

ECOWAS Intervention In The 2020 Mali Political Crises And Political Stability In West Africa

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Abstract

Since its formation in 1975, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has been at the center of ensuring political stability in the West African sub region. However, there are challenges which often impede its successful intervention and ability to maintain stability in the West African sub-region. This paper interrogates ECOWAS intervention in the political crises that engulfed Mali in 2020. It argues that ECOWAS intervention in Mali was reactionary and undermine decades of State failure and weak political institutions in Mali. This paper argues led to the resistance and rejection of ECOWAS Ministerial and Mediation mission and the subsequent support for the military junta. The paper uses the theory of neoliberal institutionalism to show how instability, institutional weakness, noncompliance, personal interests and bias among member states to the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance limits ECOWAS capacity to take necessary steps in identifying the building blocks of instability in the sub-region. The method of data collection combines both primary and secondary.

Keywords: ECOWAS, Coup Detat, Democracy, Mali, Political Crises

Introduction

Post-cold war politics, the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa and the 9/11 attack shifted the attention of Western powers from Africa to the Middle East. This shift of Western engagement in global politics and the increasing political violence, ethnic conflict, secessionist

agitations, human rights violations, terrorism and insurgency in the post-cold war world retarded the political stability of most African States (Iheme 2006; 252). This event gave room for regional and sub-regional organizations hitherto preoccupied with the 'economics of development', to step up as rallying points for political transformation, stability, and democracy in Africa. Against this background, the ECOWAS was forced to widen the scope of its operations and engagements to accommodate political, security and other issues of sub-regional concern.

The creation of ECOMOG as a sub-regional military instrument, to intervene in the Liberia crisis (1989-1990) was the first initiative by ECOWAS to demonstrate its expanded role in the enforcement of political stability and democracy in the West African region (Abogaye 2004: 163). Since the Liberian crises, ECOWAS has continued to formulate protocols and establish specialised agencies to confront and address emerging political and social problems in the sub-region. In 1999, it adopted the protocol on the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and security which was supplemented by the Protocol on Democracy and Good governance in 2001. These protocols positioned the organization to act as an agent of sub-regional stability and provided the organization with a legal framework for intervention in politically unstable member states. ECOWAS intervention mechanisms encompass peacekeeping and peace-support operation, mediation and negotiation, economic sanctions, and land/border closure.

Although, these measures reinforce a commitment to sustainable peace, 'they are divorced from the concrete roots' of instability in the sub-region and therefore problematize the implementation of its protocol on Good Governance and Democracy. This paper examines ECOWAS intervention in the political crises that engulfed Mali in 2020. It argues that its intervention was reactionary and undermined years of State failure in Mali. This, the paper argues led to the resistance and rejection of the ECOWAS Ministerial and Mediation mission and the subsequent support for the military junta. The paper also notes that instability, institutional weakness, noncompliance, personal interests, and bias among member states to the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, etc. limits ECOWAS capacity to take necessary steps in identifying the building blocks of instability in order, to address specific cases in sub-regional political stability. Intervention is often prioritized where conflict has escalated to violence and where the threat of contagion is inevitable. In the case of Mali, ECOWAS intervention was initiated after years of political dysfunction, denial, corruption, insurgency, human rights violations, and agitation for constitutional reforms culminated into a protracted political crisis and a military coup in 2012 and 2020 (Tejpar & Albuquerque 2016: 7). The attempt by ECOWAS to reinstate the Ibrahim Boubacar Keita (IBK) government against the wish of the people posed a significant challenge to the intervention and questioned the altruistic motives behind the intervention.

Part one of the paper provides a theoretical framework for explaining ECOWAS intervention in sub-regional political instability, part two gives a historical overview of the political crisis in Mali up to the 2020 coup, while the final part examines the dynamics of ECOWAS intervention in the crises in Mali, presents recommendations and conclusion.

