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Research Paper



ECOWAS MANAGEMENT OF POLITICAL TRANSITIONS IN MALI, GUINEA AND BURKINA FASO:

ACHIEVING STABILITY, SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), observed that 2021 was marked by an ‘epidemic of coups’. In fact, 2021 saw more coups than the preceding five years combined¹, including successful instances in Mali, Guinea, as well as failed coup attempts and mutinies in Niger. The trend has continued into 2022, with two coups in Burkina Faso in January and September 2022, while an attempted, but unsuccessful, military putsch took place in Sao Tome on 25 November 2022. This democratic reversal portends political instability, and its attendant economic consequences for the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) are concerning considering the developmental agenda of the region².

Following these coups, the junta follows the same playbook – proceeding to set-up transitional arrangements in which they profess their desire to organise elections for a return of civilians to power. But in some countries, notably Mali where a counter coup took place in May 2021, respecting the initial schedule has been a problem. Analysts have advanced various reasons to explain the duration and non-respect for the transition agenda after coups in Africa. An argument points to “the political ambition of the military in power and to the complex political and security context of the states concerned ... (that) once in power after the coup, the putschists used various means to make the transition as long as possible³.

Following the military takeovers, the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of States and Government and the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council suspended the memberships of Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso and called, separately, for a restoration of constitutional order within the shortest possible transition period. In addition, while ECOWAS imposed strict sanctions on Mali, including closing land and air borders, the regional body lifted the sanctions after the Malian military authorities agreed on a new election timetable in June 2022 with elections to be held in February 2024⁴. However, experience has shown that the use of sanctions, unless hinged on a political and security strategies that address the underlying conditions and drivers of coups, stand little chance of leading to sustainable democracy and durable development.

The task now, and one that ECOWAS is focused on, is to provide technical support to ensure democratic transitions, particularly in Mali and Guinea, take place in a clear and acceptable timeframe. This support draws on the extensive experience of ECOWAS in managing political transitions. ECOWAS supported the political transition in Mali after the Captain Amadou Sanogo-led coup in 2012. Similarly, ECOWAS supported democratic transitions in Niger (2010), following the military’s seizure of power after President Mamadou

1. The Economist (2021) ‘As Sudan’s Government Wobbles, Coups are Making a Comeback’, 25 October, 2021.

2. Mubin Adewumi B. (2021). Political Reforms and Implications for Democracy and Instability in West Africa: The Way Forward for ECOWAS and Member States. Conflict Trends- ACCORD. Available At: Political Reforms and Implications for Democracy and Instability in West Africa: The Way Forward for ECOWAS and Member States – ACCORD (Accessed 23 April 2022).

3. Delmas Tsafack (2022). The Endless Transitions After Coups in Africa: Democracy in Turmoil, On Policy Magazine. April 27. Available at: The Endless Transitions After Coups in Africa: Democracy in Turmoil | ON POLICY Magazine (Accessed 23 March 2022).

4. See the Final Communique of the Extraordinary Summit on Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso held in Accra, Ghana on July 3rd 2022.

Tandja attempted tenure elongation, and Burkina Faso (2014) after the forced departure of Blaise Compaore.

But the circumstances prevailing during the current transitions in Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso are an added complication. While each suffers entrenched and complex governance challenges, the situation is worsened in Mali and Burkina Faso by ongoing violent extremism and associated criminal activities. The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) figures show that 610 violent incidents, mainly involving violent extremist groups, took place in Burkina Faso between 25 January and 8 April 2022, killing 567 people⁵. In Mali, both civilian fatalities and total fatalities from organised political violence recorded in the first six months of 2022 surpassed the numbers recorded in all of 2021⁶. The 2020 Peace Index estimates that the economic cost of violence as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) is 16% for Mali, 14% for Burkina Faso and 4% for Guinea⁷. The consequent humanitarian challenges are also acute. In Mali, the number of internally displaced people (IDPs) totals more than 385,000 according to the UNHCR estimates⁸, whilst Burkina Faso faces the largest forced displacement crisis in the Sahel, accounting for 64% of all displaced people in the region⁹.

