

Секция «20.11 Глобальный Юг: его место и роль в англоговорящем мире»

**Political and Economic Collaboration between West African States as an Example for the Anglosphere.**

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This report presents the core theses for a roundtable discussion examining the potential lessons that the political and economic collaboration among West African states, primarily through the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), might offer for the concept of the Anglosphere. While the Anglosphere—encompassing nations such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand—is a less formalized and geographically dispersed entity than ECOWAS, it shares a foundational goal of fostering deep cooperation among states with shared historical, legal, and linguistic ties.

ECOWAS's trajectory demonstrates that sustainable collaboration often begins with economic integration but must evolve to encompass political and security dimensions to remain resilient.

The community, established in 1975 by the Treaty of Lagos, was initially conceived as a project to promote economic cooperation and raise living standards through trade liberalization {1,4}. This functionalist approach created a web of interdependence. However, the organization's true test and transformation came in the post-Cold War era with the Liberian civil war in 1990. The shift from a strict principle of non-interference to one of collective security through its military arm, ECOMOG, marked a profound deepening of integration{6,9}. This demonstrated that to survive existential threats, a regional body must be able to move from 'soft' economic law to 'hard' security guarantees. For the Anglosphere, which already possesses deep economic and intelligence links, the lesson is that a more explicit, albeit flexible, framework for collective security and political consultation could solidify its relevance in a contested geopolitical landscape. The recent formation of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) by military juntas withdrawing from ECOWAS, while a challenge, also proves the continued perceived necessity of regional security pacts, albeit under a different configuration{2,4}.

One of the most significant challenges within ECOWAS is its successful management of deep linguistic and legal divisions, a challenge that mirrors the coordination problems within the culturally similar but institutionally disparate Anglosphere.

ECOWAS is a conglomeration of states with distinct colonial heritages: Anglophone, Francophone, and Lusophone{3,4}. This divide has historically led to internal tensions, most notably during the first ECOMOG intervention in Liberia, which was perceived by some Francophone members as an Anglophone-led (namely Nigerian) initiative{6,9}. Despite these dichotomies, ECOWAS has proven remarkably flexible and receptive to reforms, demonstrating that institutional trust and shared regional goals can overcome historical divisions. The recent Nigeria-Benin bilateral integration agreement serves as a prime example of two states from different linguistic blocs (Anglophone Nigeria and Francophone Benin) taking the lead to revitalize stalled regional projects, with President Talon stating, "Benin and Nigeria are more than twins—we are one people. Let us show the region that integration is possible"{5}. This "variable geometry" approach—where a core group moves forward—offers a direct lesson for the Anglosphere on how to build consensus among sovereign nations with diverse national interests.

The greatest threat to regional integration is not a lack of vision, but a failure of implementation. The Anglosphere can learn from ECOWAS's struggles with infrastructure and policy execution.

Recent high-level criticism from leaders like Benin's Patrice Talon highlights a critical juncture for ECOWAS. He explicitly stated that the bloc is "in crisis" due to stalled projects, citing the failure of the West African Gas Pipeline and the underperformance of the West African Power Pool as examples of wasted resources and poor coordination<sup>{5}</sup>. Furthermore, non-tariff barriers, such as border harassment along the Lagos-Abidjan corridor, continue to impede the free movement of goods that the ECOWAS Treaty promises<sup>{4}</sup>. This implementation deficit serves as a powerful cautionary tale. For the Anglosphere, which relies heavily on trust and soft power, the lesson is that declaratory statements of unity must be backed by concrete, measurable deliverables—whether in digital trade, mutual recognition of professional qualifications, or defense procurement—to maintain legitimacy and stakeholder buy-in.

Historically, the most significant leaps in integration occur in response to shared crises. This dynamic is observable in both West Africa and the European experience and is pertinent to the future of the Anglosphere.

ECOWAS itself was born from the ashes of the Biafran War, a conflict that underscored the need for a mechanism to transcend the "Berlin Wall" of colonial borders<sup>{1,4}</sup>. Later, the 2014 Ebola outbreak demonstrated the bloc's capacity to act as a critical node for coordinating a global health response<sup>{7}</sup>. While the COVID-19 pandemic initially triggered a return to nationalist border closures, it also highlighted the absolute interdependence of states. For the Anglosphere, a network of nations often separated by vast oceans, the identification of common threats—be it authoritarian statecraft, cyber warfare, or supply chain fragility—is essential. The crisis-response mechanism must be pre-negotiated and agile, allowing for a coordinated "Anglosphere response" that supplements, rather than supplants, existing multilateral commitments (e.g., within NATO or the Five Eyes).

The current geopolitical rift in West Africa, with the military-led governments of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger forming the AES and signaling a withdrawal from ECOWAS, offers a critical lesson on the limits of supranational authority and the enduring power of national sovereignty<sup>{2,4}</sup>.

These states have accused ECOWAS of being overly influenced by external (Western) powers and have chosen a new subsystem of relations that prioritizes a mutual defense pact over broader economic integration. This development underscores a key tension for any collaborative bloc: the balance between pooled sovereignty for collective good and the retention of national autonomy<sup>{10}</sup>. For the Anglosphere—a concept rooted in the sovereignty of its member parliaments and the common law tradition—this tension is paramount. The West African experience suggests that a successful Anglosphere framework must be what one scholar terms a form of "differentiated integration," allowing member states to opt into various tiers of cooperation without facing existential penalties for doing so. The Network Commonwealth model, based on flexible, overlapping associations rather than a rigid, Brussels-style bureaucracy, aligns with this need for adaptability.

In conclusion, this roundtable posits that the Anglosphere should view the West African experience not as a template to be copied, but as a rich laboratory of regionalism from which to draw strategic lessons. ECOWAS's journey—from economic community to security provider, from a collection of colonies to a manager of post-colonial diversity, and now facing the centrifugal forces of national sovereignty—provides a mirror for the Anglosphere's own potential trajectory. The key takeaway is that successful collaboration requires a pragmatic, flexible, and implementation-focused approach that respects the sovereignty of its members while building irreversible ties of mutual interest and shared security. The crisis in ECOWAS is as instructive as its successes, for it reveals the fault lines that all such unions must navigate.

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