Theoretical Framework: Neoliberal Institutionalism

Institutions define the rules of engagement in the international system by ‘discouraging, constraining, or encouraging given behavioural patterns. Institutionalism is a theory that examines the role and impacts of institutions on States and their actions (Keohane 2011: 158). The ontological claim of neoliberal institutionalism as a brand of institutionalism is that international institutions are created to serve the collective interests of States. The theory argues that coordinating the self-interest of sovereign States in international relations is inherently problematic and difficult, therefore States chose to create international institutions to enhance coordination and cooperation (Stein 2008: 201). It further stipulates that the effectiveness of an institution is dependent on the nature or design of the institution concerning its stipulations on membership, the scope of issues covered, centralization of tasks, rules for control of the institution, and the flexibility of arrangements in dealing with new unanticipated circumstances (Stein 2008: 201). However, a State’s acceptance and compliance to the stipulations of a particular international institution depends on certain institutional behaviours relating to its flexibility in information dissemination, level playing ground, member state's commitment to comply with institutional protocols, and the incentives of obeying institutional agreement (Keohane 2001: 158).

In explaining the twist of events that followed the August 2020 coup in Mali, this paper has used the theory of neoliberal institutionalism to show that the pattern of ‘cooperation and discord’ in ECOWAS intervention can be understood in the context of the inherent manner and frailties of the organization definition and interpretation of State action. To begin, it is imperative to provide a historical background to the Mali crises and the dynamics of ECOWAS intervention. The fact that ECOWAS has not been firm in implementing its resolutions and sanctions on some member states explains the defiance of the junta in Mali to abide by ECOWAS resolutions over the Malian crises. It also explains why Malians welcomed and celebrated the coup. The Malian case also raises an important question over the benign intentions of ECOWAS in the promotion of democracy and political stability.

Geopolitical Background of Mali

Mali is located in the Northern part of the West African sub-region. The country shares boundaries with Algeria in the northeast, the Niger Republic to the east, Burkina Faso in the southeast, Cote d’Ivoire to the south, Guinea to the southwest, Senegal to the west and Mauritania to the northwest (Imperato 2020: 124). Although a multiethnic nation, three ethnic groups dominate the political landscape of Mali. The Bambara ethnic group who ‘live along the upper Niger River’ constitute 36 per cent of the total population; they are followed by the Fulani (14 per cent) and the Sarakole (10 per cent). Other minority ethnic groups include the Tuareg, the Senufo, the Malinke, the Dogon, Songhai, and a host of other migrant populations who have come to settle in Mali as a result of political asylum and refugee crises in neighbouring countries (Imperato, Clark & Kathleen 2021). This ethnic configuration and racial differences was a rallying point for political mobilization during French colonial rule in Mali and has remained valid in the power contestation and politics of post-colonial Mali. The interplay of ethnic politics typical of ‘deeply divided societies’ as would be seen later in this paper is fundamental in understanding the nature of the conflict in Mali (Smith 2014: 22). Mali

is largely an agrarian economy but heavily dependent on gold mining as its major source of foreign exchange and reserves. (Imperato, Clark & Kathleen 2021)

The end of the Second World War saw increased nationalist agitation for independence in European held colonies. However, in the French Sudanese colony, the agitation gave rise to more problems. While some ethnic groups like the Bambara, Songhai and the Soninke were pitching tent with the colonial administration to enable a smooth transition to an independent Mali, anti-colonial sentiments among the suppressed groups gave rise to separatist agitation and insurgencies. The kel Tamasheq and the Moors for instance supported the establishment of a pro-Islamic State as opposed to an independent Mali (Smith 2014: 23). Although the French suppressed ethnic separatist agitation, ethnic and religious sentiments still played into political party formation as the more dominant groups in the south formed a coalition against the minority and more segregated ethnic groups in the north. In 1946, the first political party, the Parti Progressive du Soudan (PSP), emerged with strong support from the French colonial government (Smith 2014: 24). Other political parties formed in the build-up to political independence included the Parti Communistes, the International Socialiste and the Union Soudanais (US), among others. France recognized the independence of Mali on 22 September, 1960, with Modibo Keita the leader of the Union Soudanaise- Rassemblement Democratique Africaine (US-RDA) as its first President (Smith 2014; 25).