With violence persisting, initial popular euphoria about the coups has subsided, making way for criticism of the new transitional authorities' inability to restore security and improve socio-economic realities¹⁰. The military as an institution is less capacitated to steer governance in a democratic setting and due to entrenched autocratic institutional tendencies, turning an economy around quickly remains a daunting task. For instance, many are now starting to doubt if the transitional authorities will have enough time, or the legitimacy, to undertake extensive reforms¹¹. Furthermore, the armed forces can tinker or exploit emergency situations to further extend their hold of power. The Transition Charter adopted by Colonel Doumbouya in Guinea makes the duration of the transition indefinite. According to Article 77, the duration will be determined by mutual agreement with the national community. Similarly, ensuring that members of the transitional government do not partake in future elections remain a daunting task for any transition.

Managing a transition towards a sustainable democracy is a fundamentally endogenous process. However, the role of international actors like ECOWAS, the AU and UN in supporting affected countries is essential in ensuring a successful process. But the present focus of these international partners on the respect for transitional timeframes at the expense of enduring efforts aimed at strengthening the state through the interlinkages of defence, development and peacebuilding is an oversight. The UN Charter, the Memorandum of Understanding between AU and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) on Peace and Security and the ECOWAS Conflict

5. Fahiraman Rodrigue K. (2022). Burkina Faso's junta under pressure to deliver on security promises. Institute for Security Studies. Available at: Burkina Faso's junta under pressure to deliver on security promises - ISS Africa (Accessed 3 May 2022).

6. Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) (2022). 10 conflicts to worry about in 2022. Available at: 10 Conflicts to Worry About in 2022: The Sahel | Mid-Year Update (acleddata.com) (Accessed 1 December 2022)


7. See Statista, (2020). Economic cost of violence as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) in Africa in 2020. Available at: • Africa: violence cost as GDP share | Statista (Accessed 3 April 2022).

8. UNHCR (2022). Refugee Data Finder - UNHCR planning figures (COMPASS) otherwise. Available at: Mali (unhcr.org) (Accessed 7 December 2022)

9. Fahiraman Rodrigue K. (2022). OP cit.

10. Fahiraman Rodrigue K. (2022). OP cit.

11. International Crisis Group (2021). Saving Momentum for Change in Mali's Transition. Report No 304. Available at: Saving Momentum for Change in Mali's Transition | Crisis Group (Accessed 5 May 2022).




Prevention Framework, as well as other relevant international instruments, recognise the imperatives of coherence, subsidiarity, comparative advantage and complementarity among the UN-AU-ECOWAS peace and security efforts. This approach is necessary for a constructive engagement with the transitional governments in laying the foundation for long-term development by promoting respect for democratic tenets, institutions and justice.

This article examines measures for strengthening democratic transitions in Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso by analysing ongoing responses at the national, regional and international levels to ensure rapid restoration of constitutional order. It begins by reviewing the experience of ECOWAS in supporting democratic transitions in the region, while stressing and recognising the interlinkages between defence, development, and peacebuilding in laying the foundation for democratisation, peace and sustainable development. The article will advance certain policy prescriptions that entail long-term investments by the international community, and regional and civil society actors in West Africa in the areas of defence, development, and peacebuilding as part of a comprehensive support towards successful democratic transition in the affected countries.

POLITICAL TRANSITION IN WEST AFRICA: CONTEXT AND DYNAMICS

West Africa is home to several countries - Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone - that successfully transitioned from war to peace. ECOWAS embraces a traditional liberal peace approach to the management of political transition, whereby elections are a necessary step to effective transitions. In addition, ECOWAS prioritises civilian-led transition guided by the ethos of inclusivity, consensus, justice, dialogue and promptness. However, there have been occasions where ECOWAS has implemented a blended method, combining the traditional liberal peace approach with military intervention. This was the case of the ECOWAS intervention to support a political transition in Mali after the Captain Amadou Sanogo-led coup in 2012.

