal regionalization” or “regionalization from below”. So that, NRA invites to study transnational corporations, civil societies, think-tanks, private armies, informal border politics... as agents and consequences of regionalism. Likewise, States are something in process, instead of something static or settled and become one more agent in the regionalism process. Therefore, the NRA transcends the conventional state-centric and formalistic notions on regionalism. It tries to connect formal and informal regionalisms, trying to understand the complexities and

circumstances during the integration process; or having a theory based on gradual changes, or the underestimation of the influence of more dramatic types of changes in the integration process.

⁷ The acronym NRA is often use in order to refer to “New Regionalism Approaches”, in plural.

contradictions of regionalization process in order to get a clearer picture of how regionalization process looks like (Bach, 2003).

The New Regionalism agrees that a profound study of institutions can tell us about the integration process. Anyway, they defend there are different approaches to study institutions. Knowledge, ideas and norms can affect integration in various ways, as pointed out by constructivism. In a sociological institutionalism approach, identities and values promoted through institutions receive attention, e.g., the increasing importance of Parliamentary bodies.

As suggested by Hettne, regionalization and deregionalization must be analyzed within the same framework. There are no given regions, but they are constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed, intentionally or unintentionally (Hettne, 2005). It is important to note that regionalization can occur unintentionally, or it can be produced by a conscious regionalist project. And, as remarked by Grant & Söderbaum (2003), “the rhetoric of regionalism may not always have much significance for the reality of the regionalization in practice”. Regionalism has often been considered positive from a normative point of view (in liberal thought, but not only). Regional integration might have negative effects and some actors might loose from it, while other will benefit.

Grant & Söderbaum (2003) argue that NRA perspective is highly relevant in African context, where there is a mistrust on the regionalization processes and on how able will be to attain their goals of a highly developed institutional framework regarding economic and political integration – modeled on the EU. States are important, but so are other non-state actors, which come often together mixing their interests in networks and coalitions. Grant & Söderbaum (2003) remark as well their lack of confidence in formal state-led regionalism in Africa.

Comparative studies of regional integration

“Regionalism is more dynamic and turbulent, and it should not be analyzed (only) through the lenses of Euro-centric integration theory”

(Shaw, Söderbaum, Nyang’oro, & Grant, 2003)

There is a weak debate around comparative analysis and the fundamentals of comparison between different regional integration schemas. Lombaerde, Söderbaum, Van Langenhove, & Baert (2010) highlight three problems on the conceptual, theoretical and methodological approach. They note that a definition of regional organization or integration is needed for a comparative research, as the choice of concepts will affect the ability to compare and generalize. Laursen (2010) argues that integration schemes all around the world are very different, emphasizing or focusing in different topics. Concepts must not be taken for granted, as “integration” or “regionalism” is not understood the same way wherever in the world.

From NRA, most of the concepts used in comparative studies of integration were born and apply to the specific case of the EU. Therefore, they could be too specific if we want to conduct comparative studies. “Clearly, the process of European integration within the EC has gone further than integration in other regional settings.”. That is way he uses a loose definition in order to make comparative studies (Laursen, 2004b, p. 4).

For Lombaerde et al. (2010, p. 27) one fundamental theoretical problem of comparative regionalism is “the tendency to use the European integration theory as a basis for comparison with other regions”. They recognize a strong bias in favor of European integration theory (and practice), comparing every region – implicitly or explicitly – with European integration theory. Laursen starts his book about Comparative Regional Integration with the acknowledgment that “theories of integration have mainly been developed to explain the European integration” and has therefore an Eurocentric bias (Laursen, 2004b, p. 3, 2010). And finishes it acknowledging that “it is clear that the EU has progressed furthest”. As it has achieved to be a political union – with some weaknesses – and it has gone much further pooling and delegating sovereignty than other integration schemes. None other scheme has gone so far in giving common institutions “supranational” powers. “In that sense, the EU is certainly sui generis, and some scholars have argued that the EU is more than an international regime, but less than a federal state”

(Laursen, 2004a, p. 287). Notwithstanding, the toolbox of the European experience can be useful for the study of other regions⁸.

As the European experience has been a basis for the production of generalizations, it resulted in difficulties making comparable cases. They argue that “the treatment of European integration as the primary case or “model” of regional integration still dominates many of the more recent studies of regionalism and regional integration, which is an important part of “the problem of comparison” within this research area.

As Lombaerde et. Al. explain, as focused in the European experience, other models of regionalism are characterized as loose, informal or weak (such as the Asian or African experience). “‘Progress’ in regional integration is defined in terms of EU-style institutionalization”. Eurocentrism results in a false universalism, being translated its experience into a more abstract theoretical language (Lombaerde et al., 2010, p. 39).

Lombaerde et al. recommend paying more attention to theories, concepts and ideas emerged from outside Europe. Lombaerde recommends starting each case with how the actors themselves conceptualize their process of regionalization.

The EU is no longer the only example of generation of an internal market, common institutions (with decisions increasingly adopted by Qualified Majority Vote, instead that by consensus or unanimity) nor a political union; although its practices have been during the years the ones recommended to be extrapolated to any other integration scheme in the world (Laursen, 2004b; Mattli, 2004). It should be regarded with a critical approach, seeing its strengths and weaknesses.

African continent in integration theories

Grant and Söderbaum (2003) suggest that Africa is neglected in the general debate on regionalism. The mainstream perspectives show that in Africa there is a weak or primitive regional economic integration. This is not wrong but hide other attempts and efforts to reach regional integration in the continent.

As a pitfall of the dominant interpretative frames in which African political situation is analyzed, Olukoshi identifies the “persistent reading of African historical experiences using the lenses of the histories and experiences of other peoples and regions

⁸ Caporaso (2000), in line with David Mitrany in 1930, identified some dilemmas of the EU integration process that could be applied to other integration schemas in the world. They relate to social policy, internal democracy and external relations and security, about the lack of social policy provisions around its Treaties – mainly economic-; the lack of internal democracy once the organization is enlarging its size; and how o relinquish to some “hard competences” of the State, such as security.

of the world”, mainly European or from the West. It was defined as the euro-centric unilinear evolutionism.

As well as NRA scholars, Olukoshi defends that African integration phases are seen as a replay of what was experienced already in Europe or the West, and its future is only valid as long as it is modelled as the EU experience. Unilinear evolutionism, basing the study of African politics in Western models, serves to create uniformity and conformity, but not to the cause of diversity or even to understand universality. The creativity and originality of African integration schemas are lost in the comparison with Western models, and not enough attention is given to the specificity of African contexts and experiences. Some other NRA scholars are critical as well with the deprivation of Africa from its own originality in the process of region building (Acharya, 2012; Laursen, 2004b; Lombaerde et al., 2010; Olukoshi, 2004, pp. 97–98).

Conceptualization of regional integration

As introduced before, integration schemes all around the world are very different, emphasizing or focusing in different topics. Concepts must not be taken for granted, as they could not mean the same wherever in the world. That is why we would like to clarify some frequent terms when addressing regional integration. Firstly, we propose the definitions for regionalism, regionalization and regionhood.

Regionalism: refers specifically to the idea, ideology, policies and goals that seek to transform a geographical area into a clearly identified social space. It refers to the state-centric aspects of regionalization. It also relates to the construction of an identity and carries as a result, a strong cognitive component. It postulates the implementation of a program and the definition of a strategy and therefore, is generally assimilated to formal arrangement and institution-building (Lombaerde et al., 2010).

Regionalization: is a more encompassing notion, which takes into account processes and configurations where States frequently are not key players. It may or may not correlate with the implementation of regionalist strategies. Regionalism as a project does not mean regionalization. Regionalization can grow irrespective of state policies and even at times in opposition to their stated purpose (Bach, 2003). The region-building (or regionalization) process is affected by social practices and discourse. It can be a long-term process with different phases, defining its degree of regionness (Grant & Söderbaum, 2003; Hettne, 2005).

Regionhood: set of characteristics of a regional integration. They can be internal or endogenous (such as identity or institutionalization) or external or exogenous (such as the capacity to interact with another regions on the global governance, influence on polity of economy...) (Lombaerde et al., 2010).

Almost all the States in the world have already agreed on the principle of international cooperation when signing San Francisco Charter (Article 1.3 UN, 1945) and joining the United Nations Organization, but not all of them have achieved integration. Although there are different approaches and theories on regional integration, we will try to grasp some concepts coming from comparative studies. These concepts could bring some light in the study of regional integration and might be useful tracing comparisons within different cases.

According to Barbé, integration is the consequence and last exponent of co-operation, and the counterpart of conflict, therefore integration has by definition peaceful relations as core component. As common characteristics of regional integration, Barbé highlights different ways to exert integration: legal and institutional integration, political integration and generating a security community. In consonance with scholars like Etzioni, she recognizes that these three ways “don’t exclude each other, the sum of the three would mean the success of any integration process in the current international system” (Barbé, 2007, p. 262).

Legal and institutional integration: It is the most extended and more agreed way to exert integration. There is a consensus on saying that an integrated region is a geographical area with an attached social community and/or system which is not a state, but at the same time it has some statehood properties (Lombaerde et al., 2010, p. 23). This implicitly agrees that behind regional integration and while benefiting regional sovereignty, there is a loose of State sovereignty. Moreover, in theories focused on “formal integration” there is an agreement highlighting the collective decision-making as a key aspect for all regional integration efforts. Therefore, legal and institutional integration means the transference of sovereignty and holding independent institutions. From Díez de Velasco’s point of view, integration processes operate when States hand over competences to common supra-national bodies, having their decisions direct and immediate authority in the national legal system (Diez de Velasco, 2010b).

Political integration: Ernst Haas (1958) defined political integration by the process in which political actors transfer their loyalty and expectations to a new authority or community overlapped with the existing Nation-State. Haas argues that this loyalty

transfer crystallizes with the delegation of decision-making to new central organs. Social constructivism critiques that the studies of integration were too rationalistic and paid too little attention to identity construction processes and how interactions affect interests (Laursen, 2004b). Higgott points out that regional awareness and regional identity are important factors when it comes to regionalism. The role of ideas and emerging regional identities remain factors to be explored further in comparative regional integration studies, from Laursen's opinion. This means that there is integration when there is the creation of a common identity. As pointed out by Etzioni, it is important that decision-making organ are politically identified by the majority of the citizens (Rüland, 2002)

Security community: This is understood as war elimination between the members of the regional organization. Karl Deutsch designed a new concept based on creating a "peace area" between the members of the community regardless of the law status of the parts integrating it. The members of this community won't fight between each other but will solve their disputes by other means. It has a communitarian base, but it keeps the system of independent states. For a pluralistic security-community it is needed the compatibility of main values relevant to political decision-making, the capacity of the participation political units or governments to respond to each other's need, messages, and actions quickly, adequately, and without resort to violence; and mutual predictability of behavior. In Laursen's opinion pluralistic security-community is relevant for explaining regional integration in the world (Laursen, 2004b). Some understand the security community as a step forward, meaning integration only when there is an effective control of violence means by common decision-making organs (Rüland, 2002). In this line we will find those highlighting the concept of "security complex", defined by Bauzan as a set of states whose major security perception concerns are so interlinked that their national security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed apart from one another... security interdependence is markedly more intense between the states inside such complexes than it is between states inside the complex and those outside it (Dunn & Hentz, 2003).

Caporaso remarks that it is due to the link between security and foreign policy that security has been one of the areas posing the greatest difficulties to integration (Caporaso, 2000). It is still nowadays, when the issue of a common army takes over the debates and election campaigns in regional organizations all over the world. States are less likely to relinquish to their competences in the security field than in others, as it is a sensitive topic for the State's sovereignty, as they have to choose between playing their own interests or

the common interests. That is why security remain dominated by state-centric notions. Some scholars pointed out that a shift in the approach to conceptualize security would need all actor to act responsibly (Shaw et al., 2003). Caporaso stresses that the main trade-off of not cooperating in security field is that States retain individual autonomy but relinquishing to impact and influence. From Caporaso's lectures we can conclude that areas of intense redistributive struggle are not likely candidates for early cooperation, as sometimes it is understood as a competitive relation between national and "supranational" level. That was the case of social policy or security issues in the EU, where, as remarked by Caporaso, the EU was ineffectual (Caporaso, 2000).

The "Copenhagen School" in the post-Cold War era introduced a shift in security theories with the concepts of human security and human development, that is linked to the NRA. Those concepts were developed by the Centre for Peace and Conflict Research in Copenhagen, starting with the study of Barry Bauman's *People, States and Fear* in 1983. From the conventional perspective, security is associated with State's security, tied to territorial integrity and national security (Grant & Söderbaum, 2003). In the early mid-1990s a new perspective of security is brought by individuals, in which they play an important role. The individual became the locus of human security in terms of economic, food, health, environment, personal, community and political considerations. It means the existence of a threat to a human being regarding many different factors. Therefore, security shifts from being a state-issue, but an individual issue, including economic, social and political well-being of the individual rather than the states. It is at this extent where Human Rights are concerned. This also related to the own sense of security. Human security has applications to human development and good governance, they are "closely intertwined and often mutually reinforcing" (Grant & Söderbaum, 2003).

Therefore, now the State is no longer the only responsible of providing security. It is expected from integration organizations to guarantee the well-being of individuals and promote and protect human security. Some defend that humanitarian intervention must be done by regional organizations, but that generates also controversies. There are many actors intertwining in the process, not necessarily formal actors, being a multi-level political system. The convergence of the regionalization process and human security/development allows us to re-conceptualize the State and the Regional organization.

Another feature of regional integration is the highly interdependence between the component parts. As Caporaso remarked, "the greater the interdependence, the less the

chance of successfully pursuing one's own goals in isolation from others, and the more states will rely on multilateral solutions" (Caporaso, 2000, p. 114).

Integration organizations can have different scope depending on their number of functional areas; or can have different institutional capacities in order to make the organization more or less efficient. Laursen focuses the main question on what generates a change in the functional scope and institutional capacity of regional integration schemas. To explain this Haas developed the spillover theory⁹.

Another commented and studied feature of regional integration processes is the hegemon's role. Mattli stresses the need of a leading country which serves "as a focal point in the coordination of rules, regulations and policies", "acting as regional 'playmaster'" (Mattli, 2004). This leadership, as stated by Laursen, can be another mechanism when there are temptations to defect from agreements. (Laursen, 2004a). Sometimes an undisputed leader is expected to close ties among the countries in the region. When trusting only in the hegemon Mattli underestimates the power of institutions, but as remarked by Laursen, committed common institutions can also provide leadership for a further development of the regional organization, acting as "playmaster" (Laursen, 2010). There is a tension between the role of institutions and leadership overcoming "collective action" problems.

An additional concept affecting regional integration is the proliferation of international organizations aiming cooperation. Since 1945 there was an expansion of regional integration efforts, as regionalism becomes a strategy for adapting to globalization and interdependence between countries. The result is having many attempts to create integration organizations in the world in different domains, some of them overlapping their membership. The occurrence of an interregional interlocking trap may lead to an institutional overstretch in the emerging global governance. Global governance emerges as a multi-layered system. In such an international network, regional organizations are building a society of regions, a regional-based international system. The interlocking of the different levels can thus lead to an interregional trap where the institutional overstretch ends up in political paralysis and ineffective interregional structures (Roloff, 2002; Rüländ, 2002)

The emergence of "rival regionalism" between regional organization has been produced. The creation of regional blocks or organizations is often used as an instrument

⁹ Balassa's process of economic integration is explained as well with the gradual spillover process.

to balance the dominance of other regional groupings (Roloff, 2002). Globalization and regionalization shape the new international system, characterized by complex interdependencies and cooperative competition between international regions and their leading powers. The management of these interdependencies and an equilibrium of power with the three leading regions – EU, North America and East Asia – demand for concerted action by the regions, their leading powers and economic actors (Hettne, 2005; Roloff, 2002).

Models of regional integration process

There are different proposes of regionalism whereby consciously build regional integration. We will briefly introduce some of them, risking being too simplistic. Each of them puts the focus on a concrete domain. The generation of these models respond to experiences of regional organizations. The shared critic among scholars of comparative regional integration is that frequently the theorized models respond to the process of the EU, the one which has been deeply studied (Lombaerde et al., 2010).

With a security perspective and based in the theories of Deutsh, Laursen (2004b) proposes this model, understanding security community not only as war elimination, but also alluding to the perceptual dimension of integration (sense of community, regional awareness and identity). Laursen defends that the EU followed this process: Hostility → no-war zone → zone of peace → security community. This model is rather simplistic, as from a zone of peace to a security community there could be in between many stages

Andrew Moravcsik developed the “liberal intergovernmentalism”, a framework to explain integration process mainly driven by demands from economic actors. In Mattli further developed the model and recognized three stages: national preference formation → interstate bargaining → institutional choice. He adds to Moravcsik’s model the need of an undisputed leader seeker of closer ties among the countries in the region (Mattli, 2004). They explain that in the interstate bargaining seeking for greater outcomes, asymmetrical interdependence or supranational entrepreneurship can happen, provoking new areas of cooperation. This is when the process of pooling and delegating national sovereignty takes place, as a way to create “credible commitments”. Institutional choice could be done following three possible explanations: federalist ideology, centralized technocratic management or more credible commitment between states. Neo-functionalists as Jean Monnet have doubted about the possibility of classical

intergovernmental cooperation to create “credible commitments”, so that common institutions with a greater share of competences are needed (Laursen, 2004a). This is showed as a simple model that can be applied to other parts of the world apart from Europe.

For its part, Balassa theorized a more exhaust model of regionalism through gradual economic integration (Balassa, 1961), which was further developed by Willem Molle, who stated the following stages (Laursen, 2004b). This is by the regional integration theorist the model followed by the European Union, starting from the economic field in order to achieve a full political union.

Free trade area → Customs union → Incomplete common market → Common market → Economic union → Monetary union → Economic and monetary union → Political union → Full union or integration

The political union is understood when integration is extended beyond the realm of economics to encompass other fields such as foreign policy. The full union is the furthest extent and involves social security, income tax, macro-economic and stabilization policy.

Adopting a spillover approach, Hurrel defined five categories of regionalism depending on the topics which will serve as a catalyst for further integration: 1) social and economic, 2) regional awareness and identity, 3) regional interstate cooperation, 4) state-promoted regional integration and 5) regional cohesion (Lombaerde et al., 2010). Integration processes catalyzed by the security efforts are not directly represented in these categories, although depending on the case and the means used, we can understand them as part of the latter categories.

The “inter-regionalism” or, as described by Bappah, “the institutionalization of the relations between regional groupings” is a concept developed by Bappah (2015); Hänggi (2000); Roloff (2002); and Rüländ (2002). The idea behind is fostering the sub-regional relations, in order to be more functional in the governance and operationalization. The idea of inter-regionalism raised in the 1990s. According to Roloff (2002), “interregionalism has become an important feature in international politics during the last decade”. Inter-regionalism mainly contributes to balance the dominance of other rival regional group, in a new international system shaped by globalization and regionalization with complex interdependencies and cooperative competition between

international regions and their leading powers. It is a way of rationalizing interests, setting a common agenda and building institutions and a collective identity among different regional blocks in order to better pursue their interests and have a greater impact in a globalized world contesting the power of the leading regions – EU, North America and East Asia (Hettne, 2005; Roloff, 2002; Rüländ, 2002).

Chapter 2: Regional integration in the African context

The role of Panafricanism in regional integration: the seed for integration

After the independencies, the academia asked to come back to the challenges of Panafricanism. Panafricanism promotes democracy in a new “African intelligentsia”, looking for an intellectual and institutional autonomy (Ngodi, 2007). The 20th century is considered the “Panafricanism Century”, as intellectuals from the *Renaissance Africaine* experienced some key moments for the continent, such as the period after the independences, the creation of the OAU, the single party military regimes, the national conferences, the introduction of multiparty systems, the civil wars or the project of creation of the African Union. As Ngodi suggests, African intellectuals have played a central role in the democratization process of the continent. Furthermore, we wonder if subregional integration processes in the continent were also promoted by the spread of Panafricanist ideas.

Panafricanism intended to boost the fundamentals of Africa and its civilization and restore their dignity again into the “*mère-patrie*” (Ngodi, 2007, p. 58). That is why in the 20th century there is an effervescence of black nationalism trying to conquer their past and identity, condemning colonization and racism. Woodson devoted his time to feed the black soul with its history. From 1927, with Marcus Garvey doctrine of “*Moise de la race noire*”, the African nationalism was promoted and brought to the African continent after its development in the United States of America and among African diasporas in Europe.

In 1958 two Panafricanist Conferences took place in Accra, the first one concluding with the reaffirmation of the principles of United Nations and the Conference of Bandung, asking for the independence of the still colonized countries and condemning racism in all their forms and the kick-off of the slogan “Africa for the Africans”. The second Conference established a strategy in order to generate a “non-violent revolution” of Africa against racism, colonialism, tribalism, and region separatism. By doing so, they asked for the future creation of the “United States of Africa”, what meant a strong idea of cooperation between the African countries once they fully dispose on themselves.

