CODESRIA Bulletin

Numéro / Number 5, 2021

ISSN 0850 - 8712

Numéro spécial

Où en est l'intégration monétaire en Afrique de l'Ouest ?

Les dilemmes du projet d'euro tropical

Avec

Ndongo Samba Sylla

Dans ce numéro / In this issue

Éditorial
Godwin R. Murunga & Ibrahim O. Ogachi 1

Editorial
Godwin R. Murunga & Ibrahim O. Ogachi 4

1. *L'Afrique a-t-elle besoin d'un euro tropical ?*
Ndongo Samba Sylla 7

SHAHIDA AHMED KHALIL ELBAZ (1938–2021)
À la mémoire d'une indéfectible combattante de la justice, de l'égalité et de la liberté 14

2. *The Uncertain Future of the ECOWAS Common Currency*
Ali Zafar 15

3. *ECO: the Future Currency of Cape Verde?*
Odair Barros-Varela 21

SHAHIDA AHMED KHALIL ELBAZ (1938–2021)
Saluting a Life of Unfinching Commitment to Justice, Equality and Freedom 26

4. *La fonction de Prêteur en Dernier Ressort (PDR) : une assurance de stabilité macroéconomique dans un arrangement monétaire de fixité durable*
Souleymane Ndao 27

5. *Revisiting African Monetary Integration through the Work of Joseph Pouemi*
Francisco Perez 31

6. *Samir Amin : « Les Africains veulent répéter l'erreur commise par l'Europe en calquant leurs projets de monnaie unique sur l'euro »*
Interview par Ndongo Samba Sylla 37

شهيدة أحمد خليل الباز (1938–2021)
في ذكرى مناضلة لا يتزعزع من أجل العدالة والمساواة والحرية 46

Special Issue

Whither Monetary Integration in West Africa? Dilemmas of the Quest for a Tropical Euro

With

Ndongo Samba Sylla

Editorial

This issue of the *Bulletin* focuses on the West African region, and specifically on ongoing attempts by the political leadership of the countries of the region to establish a common currency. The region presents both political and economic complexity, punctuated by cycles of turbulence manifesting, for example, in the form of extended periods of terror, inter- and intra-regional conflicts and, more recently, periodic public health challenges in the form of the Ebola epidemic and now the coronavirus pandemic. Some of this turbulence has historical origins, especially in the interrupted processes

This Bulletin is distributed free to all social research institutes and faculties in Africa and beyond to encourage research co-operation among African scholars. Interested individuals and institutions may also subscribe to CODESRIA mailing list to receive the Bulletin promptly upon release. Contributions on theoretical matters and reports on conferences and seminars are also welcome.

of state-building and subsequent legacies of colonial rule, that have either combined with or accentuated extreme ecological realities that periodically boil over to worsen matters. The region is indeed subject to climatic extremities, and emergencies resulting from this have affected not just everyday livelihoods but have also undermined key productive sectors in region.

But West Africa is also a place of diversity, coloured by historic civilisations that are the outcome of extended movements of peoples that feed rich and convivial cultures in the region. This, in part, explains the region's historic heritage that includes rich cultures of scholarship, music, art and poetry. The complex movements that characterise the region have melded the peoples of West Africa into a ready-made zone of integration with processes of territorialisation and de-territorialisation, as described elsewhere by Souleymane Bachir Diagne, being seen and understood as essential to its traditions. But cycles of turbulence continue to erode state and society capacities for resilience and open fissures to non-state actors to compete with the state both in the provision of some semblance of security, but also in the monopoly of violence.

The fifteen countries in the region constitute the grouping of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) that has over the decades sought monetary union and a common currency. But the political complexity of the region, linked to its colonial past, has presented countervailing headwinds to this objective over the years. Eight of the countries that constitute ECOWAS are French speaking; five are English speaking, and two Portuguese speaking. This linguistic divide has, over the years, been replicated in monetary and fiscal policies. While ECOWAS continues to serve as both a political and economic union for the fifteen countries, the Francophone countries have also formed the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU). Besides being referred to as the CFA zone countries, which signals the influence that France has on the monetary and fiscal policies of these eight countries, they exist within a broader ECOWAS grouping that has monetary integration ambitions.

The articles in this *Bulletin* have taken account of this political and economic complexity as a lens to engage with the issue of monetary integration. While the desire for a single currency was mooted since 1975 within the ECOWAS arrangement, the current dimension of this desire is defined by the politics of the eco, the proposed common currency for all fifteen countries that constitute ECOWAS, which has been in design since 2003. But the political complexity of the region, linked to its colonial past, continues to present challenges, some actively provoked to neuter ambition for the eco. While monetary integration was conceived as a strategy to have the fifteen countries exercise a greater degree of monetary and fiscal sovereignty, legitimate fears abound that external influence is driving the design, value and pace of adoption. Ndongo Sylla's article in this issue delves into these fears, questioning if the region needs a tropicalised version of the euro?