Political developments in post-colonial Mali were no different from the colonial trajectories of ethnic segregation and isolationism. Instead of calling for national integration, post-colonial leaders of Mali sort to build a nation based on majority nationalism. The name Mali adopted from the defunct Mali Empire (Ki-Zerbo 1992: 421), did not recognize the new minority groups which the French wielded together during the conquest and colonization of the area. Minority ethnic groups perceived the name 'Mali' as 'self-isolating' and an attempt to favour only the Malinke, Bambara and Mande ethnic groups as "true Malians", 'deserving of State resources, political power and respect' (Baz 2004: 41). The marginalization of ethnic groups was compounded by weak institutions; a poor economy and food insecurity arising from severe climatic conditions (Smith 2014: 26). Between 1970 and 1980, severe drought in the northern region intensified the hardship among the northern minorities who began to flee Mali to neighbouring countries in the Maghreb and West Africa (Hagberg & Korling 2012: 118). Some of them who migrated to Algeria and Libya were given military training while others secured menial jobs. However, they were soon forced to return home as their presence constituted pressure on their host States, some of whom were trapped in food crises and political instabilities (Baz 2004: 49). The news of government embezzlement of drought relief funds provided by international NGOs for Northern Mali also inspired their return home (Benjaminsen 2008: 840). It was these returnees who became the pillars of the Tuareg insurgency that erupted in the 90s under the Mouvement Populaire pour la Libération de l'Azaouad (MPLA) (Poulton & Youssouf 1998: 21). At the height of the insurgency, President, Moussa Traore was ousted in a military coup on 26th March 1991 and replaced by Alpha Oumar Konare who initiated a peace talk and negotiation that ended the violence on 27th March 1996 (Smith 2014: 26).

Consequently, the government of Moussa managed to maintain the ‘fragile peace’ by promising ‘decentralization reforms’- an attempt to widen political participation, inclusion and autonomy for the Tuaregs in decision making and integration of erstwhile insurgents into the Malian military (Hagberg & Korling 2012: 120). However, many of the promises were never implemented. In 2002 when the ex-military Amadou Toure was elected as the President, Mali had become a ‘deeply divided’, politically and economically unstable society threatened by the renewed insurgency. To stem the tide, the new government pushed for a ‘consensus government’ and appointed a Tuareg prime minister as a show of commitment towards a more democratic and united Mali (new24 2011). Nonetheless, the inability of the new government to deliver on its mandate of political and economic equity led to a resurgence of Tuareg insurgency in 2006. Although Toure managed to secure re-election in the 2007 general election, he was deposed before the end of his tenure in another military coup led by Captain Amadou Sanogoin March 2012. This paved way for the Tuareg insurgents to capture and occupy ‘strategic parts’ of Mali and to team up with the Islamist hard-liner group Ansar Dine and Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) to declare the independence of Azawad (Moraes, Marilia & Giordano 2013: 62).

The ECOWAS was the first to intervene and mounted pressure on the military junta to transfer power to a civilian government. An interim government was formed under Diounounda Traore. Between October and December 2012, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted resolutions 2071 and 2085, authorizing ECOWAS and the AU to draw up a plan for 3,300 military troops’ intervention named African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA), against the insurgents in Northern Mali (York 2012). However, the rebel’s capture of the city of Konna 600km away from the State capital forced the UN to expedite action in deploying military forces to quell the situation (Moraes, Marilia & Giordano 2013: 64). They were soon joined by French Special Forces in what was described as ‘Operation Serval’ (Heisbourge 2013: 13).