Panafricanism is finally a movement which tries to regroup and share solidarity among the African peoples, from the approach that they were in a subaltern position during History. It could be understood as a seed for regional integration, promoting the cooperation and unity between countries and peoples. Intellectuals of Panafricanism became the leaders of the independence fight in many African countries, and the idea of Panafricanism went beyond the independence.

Ngodi identifies two main Panafricanist trends: minimalist and maximalist Panafricanism.

The core idea of minimalist or “Reactionary” Panafricanism was that every state had the inalienable right of and independent existence, based on the intangibility of boundaries inherited from colonization, i.e., the respect of the sovereignty and the non-interference in the internal affairs of States. These ideas were supported by The Monrovia Group. They proposed the creation of continental federations without any executive power, enhancing the economic development separately (Ngodi, 2007). The creation of the OAU in 1963 was aligned with these principles, which were the ones ruling the international arena since the Peace of Westphalia: mainly independent statehood, non-interference and national sovereignty.

Maximalist or “Revolutionary” Panafricanism tried to break with any dependence from the West and in the last term, tried to achieve the United States of Africa, based in the independence and political, economic and military union, which could become an important actor in the international arena. As Nkrumah said in 1994, “Africa must unite”. Ngodi concludes that Nkrumah’s ideas are still present nowadays, with different attempts of regional integration. The core idea is still to achieve “independence through unity”, saving Africa from being at the edge of the modern history, and thus, guaranteeing the agency of Africa in the international arena (Ngodi, 2007, p. 61). As Basil Davidson said in 1974, Nkrumah was a “A prophet who leaves a lasting impression on his time” (in Ngodi, 2007, p. 62). Nkrumah thought the consolidation of Nation-States as a step in the way of achieving the United States of Africa, as it was first needed to restore the dignity of African peoples. After creating African States, creating African sub-regional entities that are useful for the citizens could be actually considered as another step in the long-term project of Nkrumah. This idea goes beyond the African nationalism: it means not only achieving the independence of every African country but creating a political awareness between Africans on the idea of one continent without borders, united in only one political and economic entity. Here we can identify the maximalist Panafricanism as

a precursor of regional integration. The Group of Casablanca¹⁰ embodies these revindications.

In 1963, the creation of the OAU as an organization for inter-state co-operation meant the failure of the idea of the maximalist Panafricanists and proclaimed the victory of the minimalist trend, as the OAU vindicated the Westphalian model of international relations, based on the absolute national sovereignty and the non-interference in domestic issues, refusing an African political organization.

What is by any reckoning clear, is that Panafricanism meant a seed for integration processes in the African continent. The creation of the OAU inaugurated the first wave of regional integration in the African context. After the OAU, other sub-regional organizations were created.

From 1960 to 1980s, regional organizations promoted industrialization and economic development, many of them founded by European-styled colonial powers. Most of them became “politics of illusions” which remained unfulfilled (Iheduru, 2003). Sobrino Heredia described in 2010 the institutionalization of the regionalism processes in Africa with some common aspects. For him power was divided equally among the states, not existing a common and continental hegemonic power, but a subregional one; therefore it was a system based on a subregional pluralism. Regionalism in Africa has tended to the model of limited economic unions, rather than political unions, which is, for Sobrino Heredia, more easily realizable. But while they enjoy formal political independence –as international relations are based on some tenets such as national liberation, respect on the boundaries, dispute resolution in an African framework...–, those integration projects are economically dependent on abroad (Sobrino Heredia, 2010a, p. 860).

West Africa opted for a market-driven community of states, welcomed by the IMF and the World Bank who earmarked \$600 million from 2002-2004 “to enhance the region competitiveness as well as to reduce the cost of doing business there”, as part of its regional integration assistance strategy (Iheduru, 2003). Some West African leaders saw market-led integration as the panacea for Africa’s security (Iheduru, 2003)

¹⁰ They were understood as communist and criticised to be “the African ally of Mao” (Youlou 1966:210 in Ngodi 2006:63).

The first wave of integration was focused on a market-led integration perspective with a “trade diversion” approach, which tried to increase trade among the region by extending the national protection to regional. This perspective was relieved by the critical theory introduced by the NRA, which, standing for the “open regionalism”, looked to create a North-South market integration (Iheduru, 2003).

Scholars of regional integration remark that a new wave of integration efforts came from the end of 1980s and early 1990s, sparking the interest in regionalism and regional integration processes (Laursen, 2004b; Lombaerde et al., 2010). Iheduru explains those new networks arose in response to Structural Adjustment Plans and the deep fiscal crisis of the state (Iheduru, 2003). It came together with a resurgence of transnational activist networks, professional and business associations enterprises operating beyond boundaries. There is a co-existence of the “old” and the “new” patterns of interaction (Hettne, 1999, 2005; Iheduru, 2003).

The established model based on the Panafricanist minimalist approach was contested. Olukoshi states that there was a “changing nature of inter-state relations”. The independence of the African countries brought the principle of inviolability of the boundaries (Olukoshi, 2001). This principle was the basis of the Organization of the African Union and was working for 30 years, until armed conflicts eroded the principle of non-interference (sub-regional peacekeeping efforts were undertaken when there was an imminent collapse of central governmental authority). Thus, a second wave of regionalism took place in Africa in the 1990s. This wave went beyond trade to encompass security and regional goods, as the management of water basins, energy or environment. This second wave, referred as “new regionalism”, also integrated civil society. As Hettne states, “not only economic, but also social and cultural networks are developing more quickly than the formal political cooperation at the regional level” (Hettne, 1999, p. 11). New qualitative type of “political cooperation [are developing] on the regional level to promote the region as a viable economic, cultural and ecological unit” (Hettne, 1999). The recognition of civil society and non-state actors as “valuable partners in providing for the material and overall human security needs of the people” (Iheduru, 2003). This means a more spontaneous process creating regional integration form below. This, as commented by Iheduru, explains the will of West African governments to accommodate civil society in regional policy, even if this is still so feeble, as States must work to accommodate neo-liberal pressures and bottom-up pressures (Iheduru, 2003). For Van Langenhove, the new regionalism allows the smallest and poorest states to integrate more

easily in the world's economy (Wachira, 2003). The omission of new regionalism is no longer possible, as the acknowledgement African regional integration captures the co-existence of multiple linked actors through hybrids networks and coalitions.

Olukoshi (2004) highlights the main features of the change in African political systems from 1990 to 2005, which characterized the second wave of regional integration. He remarks that the year 1990 finished with a process of reforming institutions in order to increase the governance, such as the convocation of sovereign national conferences in many countries, the production of new constitutional laws, the restoration of multiparty politics and peaceful alternation of power between ruling parties. It conducted to the restructuring of the issue of political competition and governance. This restructuration was catalyzed by the emergence of media pluralism, what enhanced the governmental accountability and popular participation, as well as the massive growth of civil associations and NGOs. The fostering of the civil society sector in Africa resulted, therefore, in one more step in the democratization process, meaning the emergence of a new political -and critical- actor playing in the political arena and claiming for the promotion of pluralism, human rights and civil liberties.

In the Conference of “Linking Peace, Security and Regional Integration in Africa” it was concluded that new regionalism should contribute on a development of national institutions strategy and state-formation as building blocks for regional institutions. This introduces a change of approach, as before it was suggested the other way around; i.e., stable national institutions were needed for regionalism to succeed (Wachira, 2003). Moreover, Olukoshi states that with this changing approach “governments involved in massive and gross violations are not entitled to enjoy the principle of non-interference in the affairs of their countries” (Olukoshi, 2004, p. 92). This means a huge change in the perception of International Relations and is one of the biggest conquests of sub-regional integration processes in the second wave of regional integration. States have generated a trust relationship among each other, based on the position that they will “take care of the population” in case the governmental authority of a given country is not providing security. Also, relying on the principle that no other state in the region is doing it for its own benefit, but in a basis of solidarity between states.

This generated an enabling environment for a revival of regional cooperation and integration efforts. As remarked by Olukoshi, new efforts were made to strengthen

continental-level governance, rule of law, conflict resolution and peace-keeping¹¹. Likewise, there was also a promotion of sub-regional cooperation and integration in Africa, both as an important exercise of its own and as a building block towards pan-African economic unity (2004).

However, scholars like Iheduru do a pessimistic outlook on state actors and regional formal institutions, as he believes that “Formal institutions of regional integration have yet to shed their statism and have remained avenues for diplomatic showmanship and regional power projection that be inconsistent with the region’s development and security complex” (Iheduru, 2003). For him the model based on a state-centric West African community has yet to evolve, as “Formal regional structures are legal fictions of sovereign and juridically equal states”. Iheduru remains pessimistic also regarding the prospect for the State to provide human security to their citizens due to the duplicating efforts, the proliferation of organizations –often overlapping its membership– and the different cultural patterns inherited from the former colonial rulers (i.e. having diverse legal and administrative systems or the languages) (Iheduru, 2003, p. 55).

The shift into political integration and other ways to exert co-operation introduced by the new regionalism was crystallized in the last extent with the refund of the OAU into the current African Union in 2001, completing the organization with a pan-African parliament, a pan-African judicial system and a reinvigorated commission. In its Agenda prospect for 2063 the African Union committed “to become an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena.” (African Union, 2015). Economic Commission for Africa states that Africans must seek growth that is primarily anchored on their priorities and that is capable of delivering structural transformation, understanding that regional integration is a key strategy for development (AUC, AfDB, & ECA, 2016). Therefore, the aim of promoting regional integration is to have agency in the global arena, understanding integration as a key catalyst for development.

¹¹ Such as enabling the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights to outlaw the unlawful seizure of power and the exclusion from the counsels of the continental body of all governments installed other than by lawful means, the intensification of efforts at promoting pan-African conflict resolution mechanisms/peace-keeping instruments, in order to achieve national reconciliation after immediate authoritarian past in some countries creating instruments of transitional justice...

Proliferation of regional organizations in Africa

The second wave of regional integration in Africa meant a great proliferation of international organizations in the region.

The new wave of regionalism in Africa meant a change of the mandates and priorities assigned to the major existing intergovernmental organizations (Bach, 2003). They no longer dedicate themselves to economic integration, but include explicitly social and politico-strategic concerns, including the security of the states and their citizens, now recognized as pre-conditions to the implementation of the developmental objectives assigned to regional integration.

As remarked by Bach, the expansion of mandate of African organizations into the military field testifies the failure providing a stable environment. The new regionalist agenda in Africa reflects the narrow scope for promoting and implementing economic integration.

In the revision on the treaties Supra-nationalism proceeds the transfers of sovereignty. Currently every African country takes part at least in two regional organizations. Bappah (2015) considers that the continent is facing a crisis of the management of the regional integration schemes and suggests that the existence of multiple sub-regional groupings in Africa may be a problem for Africa's integration process, as they may conflict within each other regarding their overlapping objectives. Organizations may confront in the operational and governance structures, as in their decision-making processes. As well, they face also the problem of scarcity regarding the resources available: in terms of diplomacy, economy or human resources. Multiplicity of grouping projects have created the "politicization" of the African integration processes, in the form of clashes between the leading countries of each regional group¹². That is why Bappah considers the proliferation of regional organizations in Africa as an obstacle to reach a deeper integration in a legal, political and security way.

Not being exhaustive with all the existing international organization in the African continent, the European Centre for Development Policy Management, by its Political Economy Dynamics of Regional Organizations (PEDRO) project, tries to offer an outlook of the dynamics of different regional co-operation organizations in Africa and their effects in different policy areas. PEDRO project looks at which are the member state

¹² For further explanation see Bappah, 2015, p. 7.

interests in engaging with regional organizations (especially the so-called ‘swing states’, i.e., the more resourceful and powerful ones). It helps assess whether regional organizations have enabled regional decision making and implementation of decisions, as well as which are the areas with most traction where regional and national level interests seem to be most aligned for regional outcomes¹³ (Byiers, 2017).

Abuja Treaty and the African Economic Community project

Although there are different organizations all over Africa, many of them overlapping between each other, some of them are supported by the African Union in the so called African Economic Community. To promote coordination and intensify cooperation efforts among States was a purpose of the OAU. Influenced by the changing patterns of the 1990s, the OAU approved the Abuja Treaty, formally the African Economic Community Treaty, enforced in May 1994. This Treaty planned to establish the African Economic Community (AEC) “through a gradual process, which would be achieved by coordination, harmonization and progressive integration of the activities of existing and future Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in Africa” (OAU, 1991). The Treaty, the Lagos Plan Action (1980-2000) and The Final Act (1980) showed the commitment of African Leaders to cooperation and integration processes in different fields, such as social, economic and cultural. Afterwards, the need to accelerate the creation of the AEC was a conviction in the creation of the African Union, as shown in the preamble of its constitutive Act, as achieving the region unity was a purpose of the African Union (AU, 2000).

The AU member states agreed by the Abuja Treaty on the stages to establish the creation of the African Economic Community (AEC), in a common Work Plan until 2028, as well as mechanisms for monitoring the implementation through the Minimum Integration Programme (MIP) (AU, 2009; OAU, 1991; Sobrino Heredia, 2010a). The Workd Plan consisted on six stages, being the first three related to the sub-regional level, and the last three to the continental level.

STAGE 1: Strengthening existing RECs and creating new ones where needed (5 years)

¹³ Visit Byiers (2017) and <https://indd.adobe.com/view/f49ac87d-7aa3-4cf7-822e-841d674bbc92> for the interactive schema of overlapping international organizations in Africa

STAGE 2: Stabilization of tariff and other barriers to regional trade and the strengthening of sectoral integration, particularly in the field of trade, agriculture, finance, transport and communication, industry and energy, as well as coordination and harmonization of the activities of the RECs (8 years)

STAGE 3: Establishment of a free trade area and a Customs Union at the level of each REC (10 years)

STAGE 4: Coordination and harmonization of tariff and non-tariff systems among RECs, with a view to establishing a Continental Customs Union (2 years)

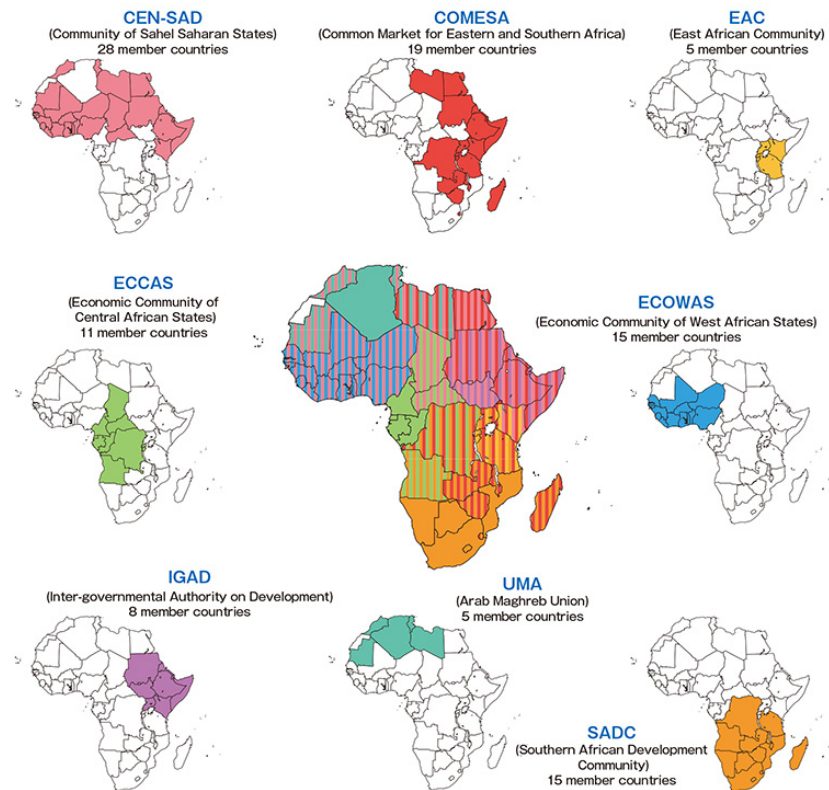
STAGE 5: Establishment of an African Common Market and the adoption of common policies (4 years)

STAGE 6: Integration of all sectors, establishment of an African Central Bank and a single African currency, setting up of an African Economic and Monetary Union and creating and electing the first Pan-African Parliament (5 years).

The Treaty recognized eight Regional Economic Communities (RECs), which are expected to implement the regional integration agenda and achieve the AEC for 2028. All eight organizations are regional organizations with a limited number of members, and they all have a general scope regarding their specialization. As it can be seen in the image below, although these eight organizations are grouped geographically, there is some membership overlapping between each other, particularly with COMESA and CEN-SAD, which are the biggest in terms of member states.

Regional Economic Communities (RECs)

Africa is moving toward regional integration. There are eight Regional Economic Communities approved by the African Union (AU)



Source: (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2016) Diplomatic Bluebook.

Their level of formalization and institutional development, as well as the intensity of its integration until now vary from one to another. In the following lines we will make a short course on the main characteristics of each REC:

- CEN-SAD – Community of Sahel-Saharan States: it was established on 4 February 1998, with the aim of consolidating collective work in the political, cultural, economic and social fields. Particularly among CEN-SAD’s purposes there are: to create a comprehensive Economic Union based on a strategy, to eliminate of all obstacles impeding the unity of its member States and coordinating their pedagogical and educational systems. CEN-SAD’s goals seem quite too broad. The free trade that aims to create will not easily become a reality, as it overlaps with some other custom unions already advanced in their integration process. Therefore, it is not meeting Abuja Treaty’s expectations. Its revised treaty, which strengthen the areas of regional security and sustainable development, creating a new institutional framework, is still not into force as it has not reached enough ratifications, a sign of lack of commitment from its member states. Its Member States are Benin, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, the

Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, the Sudan, Togo and Tunisia, overlapping 12 out of 24 with ECOWAS membership (U. N. E. C. for A. UN ECA, n.d.-b).

- COMESA – Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa: Its goals are very related to the global sustainable agenda, trying to attain sustainable growth and development, through improving production and marketing structures; together with the joint adoption of macro-economic policies and programs to raise the standard of living and to co-operate in the promotion of peace, security and stability among the member States in order to enhance economic development in the region. Its main focus is the formation of a large economic and trading unit to overcome trade barriers faced by individual States and to foster the relations inside the Common Market, particularly with the adoption of common positions in international fora. Although it has a very ambitious objectives, at least regarding economic integration it has achieved on time the first three stages of the Abuja Treaty. For Sobrino Heredia (2010), it is one of the most advanced projects of integration in the region. One illustrative datum of this is that decisions are taken by consensus of the Chiefs of State or Government from the Member States or by majority of two thirds. COMESA member states are Burundi, the Comoros, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Sudan, Swaziland, Seychelles, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

- EAC – East African Community: It was refunded in 1999. EAC is to gradually establish among its member States a Customs Union, a Common Market, a Monetary Union, and ultimately a Political Federation of the East African States. So that, it enhances policy harmonization and integration among its members. EAC has met on time the expectations of the Abuja Treaty for the three first stages. It has eight subsidiary institutions and organizations and its institutional structure includes the East African Court of Justice and the East African Legislative Assembly, another step into political integration. EAC member States are Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Uganda and United Republic of Tanzania (U. N. E. C. for A. UN ECA, n.d.-c).

- ECCAS – Economic Community of Central African States: Started working in 1983. Its main purpose was the promotion and cooperation in the domains of industry, transports, communications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, culture and science; and generally, to promote the pacific relations and development of the African continent. It is still an inter-governmental organization, as its Commission has only an advisory role, being the Conference of Chiefs of State and Government the decision-maker, which needs unanimity in order to reach agreements. The guiding principle is the national sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs, which reinforces its only-cooperation status. Notwithstanding, ECCAS has created a Justice Court, whose sentences are granted with compulsion.

- ECOWAS – Economic Community of West African States: shortly describing the organization that will retain our attention in a large part of this research, ECOWAS was created in 1975 with the Lagos Treaty. Initially it was limited to economic cooperation, amplifying its scope in 1993 with its revised Treaty. ECOWAS envisages the creation of the Economic Union of West Africa, as a mean for rising the living standards of the population, enhancing economic stability and fostering the relations among states. In its revised treaty it envisages a general scope cooperation and further political integration, aiming the harmonization of national policies in some domains such as agriculture, natural resources, industry, communications, energy, education, science, technology, health, tourism, legal matters... but still keeping a great focus on economic issues and the generation of a common market, a monetary union and an enabling environment for investment and a balanced development, promoting the relations with civil society. ECOWAS met the envisaged objectives for the three first stages of the EAC.

