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Mali's participation in the West Africa's integration processes

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Abstract. The first ever integration bloc in Africa was formed back in the colonial era in 1910, when a number of British colonies were integrated. Modern integration processes in the African countries in the south of the Sahara began much later, from the early 1960s, when most of the former colonies gained independence, and it was during this period that the construction of a number of economic blocks began. The article reveals integration processes in West Africa and sub-Saharan African countries features. Integration as such is viewed as a complex procedure, with the success way which depends on many factors. On the experience of the Republic of Mali, the authors demonstrated how an irrational socio-economic policy can lead to deformation of integration processes, which inevitably threatens with deep financial and socio-political crises.

Keywords: integration, integration process, ECOWAS, Sahel, African Union, Mali

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Участие Мали в интеграционных процессах Западной Африки

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Аннотация. Первый в истории интеграционный блок в Африке был сформирован еще в колониальную эпоху в 1910 году после объединения ряда британских колоний. Современные интеграционные процессы в африканских странах на юге Сахары начались гораздо позже, с начала 1960-х годов, когда большинство бывших колоний обрели независимость, и именно в этот период началось строительство новых экономических блоков.

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Исследование раскрывает особенности интеграционных процессов в Западной Африке и странах Африки к югу от Сахары. Интеграция рассматривается как сложная процедура, успех которой зависит от многих факторов. На опыте Республики Мали продемонстрировано, как нерациональная социально-экономическая политика может привести к деформации интеграционных процессов, что неизбежно грозит глубокими финансовыми и социально-политическими кризисами.

Ключевые слова: интеграция, интеграционные процесс, ЭКОВАС, Сахель, Африканский союз, Мали

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Introduction

Integration processes in Africa, and especially in sub-Saharan Africa, have a long history. The first ever integration bloc in Africa was the South African Customs Union – SACU, which was formed back in the colonial era – in 1910, when a number of British colonies were integrated. However, this example should be taken rather as an exception – the emergence of any tendencies towards integration in the territories south of the Sahara was hindered by the active redistribution of territories between the leading colonial powers.¹

Modern integration processes in the African countries in the south of the Sahara began much later, from the early 1960s, when most of the former colonies gained independence, and it was during this period that the construction of a number of economic blocks began. A number of these blocs disintegrated in the early years of their existence, such as the Equatorial Customs Union created in 1962 by Gabon, Cameroon, CAR, The Republic of Chad and The Republic of the Congo, also such blocks were the Federation of Mali and the Federation of Mali-Guinea-Ghana. created in 1960 (Kamara, 2010).

At the same time, other associations, such as the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), created in 1994, which included Burkina Faso, Benin, Guinea-Bissau, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger and Senegal have transformed into significant integration blocs not only at the subregional, but also at the regional level. The West African Economic and Monetary Union was transformed into a free trade zone in 1996 and functioned as a single customs area. By 2000, the share of domestic exports in this customs union reached 13% of total exports. According to P. Kamara, the implementation of internal opportunities for expanding and strengthening economic integration in West Africa will allow the countries of the sub-Saharan and western Africa to get out of the deep socio-economic crisis.

¹ Integration in Sub-Saharan Africa (2013). *World and National Economy*, 1(24). Retrieved March 23, 2021, from <https://mirec.mgimo.ru/2013/2013-01/integraciya-v-afrike-yuzhnee-sahary>

Literature review

Analysis of the literature about the integration of African countries into regional and sub-regional associations has shown that this issue is paid not only to the attention of scientists and researchers, but also to such organizations as the World Bank, the UN, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs – a country that makes an invaluable contribution to the establishment of democracy and economic development former French colonies, including Mali. The materials of these organizations contain information on key development indicators, statistics, coverage of discussion issues that are discussed with the governments of African countries integrated into various associations.

The work papers of E. Korendyasov, a leading researcher at the Institute of African Studies in the Russian Academy of Sciences, and O. Konstantinova, a researcher at the Institute of African Studies in the Russian Academy of Sciences, are characterized by great scientific research significance. geopolitical, administrative and national factors. So, in the work “Peace in Mali: the path to security in the Sahara-Sahel subregion”, the integration processes are considered from the point of view of their connection with the ethnic, military-political, economic factor, assessing the impact of agreements within the Sahel-5, interstate relations of Mali with European countries and Russia, the policies of the Malian government towards large ethnic groups. The importance of conducting a constructive state policy, which is the key to political stability (Mali is one of the African countries that has undergone a number of military coups and armed uprisings, due to dissatisfaction with the population and the army with the policy pursued by the authorities).