On 29 July, 2018 the Transitional Government of Mali conducted the Presidential election which led to the emergence of Ibrahim Boubacar Keita popularly known as IBK as President. The election which was adjudged ‘free, fair and credible’ was hotly contested by 28 candidates and against the advice of the Independent Electoral Commission which favoured a much later date. Although it was difficult securing a clear cut win in the first round of the election, IBK secured 77.7 per cent of the votes in the rerun election of 12 August, 2018 (Ba & Boas, 2013: 65). According to IBK, the election was the culmination of the democratic transition after a period of military rule (BBC 2013). Contrarily, the IBK regime was characterized by rising levels of insecurity, allegations of corruption, and scandals. Notwithstanding, IBK managed to secure re-election in the violently ridden 2018 Presidential election (Gerenge 2020; 8). The precarious situation and violence which trailed the re-election of IBK caused the postponement of the legislative elections which was supposed to hold after the Presidential elections. It was his apparent interference in the 2020 parliamentary elections that triggered the crises that led to the intervention by the military on 18 August.

The 2020 Crises in Mali and the Dynamics of ECOWAS Intervention

As a sub-regional institution, ECOWAS is a 15-member regional group, established on 28 May, 1975, via the treaty of Lagos' with a mandate of promoting economic integration in all fields of activity of the constituting countries (ECOWAS 2016). These countries share a common historical, colonial and geographical experience. Although its formation was originally inspired by the need to foster economic interactions among member states, emerging security issues that undermine economic and political stability in the region has necessitated increased cooperation across a broad spectrum of concerns. The organization under its protocol on Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security have continuously pioneered peacekeeping operations within the sub-region. For instance, ECOWAS peacekeeping forces intervened in Liberia (1990–97 and again in 2003), Sierra Leone (1993–2000), and Guinea-Bissau (1998–99).

In 2001, the organization adopted the supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance to forestall unconstitutional change of government. The protocol legitimized an automatic use of sanction and suspension to deter and reprimand unconstitutional change of government among member states and also set guidelines for constitutional transfer of power and electoral laws (ECOWAS 2021). It was this protocol that rationalized the intervention in the Mali Crises of 2020. The intervention which was in two phases saw ECOWAS Ministerial and Mediation Mission in Mali in an attempt to nip in the bud the protest that followed the parliamentary elections of April and June 2020. The failure to reach a compromise among parties and the consequent military coup in August saw ECOWAS imposing economic sanctions and suspending Mali from its decision making body as means of pressuring the junta to transmit power to a civilian government. Notwithstanding, Malians rejected ECOWAS resolution to the crises.

Constitutionally, the national assembly in Mali comprises 147 'Members of Parliament (MPs) elected by absolute majority vote (50% +1) in single-member constituencies through a two-round system for a five-year term (renewable once), through universal suffrage (The Constitution of the Republic of Mali 1992). However, the precarious situation, political stalemate, and violence that trailed the re-election of IBK in 2018 caused the parliamentary elections, scheduled to hold after the presidential elections to be postponed to 2019. The government, subsequently, adjusted the date of the election from 2019 to 29 March, 2020 on the grounds of the resurgence of the Tuareg and extremist insurgency in the north and some parts of southern Mali ((Gerenge 2020: 8). These adjustments fuelled consternation among the populace and particularly among government opposition and electoral stakeholders who began to mount political pressures on government, questioning 'the legitimacy of the tenure of the MPs in office whose term ended in December 2018' (Gerenge 2020: 11). Similarly, following the outbreak of the covid-19 pandemic some members of the opposition called for further adjustment in the date of the election expressing concerns over the vulnerability of the electorates in the face of a weak healthcare system in the country (DW 2020). Amidst these twists of concern, the government determined to go ahead with elections scheduled for 29th of March, 2020 (four days after the first case was reported in Mali) arguing that adequate

preparations have been made for the elections and that voters should take necessary precautions during voting (GlobalSecurity.org 2019). The pandemic added to the already tense political atmosphere arising from the kidnapping of the main opposition leader Soumailia Cisse; insecurity (in regions such as Gao, Kidal, Monte and Timbuktu), inter-communal violence and inadequate electoral preparedness (International Crisis Group 2019), would later have an impact on the outcome of the election.