- IGAD – Intergovernmental Authority on Development: it was created in 1996, succeeding the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development, with the ambition of expanding cooperation among its members. Its efforts focus on food security and environmental protection, economic cooperation for integration in the region, and, particularly recent years on peace and security, issue in which is renowned in the region. IGAD seeks to harmonize policies regarding to trade and promote a free movement space. Among its objectives it is to promote and realize the objectives of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the African Economic Community. It is paradoxical that this REC aims to promote the realization of an objective of another REC.

Indeed, IGAD has not done many steps in the consecution of AEC. It has a simple institutional structure, based on Assembly of Heads of State and Government, Council of Ministers, Committee of Ambassadors and Secretariat, but it counts on some specialized institutes though. Its members are Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Somalia, the Sudan, South Sudan and Uganda (U. N. E. C. for A. UN ECA, n.d.-d).

- UMA – Arab Maghreb Union: in 1989 was signed in Marrakech the Treaty Instituting the Arab Maghreb Union. Its member States are intended to coordinate, harmonize and rationalize their policies and strategies to achieve sustainable development in all sectors of human activities. Among its purposes there is preserving peace, creating a space for free movement of persons, services, goods and capital in a Common Arab Market, and to create common policies in some domains such as culture or defence. From the moment now it is an intergovernmental organization, exerting a simple coordination among countries. It has not shown many efforts trying to meet Abuja Treaty expectations. UMA is composed by Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia (UN ECA, n.d.-a).

- SADC – Southern African Development Community: It was born in 1992 succeeding the Southern Africa Coordination Conference (SADCC), which tried to avoid the dependence on apartheid, as well as to foster the cooperation and understanding among the members. In 1992 the member States agreed on deepening integration, so they created the SADC. Among its purposes it is to evolve common political values, systems and institutions; to achieve development and economic growth through Regional Integration; to promote and defend peace and security; to strengthen and consolidating their relations and to take full advantage of the region resources. It has a developed institutional structure, highlighting the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation and the SADC Court. It has also met AEC expectations regarding economic integration. Its members are Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe (SADC, 1992; U. N. E. C. for A. UN ECA, n.d.-e).

Africa's Regional Economic Communities (RECs) are undoubtedly part of the heritage of Panafricanism. Further discussion can be conducted on the influence of the

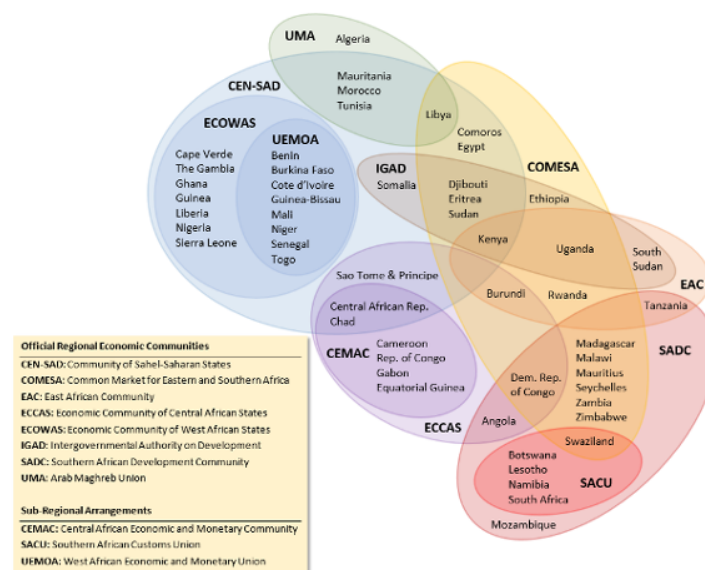
second wave of regionalism's values. Van Langenhove points out that the signature of the Abuja Treaty initiated the "second wave" of regional integration a promising regionalization in Africa (Wachira, 2003), an idea I would like to nuance. Although the Treaty speaks about "progressive integration", the approach of the AEC and RECs at the very beginning was from the minimalist Panafricanism, putting the focus on coordination between countries – and ultimately between regional organizations – in order to achieve an economic harmonization, rather than promoting a political integration in the regional or sub-regional level. RECs showed little interest in cooperation outside economic areas. Furthermore, we can easily recognize that the six proposed stages for the AEC's creation correspond with the phases for a successful economic integration suggested by Balassa, which were based on the example of the European Union (Balassa, 1961; Caporaso, 2000; Diez de Velasco, 2010b). Therefore, we can also conclude that the AEC was modelled having the EU as spotlight.

Although the adoption of the Abuja Treaty prompted the expansion and creation of sub-regional organizations, not all of them adopted the views promoted during the second wave of regionalism. Some of them rather kept anchored to the classical values of the first wave, i.e., understanding the regional organization as an inter-governmental space for coordination reduced to the economic agenda. Nevertheless, some of the RECs, as ECOWAS and SADC, have developed and tended to co-operation in different fields, breaking the minimalist principle of Panafricanism of not having any executive power in common regional institutions.

Notwithstanding, the Abuja Treaty introduces some innovative aspects in the OAU (after introduced in the Constitutive Act of the African Union), such as the existence of a Pan-African Parliament or Justice Court, whose functioning and regulation would be developed in an upcoming protocol. As remarked by Sobrino Heredia (2009b, 2010b), the creation of the Justice Court – both in regional and sub-regional levels – responded to a tendency in international organizations to move from the diplomatic ways of solving disputes to the jurisdictional, what meant a way to empower the common institutions. Similarly was remarked by regarding the existence and gradually generalization of parliamentary organs in the regional organizations, as well as the incorporation of civil society organizations.

Anyway, apart from the RECs there are still many other international organizations generating the so-called Spaghetti bowl effect. Therefore, we can conclude that the main obstacle that AEC's project of integration is facing, as well as any other

attempt to deep in sub-regional integration, is the proliferation of organizations with similar goals which try to make cooperation apart from the RECs. To Olukoshi it seems that West Africa is “lost between functionalism and integration”, as the majority of co-operation organizations have failed, as most countries simply do not use their services. So that they became “moribund efforts at functional co-operation” (Olukoshi, 2001, p. 18). In 2001 the believe was, that neither functionalism nor integration were able to attract enough political and economic commitment. Sobrino Heredia remarks that the complexity and multiplicity of international organizations may be an attempt to recover the normative lack present in the region, i.e., there is an “institutional inflation” due to the lack of juridical content of these regional and sub-regional organizations. In his view, most of these organizations lack real competences (Sobrino Heredia, 2010a, p. 868). Bappah argues the absence of “one strong center” in the building process of “solid groups” for regional integration – what Mattli would call a “regional hegemon” (2004) – , even if there is in every region an organization recognized by AEC as “building block” (Bappah, 2015, p. 12).



Source: Spaghetti Bowl of African Regional Organizations (NG & Mumford, 2017)

In the following section we will focus on the competing organizations in West Africa. Just giving some examples¹⁴ from the rest of the continent, in Central Africa coexist the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) – the officially recognized REC – and the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), that has

¹⁴ For further details see the study of Bappah (2015).

developed a multinational force and has a strong regional reputation. While ECCAS has signed the Protocol on relations between United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and has been granted observer status at the UN¹⁵; CEMAC has been recognized by the EU in the EPAs negotiation. They also have similar governance bodies with very similar functions. This leads to a “crisis of identity for the sub-region” (Bappah, 2015, p. 14). Their situation does not give any positive prospect of the creation of a single community in Central Africa.

In Southern Africa sub-region, the South Africa Development Community (SADC) and the South African Customs Union (SACU) “exist irreconcilably side-by-side” and they represent a huge challenge to the integration of the sub-region. (Bappah, 2015, p. 14). They have similar institutional organs and similar goals, and the integration process of both organization in the region constitutes a huge challenge. SADC is the recognized pillar for the AEC and also the platform for negotiations of the EU-ACP partnerships for the southern African region. Both organizations have established similar internal organs and there are 13 different institutions in Southern Africa belonging to the two organizations. The integration process in the region becomes even more complex as the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) also engages some of the countries in SACU and SADC.

In Eastern Africa, even if there is a coexistence of two organizations recognized as pillars for AEC, they represent a peaceful “demonstration of ad hoc measures taken by the regional groupings in the face of multiple regionalisms” (Bappah, 2015). While the East African Community (EAC) is working on economic issues, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) developpes in practice its work in security and social affairs. They both try to divide projects so that there is no duplication in their tasks, and they avoid approaching the same donors with the same projects (IGDA 2011).

From its part, in North Africa the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) exists alongside the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN SAD), both pillars of the AEC. CEN SAD has been the role-player in the region – focusing on market integration- , as UMA is “almost moribund” and has not even signed the Protocol on Relations with the AEC (Bappah, 2015).

In conclusion it must be said that in case of overlapping of regional organizations in a region, the eight organizations recognized as RECs are more luckily to succeed in

¹⁵ The UN General Assembly approved a Resolution in January 2001 on cooperation between the UN and ECCAS (A/RES/55/22).

terms of generating integration. They are usually the regional organizations with a greater membership in their geographical region. Its foreseen success comes also from the fact that there is a bigger project supporting them, and thus some international support, from the continent and abroad. Actually, the Chapter IV of the Abuja Treaty – also stated as the first stage of AEC – carries the commitment of the member states of the AU to strengthen the existing RECs. Moreover, the Protocol on Relations between the AEC and the RECs, signed and entered into force on 25 February 1998, provides a legal structure upon which interregional relations can be developed and strengthened. One of their objectives is to strengthen the existing RECs and to promote coordination and harmonization between them (Bappah, 2015).

Competing institutions in West Africa

Even if ECOWAS is the one regional organization holding ECA's recognition as building block for West Africa, this region risks what Bappah criticizes: there is a proliferation of organizations in the area. We will explore the multiple existing organization in the region, distinguishing them by their scope or issues of cooperation. We will start with those working on specific issues, finishing with those with a generalist scope. Special attention will be given to the case of UEMOA, described by Sobrino Heredia in 2010 as one of the most recent and advanced attempts of integration, and understood in the literature as the main competing organization with ECOWAS in West Africa (Bappah, 2015; Sobrino Heredia 2010a, p. 849).

Classified by Sobrino Heredia (2010a), there are some international organizations in the region specialized in taking advantage of the river basins and sea space. Their competences normally limit to cooperation in agriculture, fishing, energy, transport and communications around the rivers. Those are the following:

- NBA- Niger Basin Authority: The Niger basin is a geostrategic point in the Sahel. Due to the climate pressure, States are cooperating in order to prevent conflicts regarding the river management (dam, reservoirs construction...) and have a common Fund to finance the development of projects defined by the organization. The NBA is composed by Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Niger and Nigeria (NBA, 2005).

- MRU – Mano River Union: This organization has attempted to be more than a river basin cooperation space, creating, by recommendation from the United Nations, a custom union in 1973. First it was only established between Liberia and Sierra Leone, after Guinea joined, a currently also Côte d’Ivoire takes part of it. The Union intended to free the trade of local goods. The Organization was out of activity for some years, until its reactivation in 2004 and the agreement of Côte d’Ivoire to join in 2008. Attempts to create a common legislative body have been studied (U. Nations. E. C. for A. S. D. C. for W. A. UN ECA, 2000; Walkenhorst, 2015).

- OMVS – Senegal River Basin Development Organization: It is an Organization which limits its activity to promote cooperation and economic exchange through the Senegal river. Notwithstanding, this organization created in 1972 suffered a great paralysis due to the conflicts between Senegal and Mauritania in 1987. Now it is composed by Guinea, Mali, Mauritania and Senegal and it has implemented the equitable sharing of ownership of infrastructures and benefits among its members (Komara, 2014; OMVS, n.d.).

- OMVG – Gambian River Basin Development Organization: The OMVG has focused its activity in the fields of electricity production and irrigation systems, recommending common plans and projects in the region since 1978. It is composed by the Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, and Senegal (World Bank, 2015).

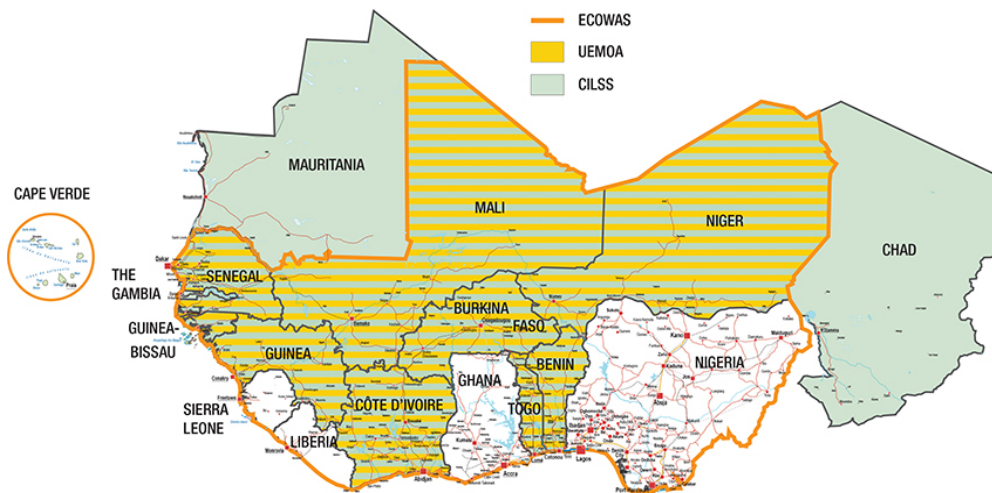
- VBA- Volta Basin Authority: In July 2006 VBA approved its Convention and Statutes and its priority activities in order to promote cooperation and sustainable development among the Volta riparian countries, coordinating studies, monitoring and evaluation policies. Ghana, Burkina Faso, Mali, Benin, Togo and Côte d’Ivoire are its member States (Biney, n.d.; ‘Volta Basin Authority to develop Water Charter’, 2017).

- ALG – Liptako-Gourma Integrated Authority: It is an inter-governmental organization composed by Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger whose goals remain in the promotion of cooperation in the areas of mineral, energy, hydraulic, and agricultural resources. In 2017 the ALG agreed to create a joint military task force (ALG, 2016; West Africa Brief, 2017).

Likewise, there are many other organizations in the West Africa focused on particular topics beyond the management of river basins. Serve as example the CILSS, the Permanent Interstate Committee for the Drought Control in the Sahel, composed by Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Chad, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Togo (CILSS, 2019); or the G5 Sahel, an institutional framework for coordination in development policies and security created with the purpose to fight against the threat of terrorism in the region, composed by Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger (France Diplomatie, 2019; G5S, 2014). Deeper examination is required in the case of UEMOA, the West African Economic and Monetary Union, which is an organization composed by Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo (UEMOA, n.d.), i.e., eight out of fifteen countries member of ECOWAS. Its official language is French, due to its membership is mostly former French colony. In 1994, the CEAO (Communauté économique en Afrique de l'Ouest) and the UMOA (Union Monétaire Ouest-Africaine) merged into a more effective organization, the UEMOA, by the signature of Dakar Treaty on 10th January 1994. Its objective was to achieve regional integration by following the European process. As Sobrino Heredia (2010a) remarks, its economic and monetary union was modelled from the Maastricht Treaty. Currently UEMOA unites its different member states with a single currency, the Franc CFA, a far stage in economic integration regarding Balassa's model (Balassa, 1961). Despite its activity is focused in economic integration, in the last decades the organization has amplified its approach, turning more generalist and addressing also the harmonization of sectoral policies, such as agriculture, industry, energy, environment, transports, communications... Having an overlapped membership with ECOWAS and rather similar goals, it rises the questions if both organizations are contesting the regional leadership and, in that case, which organization is being more successful in West Africa regarding regional integration.

ECOWAS and UEMOA: rivals or allies?

In the last decades many scholars have devoted themselves to explain the success of UEMOA, while being pessimistic about ECOWAS's future (Bappah, 2015; Sobrino Heredia 2010a, p. 849). Both ECOWAS and UEMOA have similar goals regarding economic integration, actually they have been duplicating efforts in the quest of a single monetary zone and common currency in West Africa.



Source: OECD, 2015

ECOWAS has overcome the challenge of the language, in order to become “a West African Community” (ECOWAS, 1993). UEMOA does not seem to aspire to so, as its link with France is very tight since the times of the colony. So, ECOWAS means also a sign of independence for the African countries of this region, and a project to work together regardless their background.

As remarked by Sobrino Heredia (2010), UEMOA introduced new institutions “more advanced” regarding the existing ones in the continent. Thus, it has three leading organs (Conference of Chiefs of State, Council of Ministers and the Commission) and three new control organs (interparliamentary Committee, Justice tribunal and a Court of Auditors), which are innovative and an attempt to success in the integration efforts of the continent. In January 2003 the Revised treaty was adopted, creating the UEMOA Parliament. The Justice Tribunal, with wide competences, attracts the attention as it has had an intense development, with a large production of sentences since its creation (Sobrino Heredia, 2010a). Therefore, UEMOA has created an institutional structure and legal system that shows a great potential for integration. Notwithstanding the political will of the States is always an issue, serving as an example the decision of Côte d’Ivoire of nationalizing employment in 2004,¹⁶ violating UEMOA’s Treaty.

It was years later when ECOWAS developed also its institutional system and made it function smoothly. Currently both organizations have similar structures in terms of governance and specialized institutions and agencies – they have Authorities of Heads

¹⁶ On the 19th February 2004, due to the economic crisis in the country, the Government of Côte d’Ivoire agreed that every job vacancy created in the country had to be occupied by a national

of State and Government, Council of Ministers, Commissions, Parliaments and Courts of Justice (Bappah, 2015).

Although the increasing attempts of UEMOA to develop into new fields of integration, there is a statement in its revised Treaty that could be understood as a sign of non-competition in the region. While ECOWAS fundamental Treaty supported the idea that it should be the only Regional Economic Community in the region (ECOWAS, 1993, p. 4), UEMOA in its revised Treaty expressed the loyalty of the members to the objectives of ECOWAS (UEMOA, 2003, p. 1).

Nevertheless, the practice of both organizations still generates signs of ongoing competition. ECOWAS has faced a “crisis of representation”, as the organization has needed to share with UEMOA the representation of the region in different international spaces. Sometimes a common position for negotiations between both institutions was needed, e.g. when negotiating with the European Union in the framework of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), ECOWAS agreed on adopting UEMOA common external tariff, so that both organizations could negotiate with the same background and regarding customs duties (Bappah, 2015). This “crisis of representation” could be an opportunity for clarifying the roles of both organizations in the region. The need to reach an agreement between both of them in the international level, has created the perfect environment for both organizations to be open to coordination and, in some projects, to integration.

UEMOA and ECOWAS signed an agreement in 2004 in order to promote the coordination and harmonization of their programs by ceding power to an inter-regional secretariat, that is “facilitating the cooperation programs and projects” (Bappah 2013:18). According to Bappah, “this form of interregional arrangement is helping to overcome the administrative challenges related to the implementation of the community programmes in West Africa” and it is an effort pursuing interregionalism (Bappah, 2015, p. 18). Another example of “the strong understanding” between UEMOA and ECOWAS was the political decision to sanction the former President of Ivory Coast, Laurent Gbagbo, freezing financial deals with his regime when ECOWAS directed the Banque Centrale des Etats de l’Afrique de l’Ouest (BCEAO) (Bappah, 2015, p. 18).

Bappah shows the relation between UEMOA and ECOWAS as competing, but ECOWAS is trying to change the approach, tending to the harmonization of both entities. Since 2016 ECOWAS and UEMOA are trying to merge. The annual report of 2016 talks

about those efforts regarding the harmonization of macroeconomic policies and private sector promotion (ECOWAS Commission, 2016, p. 45).

The main merging efforts look for the creation of the West African Monetary Zone (WAMZ), a unique economic and monetary union along West Africa. It must be remarked that UEMOA has already generated a monetary and custom union within the region, by using a single currency: the Franc CFA, managed by the Central Bank of West Africa (BCEAO). The next steps of its integration process go in terms of free mobility of persons, goods, services and capital. For its part, ECOWAS has also been working on its protocol on free movement, although not so many achievements were made, and different technical measures to achieve a common market have been implemented. That is why the two organizations were competing the leadership of the region (ECOWAS Commission, 2011b).

The first ideas in order to achieve the WAMZ planned to merge the existing Franc CFA union created by UEMOA – the Franc CFA -, to a new union, - the West African Currency (ECO) -, still to be created uniting the remaining countries by ECOWAS.

As in 2012 the criteria to create the ECO were not met, in 2014 States took the decision of abolition of this project. In 2016, some leaders spoke about the lack of political will. That is the example of West African Monetary Agency's Chief Economist Dr. Christian Ahortor "Because the political will is not there that is why we don't see them meeting this criteria" (Face 2 face Africa, 2019).