Interesting the work of T. Denisova “ECOWAS and regional security problems.” The author emphasizes the high importance of the ECOWAS subregional association, integration into which is one of the most important security guarantees in West African countries. ECOWAS has the potential to provide all-round economic, military and political support to the member countries of the association, provided that they comply with the uniform format of agreements and pursue a policy adequate to them.

Results

Considering the activity of the Republic of Mali in the integration processes of Africa, it can be noted that Mali is a member of such large sub-regional economic structures as the Community of Sahel-Saharan States – CEN-SAD, from the English. Community of Sahel-Saharan States, Economic Community of West African States – ECOWAS, from English. Economic Community of West African States (Denisova, 2016) and a member of the international organization of Francophonie (OIF, French l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie), which unites former French colonies (54 members and 7 integrated structures) and is a platform for the development of economic, politico-military and cultural ties with the French Republic, West African Economic and Monetary Union (Table).²

² Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires Étrangères. (n.d.) *La Francophonie, espace de coopération multilatérale*. Retrieved March 25, 2021, from <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/politique-etrangere-de-la-france/francophonie-et-langue-francaise/la-francophonie-espace-de-cooperation-multilaterale-63438/>

Period of accession and objectives of Mali's participation in integration associations

Name of integration	Year of accession of Mali	Members	Integration goals
West African Economic and Monetary Union	1994	Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Togo	Creation of conditions for free movement of goods, capital and labor resources, implementation of a unified customs policy, harmonization of legal norms. The Union uses a single currency – CFA (franc) USEAO
Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)	1975	Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Togo	Economic integration. Poverty alleviation; creating conditions for peace and security, combating crime and illegal proliferation of weapons, countering smuggling
CEN-SAD	1998	Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Togo	Attracting capital to agriculture, energy, production, social. Conditions for the free movement of people and goods; productive work, development of private property, increasing the volume of foreign trade, development of infrastructure, achieving equality of citizens of the participating countries creation. Stimulating the development of education, science and culture
Francophonie	1971	More than 50 states	Supporting the consolidation of economic and social policies, enhancing multilateral cooperation. Support for multinationality. Defense of democracy and human rights. Development of higher education and science, economic interaction. Support for women and youth

Source: West African Economic and Monetary Union. Retrieved April 15, 2021, from <http://www.uemoa.int/en>; Economic Community of West African States. Retrieved April 15, 2021, from <https://www.ecowas.int/>; CENSAD. (n.d.) *Community of Sahel-Saharan states*. Retrieved April 15, 2021, from <https://ecfr.eu/special/african-cooperation/censad/>; Francophonie. Retrieved April 15, 2021, from <https://www.francophonie.org/>

Mali's participation in these sub-regional associations is due to the receipt of financial, economic and socio-political support, the fact that the Republic does not remain alone with its problems.³

It should be noted that Mali's admission to economic unions, as a least developed country, may initially seem somewhat strange. Indeed, Mali has an intensive population growth – if in 2000 the population was 10.9 million people, then in 2019 this figure reached 19.7 million, which is due to the high level of fertility (5.9), which exceeds the world average by 2.5 times. Mali's GDP in 2020 was \$ 17.39 billion, which is 0.7% less than in 2019. In terms of the business climate, according to the World Bank's 2020 rating, Mali was in 148th place out of 190.⁴

Despite the depressing indicators, many experts conclude that the country has great economic potential, since it is provided with valuable natural resources.