Consequently, in the first round of the election held on 29 March, fear over the pandemic caused significant voter apathy. Voters' turnout was estimated at 'about 35 per cent nationwide with less than 13 per cent participation in the capital'; (France24 2020), about 274 out of approximately 12,500 polling stations were unable to open due to insecurity. Concerns over the wellbeing of Soumailia Cisse, the main opposition leader who was being held by the jihadists overshadowed the poll. In some areas, election observers were kidnapped, while voters were prevented from voting as a result of ballot box snatching (France24 2020). The second round of voting which took place on 19 April witnessed about 23.2 per cent voter turnout and was equally marred by varying levels of irregularities ranging from vote-buying, destruction of voting equipment, threats from jihadists in the northern region, intimidation and removal of electoral officials (France24 2020). Despite the allegations of executive interference and widespread electoral irregularities, the constitutional court on 30 April, went ahead to declare the election results where they overturned the results of 31 seats and handed 10 more parliamentary seats to the President's party (Rally Mali) making it the 'largest bloc' in the parliament (France24 2020). The declaration which the opposition alleged was different from the actual results of the poll was greeted with widespread protests initially calling for the reversal of the election results and the dissolution of the constitutional court (Afrique 2020). The protest turned violent when the Movement-Rally of Patriotic Forces (M5-RFP) (ECOWAS 2020), joined the protest and began to demand the resignation of the President based on corruption, insecurity and poor governance.

In line with the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, the Authority of Heads of States of ECOWAS deployed a ministerial mission to Bamako. The ministerial mission after its investigation between 18 and 20 June on the causes of the crises came up with the following solutions and recommendations (ECOWAS 2020);

- A reconstitution of the Constitutional court after the abrogation of the decree appointing its members
- Addressing the disputed 31 seats in parliament and
- Formation of a government of national unity.

The M5-RFP rejected the proposal of ECOWAS and went ahead to mobilize protesters to demand the resignation of the president whose second term is due in 2023. At the height of the protest, between 11 and 13 of July, about 10 deaths were recorded with several others injured (ECOWAS 2020). In response to these escalations, ECOWAS appointed the former president of Nigeria; Goodluck Jonathan to lead a Mediation Mission to Mali. The mediation team, between 15 and 19 of July met with all the stakeholders including representatives from the M5-REP, civil societies and government and formulated a road map based on the recommendations

of the Ministerial Mission. Similarly, the M5-REP rejected the road map and instead intensified calls for IBK's resignation, formation of a transition government, the release of Soumaila Cisse and the establishment of a commission of enquiry to investigate the killing of protesters (ECOWAS 2020). Renewed protests prompted the ECOWAS to send a five (5) man high profile delegation led by the ECOWAS Chairman and President of Niger Republic, Mohammed Issoufou alongside his counterparts from Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, and Cote d'Ivoire. The delegation on 23 July met with the President, M5-REP representatives, the presidential majority in parliament and civil society leaders and later held an extraordinary summit of the commission to fashion a resolution to the crises. In a communiqué issued at the end of the summit on the 27 of July, the commission reiterated the recommendations of the Ministerial mission and the mediation mission and based on the demands of the M5-REP, the commission added;

The resignation of the 31 MP whose elections were overturned to be followed by a by-election, a national unity government headed by BoubouCisse with 50% of its members drawn from the ruling coalition, 30 % from the opposition and 20 % from civil society, an investigation into the deaths and casualties of 10, 11, and 12 July and that the IBK led government should institute a fund to support the injured and assist the families of the victims of the demonstrations, and the formation of a Monitoring Committee to oversee the implementation of the road map within 10 days (Maas 2020).