New projects were set for 2020. On June 2019 Finance ministers of ECOWAS gave greenlight for the creation of the single currency in 2020, although the strategy approved differs from the initial conception (Akwei, 2019). Now there will be one single step of creation of the ECO, where current UEMOA countries and the remaining countries are expected to join. The agreements set some requisites for States in order to join, the so called "primary convergence criteria", which are the following: A single-digit inflation rate at the end of each year, a fiscal deficit of no more than 3% of the GDP, a central bank deficit-financing of no more than 10% of the previous year's tax revenues and gross external reserves that can give import cover for a minimum of three months. Also some secondary criteria were established: within we can find a stable real exchange rate and a total public debt to GDP ratio of not more than 70 percent. Other areas of cooperation on sectoral policies such as agriculture, transportation and energy or statistical harmonization are taking place, with the objective to strengthen the convergence between the Commissions of ECOWAS (ECOWAS Commission, 2011a).

Cisse Lo said, Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament in a debate about the single currency stated to all Member States that “all of us are responsible in terms of politics to achieve that objective; we have to be careful to act now”, remarking the need for States to push for meeting the criteria to enter ECO. He asked the ownership of everybody in this project and contributing to it.

While members of Franc CFA community are pushing for this single currency, Nigeria seems one of the most reluctant countries, being at the same time one of the States that does not meet the established criteria by far.

In light of these actions, we can conclude that ECOWAS and UEMOA are in a crescent effort promoting the merge of both organizations. This merging process actually benefits ECOWAS, as this push enlarged the commitment of West African States towards the creation of AEC building block and inherits the good practices from UEMOA’s functioning (although some countries such as Nigeria could be reluctant).

It is remarkable that, at the same time as it is taking place a strengthening of the ECOWAS integration process, a de-regionalization process is occurring with UEMOA.

Inter-regionalism as a problem-solving mechanism

Rüland (2002) defends that “*inter-regionalism is a problem-solving mechanism to the challenges of multiplicity of regional integration projects in Africa*”, as it offers both a theoretical framework and a methodological support. Inter-regionalism promotes the harmonization of different sub-integration projects on the continent, as well as it is a tool for the acceleration of integration between regional groupings (Bappah, 2015, p. 8). Therefore, inter-regionalism can be played by the existing RECs in Africa, with the final objective of creating a strong African Union or, at least, realize the African Economic Community project. Bappah reinforces the idea that “creating, expanding and deepening synergy between competing economic groupings will help in building a solid block [...] and to advance a broader vision and agenda for the sub-region”. That is the experience of the increasing relations between UEMOA and ECOWAS, generating the merging of both organizations. “Inter-regionalism” can therefore be as a solution to resolve the regional governance and integration problems in Africa (Bappah, 2015, p. 15).

AEC project is in line with inter-regionalism, as a new governance structure can emerge from the relation among REC blocks, involving gradual institutionalization of those relations by practices like regular exchanges, meetings of Chief Executives of the

RECs and Heads of State and Government of the RECs or harmonization of economic and monetary projects, as proposes Bappah (Bappah, 2015)

Controversies around elections and conflict management strategies

Elections are an essential step in the democratic process, by some even the heart of democracy (Bappah, 2015; Brown, 2017). Through elections people express their minds with their ballot, what means a democratic process. For Brown (2017) the main controversies that can emerge around elections are regarding the right of people to stand for elections, the ability of political parties to nominate candidates and the ability of political parties campaign legally. Furthermore, broader issues can emerge that affect party performance, or the chances of a candidate or political party to win elections, such as funding, access to the media, the capacity and independence of the electoral management bodies, the authenticity of the voter register, the impartiality of the security agencies, the uprightness of the judiciary or electoral tribunals that adjudicate on electoral issues or, last, the willingness of the loser to accept defeat.

According to the Freedom House, in 2019 only four African countries have been declared as free, being eleven partly free. From those, Benin, Cape Verde, Ghana and Senegal are the most stable democracies, which has witnessed several free and fair elections as well as transfer of power, with minor remarks. On the other side, the remaining ten countries experience controversies in elections. Making a brief overview, Côte d'Ivoire faced an armed conflict at the end of 2011 and is still recovering from it; The Gambia experienced presidential elections where the incumbent who lost the elections did not accept defeat; Guinea Bissau's elections in 2014 turned the country into democracy again, after a military coup and transitional government was formed, which has postponed elections until 2019. In Guinea elections are plagued by violence and delays; Liberia, since the second civil war which ended in 2003, has enjoyed a decade of peace and stability and in 2017 experienced its first peaceful transfer of power; in Mali the State remains fragile and a situation of insecurity endures, although it is building its democratic institutions for already 20 years; in Niger the last election and polling was full of irregularities, although the current regime was democratically elected; Nigeria has made important improvements in national elections, although civil liberties remain undermined by religious and ethnic bias; Sierra Leone holds elections since 2002, but opposition faces violence by the police and restrictions in the Assembly; and finally, Togo

holds regular multiparty elections, although the same family remains in the power since 1963, opposition has been repressed for calling for electoral and constitutional reforms.

In 2006 Agbu argued that West African leaders did not seem committed enough to implement their decisions in regards of Conflict resolution in the region. The responses were “country-specific”, instead of regional (Agbu, 2006).

In short, when talking about “conflict management” we refer to the strategies of conflict avoidance, conflict prevention, conflict settlement and conflict resolution. Agbu describes them as follows:

“conflict avoidance refers to efforts to avoid the emergence of contentious issues and the incompatibility of goals between and within actors. On the other hand, conflict prevention refers to measures which contribute to the prevention of undesirable conflict behavior once some situations involving goal incompatibility has arisen. This entails both short-term and long-term measures. The short-term measures include preventive diplomacy, preventive deployment and preventive disarmament. The long-term measures consist of the various mixes of peace building measures in a post-conflict environment. Further, conflict settlement can be described as a portmanteau term for the ending or termination of conflict, whilst conflict resolution is a somewhat esoteric term for conflict termination. In order to achieve what may be regarded as a resolution, parties to a conflict usually have to redefine their relationship in such a way as to either pursue their goals without conflict or redefine their relationship so that their goals no longer conflict.” (Agbu, 2006, pp. 67–68).

The existing regional conflict resolution mechanisms in West Africa are classified by Agbu in two groups: structured and unstructured. The structured refer to the institutional activities and efforts geared towards conflict resolution and management. Normally take place under governmental institutions or organizations as UN, the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). On the other hand, the unstructured mechanisms refer to the strategies implemented by non-governmental and private organizations. In most cases “tend to rely more on the attitudinal dispositions of the warring parties in trying to manage the conflict” (Agbu, 2006, p. 68).

Both kind of strategies are reactive, that means, responding to already existing conflict. They are based on the concepts “peacekeeping and peace-enforcement”, both designed to manage the conflict rather than resolving it nor prevent from it.

Chapter 3: Methodological approach

Research questions

In the conference “Linking Peace, Security and Regional Integration in Africa” organized in June 2003 by the United Nations University’s Comparative Regional Integration Studies Centre (UNU-CRIS) and the Africa Centre for peace and Conflict Studies of the University of Bradford there were some suggested areas for following researches about the role of integration organizations promoting peace. These topics were mainly the state of regional integration and its dynamics in Africa, as well as the development of a methodological framework for analyzing the foci of regional integration and rigorous multidisciplinary theorizing of integration projects (Wachira, 2003). Scholars highlighted a challenge for the studies on Africa regionalism projects, that is to discern what has worked, what has not and why. Ocheche states, as well, that structures and mechanisms for overseeing integration need a careful thought, and regional integration should be viewed from “within a larger democracy project for the region” (Wachira, 2003). This will be our starting point. Through these preliminary reflections we will try to approach the integration project of ECOWAS in order to outline its state, how it fulfills the features of regional integration and which are the means used to promote it.

Several scholars in the Conference about “Linking Peace, Security and Regional Integration in Africa” remarked the potential of regional integration processes in Africa to contribute to regional peace, stability, development and democratic consolidation and identifies ECOWAS as a key actor. As well, NRA scholars take ECOWAS’s initiatives as case studies in their researches about regional integration processes (Dunn & Hentz, 2003; Grant & Söderbaum, 2003; Lombaerde et al., 2010). Furthermore, ECOWAS has developed legal and institutional structures and is expanding the fields in which to exert a closer cooperation among States. This suggests us that ECOWAS is definitely an example of integration project. Some questions rise regarding the State’s sovereignty, as some basic competences of the State – such as providing security – are now being managed by ECOWAS common institutions.

Therefore, the questions that will lead our research will be: which are the key foci of ECOWAS’s integration process?; how does ECOWAS strengthen its regional integration through security?; how are security and rule of law combined by ECOWAS in mediation processes?

Our objectives are to explain how ECOWAS constitutes an example of regional integration and explain how the institution is using security as a means to strengthen its integration. From this base, we will be able to see if there are some distinctive features in its integration process that could mean a valuable and replicable lesson for any other integration projects in the world. Our third objective is to explain how ECOWAS combines its security axe with the promotion of rule of law in mediation processes.

To answer to the questions, we will analyse the role ECOWAS had in the management of the postelectoral crisis in The Gambia in 2017. ECOWAS has proved solvency facing security challenges in West Africa. The positive reactions on the Gambian crisis management buzzed the word about the ECOWAS model's success and encourages us to think that ECOWAS can be considered internationally as an example of regional integration.

Case selection

ECOWAS

ECOWAS is the Economic Community of West African States, composed of fifteen States. These countries are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. It is one of the oldest sub-regional projects in the African continent, created by the Lagos Treaty, 28th May 1975. Differently from previous organizations in the region – such as the Communauté Economique de l'Afrique Occidentale, which only united former French colonies – it aimed to be a generalist organization with a regional vocation, grouping all the States considered part of West Africa. Actually, ECOWAS in its policy documents states that the West African region comprises all Members States of the Community. This means that ECOWAS goes beyond and overcomes a barrier that is very present in other integration organizations in the region: the colonial legacy. ECOWAS means a sign of independence for the African countries of this region, which were former Britain, Portugal and France's colonies. Exemplified with the language, ECOWAS is a project to work together regardless the differences. Accordingly, Arabic, English, French and Portuguese are the official languages of ECOWAS.

ECOWAS objectives, at the beginning, were to promote cooperation and development in the economic fields, in order to improve the life standards of the

population in the region, to ensure the economic stability and contribute to the development of African continent.

In order to achieve its objectives, States agreed on some deadlines to create a common customs zone and trade rules, freedom of borders to people, capitals and services; harmonization of agricultural, industrial and economic and financial policies; as well as the creation of the Fund for Development and Cooperation. Notwithstanding, scholars agree on the lack of success of the project regarding economic integration since its creation in 1975.

Nevertheless, and paradoxically, as stated by Sobrino Heredia, “the reduced success in the economic integration, become significant steps in the political cooperation instead, even though political matters were not among the scope of this Organization” (Sobrino Heredia, 2010a). Due to the evolution of the conflicts in the region (specially affected by the civil war in Liberia and the intervention of ECOWAS multilateral Force), ECOWAS’ political cooperation turned into cooperation in the field of security, adapting to the circumstances of the region. In Cotonou in 1993 it was revised the Abuja Treaty in order to introduce the political scope of the organization and allocating new responsibilities in the prevention and resolution of regional conflicts.

ECOWAS mediation and surveillance forces came into play the following years in Sierra Leone (after the coup d’état on 25th May 1997) and afterwards in Guinea-Bissau, where the mediation facilitated the adoption of ceasefire agreements, such as the one celebrated on the 26th August 1998 (Sobrino Heredia, 2010a).

While economic integration efforts were generating reduced advances, ECOWAS has created a framework for negotiation and mechanisms on peace, disarmament and security in the region, which are rather a new experience in the world. The organization has evolved into a more integrated region moving forward the conventional economic integration schema.

Anyway, the economic integration project was again focus with the signature of the Treaty of the African Economic Community in 1991, as ECOWAS was recognized as building block for the AEC in West Africa, and States committed within the African Union to achieve the African Economic and Monetary Union by 2028.

That said, the African Integration Index in 2016 reports that ECOWAS is the most developed region in Africa in terms of integration in the areas of free movement of people and financial and macroeconomic integration (AUC et al., 2016).

All in all, nowadays ECOWAS is a cross-sectorial organization, already developed in different areas, with a solid economic co-operation, and relevant experiences in terms of security. Nevertheless, the general literature on International Relations remain filled and focused on the EU example, and ECOWAS integration efforts have not occupied pages of research, although it has several noteworthy cooperation areas.

As we have seen, in other geographical regions such as Central Africa there are other organizations with a similar situation to that of West Africa, which definitely could represent an interesting topic for future researches. Notwithstanding, in Central Africa it is not that clear which regional organization is leading the region, as both ECCAS and CEMAC have developed consistently their activity in the past years and have strong alliances outside the continent. In West Africa, however, ECOWAS has proved to be the leading organization, as it is the building block for the African Economic Community and other generalist subregional organizations, such as UEMOA, have shown their will of establishing cooperative non-competing relations, even leading to merge. Those are the reasons why we decided to study ECOWAS' integration process.

Presidential elections in The Gambia December 2016

The Gambia is an ECOWAS country located in the Atlantic coast surrounded by Senegal. According to Freedom House, before 2016 The Gambia was not considered a free country, as although conducting formal elections, the same person remained in power for the last 22 years. In the presidential elections conducted in 2011, there was violence and some organizations such as ECOWAS refused to be observers as they notified issues competing the fair and free character of the elections. After the elections electoral law became stricter, reducing the capacity of establishing an opposition. In 2016 The Gambia faced presidential elections, and with so the challenge of creating an enabling environment for the opposition, ensuring a fair electoral campaign, free elections and, in case, peaceful transfer of power. Actually, the environment improved and elections were declared fair and free, but there was not a smooth and peaceful transfer of power.

ECOWAS intervention in The Gambia was an unprecedented case as it was *“the first regional organization to manage a post-election impasse, and which led to the inauguration of a president-elect in the country's embassy in a foreign country, with the full participation of the AU, the UN and the diplomatic community – and a simultaneous UNSC resolution backing the process.”* (Brown, 2017).

ECOWAS has developed during the last decades mechanisms to prevent conflicts and solve controversies. The Gambian intervention may show us a practical example of the cooperation in the field of security exerted by ECOWAS, which will provide information about ECOWAS' interest regarding conflicts and controversies arising around elections in its member states.

The Gambian intervention is the last intervention of ECOMOG and would be useful as study case to better understand the decision-making processes in ECOWAS concerning security, as well as to know the functioning of the conflict prevention, conflict management strategies and enforcement processes. A deeper examination of this intervention can shed light to understand the commitment of ECOWAS and its member states regarding its conflict prevention and management instruments, as well as with peace maintenance in the region. Moreover, it will provide information about to what extent the created mechanisms to solve controversies among ECOWAS Member States are set in motion and acting in the interest of regional integration.

After the examination of ECOWAS intervention in The Gambia, Brown concluded that “regionally, while celebrating its successes, ECOWAS needs to reflect on the challenges encountered, with a view to drawing lessons from the experience.” (Brown, 2017). This research study aims to deep into the key facts and challenges encountered in the ECOWAS mission in The Gambia, drawing the main lessons from the experience and identifying the keystones for the ECOWAS integration process.

Disputes between the different contesting parties in the Presidential elections seem a very domestic issue. Therefore, we want to deep on why ECOWAS intervened in this conflict, which was its role, why ECOWAS understood its responsibility to intervene, which actions were taken and how decisions were made.

The analysis of the different actions developed by ECOWAS regarding the Gambian elections may show the ways the organization conceives and exerts integration. This case study may be an example of ECOWAS operating at full power.

It is particularly interesting the study of the intervention of ECOWAS in the Gambian elections in 2016 because this operation concerns the security inside a State, what with a Westphalian approach is understood as a responsibility of the State, i.e., one of the so called “hard competences”. Nevertheless, it was ECOWAS intervening, even deploying military units. This would mean an erosion of the State components and an effective transfer of powers to common institutions, the basis of regional integration.

Moreover, the operation was quick and coordinated, so it seems that a formalized and efficient structure for quick response exists and that coordination between states is smooth.

The ECOWAS' management of the Gambian crisis was internationally applauded because of the success of the deployments. Every country seems satisfied with the intervention, particularly ECOWAS' countries. Though this operation ECOWAS was granted the confidence of international organizations and recognized as an efficient partner. These operations helped ECOWAS to strengthen its international image as regional organization. A deeper study would let us know if it was also a mechanism to strengthen and promote regional integration.

Methodology

Lombaerde, Söderbaum, Van Langenhove and Baert (2010) reflected on the problems and divides in comparative regionalism studies. They remark as main methodologies in the discipline the idiographic research and nomothetic research, i.e., the comparative method and the single case study, the first focusing on formulating general laws, the second on researching individual cases.

We will adopt the idiographic research, as known as single case study. The single case study makes an emphasis on understanding the historical process of the case. It is dominated by qualitative approaches. This kind of methodological approach gives us an advantage regarding to comparative studies: it is possible not to use the EU as a standpoint for comparison¹⁷ and to take Lombaerde's recommendation of starting the study with the own conceptualization by the actor of its regionalization process.

The (a priori) lack of comparable cases and the complexity of the phenomenon explains the preference for the single case method. It is needed a deep knowledge of the context of this region to be able to conclude concepts for generalization. We will be keen to generate a kind of "regional specialization". We will try to overcome the challenge of not working with general concepts identified by the scholars in previous researches (Lombaerde et al., 2010, p. 31), so that we will apply general concepts, question and

¹⁷ As an example, Mattli (2004) has developed his comparative perspective of regional integration comparing Europe with other regions in the world. Critics arose on the question of the ability to compare integration and cooperative relations as different as those compared by Mattli and, overall, if it is able to establish a comparison starting from the European model.

hypotheses derived from the literature review. This case selection aims to be purposive and a contribution to future researches. We will try to develop questions and conclusions that can be used and transferred to cross-regional comparisons and future studies of regional integration in other geographical regions, always acknowledging that a single case may be weak to create a broad generalization or to invalidate existing generalizations.

In the classical international law States are sovereign and international agreements are fragile as long as they are based on the will of states to transfer competences. The enforcement of their agreements depends on the commitment of the State with the organization. As Laursen remarks, theories of cooperation have been very concerned about enforcement and too little about coordination. International agreements might be incomplete and need a further management in order to be implemented. Ex post coordination and negotiation are needed and may determine the fate of the organization. That is why we will study the performance of the regional organization through an example of common deployment in the past years, the operations related to the presidential elections in Gambia that took place in December 2016, where we will be able to contrast the formal side of ECOWAS – with agreements and decisions – with the actual functioning.

We will work with official ECOWAS, African Union and United Nations documents, such as treaties, strategic plans and policy agreements, as well as with press releases or other official communications from these international organizations. Still, this research will be carried out mainly through a literature review of secondary sources and intends to approach the subject of study from an International Relations perspective, combining different disciplines, namely law, political sciences and history. Some information, particularly about the chronological fact review of the operation in The Gambia, will be accessed through the media, as there is little academic production which covers all the actions happening in the deployment.

In this in-dept single case study we will start analyzing ECOWAS' institutional evolution in the past years, trying to identify in ECOWAS some common features of regional integration commented above in order to assess the integration process in a qualitative way. We will try to conceptualize the ECOWAS integration process, identifying its different stages and axes for integration.

We will continue studying the specific case of the ECOWAS intervention in The Gambia, showing how the previously described mechanisms work. Literature review on

ECOWAS performance and the case of The Gambia, developed in chapter 4 and 3, will be contrasted with the defining features of integration introduced in chapter 1. To conclude we will try to reply our research questions spotting some ideas that describe the ECOWAS integration process, remarking its key foci and mechanisms to strengthen integration.

Chapter 4: About ECOWAS and its institutions

General, aim and objectives

ECOWAS is one of the oldest sub-regional projects in the African continent, created by the Lagos Treaty on 28th May 1975. Differently from previous organizations in the region – such as the Communauté Economique de l’Afrique Occidentale, which only united former France colonies – it aimed to be a generalist organization with a regional vocation, grouping all the States considered part of West Africa. Actually, ECOWAS in its policy documents states that the West African region comprises all Members States of the Community. This means that ECOWAS goes beyond and overcomes a barrier that is very present in other integration organizations in the region: the colonial legacy. ECOWAS means a sign of independence for the African countries of this region, which were former Britain, Portugal and France’s colonies. Exemplified with the language, ECOWAS is a project to work together regardless the differences. Accordingly, Arabic, English, French and Portuguese are the official languages of ECOWAS.

ECOWAS objective when created in 1975 was to promote cooperation and development in the economic fields, in order to improve the life standards of the population in the region, to ensure the economic stability and contribute to the development of African continent. In order to achieve it, States agreed on some deadlines to create a common customs zone and trade rules, freedom of borders to people, capitals and services; harmonization of agricultural, industrial and economic and financial policies; as well as the creation of the Fund for Development and Cooperation. Notwithstanding, scholars agree on the lack of success of the project regarding economic integration since its creation in 1975.