The ECOWAS intervention in Mali in 2012 offers an instructive example of the regional body's experience of managing political transition. ECOWAS was the brainchild and driving force behind the restoration of constitutional order in Mali – from drawing up the framework agreement, to the establishment of the Dialogue and Reconciliation Commission and finalising the preliminary agreement that moved the country towards elections and national dialogue. Measures that, in turn, paved the way for the successful conduct of presidential and legislative elections. Furthermore, the ECOWAS-facilitated Transitional Roadmap and the ECOWAS Concept of Operations (CONOPS) served as the



basis for the strategic and operational frameworks for the international military interventions in Mali in 2012. Notwithstanding these efforts, the request for authorisation of the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) and provision of voluntary and UN-funded logistics support packages to AFISMA, including equipment and services for an initial period of one year, was not heeded by the UNSC. One analyst claims that the “UN and some Western governments declined to back and finance the AU and ECOWAS intervention proposals due to concerns about planning and a keenness for non-military options”¹². However, others argue that the UN refusal to support ECOWAS and its subsequent takeover mission through the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) demonstrated a lack of acknowledgement of ongoing regional counterterrorism efforts in Mali. In fact, the US Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Susan Rice, pointedly queried ECOWAS for referring the matter to the UN when the region had initially confronted similar challenges in the Mano River Basin on its own¹³.

REVIEWING EXTERNAL RESPONSES TO POLITICAL TRANSITIONS IN MALI, GUINEA AND BURKINA FASO

The resurgence of coup d'états in West Africa has become a core focus for several actors – ECOWAS, AU and UN - who regard it as a new front of democratic backsliding and a threat to peace and security. In particular, ECOWAS diplomatic engagements with transitional authorities were critical in reaching some degree of compromise with national stakeholders that helped facilitate frameworks to move toward democratic transitions in Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mali. At the time of writing this article, ECOWAS has held seven extraordinary summits and deployed several mediation, technical and follow-up missions to the three countries. But some analysts have argued that this extensive dialogue has not achieved the desired outcomes. They contend that in times of crisis, too many extraordinary summits renders them redundant and weakens compliance with decisions taken¹⁴. Critics argue instead that a comprehensive democratic transitions framework, with a monitoring mechanism and follow-up engagement, is preferable to reoccurring summits.

Mali


ECOWAS support to engender democratic transition in Mali thus far has been driven on three fronts: preventive diplomacy, technical support and political dialogue. ECOWAS appointed former president of Nigeria, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan as a mediator to Mali on 14 July 2020. Jonathan initially engaged with protesters under the aegis of the Movement of 5 June-Rally of Patriotic Forces (M5-RFP)¹⁵ when they insisted on the departure of the late President Ibrahim

12. Nickels, B.P. (2013). 'Analysing the Crisis in the Sahel', Geneva Centre for Security Policy Paper 2013/3. Available at: JIHADISM IN WEST AFRICA (jstor.org) (Accessed 25 April 2022).

13. ECOWAS Commission. (2013). The Mali After-Action Review-ECOWAS Initiatives and Responses To the Multidimensional Crises in Mali: Report Of the INTERNAL DEBRIEFING EXERCISE. Lagos, 28-30 November. ECOWAS Commission.

14. ECOWAS Commission (2013). OP cit.

15. The M5-RFP connotes the Movement of 5 June-Rally of Patriotic Forces. It is coalition of religious leaders, opposition figures and civil society led by the influential imam Mahmoud Dicko,



Boubacar Keita (IBK) in 2020. However, the inability of the mediation to strike a compromise between the then IBK-government and the M5-RFP led to the coup d'état of 18 August 2020. Following the military takeover, ECOWAS mediation efforts supported agreement on an 18-month transitional government, with a civilian prime minister and a commitment to restore democracy. However, a coup within a coup occurred in May 2021, which impacted on this timeframe. The new transitional authority presented a timetable to hold elections within a period of between six months to five years, which ECOWAS deemed 'unacceptable'¹⁶. The regional body immediately imposed economic and financial sanctions on Mali, including closure of land and air borders¹⁷.