The President adopted the recommendations, announced the reconstitution of the constitutional court, and reappointed Boubou Cisse as the prime minister (Cserkits 2020). Contrarily, the opposition intensified the protest insisting on the resignation of the president. At the peak of the crisis on August 18, senior military officers under the National Committee for the Salvation of the People (CNSP), seized power from the government, arrested the president and compelled him to resign on national television (DW 2020). The CNSP among other things claimed that the military takeover was expedient to avert the looming chaos and violence arising from the continuous protest in the country. They later added the government's failure to contain extremist insurgencies, unpaid arrears and entitlements, delayed promotions and inadequate facilities for the military, as the reasons for the military junta (ECOWAS 2020).

Consequently, ECOWAS citing its protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, immediately, on 20 August, 'suspended Mali from all ECOWAS decision making bodies', called for 'the reinstatement of IBK', 'closed all lands and air borders as well as stopped all financial, economic and trade flows and transaction between ECOWAS member states and Mali, imposed sanctions on the junta and their allies and called for immediate 'activation of the ECOWAS standby force' (Orosz 2020). However, this did not deter the putschists who continued to enjoy a rousing welcome among civil societies and Malians who trooped out to the street to celebrate the exit of the IBK government. In a three day, open consultation held with 500 representatives drawn from various spheres of Malian society, civil society groups and the M5-REP the junta drew up an 18 monthly plan for transition to democratic rule (ECOWAS 2020). Similarly, in another meeting on 20 August, the Authority of Heads of State of ECOWAS agreed to send its Mediation mission led by Goodluck Jonathan to assess the

political situation in Mali. Between 22 and 24 August, the Mediation mission met with the military junta, IBK, the constitutional court, the group of Ambassadors to Mali, representatives of the African Union, the United Nations and the Executive Secretary of the G5 Sahel (ECOWAS 2020). In its review of the Mediation mission report, on 28 August, ECOWAS called on the CNSP to immediately; constitute a transition committee which must be led by a civilian appointed President, appoint a prime minister to head the government and that the Transition committee should implement the transition programme within 12 months (UNSC 2020).

The rescinding of ECOWAS's insistence on the reinstatement of IBK in its later resolution followed the President's acknowledgement of his wilful resignation. During a 'mini-summit' on 15 September with the leadership of the CNSP, the organization, however, reiterated its commitment to the 12 monthly transition period and that the president and prime minister must be civilians. The junta rejected ECOWAS' ultimatum for a 12 months transition and insisted on a Transition Government (TG) midwifed by the military in line with its earlier 18 months transition plan (Cserkits 2020). Although there was a rumour that the coup was backed by the M5-REP opposition coalition, 'the Malian Armed Forces have for many years been seen as one of the main reasons why the country has not fallen completely apart (UNSC 2020). Similarly, the M5-REP disagreed with the CNSP proposal which allowed the military to lead a transition period (Ahmed 2020). To stem the tide of opposition, the military tactically yielded and announced on 21 September, the appointment of Bah N'Daw, a 'retired colonel' and Colonel Goita, leader of the CNSP as President and Vice President of the TG and subsequently appointed Moctar Ouane as transition prime minister (Orosz 2020).

Analysis

By consecutively rejecting ECOWAS' resolutions, hailing a military junta, appointing former and serving military officers as president and vice of the TG, and by insisting on its 18 months transition the Malians case defied ECOWAS intervention. ECOWAS has since lifted its sanctions on the country and the military has continued to perpetuate its transition programme. Several factors come in handy in explaining this situation based on liberal institutionalism. The coup in Mali has been described as "the good coup" (Chin 2020), by analysts who argue that Mali has had a history of failed leadership which climaxed under the IBK regime since 2013. The optimism which surrounded the election of IBK was short-lived. The initial success recorded by the regime was marred by a high incidence of corruption, favouritism, autocracy, corruption in the defence sector, etc. Amnesty International reported that;

Since 2015, the annual number of security incidents in Mali has risen year on year. Moreover, insecurity has spread from the north into the central regions of Mopti and Ségou, where there are increasing numbers of ethnic militias. The availability of arms, the state's inability to resolve land disputes between pastoralists and agriculturalists, and the growing absence of state authorities have led to ethnic crises, government has been unable to implement the 2015 Algiers Peace Accord and prevent rival armed groups

that are signatories to the agreement from fighting one another (Cserkits 2020).