Contradictions in the literature about the ECOWAS, being optimistic or pessimistic depending on the moment the organization was living. As expressed by (Dennis & Brown, 2004) in 1990 ECOWAS was a weak organization, as its original goal was abandoned and its future was questioned. ECOWAS leaders were frustrated as the organization remained in an embryonic state. To Dennis and Brown, ECOWAS faced formidable political obstacles, including political upheaval and changes in Member State leadership and lack of democratic governance. It was regarded as a failure, as most members put national interests above the interests of the region. ECOWAS faced also important economic obstacles such as diversity of currencies, complex exchange controls,

low levels of intra-regional trade and communications, competitiveness of national economies and disparities among members in terms of size, population and level of economic development. One remarkable fact is that although the economic integration goal remained unfulfilled, the existence of the organization reduced regional conflict, maintaining interstate stability (only with minor frontier disputes), although there was significant domestic instability.

The second wave of regionalism brought to West Africa a revision of the ECOWAS's fundamental Treaty. The Revised Treaty meant a milestone for the organization, as by its signature States committed with an organization intended to integration and not only inter-governmental coordination.

As agreed in the ECOWAS Revised Treaty, the furthest objective of ECOWAS is "the establishment of an economic union in West Africa". In order to achieve it, the Community will "promote co-operation and integration" (ECOWAS, 1993 art. 2.1)

So, *strictu sensu*, ECOWAS in its fundamental Treaty is not aiming to generate an integration model and different common policies, but the needing coordination, co-operation or integration to create an economic union. The aims of the Community are to promote co-operation and integration, leading to the establishment of an economic union in West Africa in order to raise the living standards of its peoples, and to maintain and enhance economic stability, foster relations-among Member States and contribute to the progress and development of the African Continent. In Balassa's integration model, the economic and monetary union can be followed and prompt a political union (Balassa, 1961), what a priori was not the objective set by ECOWAS Member States though.

Despite the footprints of ECOWAS's Treaty in 1993, ECOWAS has evolved beyond the paper. Derived from a lecture of its main agreements beyond the Revised Treaty, ECOWAS declares the need of working in the fields of economy, security and rule of law in order to achieve its final integration objective. We will understand those three as the axes for ECOWAS integration. Furthermore, currently ECOWAS considers itself an organization pursuing regional integration. This explains why the organization holds a chapter in every meeting of the Authority of Heads of State and Government (AHSO) "On Regional Integration and Development Matters", where the evolution of regional integration is explained to Member States. Actually, in the Forty-ninth ordinary session of the AHSO, ECOWAS "reiterates its total commitment to the on-going integration process as a collective response to the region's development challenge". The analysis of the final communiqué of the fiftieth ordinary session of the AHSO leads us to

say that ECOWAS makes a positive assess of its integration process, as the Authority congratulates “the excellent work accomplished by Community Institutions for the consolidation of the achievements of West Africa’s integration and reaffirm[s] their firm commitment to the attainment of regional integration goals, in an environment of sustainable peace, security and good governance.” (ECOWAS, 2016b, p. 2).

From an analysis of the communiqués of AHSB in the past three years (since the forty-ninth ordinary session in June 2016 to the fifty-fourth in June 2019), the institution takes advantage of these chapters to revise institutional reforms of ECOWAS, as well as remarkable actions in the organization, that will generate a more cohesive Community. Those topics concerns the three key axes already identified, but also the international projection of ECOWAS. Therefore, in the last three years the topics arisen where the economic performance of the region and ongoing structural reforms, the free movement of persons and goods, regional interconnection projects and infrastructures development, the need to take ownership of the Community acts and protocols “in order to fast-track the integration process”, the Security Sector Reform and Governance Agreement, reflections on early warning mechanism, as well as candidacies to UNSC and agreements on hosting international organizations.

ECOWAS’s institutional evolution through the integration axes: economy, security and rule of law

As it was already introduced, albeit the wording of the main in-force Treaty regulating ECOWAS, the practice of the organization differs from what was stressed in the documents. In the following paragraphs we will go through the institutional modifications and innovations implemented by ECOWAS since the signature of its Revised Treaty. Firstly, we will introduce the considerations of the Revised Treaty regarding the three axes of integration. We will bring reflections coming from the conceptualization of integration organizations and analyze the development of the three axes of integration in ECOWAS experience.

An advantage regarding other regional integration platforms in the world – such as the case of the European Union process – is that the institutional body of ECOWAS has been created counting from the beginning with the current membership, so the modifications are related to improvements in the functioning, rather than adaptations to a greater membership. There is also no “fast-track” group with the first joining the

ECOWAS. This was one of the dilemmas of EU integration identified by Caporaso (2000), as there was a concern as while the number of member increases, the strength of political institutions would decrease and it is needed to develop some mechanisms of internal democracy.

Axes of integration in the Revised Treaty

In the Revised Treaty there is a clear agreement for the economic integration of the region, aiming in the long view to be the sole economic community in West Africa for that purpose (ECOWAS, 1993 art. 2.1). Member States commit with this objective and chapter IX of the Treaty is entirely dedicated to the establishment and completion of an economic and monetary union, the furthest step in integration in the economic field. The economic cooperation is much stressed and overrepresented alongside the Treaty.

On its behalf, there is no particular mention to security integration among the objectives of ECOWAS in its Revised Treaty (ECOWAS, 1993), whilst Article 3 about “Aims and Objectives” pays mainly attention to how to enhance economic integration in the region. But it is understood as a principle and “prerequisite for economic development”:

[...] affirm and declare their adherence to the following principles:

e) maintenance of regional peace, stability and security through the promotion and strengthening of good neighbourliness;

*f) peaceful settlement of disputes among Member States, active co-operation between neighbouring countries and promotion of a peaceful environment **as a prerequisite for economic development;***

(ECOWAS, 1993 art. 4. e and f. Bold added)

By using the wording “prerequisite” it could be understood that regional institutions may take actions in order to promote a peaceful environment in West Africa’s landscape, as a basis to move forward the final objective of economic integration.

Chapter X, XI and XII are dedicated to other cooperation fields different from the economic, such as “Co-operation in Political, Judicial and Legal Affairs, Regional Security and Immigration”, “Co-operation in Human Resources, Information, Social and Cultural Affairs” and “Co-operation in other Areas”. In the article 58, dedicated to Regional Security, the revised Treaty streamlines the establishment and strengthen “of an

appropriate mechanism for the timely prevention and resolution of intra-State and inter-State conflicts”.

Regarding the promotion of democracy and rule of law, it is not mentioned explicitly in the Revised Treaty, but it can be implicitly understood as a mean to achieve “the progress and development of the African Continent” (ECOWAS, 1993 art. 3.1). As well as the security concern, democratic governance in every State is a leading principle of ECOWAS. Not stated this time as “prerequisite” for integration, but as an agreed starting point, by the “recognition, promotion and protection of human and peoples' rights” and by the “promotion and consolidation of a democratic system of governance in each Member State”, referring to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Declaration of Political Principles, which include provisions guaranteeing the democratic and law-respectful functioning of States.

Braking and accelerating economic integration

In 1990 the economic integration process of ECOWAS was paused. This moment corresponds with the well-functioning of UEMOA, and the high expectations generated on the integration process of former French colonies. Nevertheless, and paradoxically, as stated by Sobrino, “the reduced success in the economic integration, become significant steps in the political cooperation instead, even though political matters were not among the scope of this Organization” (Sobrino Heredia, 2010a).

The Revised Treaty marked a new standpoint in the gathering of efforts from ECOWAS Member States regarding the idea of regional integration (still limited – formally – to the economic area though). Around this moment other areas of integration were explored, consciously or unconsciously.

A stimulant for economic integration project to be refocus was the signature of the Treaty of the African Economic Community in 1991, as ECOWAS was recognized as building block for the AEC in West Africa, and Member States committed within the African Union to achieve the African Economic and Monetary Union by 2028.

The economic issue is closely followed by common institutions and arises every AHSG meeting. ECOWAS has committed to the elimination of multiple trade regimes in the region and has already fulfilled until stage 3 of the AEC's economic integration stages, what is needed from every region before proceeding to the continental customs union.

That said, the African Integration Index in 2016 reports that ECOWAS is the most developed region in Africa in terms of integration in the areas of free movement of people and financial and macroeconomic integration (AUC et al., 2016), what shows successful developments in the economic integration. Therefore, although other areas of integration have been explored, economic integration has remained one of the key goals of ECOWAS. The above-mentioned agreements with UEMOA in order to create the West African Monetary Zone show the current depth of economic integration in ECOWAS.

Conflict management and peace promotion mechanisms

The Treaty of Lagos from 1975 did not contain components relating to the issues of peace, security, stability and governance. These fields of work were incorporated as fundamental principles in ECOWAS Revised Treaty of ECOWAS in 1993. ECOWAS during its history has developed a sort of agreements and mechanisms related to the security field. We will go through them explaining their main characteristics, in order to see the evolution of this axis of integration.

As a starting point, back in 1978 it was signed in Lagos the ECOWAS Protocol on Non-Aggression, calling for peaceful resolution of disputes between member states. It is limited in scope, as it refers only to emergency situation. It has been criticized as being only an aspiration and failing creating institutional mechanisms to react according to the agreement. It states that whenever a dispute cannot be solved by peaceful settlements, Member States shall refer to a Committee of the Authority, and if it persists, to the Authority, which is ultimately the one taking a decision.

In 1981 in Sierra Leone it was signed the Protocol relating Mutual Assistance of Defence (MAD) agreement. It declared situations that could require joint sub-regional action on external aggression, as well as interventions in inter-state and intra-state conflicts. It understands any threat against any member state as a threat against the community, therefore a mutual aid and assistance will be given. ECOWAS is called in action in three situations: 1) Internal armed conflict in a member- state, engineered and actively supported from outside the community and likely to endanger peace and security of the entire community. In case this conflict is “purely internal” ECOWAS shall not intervene; 2) an armed conflict between two or more member-states where the pacific procedures have proved ineffective (AAFC may be authorized to serve as an interposition force); 3) an external armed threat or aggression (Being needed a written request of the besieged state triggering AAFC action). Responding to the failure of the previous

agreement, it created a security framework and provided the region with organs for collective action (such as the Defence Council and the Allied Armed Force of the Community, so called AAFC), including decision-making and administrative structures. The AAFC is an standby force composed by national units from ECOWAS States available “in case of any armed intervention” (Agbu, 2006; ECOWAS, 1981).

This Protocol was the result of the merge between the Protocol on Non-aggression and a version of the Mutual Defence Plan generated by Senegal. It was criticized for not being implemented for a long time, arguing it was due to a lack of political will. It is believed that this was due to the fear of Francophone states to the great power of Nigeria in the armed forces, main opponent in the region (Agbu, 2006, p. 70). Regarding the security and defence arena, Agbu explains in the region there was an existing mechanism between francophone countries which counted with commitment enough to be implemented, unlike ECOWAS’ MAD (Agbu, 2006). It is the Accord de Non Agression et d’Assistance en matière de Défense (ANAD). It enhanced the countries to refrain from the use of arms in case of conflict, using dialogue, mediation, conciliation and arbitration to solve their differences; to respect the inviolability of boundaries inherited from colonization and to exchange security and police information in order to maintain peace. Furthermore, it is believed that the existence of this security mechanism in origin exclusively francophone delayed the implementation of the MAD (Bassey, 1994).

In 1998 ECOWAS Summit of Heads of State and Government agreed on the Moratorium on the importation, exportation and manufacture of light weapons, known as the West African Small Arms Moratorium. The agreement was enhanced by UN Institute for Disarmament and Research (UNIDIR)’s conference on Conflict Prevention, Disarmament and Development in West Africa, stressing the data that in West Africa there was estimative about 15 million small weapons in circulation (one each 25 inhabitants), being civilians the 80% of the victims of small arms. With this three-year moratorium ECOWAS was intended to harmonize policies on arms control and conflict prevention in the region and States committed with an Action Plan based on conflict prevention, peace education and controlling weapons tenure. It is no legally binding, but a shared political will tough, what has been described as “an innovative approach to peace-building and conflict-prevention” (Agbu, 2006, p. 75). Previous agreements were reactive and focused on peacekeeping or peace-enforcement, while this one is an effort for peacebuilding as a sustainable solution. This meant a shift in ECOWAS security policies, adopting a proactive approach.

Security integration to protect Human Rights and the rule of law

In December 1999, in an attempt to improve the conflict solving capacity, it was agreed by the ECOWAS Summit the Protocol for the Establishment of a Mechanism for conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, Peace and Security. It replaced the former agreements and provided a framework for regional intervention in political crisis in Member states. It strengthened the functions of the Security and Mediation Council and created the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), the regional intervention force. This protocol reformulated and amplified the conditions for activation of the mechanism. The protocol could work in cases of: a) aggression or conflict in any member states or threat thereof, (b) conflict between two or several member states, (c) internal conflict that threatens to trigger a humanitarian disaster, or which poses a serious threat to peace and security in the subregion, (d) serious and massive violation of human rights and the rule of law (e) in the event of an overthrow or attempted overthrow of a democratically elected government; and (f) any other situation decided by the Mediation and Security Council (Brown, 2017; ECOWAS, 1999).

This protocol is an example of the links and interrelation between the above-mentioned axes that ECOWAS is following in its integration process, being Human Rights and the rule of law principles to be protected by the Mechanism for conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, Peace and Security. The following mechanisms and protocols will follow this trend, anchoring the rule of law and the respect of human rights as basis for ECOWAS functioning. This document glimpses the first signs of a shift towards human security perspective.

Regarding the institutions shaped, the Security and Mediation Council has nine members and performs similarly to the UN Security Council. It acts on behalf of the Authority of Heads of State and take decisions on all issues related to peace and security in West Africa. It can authorize all forms of interventions, including the decision to deploy political and military missions, inform the UN, AU, appoint force commanders and deploy the ECOMOG. It meets at least twice a year, but a Council of Ambassadors meets each month to review issues of peace and security.

The Protocol entrusts the Executive Secretary to initiate fact-finding, mediation, facilitation, negotiations and reconciliation actions in the effective prevention and management of conflicts. It creates an Office of the Deputy Executive Secretary for Political Affairs, Defence and Security, counting with an Observation and Monitoring

Centers established in four zones around Banjul (Gambia), Monrovia (Liberia), Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) and Cotonou (Benin).

In cases of high electoral competition, “when it becomes difficult for the political elite to reach consensus on electoral processes or outcomes, third-party intervention often becomes inevitable”, as stated by Brown. This third-party intervention means an authority from another country intervened in the resolution of the crisis by mediation. From different definitions of mediation process (UN Guidance for Effective Mediation, UN Development Programme (UNDP) Guidance Note on Supporting Insider Mediation and West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), Brown concludes three principles of a mediation process: 1) Involvement of a third party; 2) the consent of the parties in using mediation to resolve it; 3) Principle of impartiality, not meaning “neutrality”, as there are some universal guiding principles and values, that shall be shared with the parties (Brown, 2017).

Although the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) was officially established by the Mechanism for conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, Peace and Security in December 1999, there is one precedent of this Monitoring Group, set up in the context of the Liberian Civil War, concretely at the first session of the Standing Mediation Committee on Liberia, held in Banjul from the 6th to 7th of August 1990. It gathered the participation of The Gambia’s, Sierra Leone’s, Ghana’s and Nigeria’s Heads of State and high-powered delegations from Mali and Togo (Agbu, 2006). The intervention in Liberia in 1990 was very controversial because of the reservations of the francophone speaking countries and MAD protocol, which was still the legal framework in force. However, the intervention framed in MAD, as the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) was “an externally sponsored act of insurgency”, invoking article 4b of the protocol (Agbu 2006). Nigeria pushed for the creation of a Mediation Committee, which finally resulted on the Committee of Five, composed by Nigeria, Ghana, Gambia, Togo and Mali, which took the decision for the ECOMOG implementation for the first time. The divide between francophone and anglophone countries was an issue when taking the decision. As stated by Agbu, “the initiative by the standing mediation committee alone to send troops into Liberia, and the composition of the troops from among its own members, not only raised legal issues, but forced the simmering anglophone-francophone divide into the open” (Agbu, 2006, p. 73). Scholars agree that Nigeria spearheaded the situation of akimbo among the international community to create the ECOMOG and consolidate its regional hegemony (Agbu, 2006; Tavares, 2011;

Wachira, 2003). As stated by Agbu, “[Nigeria’s] military strength of about 100,000 fairly well equipped armed forces, compares quite favorably with an estimated 105,000 men for the rest of the sub-region, of which many of its national units lack a naval fleet and an Air force” (Agbu, 2006, p. 72). According to Agbu, the creation of ECOMOG served to recognize the dominant role of Nigeria providing security in the region (although the decisions of broadening of the troop contributions and rotating the Force Commander was opposed by Nigerian commanders) (2006, p. 70). Actually, Nigeria took a political benefit of the sacrifice of men and materials in the operations in Sierra Leone and Liberia, rising indisputably as the security keeper in the region.

Apart from the first and second Liberian Civil Wars, some other ECOMOG interventions took place in Guinea Bissau, Sierra Leone, *Cote d’Ivoire*, Sao Tome and Principe or Togo, being almost all of them as controversial as the first¹⁸.

In Ochoche’s viewpoint, ECOMOG is a model of what a regional institution with limited resources and capacity could do. Compared with other mechanisms that may be good in the paper but weak on implementation, ECOMOG has proved its capacity to understand the political environment in which to work (Wachira, 2003). The evaluation of the Mechanism for conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, Peace and Security has been positive. The creation of ECOMOG in hindsight has proven to be a successful regional security mechanism. As Agbu expressed, “the organization [ECOWAS] is growing in effectiveness and stature considering the roles it played in resolving the conflicts in Sierra Leone and Liberia.” (2006, p. 72).

In order to complement the Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, ECOWAS agreed in 2001 on the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, which means almost a guideline for States to implement a good governance and particularly improve their action when conducting elections. “More often than not” due to electoral competition pre-election crisis and disagreement among political actors rise, as well as post-election violence (examples given in 2010 presidential elections in Côte d’Ivoire, October 2015 presidential elections in Guinea, the November 2015 presidential elections in Burkina Faso, and the February 2016 presidential elections in Niger (Brown, 2017). This agreement follows the preventive approach regarding conflicts in electoral processes. In the ECOWAS Revised Treaty actually, the observation of democratic

¹⁸ For a further analys, see Tavares (Tavares, 2011)

elections and the provision of assistance to Member States is one of the contemplated domains to pursuit regional security, developed in this protocol in section III. Therefore, it can be understood that security is perceived as a tool to guarantee the democratic functioning of the states. One more time security agreements commit with the rule of law, including concrete actions to ensure that elections are conducted in a free, fair and transparent manner, ensuring that every accession to power happens this way. One of these measures is that “no substantial modification shall be made to the electoral laws in the last six months before the elections, except with the consent of a majority of political actors” (section II). The protocol also states some constitutional convergence principles shared by all Member States (article 1), including the zero tolerance for power obtained or maintained by unconstitutional means and the extension of popular participation in decision-making. It also mandates Executive Secretary to dispatch a fact-finding Mission when elections in a Member State approaches, followed by an exploratory Mission. Therefore, this protocol gives mechanisms to ECOWAS common institutions to previously observe and intervene for the free and fair performance of electoral processes in Member States. It mandates the Mission to assess the electoral process and to formulate recommendations in order to improve the conduction of future elections.

The Protocol relating the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security is also clear about the role of the armed forces, the police and the security forces in a democracy, devoting to this the IV Section of the Protocol. It stresses that all the security agencies in the country must receive “instructions on the Constitution of their country, ECOWAS principles and regulations, human rights, humanitarian law and democratic principles” (article 23), as well as other measures to promote peaceful societies through cultural and educational means referred to the general society.

It makes relevant contributions to the strengthening of the rule of law in ECOWAS Community. Section VII of the protocol is devoted to rule of law, Human Rights and good governance. Particularly Member States recognize “that the rule of law involves not only the promulgation of good laws that are in conformity with the provisions on human rights, but also a good judicial system, a good system of administration, and good management of the State apparatus” (Article 33). The Protocol finally introduces sanctions for those States not observing the mentioned precepts (ECOWAS, 2001).