Whilst the AU Peace and Security Council, France, the US, and the European Union (EU) supported and endorsed ECOWAS' decision, China and Russia blocked the adoption of ECOWAS's decision at the UN Security Council. The EU's response to the political development in Mali has been prominent. It imposed targeted sanctions on five individuals believed to be obstructing and undermining Mali's transition, including former Prime Minister Choguel Kokalla Maïga. Amid deteriorating relations with the Malian authorities and the alleged deployment in December 2021 of personnel from the Wagner Group, a Russian private security company, France, other European countries and Canada announced the exit of their forces from Operation Barkhane and Task Force Takuba in Mali creating a potential security vacuum in the Sahel at large.

But in the region, support for Mali's military regime continues to exist. Neighboring Guinea's transitional authority recused itself from complying with ECOWAS sanctions on Mali and declared that the air, land, and sea borders would remain open in accordance with its pan-Africanist vision. Similarly, Mauritania, an erstwhile member of ECOWAS, signed a new trade agreement with Mali on 14 February 2022. This has undermined the effectiveness of the ECOWAS sanctions in Mali. At the same time the strong commitment of external actors to salvage the Malian situation is fraught with uncertainties as global political, security, environmental and post-Covid-19 recovery situations occupy centre stage in international diplomacy.

Burkina Faso

Since 2015, Burkina Faso has been caught up in a spiral of violence attributed to armed jihadist movements affiliated with Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State group, which has left more than 2,000 dead and 1.8 million displaced¹⁸. While the Damiba-led military authority justified the 24 January 2022 coup d'état by citing the inability

which constituted a protest movement in the wake of a 5 June mass rally in Bamako, calling for civil disobedience to force late Ibrahim Boubakar Keita (IBK)'s resignation.

16. See the Final Communiqué of the ECOWAS Authority at the Extraordinary Summit held on 9 January 2022

17. The ECOWAS Authority at the Extraordinary Summit held on 9th January 2022 imposed a tougher sanctions on Mali, including: Recall for consultations by ECOWAS Member States of their Ambassadors accredited to Mali; Closure of land and air borders between ECOWAS countries and Mali; Suspension of all commercial and financial transactions between ECOWAS Member States and Mali, with the exception of food products, pharmaceutical products, medical supplies and equipment, including materials for the control of COVID-19, petroleum products and electricity; Freeze of assets of the Republic of Mali in ECOWAS Central Banks; Freeze of assets of the Malian State and the State Enterprises and Parastatals in Commercial Banks; Suspension of Mali from all financial assistance and transactions with all financial institutions, particularly, EBID and BOAD.

18. Africanews (2022). Humanitarian and security situation "difficult" in Burkina Faso- ECOWAS. Online 20th May. Available at: [Humanitarian and security situation "difficult" in Burkina Faso- ECOWAS | Africanews](#) (Accessed 5 June 2022).



of former president Roch Marc Christian Kaboré's government to provide security in Burkina Faso, three months after the putsch, however, the military had not been able to reverse the growing insecurity¹⁹. The continually declining security and humanitarian situations were used as pretext by Captain Ibrahim Traore to stage a counter coup on 30 September 2022.

ECOWAS has been providing support to ensure democratic transition in Burkina Faso²⁰. In order to facilitate dialogue among all stakeholders, it appointed Mahamadou Issoufou, former president of the Republic of Niger, as ECOWAS Mediator for Burkina Faso in July 2022. Issoufou has been engaging with stakeholders with the aim of striking a deal between ECOWAS and transitional authorities that can support a successful democratic transition in Burkina Faso. ECOWAS, in conjunction with AU and United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), deployed several technical missions to facilitate dialogue with the transitional authorities and to assess the progress made in the process of restoring constitutional order. As a result deposed president Roch Marc Christian Kaboré has gained partial freedom from detention and the ECOWAS Commission has been able to provide some humanitarian and food materials to IDPs.

Guinea

Following a March 2020 constitutional referendum that allowed Alpha Condé to run for a third term in the October 2020 presidential election – polls that were marred by violence – a coup was staged, and Condé arrested in 2021²¹. In response, ECOWAS and the AU suspended Guinea's membership of its activities and decision-making bodies. Furthermore, ECOWAS imposed targeted sanctions, including travel bans and asset freezes, on the coup leaders and their families²².