Maliens accused ECOWAS of conspiracy to keep the IBK government against their wish and therefore rejected ECOWAS interventions (Tejpar & Lins 2011: 18). This is the rationale behind the overwhelming support which the putschists enjoyed among Maliens. The insistence on the reinstatement of IBK portrayed ECOWAS as ignorant of the plight of Maliens who were being threatened by colossal human insecurity, insurgency, inefficiencies and the dysfunctional political institutions in Mali under the IBK government. Hence, there was no gain in accepting the intervention of an institution that blocked the flow of information and provided no 'opportunities' for Maliens to 'negotiate' their political future.

Similarly, in 2012, ECOWAS supported a transitional government that included supporters of the coup in Guinea Bissau (Tejpar & Lins 2011: 17), but became hostile to the junta in Mali in 2012 and 2020. The bias in ECOWAS approach has led to a deliberate undermining and violation of ECOWAS sanctions or threat of it by its members. For instance, economic sanctions and threats of intervention could not deter the Ivorian President, Laurent Gbagbo from clinging to power following his defeat in the 2010 election. In the case of Cote D'Ivoire, it took the combined forces of French and UN peacekeepers to depose Gbagbo after 3,000 people had been killed in post-election crises (Orosz 2020). However, in the case of Mali, the junta pitched tent with France whose army has been in Mali since the Tuareg insurgency in 2012. It was also reported that the IBK government had lost the goodwill of the French government which explains why the erstwhile colonial power did not take any harsh position against the junta (Bamidele & Ayodele 2016: 47). The implication, therefore, was that ECOWAS had failed in its responsibility to 'monitor others' compliance and to implement their commitments'. This gave room for its resolutions to be rejected in Mali.

More so, by insisting on the reinstatement of IBK, the authority of Heads of State appeared to be protecting their political ambitions in their respective countries. The leaders feared that the Mali experience may inspire the overthrow of 'oppressive regimes' that had "failed" to deliver democratic dividends as well as human security. Since the wave of political independence in the region, it is estimated that the sub-region has 'recorded more political and constitutional instabilities' accounting for over '45 percent of all coups in Africa' (Bamidele & Ayodele 2016: 47). Most politically unstable nations hide under the cloak of national sovereignty and non-intervention to frustrate the implementation of the ECOWAS protocol. For instance, Nigeria actively participated in the process to forestall the overthrow of Mohammed Buhari's administration that was forcefully repressing protesters who demanded an end to government corruption, terrorism, banditry, unemployment, police brutality, among others. The leaders reasoned that Mali would set a bad precedence for politically unstable neighbouring countries with similar experiences. This not only contradicted but also reduced the expectation and solidarity of Maliens to the protocol on Democracy and Good governance.

Conclusion

This paper discussed the trajectory of political instability that culminated into a military interregnum in Mali in 2020 and analyzed the dynamics of ECOWAS intervention in the crises. The paper established that the objective of ECOWAS intervention was to restore political stability and democracy in Mali and by extension the sub-region. The organisation intended to achieve by stampeding the military junta or limiting its interference in the constitutional process of regime change. However, the paper showed that the intervention undermined decades of State failure, weak political institutions, ethnic differences, insurgency, corruption, among other negative functional indicators which formed the basis for the agitation for the resignation of the IBK government and support for the Putschists. The business of ECOWAS intervention in other countries and the selfish interests of the leaders of the institution contributed to delegitimizing ECOWAS in Mali. These the paper argued were the reasons for the failure of the intervention in Mali and may continue to be so in subsequent engagements viz a viz the political stability of the sub-region. The paper recommends that for ECOWAS intervention to be effective, it must necessarily begin by addressing leadership failure, legitimacy crises, poor governance, corruption, oppressive regimes, human insecurity, economic underdevelopment and political polarization that have enveloped the sub-region and always prompting rebel groups to wrestle power with constituted authority.

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