Continuing with the efforts improving governance and the above-mentioned shifts in the conception of the security policy of ECOWAS, in June 2016 the Authority adopted

the ECOWAS Policy Framework for Security Sector Reform and Governance. The first goal of the Policy Framework is to “Contribute to the democratization process in ECOWAS’s Member States by encouraging security institutions to comply with democratic governance principles such as accountability, transparency and the rule of law;” (ECOWAS, 2016a, p. 9). Although this approach was already introduced in some previous agreements, by this document ECOWAS highlights its vision towards the concept of security, moving to the conception of human security, which is more sensitive to human rights and understands the security means of a State as tools at the service of Human Rights consecution. This is condensed in the first two objectives of the Framework:

- a) To eliminate threats to individual and group rights, safety, life, livelihoods and property, and the protection of the institutions and values of democratic governance, human rights and the rule of law under a human security umbrella;*
- b) To orient the focus and capacities of institutions, individuals and groups engaged in the security sector to make them efficient, effective, responsive and responsible to democratic control and to adhere to basic human rights and the rule of law;*

(ECOWAS, 2016a)

In order to achieve a good implementation of SSRG, it directs the Commission “to take advantage of the expertise and experience available in Member States of the region, particularly in Côte d’Ivoire and Liberia which have successfully carried out security sector reforms” (ECOWAS, 2016c par.20). The Policy Framework introduces many concerns regarding proactive, institutional and peace-building actions; however it has been criticized that it is limited to the level of diplomacy and negotiations (Agbu, 2006).

Other efforts in democracy diffusion are made by ECOWAS which worth being remarked. It is a constant in regional organizations to congratulate States for the work done in the promotion of democracy. That is a practice used by ECOWAS to raise awareness among its Member States about this principle. Democratic State functioning is still not a consolidated practice in the whole region, that is why good examples are shown and divulgated. Taking as an example the fiftieth ordinary session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, values as democratization and peaceful transition of power were recalled. Therefore, the re-election of Cape Verdean president was congratulated, as well as the new Ghanaian president. In this regard, also the former

president was positively tribute “for demonstrating a great spirit of statesmanship by accepting the outcome of the elections” In addition, the Authority paid him “glowing tribute for his significant contribution to the entrenchment of democracy in the region during his term as Chair of the Authority of Heads of State and Government.” (ECOWAS, 2016b, p. 2).

Another attempt in making diffusion of Human Rights is the declaration in 2016 of the ECOWAS Human Rights day on the 16th January, as this was the day when Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf accessed to power in Liberia, being the first African Woman Head of State. (ECOWAS, 2016b, p. 6).

The agreement regarding security and rule of law which frames indirectly ECOWAS’ activity is the *Constitutive Act of the African Union*, which was signed and ratified by the ECOWAS Member States and came into force in June 2000. It includes some interesting considerations regarding conflict addressing and firmly declares its commitment with the respect and protection of rule of law. Particularly articles 4 (h) (j) state “the right of the Union to intervene in a Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely, war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity” and “the right of Member States to request intervention from the Union in order to restore peace and security”. In relation to rule of law, the Act declares in the article 4 (p), the “condemnation and rejection of unconstitutional changes of governments”, as well as that “Governments which shall come to power through unconstitutional means shall not be allowed to participate in the activities of the Union” (Article 30) (AU, 2000, articles 4 and 30).

Transfer of sovereignty for the promotion of democratic governance

Supra-nationalism proceeded the transfers of sovereignty in ECOWAS. The revision of 1975 ECOWAS’s Treaty represented this process. In order to speed up the pace of regional construction, introduces the decision-making mechanisms in ECOWAS’s institutions, which do not need unanimity of States to be approved nor authorization to be applicable. As an example, ECOWAS’s Revised Treaty in the article 9 stipulates that the powers of the Authority of Head of State and government, supreme decision-making body, are automatically into force in 90 days since the signature. That means that no ratification process is needed: they will just commit their countries, bypassing internal decision-making structures (Bach, 2003). These mechanisms transform the organization from an inter-governmental organization to an organization intended to integration.

Meaning, as well, that States transfer some sovereignty to common institutions. Bach alerts on the challenge of a low level of implementation of ECOWAS's decisions, that might be produced by the fact that no ratification process is needed for the agreements of some ECOWAS's institutions (2003). In the 49th ordinary session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government ECOWAS calls on Member States "to take ownership of, and implement, all Protocols and Community Acts", in order to "fast-track the integration process", referring specifically to the Community Levy Protocol (ECOWAS, 2016c).

Currently a new phase in the integration process seems to be arising among experts, civil society representatives and decision makers in West Africa: once the structures are created and consolidated, it is time to address common challenges in the region and improve the democratization and governance system making the structures more participatory. Civil society is emerging in recognized spaces of ECOWAS, in an attempt to include them in the decision making (UNOWAS, 2018).

Some governance challenges were identified in a joint colloquium between ECOWAS and UNOWAS about: "(1) the lack of an open political space; (2) the need to continue democratic reforms beyond changes of governments; (3) corruption; (4) lack of political change resulting in a sluggish reform agenda; and (5) a large amount of unsolved problems which are simply passed on to the next generations." (UNOWAS, 2018, p. 11). It was pointed out as well the disconnection between political reforms and people's concerns: the political reforms are mainly targeting the reform of the political system itself (it means, the party system, the elections regulation...), and it is lacked the addressing of socioeconomic, education and cultural questions. (UNOWAS, 2018, p. 10). "The participants also suggested that the civil society's involvement in political reform processes, considered as raising people's awareness, should be reviewed and improved." (UNOWAS, 2018, p. 11). This is a good sign in the way of democratization of political processes in the organization. Although it was also spotted that this political shift can only be taken in the countries where there is already a peaceful environment. Therefore, creating a peaceful environment seems a keystone for improving integration through ECOWAS.

Sovereignty transfer comes together with the democratization of institutions and openness to the population. Iheduru recognizes that democratic governance and the defense of human rights are becoming "acceptable targets of regional foreign policy" (2003, p. 54). This answers to an effort followed by different regional organizations

around the world (Sobrino Heredia, 2009a). ECOWAS's Court of Justice was amended in 2002 to enable citizens to bring cases against member states and the Court to entertain them. Court ruling also bind member states, institutions and individuals and corporate bodies. But in fact the supra national competence of the court can only work with the support of the national judicial systems and its attitude towards the enforcement of the Community Law (Bach, 2003) Likewise, in 2001 the ECOWAS's Parliament inaugurated its mandate with 120 members, having a quota for women, while States do not have similar provisions. A big step was taken when the decision of giving more powers to the Parliament. Gradually the ECOWAS Parliament was given more powers. The adoption of the Supplementary Act on the enhancement of powers of the ECOWAS Parliament enabled the Parliament to perform "the traditional roles of a Parliament" giving assent or opinion on a number of Community policies and programs (ECOWAS, 2016b, p. 5).

Amplifying the democratic functioning of ECOWAS comes together with increasing the transference of sovereignty to common institutions as well as with the effort of Member States to be more aware of the integration process and stand for it.

Remarks and findings about the evolution of ECOWAS's institutions

A significant point for the ECOWAS's functioning was the Civil War in Liberia in 1990 and ECOWAS intervention, when the regional economic organization broadens its agenda to include tasks that were not originally part of its mandate, even not being these tasks connected with the earlier functions. Due to the evolution of the conflicts in the region, ECOWAS's economic cooperation turned into cooperation in the field of security, adapting to the circumstances of the region. While economic integration efforts were generating reduced advances, ECOWAS created a framework for negotiation and mechanisms on peace, disarmament and security in the region, which is rather a new experience in the world. In Cotonou in 1993 it was revised the Abuja Treaty in order to introduce the political scope of the organization and allocating new responsibilities in the prevention and resolution of regional conflicts. The organization has evolved into a more integrated region moving gradually beyond the conventional economic integration schema.

The peace-keeping embrace phenomenon can be considered a spontaneous spillover. Schmitter identifies three possible spillover mechanisms: reward-generalization; imitation and frustration. ECOWAS was not spilling-over security sector

after being an integrated economic organization and the peacekeeping was seen as a duplicated effort by external actors, but maybe because the frustration of the Member states. The frustration-generated spillover is defined by Schmitter as “the process whereby members of an integrated scheme – agreed on some collective goals for a variety of motives but unequally satisfied with their attainment of these goals – attempt to resolve their dissatisfaction either by resorting to collaboration in another, related sector, or by intensifying their commitments to the original sector, or both” (1964). Additionally, from Dennis and Brown’s opinion, “this ineffective, and by some standards moribund, intergovernmental organization would not have acted to take on this new challenge without a powerful catalyst, in this case the threat of regional chaos” (2004, p. 246). The creation of ECOMOG was an immediate security need, independent of long-term considerations regarding economic integration. That is why it could be understood as a spontaneous reaction, both generated by frustration and a reward-situation due to the threat of regional chaos.

Responding to a question posed by Dennis and Brown in 2004, the spillover into security functions has translated into a more viable regional economic cooperation in ECOWAS. Actually, we can say that the organization has improved its internal mechanisms in all aspects concerning political integration.

Furthermore, it is remarkable that ECOWAS shifted its security policy to a preventive approach and recent agreements focus on guaranteeing “human security” and defense of rule of law and good governance. Therefore, in ECOWAS regional integration in terms of security is becoming a way to ensure democratic values and regimes within the region. As Agbu states, the measures taken were useful “not only preventing the conflicts from escalating, but also in institutionalizing certain practices, namely, that unconstitutional changes of governments including coups d’états are not only unacceptable, but will attract sanctions and possibly military interventions” (Agbu, 2006, p. 76).

For its part, the economic integration project was again focused with the signature of the Treaty of the African Economic Community in 1991, and States committed within the African Union to achieve the African Economic and Monetary Union by 2028, showing successful developments in the economic areas according to the African Integration Index. So, it seems that far from moving to one field to another, the move stressing security concerns has prompted integration efforts not only in security, but in economy and in the ECOWAS’s democratization and respect of the rule of law.

Therefore, we can say that security cooperation has served as a catalyst for ECOWAS's regional integration. All in all, nowadays ECOWAS is a cross-sectorial organization, already developed in different areas, with a solid economic co-operation, and relevant experiences in terms of security and the promotion of Human Rights and rule of law.

The hegemon's role

On another note, Iheduru alerts on the hegemon's role played by Nigeria in ECOWAS, what represents the so called "Nigerian threat" to its neighbors, because of the inequitable distribution of benefits from integration¹⁹. It should be noted that Nigeria's contribution to ECOWAS's budget is three quarters of the total budget (Iheduru, 2003).

ECOWAS's intervention in Liberia's Civil War (1990) is explained differently from one scholar to another. Some point out that external powerful states and multilateral organizations convinced ECOWAS to intervene in order to guarantee regional stability, some other that Nigeria saw an opportunity to solidify itself as a regional hegemon²⁰. Since the beginning Nigeria has played a leading role, due to its economic, geographic and human weight. ECOWAS in the Liberian crisis acted under the Nigerian leadership. Nigeria was simply the only actor with the interest and wherewithal to take on the task because the international community refused to do so (Dennis & Brown, 2004).

From Brown's opinion in the past 20 years "ECOWAS has a rich history managing political transitions and elections", particularly through the common mechanisms of Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-keeping and Security and Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (Brown, 2017). Nigeria dominates the peacekeeping operations of ECOMOG in terms of military equipment, personnel and funding. Actually, until 2006 ECOMOG mechanism has worked under Nigeria's leadership, what poses the question of the capacities of the other

¹⁹ Olusegun Obasanjo, former President of Nigeria, delivered in 1999 the following words regarding its commitment with ECOWAS: "Our Administration fully accepts the challenge of making ECOWAS a viable regional organization that will also serve as major building block for the continental integration of Africa as a whole".

²⁰ Dennis and Brown (2004) deep on these ideas in their study about the intervention of ECOWAS in the Liberian conflict. They collect arguments to demonstrate that, from the one side, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, by that moment Secretary General of the United Nations, thought that regional peacekeeping efforts might be more effective than UN's, so that he promoted the intervention of ECOWAS managing Liberian conflict: and from the other, they argue that ECOWAS was even conceptualized as an instrument of Nigerian foreign Policy in official documents.

²¹ Tavares (2011) assesses that the participation of ECOWAS in military interventions respond to reasons of national and personal interests rather than humanitarian reasons or out of a primary interest in preserving regional stability. Particularly the individual interest of Nigeria.

member states to persuade belligerents military in case a conflict arises. Tavares makes a pessimistic analysis of these interventions, as all of them reply to individual interests of the countries involved, namely Nigeria. West Africa is a very diverse region, where the Franco and Anglophone divide has specially affected the relations between countries. Some countries have opposed Nigeria's roles as regional hegemon. However, we suggest that the role played by Nigeria could have also been the "powerful catalyst" which enhanced ECOWAS to spill over the security field.

Apart from that, "ECOWAS regionalism is lack of political will, which is tied up with national pride and claims of sovereignty", in Ochoche words (Wachira, 2003). By this the scholar means that a more ambitious intervention of ECOWAS institutions in some cases of violations of the precepts of the Treaties would have been expected. However, he understands that States are little by little advancing that way, putting more determination into common interventions (Wachira, 2003, p. 21).

In future researches about integration efforts in ECOWAS it could be interesting analyzing the attempts to generate political integration in political domains different than security. Some examples of initiatives ongoing that can give reply to the main challenges identified in the region could be the creation of the common Biometric ID Card or the efforts in the infrastructure field with the Lagos-Abidjan corridor. Furthermore, the current economic integration of ECOWAS is another subject worthy studying more in dept. Likewise it could be interesting to deep on the processes of generation of a common ECOWAS identity among the states or population.

It could offer some relevant information a study on the causes for the success of UEMOA. Some lessons from its action could improve integration processes though ECOWAS. Similarly, it could be interesting to deep on how the divide between anglophone and francophone countries has influenced the integration process in West Africa, taking as a study case the divide arisen with the creation of ECOMOG.

Chapter 5: ECOWAS around the 2016 presidential elections in The Gambia

Contextualization

The Gambia hold Presidential elections in December 2016, as they were expected after the last presidential pool in 2011. The call for democratic elections was made by Yahya Jammeh, the long-term incumbent, which was President of The Gambia since the military coup in 1994. President Jammeh, who once vowed to rule for “a billion years” (Reuters, 2017), earned reputation for rights abuses. He organized elections in 2001, 2006, 2011 and won all of them. His presidency lasted for 22 years where his government was accused of emasculation of political opponents and human rights violations (International Amnesty, 2017).

The Gambia in 2016 was not considered a free country by the Freedom House, due to several reasons. One of them is that there is no limit of terms for the President to be elected. Although in 2016 The Gambia was formally a democracy with multiparty elections, political parties had difficult access to elections, due to the burdensome requirements. Furthermore, president Jammeh exerted an opaque governing, and controlled decision-making processes and government operations (Freedom House, 2017). According to Freedom House, there was no press freedom, being the journalists victims of harassment, arrest, and violence. In April 2016, the Gambian Press Union estimated that 20 percent of Gambian journalists were living in exile. NGOs operated under constant threat of reprisals and individual rights were not fully guaranteed (Freedom House, 2017).

The last Presidential elections in 2011 were highly criticized by international organizations such as ECOWAS, as the electoral environment was not conducive to free and fair elections. Therefore, they refused to send observers to the elections. AU and ECOWAS asked for thorough and independent investigation. The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) was controlled by the government and failed to share the electoral register with opposition parties, shortened the campaign period from four weeks to eleven days, and barred opposition parties from campaigning via national media or holding political assemblies. Jammeh declared that neither coups nor elections could remove him from power as he had been installed by God. He made great efforts in the suppression of

the opposition, media, and civil society for the election and threatened all the people not supporting him to withhold government services. Therefore, although The Gambia had the shape of an electoral democracy, it was not, as the government controlled the media and voter intimidation features the elections (Freedom House, 2012). The results of these elections gave 71.5% votes for the re-election of Jammeh (APRC), 17.4 and 11.1% the other two parties, UDP and UF respectively.

For the 2016 elections the situation provided by The Gambian government improved. An example is that opposition had time during the electoral campaign in the public media or that the Independent Election Commission was actually Independent. Although there were still some obstacles on the election day – like the cut of internet and telephone services –, the IEC was able to conduct an impartial vote count (Freedom House, 2017). In order to verify the fair and free functioning of the elections, different international organizations sent observers, being one of these the ECOWAS.

Controversies arose particularly after the elections. The announcement of the victory of Coalition 2016 (43.3% of the votes), overthrowing Jammeh (39.6%), was impressive, as the first reaction of the former President for 22 years was accepting the defeat – what was internationally applauded. Notwithstanding, in the following days Jammeh changed his mind and refused leaving the office, rejecting the outcomes and appealing to unfair elections.

This situation produced the determined action of ECOWAS and other international agents to support The Gambia to make a political transition of Presidents and to establish a democratic functioning in the country. Finally, new president Adama Barrow made his oath of office at the Gambian Embassy in Dakar Senegal in January the 19th and moved to The Gambia on the 26th. And on 21 January 2017 Jammeh finally granted to leave The Gambia. The handling of the impasse showcased a multi-actor coordination. ECOWAS operation was internationally applauded and congratulated. It showed a “coherent coordination of joint preventive diplomacy and mediation initiatives” (Brown, 2017). Furthermore, as Brown states, ECOWAS brought “timely results” for the impasse. Sometimes there is no hope in international organizations as their reply is very slow due to the procedures to make a decision. In this case the reaction was immediate and communications agile.

Chronological review: facts, dates and agents playing around the Gambian elections

Through this timeline we will revise the key facts happening around the Gambian Presidential elections, which took part in December the 1st 2016. Some data will be showed from the period before and after, as they are remarkable for the understanding of ECOWAS operations, but the chronology will mainly focus the activity during the months of December 2016 and January 2017.

We will highlight facts, dates and times regarding actions carried by ECOWAS, any of its institutions (Authority of Heads of State and Government and ECOMOG, mainly), any of its member States, the African Union, other African countries, the UN Security Council, the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), domestic institutions in The Gambia, and some distinguished individuals such as the former and the current President of The Gambia, presidents and Ambassadors of other ECOWAS Member States and ECOWAS Chairperson during the studied period. Actions involving civil society are not specifically studied as they go beyond the scope of this research.

Timeline

2016

- 14-16th April: Tensions between the party in office (Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction APRC) and the opposition (United Democratic Party UDP) demanding political reforms, with repressions followed by the arrest of demonstrators, “subjected to torture and other ill-treatment” (Brown, 2017; International Amnesty, 2017)
- 4-6th May: joint mission to The Gambia by ECOWAS, AU, and UNOWAS. Jammeh refused to meet them.
- 4th June ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government asks to deploy as soon as possible a pre-electoral technical mission to appraise the electoral process in The Gambia.
- 13th June: death during his arrest detention of Solo Sandeng, youth leader of UDP, together with other deaths in custody all along the year (International Amnesty, 2017)
- 14-15th July: ECOWAS 4-member pre-election fact-finding mission
- 20th July: 19 people in jail for participation in an “unauthorized protest and related offences” (International Amnesty, 2017)

- 15-30th November: Election campaign peacefully run with thousands of Gambians taking part
- 1st December: Elections take place in The Gambia
- 2nd December: announcement of the results of the elections by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) of The Gambia declaring Adama Barrow the winner of the elections. Recognizes the elections as “fair and free”. Jammeh accepts his defeat.
- Congratulation messages from different ECOWAS, AU and UN countries.
- 5th December: IEC issued the review/corrections on the polls, as errors were declared in the early electoral results.
- 9th December: Jammeh rejects the results and calls for fresh polls.
- Attempt to visit The Gambia of ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government and President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf – Jammeh avoided receiving her (in one attempt her flight was denied to land in Banjul airport (Brown, 2017))
- 10th December: Several international reactions
 - o Senegal Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mankeur Ndiaye, demands respect for the democratic choice freely expressed by the Gambian people and a peaceful transition of power. Asks for an emergency meeting on the UNSC.
 - o President Buhari’s tweet stating that “Africa's future rests on building strong democratic institutions, ensuring credible elections, and respect for the sanctity of the ballot.”
 - o Joint statement the AU and the UN, the ECOWAS Commission about deep concerns, to reject violence and peacefully uphold the will of the people as clearly expressed through the ballot box, support the Senegalese Government calling an emergency meeting of the UNSC. Support to Senegal’s request for an emergency session of the UNSC (ECOWAS, UNOWAS, & AU, 2016).
 - o United States’ deputy spokesman at the U.S. Department of State expresses that it is “a reprehensible and unacceptable breach of faith with the people of The Gambia and an egregious attempt to undermine a credible election process and remain in power illegitimately”.
 - o UNSC statement condemning the reject of Jammeh, “respect the choice of the sovereign People of The Gambia, and to transfer, without condition and undue delay, power to the President-elect, Mr. Adama Barrow” and called: “on the support by the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWAS) and international partners, especially ECOWAS, to preserve stability in The Gambia and work towards the installation of a democratically elected Government in the country”
- 12th December: 644th meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, supporting ECOWAS efforts and stressing its determination “to take all

necessary measures, in line with the relevant AU Instruments” in order to ensure the full respect of the will of the Gambian people (AU, 2016).