While ECOWAS strongly rejected the proposed 36-month transitional timeframe, the AU announced in February 2022 that, through the established Joint Monitoring Mechanism, it would ensure the provision of requisite technical support to the National Transition Council, especially in areas regarding elections support, social cohesion and constitutionalism, which are critical for the establishment of a sustainable post-transition order²³. Working with ECOWAS, the AU has supported agreement on an acceptable transition timetable. Under the aegis of ECOWAS Mediator to Guinea, Yayi Boni, a two-year transitional timetable was brokered on 24 October 2022. ECOWAS negotiations with the transitional authority also resulted in the release of Conde in November 2021.

19. Fahiraman Rodrigue K. (2022). Op cit.

20. ECOWAS Commission (2022). ECOWAS Launches Support Program for Education in Emergencies, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. Press Release. Available at: ECOWAS Launches Support Program for Education in Emergencies Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso 2nd to 4th November, 2022 | Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (Accessed 10 June 2022.)

21. Mubin Adewumi B. 2021. Op cit

22. See Final Communiqué Extraordinary Summit of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government on the political situation in Guinea, held on 3 February 2022.

23. See Final Communiqué of the 1064th meeting of the African Union Peace and Security Council on the update on the situation in Guinea, 10 February 2022

MANAGING DEMOCRATIC TRANSITIONS: COMBINING DEFENCE, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACEBUILDING

As political transitions remain one of the main flashpoints for democratic reversals, relapses of conflict, and violence across the region, transitions in Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso need to be effectively managed and supported as the circumstances prevailing in these countries are complex and potentially debilitating. This necessitates a response to transition settings, which combines the predominance and sometimes necessary means of military interventions, alongside softer measures linked to peacebuilding and development. Experience has shown that frameworks, tools, as well as investments that focus on the individual pillars of defence, development or peacebuilding in silos are not sufficient in addressing the growing human security problems in the affected countries. A holistic approach, which aims at combining each pillar in an integrative manner so as to take advantage of synergies and avoid challenges is needed.

Defence

Threats emanating from the activities of various terrorist groups in Mali, Nigeria and Burkina Faso undermine the West African regional development agenda, threatening the security of international trade, and above all, endangering regional and international security. Two of the three ECOWAS member states undergoing political transition continue to suffer from terrorist attacks. Despite the deployment of Operation “Malico” and Operation “Kélétigui” by the Malian transitional government, the security situation in the country continues to deteriorate. Compounding this security concerns have been amplified by withdrawal of the 5,100 troops that are part of Operation Barkhane and the EU Takuba Task Force. Furthermore, the withdrawal of Mali from G5 Sahel portends a threat to the regional counter-terrorism collective security regimen.

This prevailing situation obligates ECOWAS to demonstrate its strong political will and commitment to the founding ideals of collective self-help, security, and regional and international peace and security. Following the UNSC’s demand for robust transnational and regional counter- terrorism measures²⁴, ECOWAS has increasingly looked to act collectively. Drawing lessons from previous ECOWAS’ interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone²⁵, discussions about the deployment of the ECOWAS Standby Force for counterterrorism operations are ongoing. But they will have to meet some minimum requirements to engender a successful outcome.

First and foremost is the understanding that counterterrorism operations are complex, long term and capital intensive, necessitating significant resources. To achieve this ECOWAS member states have to translate their expressed commitment to eradicate terrorism from the region into concrete efforts towards mobilising adequate resources. The decision to establish a Counterterrorism Fund can help in this regard. Indeed, the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government arrived at a decision at an Extraordinary Summit of on Terrorism, held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso on 14 September

24. Tar, U. A. (2019) Architecture of Regional Security Complex in the Lake Chad Basin. Paper Delivered at the Workshop on Security Force Assistance, jointly hosted by the Kofi Anan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) and the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) held at Best Western Hotel Accra, on 3-5 September, 2019.