The authors of the articles in this issue do acknowledge that the challenges experienced around the implementation of the eco as a West African currency point to a persisting colonial legacy that places France at the centre of the process. France continues to exercise overwhelming (in)direct command over economic and political policy of its former colonies. Countries such as Mali and Guinea that resisted France's manoeuvres have seen attempts to cripple their economies, coercing the rest of the Francophone countries to submission to and compliance with France's wishes. France's stranglehold on its former colonies is most evident in how it exercises military power over the Sahel, a region that it defines as including only the five countries of Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad. These countries are rich in minerals and at the centre of a security complex that is at once real but also imagined into existence to legitimate unwarranted incursions into the internal affairs of the region.

In fact, the Sahel is a broader geographical region that approximates all or part of twelve countries from the Atlantic coast to the Red Sea. It includes countries such as Senegal, Mauritania, the Gambia, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti. Ghana aligns to this proximity and would enable an alternative regional axis that would form the basis for a new monetary union. But as the articles in this issue of the *Bulletin* show, the journey to real monetary integration is fraught with dangers that are the product of external manipulation of internal diversities. The story of the CFA franc as the currency of French-speaking West African countries is replete with neo-colonial exploitation, that has expressed itself primarily through pegging the currency to the French monetary system. In turn, France's continued manipulation and exploitation of the countries of the CFA zone are facilitated partly by the inability of the continent to break loose from the colonial yoke that left Francophone West African countries tied to France. The motivation by France to control the design, evolution and adoption of the eco is tied to this desire for continued control and manipulation, and to expand its sphere of exploitation to all ECOWAS countries. The manifestation of this expansion is seen in the manner in which French business interests litter the region and have more recently spread beyond this region.

Any attempts by the countries of the CFA zone to break loose from France's yoke have been frustrated by a combination of strategies including manipulation of one state against the other and revamped attempts to resuscitate debunked intellectual and policy proposals that have been used previously to purchase a new lease of life for an obsolete colonialism. In particular, the move to hijack the eco under the compliance of a few countries is designed to defeat the idea of a West African single currency by engineering a break-up of ECOWAS to allow France new control over the eco. In many ways therefore, Ndongo Sylla's idea of a tropicalised euro in the name of the eco is an apt description of the moves we are observing. Ali Zafar and Odair Barros-Varela discuss the complex task of forging a common currency for countries that have different colonial traditions ranging from Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone. Politics drives monetary and fiscal policies and the fact that, even in politics, each of the countries continue to reflect vestiges of their colonial past limits possibilities of easy convergence around one monetary unit. For countries such as Mauritania and Guinea that had successfully opted out of the CFA zone, getting them into a French-driven eco zone will seem like capitulating to a cause they had won. The internal weaknesses of the ECOWAS countries, stemming from an aborted state formation project, continue to expose them to external manipulation and persistent internal strife and insecurity, economic deprivation and a false recourse to religion.

Within the context of radicalisation, politicised forms of religion have been mobilised to constitute groups that have, in the name of securing the livelihoods of people, radicalised them into militia responsible for intense violence, conflict and war in the region. In this sense, religion is politicised to provide succour, but it is relief that is short-term and unfulfilling to the long-term expectations of people in the region with the gendered dynamics of this brutal turbulence remaining by far the biggest concern. A return to the idea of a functional state is therefore one we cannot avoid, but the continuous failures of the state in West Africa renders this a vicious cycle difficult to break out from.

The re-emergence of military coups to sort out internal political dysfunctions and the scaled-up re-militarisation of the region as the solution proffered by external actors intent on controlling the economic destiny of the region make for a difficult context for dreaming of monetary union. Time has been lost since the idea of a common currency for the region was floated, about forty-five years ago. Over these decades, ideological commitments have weakened with the change of political leadership and vision. New interests have come into play and old ones re-emerged more viciously especially with the adoption of the euro, Brexit and the rise of China and its interests in Africa. Determination to ensure that the countries of the region do not forge a common force in matters of monetary and fiscal policy for ease of exploitation has triggered the kind of manipulation and uncertainty that the eco is confronting. For how much legitimacy would a monetary integration process have if it is secured by countries whose leadership assumed power by breaking established protocols of assumption to positions of leadership?

Godwin R. Murunga
Executive Secretary, CODESRIA

&

Ibrahim O. Ogachi
Acting Head Publications, CODESRIA