- 13th December:
 - o High-level mission ECOWAS-UN to review the political situation with all stakeholders, with Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of Liberia and Chairperson of the Authority, Muhammadu Buhari, President of Nigeria, Ernest Koroma, President of Sierra Leone, and John Dramani Mahama, President of Ghana and Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of ONUWAS. They appeal Jammeh to accept the will of Gambian people and avoid political crisis.
 - o Security forces evicted the Independent Electoral Commission chairman and his staff from their headquarters.
 - o Legal challenge submitted over the election result to the Supreme Court – for Jammeh is unconstitutional Barrow to assume office and asked an injunction to stop the inauguration.
 - o Jammeh asked for new elections to be held or, at least, ECOWAS authority easing “the deployment of judges from ECOWAS member states²² to hear his election petition before the Supreme Court”. Jammeh declares not to step down and 90-day state of emergency.

- 17th December: Fiftieth Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government recognizes Barrow as elected-President and asks for his protection; calls Jammeh to accept the results of the polls and guarantee the peaceful transition of power; and agree on establishing a mediation mandate. Agrees to take “all necessary measures to strictly enforce the results of the 1st December 2016 elections”

- 29-30th December: Consultations by the Mediation Support Team meet to Presidents of Liberia, Senegal and Ghana in order to define some principles of the mediation strategy.

2017

- 7th January: Summit in Accra of ECOWAS mediators to prepare the Gambian intervention
- 9th January: Summit in Abuja of ECOWAS mediators to prepare the Gambian intervention
- 13th January:

²² It should be noted that The Gambia Supreme Court judges were earlier sacked by Jammeh. The country relied on judges from Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Ghana, who are deployed to The Gambia on an occasional basis. Nigeria turned down the request for justices on the grounds that the period requested for the justices to sit fell outside the agreed period of May and November of every year.

- 647th meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, strongly reaffirming the AU's zero tolerance policy with regard to coup d'état and unconstitutional changes of government in Africa. Declares that, as of 19 January 2017, Jammeh will cease to be recognized as legitimate President of the Republic of The Gambia (AU, 2017).
- Mediators meet with Jammeh and offer asylum outside The Gambia. No outcome is reached.
- 14th January:
 - 'De facto' recognition of Adama Barrow as Gambian President as he attended the France-Africa Summit in Bamako, where Malian and French leaders ask Jammeh to respect the elections outcomes (VOA news, 2017).
 - Decision of Jammeh of not to relinquish power until Gambia's Supreme Court rules on his legal challenge.
 - Relocation of then president-elect Adama Barrow to Senegal to ensure his safety.
- 17th January:
 - Half of Ministers of Jammeh's government desert: Vice President Isatou Njie Saïdy, who has held the role since 1997, quits the cabinet.
- 18th January:
 - "Secret mediation mission" by Morocco offering "golden retirement" (North Africa Post, 2017).
 - Last ditch effort: Guinea and Mauritania's president (long-time friend of Jammeh) sent to Banjul to offer asylum.
 - In the night Guinea, Mauritania, Senegal's presidents, Barrow and ECOWAS leaders meet in Dakar. They proceeded to ask for the opportunity of a final negotiation on a peaceful exit for Jammeh, halting military intervention (Brown, 2017).
 - ECOWAS took the decision in Abuja of intervention: ECOWAS Mission in The Gambia (ECOMIG) – "Operation Restore Democracy"
- 19th January:
 - Senegal sends troops (ground forces) as well as Ghana and Nigeria. They keep in the Senegalese border. Nigeria sends reconnaissance aircraft, and warship (warning to be ready to strike militarily).
 - Gambian navy declares support for Barrow.
 - Gambian army chief declares that the army will not fight Senegalese troops, as the dispute was "political".
 - At 16h takes place the oath of office Adama Barrow in at the Gambian embassy in Dakar Senegal, adopting the new role as commander and chief of Gambia's armed services.
 - President Barrow ordered all members of The Gambia's armed forces to remain in their barracks – anyone bearing arms would be considered rebel.

- Right after, international recognition of Barrow: UN, AU, ECOWAS resolutions. The sworn ceremony was in front of ambassadors from UN Security Council and UA countries
 - UNSC resolution 2337 backing the action of ECOWAS if a political solution is attempted first and recognized Adama Barrow as President-elect.
U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres shows “his full support for his (Barrow’s) determination, and ECOWAS’s historic decision, with the unanimous backing of the Security Council, to restore the rule of law in The Gambia so as to honor and respect the will of the Gambian people.”
 - Parliamentary vote in the Gambian National Assembly to extend Jammeh presidency for 90 days- three months – legally valid under Gambian law – this decision was disregarded by the regional powers.
 - In the eve Yahya Jammeh dissolved his government – 8 out of 19 had already resigned (Reuters, 2017) and declared a state of emergency stating that he would not step down until a court hears his election challenge (North Africa Post, 2017).
 - Thousands of Gambians have fled in recent weeks.
 - In the night troops entered Gambia from the southeast, southwest and north only during a few hours (generating minor clashes to pro-Jammeh MFDC forces).
 - Few hours later, halt of the incursion. ECOWAS Authority makes an ultimatum -last political attempt- to Jammeh to quit The Gambia before 20th afternoon, under the threat of removing him by force “with the Nigerian Air force by then hovering in The Gambian airspace, a warship stationed in Gambian waters and foot soldiers already on the outskirts of Banjul” (Brown, 2017).
- 20th January:
- Deadline for Jammeh to leave The Gambia in the morning.
 - Final ECOWAS mediation mission: last attempt at negotiation by the presidents of Guinea and Mauritania in Banjul. West African regional bloc Ecowas, Marcel Alain de Souza said that if the meeting proved unsuccessful, military action will follow.
 - New deadline to leave is set at 16:00.
 - The chief justice declined to rule on an injunction to stop the inauguration of the government by Barrow, as this case affect his own position, being himself the person conducting the swearing-in ceremony (BBC, 2017).
 - Jammeh is offered an agreement of asylum outside The Gambia as an honorable and respectful manner of leaving, travelling to Guinea before choosing a country of exile.
 - Jammeh agreed and relinquished power.
 - Barrow assured Jammeh will have all the rights legally ensured to an ex-president, including immunity from prosecution, barring a decision by two-thirds of the national assembly (Yahoo News, 2017).

- Gambia's army pledged allegiance to Barrow.
- 21st January:
 - Jammeh left for Guinea with Condé and agreed to leave for exile to Equatorial Guinea with no casualties.
 - 4.000 ECOWAS forces remained in the territory until Barrow returned and consolidated his presidency.
 - Joint declaration by ECOWAS, the AU and the UN, stating that Jammeh was peacefully and orderly facilitating the transition of power and leaving The Gambia. They committed to work with the Gambian government on national reconciliation (UNOWAS, AU, & ECOWAS, 2017).
- 26th January: Barrow returned to the Gambia requesting ECOWAS troops to stay for six more months in order to help stabilising the order.
- 8th February: Mission with 2.500 troops extended for three more months – less Ghanaian soldiers
- 18th February: Inaugural speech of Gambian President Adama Barrow (Barrow, 2017).

After February 2017 some worth-studying events took place in The Gambia around the elections and the ECOWAS intervention. For example, in April 21st ECOWAS forces remained in The Gambia and there were clashes between them and Gambian soldiers loyal to Yahya Jammeh.

Putting a focus on the evils of ECOWAS intervention, in May demonstrations took place against continued military presence of ECOWAS forces, finishing with injuries (even a protester was shot dead on June 2nd). As a way of keeping the efforts for the restore of democracy, in December Barrow's government established the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC), as well as a Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) and initiated security-sector and civil-service reform processes (Afrobarometer, 2018). Those facts give food for thought and represent material for further researches.

Fact checking: How the deployment was, how the institutional decisions were made?

We can distinguish five moments in the operations deployed in The Gambia regarding the presidential elections. These moments are sequenced in time, although some of them overlap. These are: 1) the period before the elections, 2) during the elections and the week right after, where the impasse took place; the post-election scenario led by 3) the mediation missions and 4) the threat of the use of force; and last, 4) the crisis resolution and the degrees of ECOWAS' efforts for democracy promotion. We will go through these moments, deep in the decision making and the actions developed

Promoting fair elections and preventing a crisis: Pre-election fact-finding mission

In June 2016 the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government takes into consideration the situation of The Gambia and calls the ECOWAS Commission “to deploy as soon as possible, a pre-electoral technical mission to appraise the electoral process in The Gambia. Beforehand the Authority made a comment to the three States scheduled to hold elections in 2016: Cape Verde, The Gambia and Ghana. Those three countries were urged to create a propitious environment for conducting peaceful, free and transparent elections. They invited the ECOWAS Commission to deploy in these three countries “pre-election technical missions to assess together with all stakeholders, the preparations for the elections, in addition to the election observation missions which will pave the way for the arrival of the ECOWAS observation missions” (ECOWAS, 2016c paragraph 9).

As a prevention tool ECOWAS' deploys pre-election fact-finding missions in the states which are holding elections. These tools reinforce the commitment of the regional organization with fair and free elections and push the countries to better perform in this field, at least as they are mandated to prepare for the pre-election technical mission and assessed to better perform during the elections.

Furthermore, observation of democratic elections is a tool framed in ECOWAS regional security efforts that Member States undertake to provide (ECOWAS, 1993 Article 58, Annex 1).

It must be said that in the Forty-eighth session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, President Jammeh from The Gambia was congratulated by ECOWAS “for [his] leadership and positive contribution in ending the political crisis

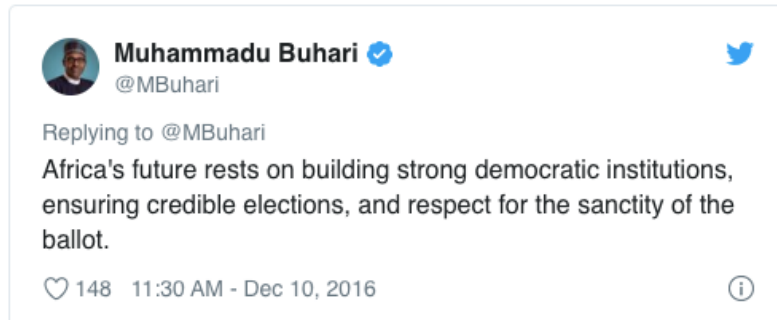
in Guinea Bissau” (ECOWAS, 2015 pr.42). So, through other means The Gambia had in the previous years, been sensitized about the need of democratic regimens respectful with Human Rights. We must not play down the importance of the work done in the previous years with The Gambia government and institutions. Thanks to these efforts The Gambia was convinced to conduct elections in 2016 improving its quality, i.e., giving more chances to opposition, creating an independent commission for the elections and letting polls perform freely. The improvement in the quality of the pre-electoral campaign and the elections itself is already a victory of ECOWAS joint efforts promoting democracy and the rule of law.

Scholars such as Da Rocha are critical however with ECOWAS prevention efforts and remark that the Community could have done more to prevent the crisis. He criticizes that due to the authoritarian tendencies of the regime not enough engagement was done asking The Gambia to hold its obligations under ECOWAS states. Likewise, ECOWAS should have done a proper election observation and given more support to the IEC and civil society groups (Da Rocha, 2018).

Elections observed as free and fair welcome the new president

It was surprising both, the declaration by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) of the elections’ win for Adama Barrow on the 2nd December 2016 and the spontaneous defeat acceptance by Yahya Jammeh, as he was the long-term incumbent of the government, with an abusive past regarding Human Rights in The Gambia. The new from the outgoing President proclaiming the results of the elections was a positive sign of a smooth transition of power (ECOWAS, 2016b). The international community was quick to react with congratulation messages for accepting the defeat and Barrow was overwhelmingly recognized by the International Community as the new president of The Gambia.

On December the 7th Ghana hold its General Elections, having as a result the change of the ruling party. President Buhari from Nigeria was the first congratulating the new president and the calm development of elections. He took advantage of his communication on December 10th to refer to The Gambian crisis through this tweet: “Africa's future rests on building strong democratic institutions, ensuring credible elections, and respect for the sanctity of the ballot.” (Africanews, 2016).



Buhari was the first praising Jammeh for conceding and extending his felicitations to Barrow and the Gambians for the peaceful development of the polls. Being an influential leader in ECOWAS, this tweet is impactful and helps spreading the need for democratic institutions. As defined by constructivist scholars, ideas are relevant in the creation of emerging regional identities. When ECOWAS' member States make diffusion of statements like Buhari's, they contribute to spread a democratic conception throughout ECOWAS and project internationally the image of staunch fighter for democracy and rule of law.

ECOWAS and AU recognized quickly Adama Barrow as president of the Republic of The Gambia. In the case of ECOWAS it happens with the 50th session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government, on 12th December.

The quick reaction from ECOWAS and the determined efforts by the Community to solve the Gambian crisis are explained by Da Rocha with the fact that President Sirleaf, Chairperson of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government (AHS), and President of Liberia "felt an obligation" to react rapidly on the situation of The Gambia, as this neighbor country played a key role in the peace talks of the Liberia Civil War in 1990s (Da Rocha, 2018).

The overwhelming international victory recognition of Adama Barrow was a pressure tool for Jammeh to dissuade. He was experiencing having all the world's leaders against him. That was also a victory of the promotion of democracy, as Jammeh, for some defined as a dictator, kept alone defending he must keep in power. Even his ideologically closest partners were not able to support him, as free elections and the respect for the outcomes were reflected as the usual, prevailing and right thing to do and the international community was supporting this message unequivocally.

It is important to note that there was an existing interdependency between the different countries in the region. Neighbor countries were affected by the situation

because of the migration and refugees flows, but also due to the tourist activity reduction in the area as a consequence of insecurity perception. Likewise, the impunity for actions against a democracy in the region could damage the democratic functioning of other countries.

A solution through mediation

Mediation in ECOWAS is regulated in the Revised Treaty (1993), Article 58 regarding Regional Security [Annex 1], by which Member States commit to co-operate with ECOWAS in “establishing and strengthening appropriate mechanisms for the timely prevention and resolution of intra-State and inter-State conflicts”, asking for a particular regard to the employment of “good offices, conciliation, mediation and other methods of peaceful settlement of disputes”.

From Brown’s opinion, article 58, using the wording “*Member States undertake to co-operate*”, obliges the States to co-operate with the community in establishing and strengthening the above-named mechanisms (Brown, 2017). Following Brown’s argumentation, the 1999 Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-Keeping and Security establishes the institution of the Authority of Heads of State and Government as the highest decision-making body of ECOWAS, with “powers to act on all matters concerning conflict prevention, conflict management, conflict resolution and peacekeeping” (1999, Article 6). Therefore, the Authority is trusted enough power to make a decision regarding the need of using a mediation mechanism in an intra-State conflict, and furthermore, once the decision is taken the named State is obliged to co-operate with ECOWAS employing mediation. A deeper analysis is then needed on the Authority resolutions and the agreements raised on the situation of The Gambia.

The ECOWAS high-level mission of Heads of State together with the Representative for ONUWAS on 13 December 2016 was intended to review the political situation with all stakeholders. This mission was kick-started by Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of Liberia and Chairperson of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government (AHSG) and it was composed by the presidents of English-speaking countries member of ECOWAS plus the Ghanaian special representative of ONUWAS Ibn Chambas. This was a first attempt to solve the crisis through political means, using diplomacy resources. This high-level delegation represented ECOWAS’ pre-formal

mediation meeting. This high-level delegation met twice with both party leaders concerned in the crisis, as well as with other stakeholders such as the IEC, security chiefs and civil society groups. Based on the study of this delegation ECOWAS prepared the position to be adopted by the fiftieth ordinary session of the AHSG.

In its fiftieth ordinary session the Authority of Heads of State and Government was clear in calling the “President Yahya Jammeh to accept the result of the polls and refrain from any action likely to compromise the transition and peaceful transfer of power to the President-elect”. The Authority asks him and the international community to “respect the will of the Gambian people” “as expressed by the Presidential election results of 1st December 2016” (ECOWAS, 2016b).

ECOWAS Authority reinforced the firm position taken by its Chairperson managing the situation and their meeting’s communiqué was a show of unequivocal support to rule of law support. Upholding the results and recognizing Adama Barrow as elected-President of The Gambia, ECOWAS Authority agrees on establishing a mediation mandate, appointing Presidents Buhari (Nigeria) and Mahama (Ghana) as mediator and co-mediator in the mission. Its resolution sets the terms of reference and the non-negotiable outcomes the mediators had to work with, which are the following: to accept the elections result, to facilitate a peaceful transition and transfer of power, to guarantee the protection of president-elected Adama Barrow and to request the support and endorsement of AU and UN [Annex 2].

The UN states some guidelines for Effective Mediation , highlighting the principle of preparedness (UN, 2012). For this mediation mission a team chaired by President Buhari was created in order to implement its mandate.

Before the mediation itself a mediation support team (MST) was created, led by Nigerian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Geoffrey Onyeama, with the task of working with the two mediators together with the ECOWAS Commission. During the 29-30th December the MST conducted consultations with Presidents of Liberia, Senegal and the Ghana. It is important to note the role of each member consulted, as the President of Ghana was the person mandated for this task as co-mediator in the mission; President of Liberia at that moment was president of the ECOWAS Commission; and President of Senegal, neighbor country and Gambia’s surround, was at that moment part of the UN Security Council, what meant an ideal combination of powers in order to achieve a greater impact of the mission. Furthermore, the three countries (Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal) are the ECOWAS most prominent ones regarding their military forces and able for a fast

deployment of them. Therefore, it is not a coincidence that those three are the countries engaged in the mediation mission, but a strategic decision in case the use of force is needed to solve the Gambian conflict.

The mediation team met twice to prepare the strategy of intervention in the Gambian crisis with the Mediation Support Team and the ECOWAS Commission. From their meeting there was the agreement on a twin policy of mediation and diplomacy means used preferably and use of force as last resort, what was the basis for the following actions of the mediation mission, as expressed by Onyeama in the summit of ECOWAS mediators in Abuja, on 9th January 2017 (ECOWAS, 2016, pp. 7–8). They agreed as well on reaching inside and outside ECOWAS leaders influent to Jammeh who could exert pressure on him to relinquish power. That was the cases of Morocco, Mauritania, Guinea or Equatorial Guinea, offering a “golden retirement” for Jammeh.

As stated by Da Rocha (2018), who conducted interviews with the concerning parts, having the opportunity to meet twice facilitated the direct communication amongst the leaders in the mediation team and a close coordination. Nigerian President office supported financially and logistically the task of the mediation team and UNOWAS and its agency in Banjul provided arrangements in Banjul (such as transportation, contacts with stakeholders and meetings’ organization). It could be further researched how the governance between countries work in ECOWAS conflict solving policy and how were the findings of ECOWAS countries about the involvement of Senegal, Ghana and Nigeria in this mission.

Future research could be conducted on which is the procedure used to choose the mediators in conflicts. In this case it seems that the linguistic and cultural approach played a role in the decision. So it is the case of Ghana and Nigeria. Another reason could be the military forces of the selected countries, therefore it was a strategic decision in case military means would be needed as a means of pressure. Why then Senegal was not elected as a mediator? One explanatory answer could be because there are competing interests between Senegal and The Gambia due to their territorial situation, particularly in the independentist Casamance area, what could affect the impartiality of the mediator.

“All necessary measures” statement or the application of coercive force.

Together with the above-mentioned security measures established by the ECOWAS Revised Treaty, Member States commit to “establish a regional peace and security

observation system and peace keeping forces where appropriate” (ECOWAS, 1993 Article 58).

ECOWAS in its final communiqué of the Fiftieth Session on the situation of The Gambia the Authority agreed on taking “all necessary measures to strictly enforce the results of the 1st December 2016 elections” (2016, page 8), a decision which allows ECOWAS forces to intervene in case the previous mediation operation does not achieve their goals. This wording is the one used by the UN Security Council (UNSC) when it invokes the responsibility to protect, justifying the military intervention in a State without its explicit consent in order to preserve international peace and security.

Likewise, inside the African Union Peace and Security Council it was agreed “to take all necessary measures, in line with the relevant AU Instruments”, with a view to ensure the compliance of the will of the Gambian people expressed by the elections on the 1st December 2016. Furthermore, the AU decided to continue and to intensify the coordination with ECOWAS and the UN, in order to facilitate “a speedy and orderly transfer of power to the president-elect of The Gambia”.