25. Musah, Abdel-Fatau (2009) West Africa: Governance and Security in a Changing Region. IPI Africa Program Working Paper Series, p. 4.

2019, to commit USD2.3 billion for counterterrorism, with USD1 billion to be raised by member state contributions²⁶. However, member states' efforts have, so far, fallen way short. Nigeria and Ghana have reportedly disbursed, USD80 million and USD20 million respectively, to support national counterterrorism operations, but only remitted USD20 million and USD5 million to the regional fund. Considering that terrorism has increasingly become a menace to all 15 ECOWAS member states, the mobilisation of these fund is urgently required both from states, but also from international partners, who are to co-fund up to 55% of the total.

Second, the success of ECOWAS counterterrorism operations is dependent on member states' commitment, readiness and capacity to deploy troops. Analysts have criticised failures to fulfil pledges made. However, it should be recalled that during the 2012 crisis in Mali, despite logistical, financial, and operational challenges, ECOWAS was able to mobilise and deploy over 4,000 troops in-theater in a record time of just three months²⁷. Nonetheless ECOWAS leadership could do more to facilitate better coordination of the political and diplomatic efforts of collective counterterrorism frameworks and interventions, including the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), G5 Sahel and Accra Initiative²⁸.

Third, despite a multiplicity of strategies by national governments and partners, violence and insecurity linked to terrorism in the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin regions persist and, in some cases, has worsened²⁹. Deploying the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF) for counterterrorism operations should be hinged on a functional counterterrorism strategy, which combines both soft and hard approaches. In light of this, ECOWAS should leverage on the recently adopted ECOWAS Counterterrorism Strategy and its Plan of Actions to complement current initiatives aimed at combatting terrorism in Mali and Burkina Faso.

Fourth, partnership and collaboration among ECOWAS, AU and the UNSC, as well as and the 'core Western countries'³⁰, are critical for the success of ECOWAS counterterrorism operations in Mali and Burkina Faso. The partnership needs to be multifaceted and consider the numerous initiatives and stakeholders required for democratic transition. Any ECOWAS deployment of a military operations in Mali will also require the backing of the AU Peace and Security Council and the authorisation of the UNSC. The UN, through MINUSMA, has already made a significant investment in fostering stability, peace and security in Mali. Therefore, there should be a harmonisation of views and interest, among all key actors, to forge consensus and support for counterterrorism operations in Mali and Burkina Faso. To attain this, ECOWAS needs to demonstrate effective diplomatic capacity to rally international support around its collective security mission to the affected countries. To do this ECOWAS could facilitate a standing committee or regional contact group to forge better understandings and

26. See Final Communiqué Extraordinary Summit of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government on Terrorism, held on 14 September 2019.

27. ECOWAS Commission (2013). Op cit

28. The Accra Initiative is a cooperative and collaborative security mechanism formed by Benin, Togo, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso to prevent spill-over of terrorism from the Sahel and to address transnational organised crime and violent extremism in member countries' border areas.

29. Sampson Kwarkye. (2021). Slow progress for West Africa's latest counter-terrorism plan. Institute for Security Studies. Available at: Slow progress for West Africa's latest counter-terrorism plan - ISS Africa

30. The Core Western Countries, include the United States of America, France, England, Germany etc

coordination of international support, as well as to monitor and follow-up on implementation of decisions, to ensure coherence and consistency.

Development

Mali, Burkina Faso, and to a lesser extent Guinea, face severe security problems linked to extreme poverty, economic fragility and inflation-issues that are being compounded by climate-security risks³¹. Past experience has shown that the concept of development is enriched when they include governance, accountability and social inclusion. In countries affected by coups there is a direct link between degradation of governance, the rule of law and human rights, and subsequent military takeover. The ongoing transitions present opportunities, at regional and national levels, for the adoption of a developmental model that is relevant, appropriate and responsive to address the remote causes and triggers of coup d'états.