³ USAID Office of Food for Peace. (2015). *USAID-best analysis annexes*. Retrieved March 29, 2021, from https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/20150116_Mali_Annexes508.pdf

⁴ The Global Economy. (n.d.). *Mali: Fertility rate*. Retrieved March 23, 2021, from https://ru.theglobaleconomy.com/Mali/Fertility_rate/; World Bank Group. (2020). *Doing business 2020. Comparing business. Regulation in 190 economies*. Retrieved March 24, 2021, from <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/32436>

For example, bauxite reserves are about 2 billion tons (more than 2.5% of world reserves). According to various estimates, diamond reserves reach 1 million carats, and probable reserves of iron ore – about 4 billion tons.⁵ In addition, the country continues intensive exploration of oil and gas deposits with the participation of foreign investors: Baraka Petroleum Ltd and Trans Ocean Securities (Australia), ENI (Italy). It should also be mentioned that the Malian company Petroma discovered a gas field with significant reserves in mid-2013, located 60 km from Bamako. This is also one of the reasons to consider Mali as an attractive participant in the integration processes, since the Republic will be able to act as a major supplier of electricity for the whole of West Africa at low prices – the cost of one kW will be less than 10 CFA francs against 113 CFA francs at the moment.⁶

In addition, the most important of the extracted resources in Mali is gold, the sale and formation of reserves of which will ensure the stability of economic positions and will avoid large losses from financial shocks. Today in Mali there are gold mines owned by the largest companies, including B2Gold, Resolute Mining (Anglogold Ashanti). Malian ore is of high quality, and therefore the Republic will provide itself with a financial buffer for a long time. This is evidenced by the production volumes, which in 2019 increased by 7% compared to the previous year and exceeded 65 tons.⁷

It should be noted that successful integration processes required not only an economic component (economic growth, diversification of the economy, liberalization of markets, a favorable investment climate), but also the viability of the country, adherence to the inviolability of the rule of law. This can be achieved by solving administrative and political problems; formation of an integral legal system; creating favorable conditions for the education of the population; establishing productive communications. And the economic potential, in turn, will act as a source for the development of high-quality human capital (constant population growth), which in favorable economic conditions will become one of the key drivers of beneficial integration processes (Korendyasov, Konstantinova, 2020). However, such conditions for Mali have not yet fully formed.

Achieving political balance and creating favorable conditions for the growth of the contribution of the population to the creation of gross domestic product, the development of economic sectors is hindered by the presence of a hotbed of instability in the north of Mali (about 2/3 of the total territory of the Republic).

Thus, the Republic of Mali, being one of the most attractive countries in West Africa in terms of investment profitability (large gold deposits, the presence of prospects in the development of oil and other hydrocarbon deposits, uranium deposits), is of interest not only for business, but also for radical elements. The potential profit from the extraction and sale of minerals and the absence of a strong army in Mali

⁵ USGS Publications Warehouse. (n.d.). *Mineral Commodity Summaries 2020*. U.S. Geological Survey. Retrieved March 24, 2021, from <https://pubs.usgs.gov/periodicals/mcs2020/mcs2020.pdf>

⁶ James J.P. (2019, October 3). Hausse des tarifs d'électricité au Mali: L'hypothèse du vide des caisses de l'Etat se confirme-t-elle? *MALI Jet*. Retrieved March 24, 2021, from <https://malijet.com/actualite-politique-au-mali/233739-hausse-des-tarifs-d'electricite-au-mali-l'hypothese-du-vide-des-.html>

⁷ Gold production in Mali in 2019 increased by 7%. (n.d.) *PRIME. Bulletin of the Gold Mine*. Retrieved March 25, 2021, from <https://gold.lprime.ru/news/20200116/346504.html>

triggered the involvement of Mali in January 2012 in an armed conflict with extremist groups in the north of the Republic. Taking advantage of the fact that more than 90% of the population of Mali professes Islam, terrorist Islamist gangs began hostilities to create the state “Azavad”, which was planned to be located on the territory of the northern regions of the Republic (more than 2/3 of the area of Mali). In March 2012, on the eve of the presidential elections in Mali, an unconstitutional armed coup took place in the country, which caused a crisis of power and aggravation of the already difficult socio-economic situation.

Such shocks seriously undermine integration processes. If the 2012 crisis was resolved with the participation of the French armed forces (special operations Barkhan and Serval), with the intervention of the African peacekeeping forces ECOWAS and the deployment of a multidisciplinary UN mission to stabilize the situation in Mali, in which more than 11 thousand military and about 1.5 thousand police officers, the recent military-political crisis in May 2020 led to the suspension of Mali's membership in ECOWAS (following the results of the emergency summit of the ECOWAS member states, it was decided to suspend Mali's membership due to the political crisis).