From its part, there was no agreement on an UNSC resolution directly endorsing possible military measures as proposed by Senegal, what seemed too strong for some Security Council members. Non-permanent member Bolivia, represented by Llorenty Solíz said “the situation [in The Gambia] would not endanger international peace and security, and the resolution could therefore not be seen as endorsing the use of force”. From its part, Egypt and China reaffirmed the need to support regional positions coinciding with the belief in African solutions to African challenges. Ethiopian and Senegalese representatives expressed the rapid deterioration of the situation and the need to retain any unconstitutional move. Fodé Seck, on behalf of Senegal, remarked the need for the resolution of the UNSC as a continuation of the ECOWAS and UNOWAS efforts to find a solution of the situation (UN Security Council, 2017b). Finally the unanimously adopted resolution on The Gambia situation went in line with ECOWAS agreements endorsing its decision to recognize Adama Barrow as President of The Gambia, ceasing the recognition of Yahya Jammeh as legitimate President of the Republic of the Gambia from 19th January 2017. UNSC expressed its full support to ECOWAS, committed, it said, “to ensure, by political means first, the respect of the will of the people of The Gambia as expressed in the results of 1st December elections” (UN Security Council, 2017a). This measure is the one enforced when UNSC agrees on the resolution of a

conflict, although before endorsing possible military measures, it calls for a political response.

The ability for ECOWAS to articulate its reaction was influenced by the support received by the UNSC. It is in here where we can see interdependency from one organization to another. As scholars like Hette or Van Langenhove introduced, “the strengthening of regional mechanisms should not compete with the role of the UN”, regional mechanisms shall complement the UN action. It would be artificial to understand it as a delegation of competences primarily in hands of the UN. As argued by Van Langenhove this complementation takes place in the UNSC with the 10 non-permanent seats (Wachira, 2003). Senegal played the role of introducing the ongoing efforts of ECOWAS managing the crisis and proposed UNSC to support and back their initiatives. Actually, the UN Charter and further UN Strategies, such as the report “An Agenda for Peace” in 1992 by UN Secretary General Boutros-Galhi, give priority to peaceful settlement of disputes through regional agencies and arrangements. Nevertheless, the not allowed use of force in another country cannot take enforcement without the authority of the Security Council (Wachira, 2003).

Following Boutros Galhi approach, Tavares remarks, contrary to apologist of regionalism, that ECOWAS as sub-regional organization can remediate the limitations of global-regional security cooperation – which is designed for conducting enforcement, peacekeeping operation or facilitate judicial solutions to conflicts. The role of ECOWAS in the Gambian elections and government transition 2016-2017 was to avoid the collapse of the state.

In its Policy Framework for Security Sector Reform and Governance (SSRG), ECOWAS commits to not tolerate any reform undermining peace and security in the region, giving only support to the policies respectful with political independence, national sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member States (ECOWAS, 2016a). In The Gambia’s operations, the tenet of “Respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity” was said ambiguous in the interpretation. For some agents as Jammeh it could be understood that this intervention wasn’t respectful with the territorial integrity of The Gambia, but at the same time it could be argued that this intervention was aimed to respond to a threat to security and inner objectives of the SSRG, particularly the first one concerning “the protection of the institutions and values of democratic governance, human rights and the rule of law under a human security umbrella”. Actually another objective of ECOWAS SSRG is “to strengthen States’ capacities to respond to present

and emerging threats and to deliver security and justice services to the State and its peoples” (ECOWAS, 2016a, pp. 10–11).

Brown says that the accusation of undermining the country’s sovereignty is an “untenable” debate, as The Gambia is a signatory country of all the instruments and protocols of ECOWAS competing in this situation and, when ratifying those international agreements, the State is committed internationally to the written clause and bound by them (Brown, 2017). Against the criteria of former president Jammeh, stating that the “Constitution does not allow to enter into any engagement, agreement, or treaty that denigrates the supremacy of The Gambian Constitution”, there was no previous fight between ECOWAS agreements and the national Constitution, so that international law is definitely in force.

Furthermore, the policy framework states that the executive control of the security sector is on the hands of Heads of States and Government. It states clearly again that “[t]he executive will ensure that security institutions function in full compliance with core principles of democratic governance, respect for human rights and rule of law and will hold them accountable if those principles are breached.” (ECOWAS, 2016a, p. 17). So, from the moment Adama Barrow became president of The Gambia with his oath of power, he is in charge of the security sector and can hold the security institutions accountable if breaching the principles of Human Rights respect or rule of law. In order to do so, a country can ask ECOWAS for support. Therefore, ECOWAS intervention in The Gambia was not disrespectful with the national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The dregs of ECOWAS’ efforts for democracy promotion

From Brown’s point of view (2017), the main lesson to be learnt and the key for success of ECOWAS it was the “coherent and coordinated intervention” between ECOWAS, AU, UN. “The AU and the UN not only gave spontaneous support to ECOWAS’s initiatives, but also allowed the principles of subsidiarity, complementarity and comparative advantage to take their full course” (Brown, 2017).

Brown distinguishes two keys in the operations: the coordinated support between international organizations; and the consistency of the message to Jammeh.

Regarding the coordinated support, Browns recommends to encourage the growing understanding and collaboration between ECOWAS, the AU and the UN, as it is a lesson in addressing security challenges (Brown, 2017). They showed an example of inter-regionalism, where international organizations working in different administrative levels

coordinated their actions. The success of the operation and its smoothness was possible, because all the intervenients kept the same message towards Jammeh and no contradictions were found during the process.

To Tavares, until 2011 no ECOWAS intervention was based on the greatest possible measure of regional consensus (with the possible exception of Liberia in 2003). (Tavares, 2011). The ECOWAS intervention in The Gambia has meant an exception as ECOWAS commonly agreed to take action in the situation. Further researches can be conducted on the leading role of each country in the operation. Differing from previous experiences, ECOWAS Commission had a prominent leadership, coordinating the actions of Nigeria and Senegal – and in a less extent Ghana-, the countries historically contesting the hegemon's role in ECOWAS. By this intervention, ECOWAS common institutions have strengthened their image towards ECOWAS member States and other international actors, showing as committed institutions able to act as providers of leadership and playmasters of the region, as introduced by Laursen (2010).

When a REC proves “prompt coherence, complementarity and coordination, particularly on matters that directly threaten regional peace and stability”, then we can assert that REC is useful, as it is useful for its purposes and population (Brown, 2017). Quoting Brown, the intervention in The Gambia actually “showcased the effectiveness of diplomacy backed by the threat of use of force as a last resort, and the capacity to use the force”. It meant an example of efficiency enforcing accurately its objectives and thus, it brought hope to common regional institutions to overcome collective action problems.

Even if there has been the threat of an armed conflict, the final resolution was peaceful, guaranteeing the safety and security of the former President, and letting him enjoy their privileges and properties as former President. There is another lesson to take from here: the strategy planned this ending as a way of showing the incentives of a smooth power transfer for future leaders that would attempt to keep in office. It could be understood as a sensibilization measure in a broader ECOWAS democratization strategy. As Brown stated (2017), “[m]easures to immediately pursue either Jammeh or his cronies might be counterproductive and could destabilize the fragile peace the country is currently enjoying”, therefore, long-view moves must be undertaken.

The great focus on Barrow generated a big challenge for his mandate, in which Gambian population is expecting an institutional reform and a country where Human Rights are respected. So it is ECOWAS, which would not stand backward steps in the democratization process in The Gambia. The management of the situation left in 2017

great expectations in Barrow regarding unity and reconciliation among the opposing parties, generating an inclusive government and State institutions (Brown, 2017).

In Brown's opinion, ECOWAS action is still needed to undertake some fronts, such as the Gambian Security reform or supporting the national reconciliation dialogue process after 22 years of Jammeh's rule. Actually, in a joint declaration ECOWAS, the AU and the UN commit to work with the Government of The Gambia for "national reconciliation to cement social, cultural and national cohesion" (UNOWAS et al., 2017).

In December 2017, the government of President Adama Barrow, in an effort to consolidate democracy, respecting the rule of law and human rights, established the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC) as part of a broader transitional-justice process aimed at addressing past human-rights violations and building a stable democratic future through justice.

Brown emphasizes the relevant lessons to learn from the intervention in The Gambia, where ECOWAS has implemented the agreements in the field of security and rule of law. "How ECOWAS, in its defence of democracy – and the will of the people – effectively used the instrument of mediation, supported by the threat of use of force as a last resort, in successfully facilitating a bloodless and peaceful transfer of power" (Brown, 2017)

Conclusions

ECOWAS's regional integration process takes place in the second wave of regionalism. In relation with the approaches introduced by Panafricanism, it could be found close to the maximalist approach, which enlarges the powers of common institutions. Notwithstanding, its evolution from an inter-governmental co-operation model limited to economic issues towards a generalist regional integration organization has been apparent.

ECOWAS is by no doubt a process of regional integration, as it combines the three ways to exert integration defined by Barbé: Firstly, because it has developed a legal and institutional integration, strengthened by deepening the transfer of sovereignty to common and independent decision-making institutions and providing those institutions with direct authority in national systems. Secondly, we have studied how Member States have improved their loyalty and expectations regarding ECOWAS's performance and have entrusted the organization with more mechanisms to act independently. Further researches can be conducted on the process of political identity construction. Finally, we have analyzed in depth the mechanisms whereby ECOWAS has constituted a security community, even if security is one of the areas posing greatest difficulties to integration. As stated by Barbé, the sum of these three components result in the success of ECOWAS as integration process in the current international system (Barbé, 2007, p. 262).

Following Lombaerde's recommendation, it is due to say that ECOWAS auto-conceptualizes itself as an organization pursuing integration. Despite the wording of its Revised Treaty, which only introduced ECOWAS as an economic integration organization, the practice of the organization has shown three key axes which articulate its integration process: economy, security and rule of law.

The evolution of integration was not unilinear nor took place in a constant speed, but it experienced some roundabouts, brakings and accelerations. According to the analysis of institutions, we can conclude that economic integration, as it was first conceived by ECOWAS, was not successfully developed. Since its creation in 1975 during the first wave of regionalism, until 1990, there was a slow development of ECOWAS's goals, demotivating States from the idea of building a more united organization and looked for other channels of co-operation or opting for amplifying their own interests as individual States.

The intervention in Liberia in 1990 meant a milestone in the evolution of ECOWAS. It took place in the early 1990s, when co-operation was weak inside the organization and it was rather demobilized. With the leading role of Nigeria, first the mediation team was implemented, and after the multilateral armed force ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) was deployed – not without rising controversies among ECOWAS countries, particularly in the French-speaking ones. After this intervention, the Protocol for the Establishment of a Mechanism for conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, Peace and Security was regulated, which created new mechanisms for ECOWAS to intervene to preserve peace and security in their Member States. Some mechanisms existed before, but they were still not implemented. Framed in the second wave of regionalism, cooperation in the field of security reactivated ECOWAS integration efforts. A consequence of this was the agreement on the ECOWAS Revised Treaty of 1993, which included guaranteeing security as a pre-requisite and fundamental principle in order to achieve ECOWAS's final goal: economic integration.

Although the ECOWAS revised Treaty stressed the objective of economic integration, ECOWAS went on deepening its activity in the security field, with some other regional interventions –often controversial– and institutional mechanisms. Those mechanisms strengthened the steps taken towards security integration, as well as they promoted for a and opportunities for coordination among States within the organization.

During this integration development, ECOWAS shifted its conception of security, turning it first into a more preventive approach, and, second, into the human security approach, paying more attention to the way Human Rights and rule of law were ensured in its Member States. This process resulted on rule of law and protection of Human Rights becoming anchored as another axis for integration, as the organization was actively making efforts in order to consolidate these principles throughout ECOWAS, i.e., with a conscious regionalist project. Some mechanisms and actions are taken in order to improve the quality of functioning of ECOWAS's member states, such as promoting free and fair elections through observation missions or recommendations, or praises when good practices take place. Furthermore, increasing efforts are being done in order to improve democratic governance inside ECOWAS's institutions, by, for example, engaging civil society organizations in decision-making processes or introducing the popular election of ECOWAS's Parliament. Often, this deployment towards democratic governance comes together with enlarging the competences of common institutions, by transferring the

management of these sovereign competences from the Member States. The process ends up with an integrated ECOWAS in the fields of security and rule of law.

This entails that ECOWAS has been able to generate mechanisms for integration in the security field, one of the so called “high politics” issues. The transfer of competences and sovereignty to common institutions in this political area means that ECOWAS has taken giant steps forward integration. It consolidates ECOWAS as an example of integration organization, as other regional schemas are discussing on the possibility to enlarge their integration efforts, particularly on controversial political areas such as security.

Together with this evolution, economic integration continues its course in ECOWAS. The efforts in the security and rule of law fields accelerated and reinforced the ongoing cooperation in the economy axis. Currently, ECOWAS has already met the objectives agreed inside of the African Union in order to achieve the African Economic Community by 2028.

While it seems that economic and rule of law integration are conscious ways of integration in which ECOWAS is developing a structured strategy, security integration efforts, at least at the beginning, seemed rather unconscious. The embracing of peacekeeping functions in 1990 and enlarging security integration was the consequence of a spontaneous spillover, catalyzed by the frustration and dissatisfaction of Member States with ECOWAS’s stagnation, together with the threat of regional chaos due to the domestic political instability inside the States. This spillover process continues, as theorized by Mitrany, as the integration process in security field generated cooperative relations reactivating the economic integration efforts and introducing the rule of law integration axis.

ECOWAS’s integration process through the axes of security and rule of law, and particularly the experience around the elections in The Gambia, exemplifies the two sides of the same coin regarding sovereignty: while regional integration needs a larger transfer of sovereignty from the States to common institutions to be accomplished, fostering common institutions strengthens the sovereignty of the States, as common institutions work for a better development of the State institutional system and democratic functioning. Therefore, security and rule of law as integration axes promote sovereignty not to be a zero-sum game.

The case of the ECOWAS’s interventions around the presidential elections in The Gambia in 2016 is a textbook example of the application of ECOWAS’s policy

Framework for Security Sector Reform and Governance (SSRG), which was approved by the Authority of Heads of State in the 49th summit, right before the Gambian elections. This Policy Framework captures the essence of the security and rule of law integration efforts made by ECOWAS. Through the interventions in The Gambia, ECOWAS gave example of saving from the cost of war and post-conflict reconstruction, a fact applauded internationally. ECOWAS's position was lauded due to the quick and timeliness move, as well as for its capacity averting a potential crisis and preventing an armed conflict in the region. The Community has proven a strong capacity for prompt intervention, not only with a military response, but previously with the fact-finding and observation mission or with the diplomatic mediation system established. Actually, in the case of the interventions in The Gambia, military intervention was not used but as a threat in the last mediators' negotiation.

The study of ECOWAS's operations in The Gambia has proved that the respect of rule of law, democracy and possible controversies in ECOWAS Member States are a question of extreme importance and interest for the organization.

ECOWAS is a clear example of the changing approach regarding integration introduced in the second wave of regionalism. Its integration process could be summarized as follows: a failure of the economic integration process generates a spontaneous spillover into peace-keeping security issues, which reactivates the organization integration building efforts in two fields. First, economy, being still the main objective of the organization, and second, security, a new integration axis. Security adopts a preventive approach and lately incorporates the notion of providing human security. This generates a spillover effect into rule of law and good governance promotion, which ends up with reforms and transfers of competences into common institutions. With stronger common institutions, other fields for cooperation are likely to be sought and developed. The experience shows, replying to Grant & Söderbaum , that formal institutions-led regionalism can work and generate positive results.

ECOWAS's structures are adapting to the possibilities of the region and have proven to work efficiently to achieve ECOWAS's objectives. It is useful to look at ECOWAS's regional institutions with hopeful lenses regarding the future prospects, particularly regarding security and development concerns in the region. Actually, ECOWAS institutions and functioning have proven to be much more than "avenues for diplomatic showmanship", but spaces for coordination and effective work on the solution for common challenges.

Besides that, another note-worthy issue is the hegemons' role in ECOWAS. Nigeria has played a central role in the development of security integration in ECOWAS, but also some experiences have shown leadership by other countries such as Senegal. Frequently, both countries have disputed their role in the region, representing, furthermore, the exponents of the conventionally opposed English/French-speaking blocks.

The experience on the Gambian elections could also bring light in this issue and represent another milestone in the good cooperation of both countries in the pursuit of regional goals. In these interventions there was a shared leadership between these main ECOWAS hegemons, as Senegal played his role regarding the UNSC relations and hosting the President-elect, and Nigeria chaired the mediation mission. Both played a significant role in ECOMIG deployment. But if we had to choose only one stakeholder which contributed significantly in the interventions in The Gambia, that is the ECOWAS Commission. Represented by the Chairperson at that moment, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the Commission represented an example of committed common institution providing fast action and leadership to intervene in the country. The leading role shown in this intervention empowers and legitimates the institution, not only inside ECOWAS, but abroad. Benefitting from this position further steps in integration can be taken.

Agbu argued in 2006 that West African leaders do not seem committed enough to implement their decisions in regards of conflict resolution in the region, as their responses were "country-specific", instead of regional. ECOWAS's interventions in The Gambia represent a milestone in the commitment with common agreements. The interventions around the elections in The Gambia showed an example of coordination among ECOWAS countries, which contributes to generate a trust relationship around the common institutions.

Although the proliferation of organizations in West Africa was a challenge, Member States have showed its support and commitment to ECOWAS's integration process. Experiences such as the interventions in The Gambia legitimate and bring hope to those more reluctant to integration, as it proved to be able to develop a quick and efficient coordination. As introduced by Hettne, while more integration is taking place around ECOWAS, other initiatives such as UEMOA are living a de-regionalization process. West Africa region is on its own way to define the governance structures in the current regional-based international system.

In light of the interventions around the Gambian Presidential elections, we conclude that, when studying regional organizations, we often need to enlarge our scope to other agents that may frame its activity or contribute significantly, as the current international system is characterized by interdependence. That was the case between ECOWAS, AU, ONUWAS and the UNSC managing The Gambian impasse, which played a substantial role particularly in diplomatic mediation.

In a regional-based international system, if States not defined as “big powers” want to have any agency in the international arena, they will need to articulate their discourse through a regional block. ECOWAS integration model brings us some reflections that could extrapolate to other integration building processes in the world.

Further studies could be conducted in order to illustrate how informal agents and institutions are promoting regional integration in West Africa.

We have limited our study to the interventions and action that took place during the month before and after the presidential elections. A more detailed study could be conducted regarding the following months after the election, as ECOWAS’s intervention was postponed by the ECOWAS Authority of Head of State and Government.

To conclude, some future studies on regional integration could be conducted applying the regional integration foci of ECOWAS’s experience.

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Annexes

Annex 1. Extract from the ECOWAS Revised Treaty.

Article 58 – Regional Security:

1. Member States undertake to work to safeguard and consolidate relations conducive to the maintenance of peace, stability and security within the region.
2. In pursuit of these objectives, Member States undertake to co-operate with the Community in establishing and strengthening appropriate mechanisms for the timely prevention and resolution of intra-State and inter-State conflicts, paying particular regard to the need to:
 - a. maintain periodic and regular consultations between national border administration authorities;
 - b. establish local or national joint commissions to examine any problems encountered in relations between neighbouring States;
 - c. encourage exchanges and co-operation between communities, townships and administrative regions;
 - d. organise meetings between relevant ministries on various aspects of inter State relations;
 - e. employ where appropriate, good offices, conciliation, mediation and other methods of peaceful settlement of disputes;
 - f. establish a regional peace and security observation system and peace keeping forces where appropriate;
 - g. provide, where necessary and at the request of Member States, assistance to Member States for the observation of democratic elections.
3. The detailed provisions governing political co-operation, regional peace and stability shall be defined in the relevant Protocols.

(Laursen, 2004b)

Annex 2. Extract from the fiftieth ordinary session resolution of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government

“37. The Authority calls on President Yahya Jammeh to accept the result of the polls and refrain from any action likely to compromise the transition and peaceful transfer of power to the President-elect.

38. The Head of States and Government further agree on the following:

- 1) To uphold the result of 1st December 2016 election in the Republic of The Gambia.
- 2) Guarantee the Safety and protection of the President-elect Mr Adama Barrow.
- 3) The Head of States will attend the inauguration of the President-elect Adama Barrow who must be sworn in on 19th January 2017 in conformity with the Gambian constitution.
- 4) Call on the Government and Coalition Parties to show restraint in order to preserve national unity.
- 5) To respect the will of the Gambian people as expressed by the Presidential election results of 1st December 2016;
- 6) That His Excellency, Muhammadu Buhari, President and Commander in chief of the Federal Republic of Nigeria will serve as the Mediator in the Gambia and H. E. John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana as the co-chair. The mediation process shall be conducted on the basis of terms agreed by the Authority of Heads of State and Government;
- 7) Requests the endorsement of the AU and the UN on all decisions taken on the matter of The Gambia and also requests their support for the mediation efforts of ECOWAS including the provision of technical assistance where required;
- 8) The Authority shall take all necessary measures to strictly enforce the results of the 1st December 2016 elections;

39. The Authority encourages all the stakeholders, within and outside The Gambia, to exercise restraint, respect the rule of law and ensure the peaceful transfer of power. It calls on the Gambian defence and security forces to perform their role in a nationalistic manner and protect lives and property and particularly that of the newly elected President Adama Barrow.”

(ECOWAS, 2016b, pp. 7–8)