At the national level, development priorities should be driven by local realities, needs, aspirations and priorities. Efforts by transitional authorities to renew the social contract between states and their populations, especially the youth, women and other marginalised groups should be prioritised. These include the provision of basic social infrastructure and implementation of development programmes. From a regional perspective there is also an opportunity to try and align this with ECOWAS' Vision 2050, AU Vision 2063 and the Global Agenda for Development (2030 Agenda), with some adapting to recognise the realities in Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso as well as other fragile west African countries. For example, development agendas for Mali and Burkina Faso should pay particular attention to creating opportunities that harness the demographic dividends of the youth through economic and financial inclusion, creativity and innovation enterprises, and entertainment and sport particularly in rural and borderland areas.


Peacebuilding

The concept of peacebuilding is to complement the other three important processes of conflict management: preventive diplomacy, peace-making, and peacekeeping³². The core objectives of peacebuilding have since been elaborated to include: 'support to political processes, support to the provision of basic social, health, and educational health services, including the return and reintegration of IDPs and victims of war; support to restoring core government functions, and support to economic revitalisation, as well as rehabilitation of basic infrastructure'³³. There is need for ECOWAS in collaboration with the AU, UN as well other development partners to enhance peacebuilding initiatives in Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso. Such initiatives should contribute to enhancing broad participation in the transition, promoting institutional reforms, providing technical assistance to the conduct of credible election, promoting social justice, rule of law, social cohesion, humanitarian support,

31. World Bank, Op cit

32. Boutros-Ghali, B. (1992). 'An Agenda for Peace, Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peacekeeping', Report of the Secretary-General. Available at: http://www.unrol.org/files/A_47_277.pdf (Accessed 8 June 2022.)

33. United Nations (2009). 'Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding in the Immediate Aftermath of Conflict'. Available at: http://www.unrol.org/files/pbf_090611_sg.pdf . (Accessed 13 May 2022.)



mediation and dialogue. In implementing these initiatives, development actors need to map-out their areas of comparative advantages, while promoting complementarity and subsidiarity in their engagement.

A successful peacebuilding process requires a wider set of actors — including, but not limited to, ‘representatives of women, young people, victims and marginalized communities; community and religious leaders; civil society actors; and refugees and internally displaced persons — to participate in public decision-making on all aspects of post-conflict governance and recovery’³⁴. The West African Network for Peacebuilding has implemented a gender-sensitive project for inclusive governance and peaceful transitions to build this inclusive approach to governance reforms in Mali and Burkina Faso³⁵. However, in general civil society groups need to strengthen their collaboration with ECOWAS, AU and the UN to deepen the implementation of peacebuilding programmes that can impact upon resilience, institutional reform, empowerment and cohesion of marginalised communities across West Africa, and in Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso in particular.


CONCLUSION

ECOWAS is confronted with challenges in negotiating democratic transition in Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso. Although it does not have a comprehensive regional framework on post-conflict and post-authoritarian reconstruction framework to guide its actions towards post-conflict stability and/or democracy building, it must act in these areas given that Burkina Faso and Mali, in particular, are threatened by an array of issues ranging from political misgovernance, underdevelopment and terrorism. ECOWAS can take a leadership role, in line with established principles of subsidiarity, comparative advantage and complementarity, in the coordination of efforts and lead collaborations with foreign actors and civil society groups to address the impending challenge facing these political transitions.

To this end, policy directions by ECOWAS should be broad based in a manner that allows the Authority of Heads of State and Government to expand the ESF’s mandate to undertake counterterrorism operations, while at the same time enabling the ECOWAS Commission to design and implement, in partnership with civil society groups where it is possible for them to operate, development and peacebuilding programmes to enhance democratic transition in Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso.

34. United Nations (2012). ‘Peacebuilding in the Aftermath of Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General’. Available at: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol%A/67/499 (Accessed 3 May 2022.)

35. WANEP. (2021). UNDP, WANEP and ECOWAS launch a gender-sensitive project for inclusive governance and peaceful transitions. Available at: [UNDP, WANEP and ECOWAS launch a gender-sensitive project for inclusive governance and peaceful transitions – West Africa Network for Peacebuilding \(WANEP\)](#)



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