Following the ensuing military coup on August 18, 2020, ECOWAS was forced to impose sanctions against the Malian regime, which were later lifted only after the military agreed to establish civilian-led governments and elect an interim President of the Republic. On September 21, 2020, former Defense Minister Ba Ndao was elected interim president of Mali, and the leader of the military coup, Assimi Goita, was appointed vice president. Ba Ndao also appointed former Foreign Minister Moktar One to the post of head of the transitional government of Mali on September 27, 2020. The military said that Mali must overcome the transition period and only then return to democratic rule through presidential and parliamentary elections, which will take place 18 months after the seizure of power.

Along with ECOWAS on the suspension of Mali's membership of the military coup and the African Union.⁸ The representative of the African community said in a statement that a decision was made to immediately suspend participation in any activity of the African Community, its institutions and bodies until the country has restored constitutional order. Members of the Peace and Security Council of the international community harshly condemned the actions of the military junta, which came to power through a coup, calling for a military operation in the place of permanent deployment. At the same time, it was noted that in case of non-compliance with the points of the roadmap, where the steps are indicated, Mali to resolve the situation will introduce targeted sanctions and implement other strict penalties against violators of the transitional period.

Social policy is another important aspect of a successful position in integrated sub-regional structures. This aspect is given special attention in Mali. The fact that four out of five citizens of the Republic of Mali live in communities and are extremely limited in access to finance to maintain a normal standard of living and develop

⁸ Osminin, N. (2021, June 2). Membership of Mali in the African Union was suspended due to a military coup. *Obshchestvennaya Sluzhba Novostei*. Retrieved June 3, 2021, from <https://www.osnmedia.ru/world/chlenstvo-mali-v-afrikanskom-soyuze-priostanovleno-po-prichine-voennogo-perevora/>

economic activities, households can lead to food shortages and financial insecurity. In this regard, close attention of the Malian authorities should be focused on the possibilities of attracting aid opportunities from external sources such as FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization Provider). FAO provides integrated technical support to IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development) through the Rural Microfinance Program. This helps the Malian government to facilitate access to finance for at least 500 thousand rubles villagers with low incomes.⁹

With a focus on financial inclusion, FAO and IFAD are providing income-generating support to rural residents as well as financial assistance to community savings groups. Malian nongovernmental organizations, observing the terms of FAO funding, organize training of the population in financial literacy, the specifics of organizing training with financial institutions, the correct preparation of applications for obtaining credit resources and their repayment, and provide comprehensive administrative support.

Thanks to FAO's assistance program, many rural Malians, including young people and women, have been able to obtain bank loans. Today, about 105 thousand poor women living in villages (about 4 thousand groups) are now listed as solvent clients of microfinance organizations. A case in point is the women's group Djekafo from Diuru, which has diversified its activities with financial support and training. Members of this group are currently busy processing millet into a food supplement, fighting childhood hunger and, in this state, setting aside money for emergency spending.

Such measures of social support, which can be implemented at the initiative of the Mali authorities, allow to reduce the degree of social tension and avoid mass discontent of the population with the policy of the authorities, which can lead to social and political crises, as a result of deformation of integration processes within the framework and important sub-regional associations that are important for Mali from an economic and socio-political point of view.

Conclusion

In the course of the research, it was found that the integration processes, which are the most important component of the development of the countries of West Africa and, in particular, Mali, is a complex category that depends on many factors. So, along with economic factors, such as the desire for economic growth in the form of increased production and exports of essential goods, increased GDP growth and active participation in investment programs, the Malian authorities should pay close attention to the socio-political situation in the country, contribute to the creation of a favorable climate for the development of households and industry. As practice shows, the reasons for armed (military) coups in the Republic, as a rule, were the irrational policy of the authorities, corruption (misuse of financial resources) and almost complete disregard for the need to improve social policy. All this led to the suspension of Mali's membership in such integrated communities as ECOWAS and the African Union, which inevitably entailed not only

⁹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). (n.d.). *Investments in the future of Mali (IFAD)*. Retrieved March 25, 2021, from <http://www.fao.org/support-to-investment/our-work/success-story-detail/ru/c/1398153/>

a financial, but also a socio-political crisis, the way out of which became more painful for Mali every year. There is a need to develop a unified socio-economic policy that will reduce corruption in the government, create favorable conditions for the country's economic development and growth in the well-being of the population, which will reduce the degree of social tension. All this will ensure the successful deepening of integration processes that will open new development paths for Mali.

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