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Misalignment of exchange rates:  
What lessons for growth and policy mix in the  
WAEMU?

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**Kako Kossivi Nubukpo**



# Misalignment of exchange rates: what lessons for growth and policy mix in the WAEMU?

Kako Kossivi Nubukpo<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

The loss of export competitiveness recorded by the WAEMU zone in recent years has prompted studies on the quantification and implication of the degree of misalignment of the exchange rate on economic growth. Little research has, however, been interested by the impact of the degree of misalignment on economic growth and the role of the policy mix in the evolution of misalignment. In this article we use the techniques of cointegration and estimation of dynamic panel models to analyse the effect of misalignment on economic growth and the role of Policy mix in external stability. Our results suggest that the continual overvaluation of the real effective exchange rate of the zone over the period 1985-2014 resulted in a loss of economic growth of 0.32 percentage points and an increase in volatility leading to a reduction of Growth of 0.86 percentage points. Moreover, the main conclusion of the article is that the current configuration of the Policy mix does not seem to be able to control the misalignment leading to overvaluation, the latter seeming mainly to come from exogenous factors. The study advocates the promotion of instruments and / or institutional arrangements favouring greater effectiveness of the WAEMU policy mix in controlling the degree of misalignment of the CFA.

**Keywords:** Policy mix; External stability; Inflation; Growth; Misalignment; Monetary Policy; Political budget; WAEMU.

## Résumé

La perte de compétitivité à l'export enregistrée par la zone UEMOA ces dernières années, a suscité des études quant à la quantification et l'implication du degré de mésalignement du taux de change sur la croissance économique. Peu de recherches se sont, cependant, intéressées à l'impact du degré de mésalignement sur la croissance économique et le rôle du Policy mix dans l'évolution du mésalignement. Dans cet article, nous mobilisons les techniques de cointégration et d'estimation des modèles de panel dynamiques pour analyser l'effet du mésalignement sur la croissance économique ainsi que le rôle du Policy mix dans la stabilité externe. Nos résultats suggèrent que la surévaluation continue du taux de change effectif réel de la zone sur la période 1985-2014, s'est traduite par une perte de croissance économique de 0,32 point et une augmentation du niveau de volatilité concourt à une réduction de la croissance de 0,86 point. Par ailleurs, la principale conclusion de l'article

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est que la configuration actuelle du Policy mix ne semble pas pouvoir contrôler le mésalignement menant à la surévaluation, cette dernière semblant surtout provenir de facteurs exogènes. L'étude plaide pour la promotion d'instruments et/ou de dispositifs institutionnels favorisant une efficacité accrue du Policy mix de la zone UEMOA dans le contrôle du degré de mésalignement du FCFA.

**Mots clés:** Policy mix ; Stabilité externe ; Inflation ; Croissance ; Mésalignement ; Politique monétaire; Politique budgétaire ; UEMOA.

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## Introduction

Procrastinations of different economies recorded at the onset of early 2008 crisis signs have quickly plunged the financial world into a total review. This review makes finance actors look for the appropriate competitiveness lines of their economies. Among competitiveness indicators is included the equilibrium exchange rate which is a price indicator of competitiveness conditioning demand towards domestic or foreign production. This revival of the concept of the exchange rate shows the theoretical revival of the concept of the distortions created by the latter. The misalignment of the real exchange rate is increasing in the economic performance of developed and developing countries (Abdallah, 2006). Among the latter are countries of the franc zone including countries of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) and the Central African Economic and Monetary Community. The anchorage of the franc CFA to the euro put the franc zone countries in a position different from that of countries with flexible exchange rate regime like china, accused of supporting their economies with undervalued currencies.

Does a strategy of articulating a restrictive budget policy with a monetary policy centered mainly on the research of price stability make it possible to maintain the competitiveness of the member States of an economic and monetary Union? The existing empirical and theoretical literature finds ambiguous results. Indeed, such a configuration of Policy mix (articulation of the budget policy and the monetary policy), even if it makes it possible to reduce macroeconomic vulnerabilities and helps to prevent financial crises, does not seem however to guarantee the long-term competitiveness of the concerned economies.

Indeed, an optimal Policy mix makes fiscal policy an instrument with the ability to stimulate and boost production, and monetary policy an instrument of price stability and balance of payments (Mundell, 1971). Sachs (1985) empirically tested this theory in the context of United States. He demonstrates that, over the period 1980 - 1984, the appreciation of the dollar has contributed substantially to disinflation. Moreover, that assessment has been largely driven by the configuration of the Policy mix. On the basis of South African experience over the period 1990 - 2010, Ivan and Kriljenko (2011) mobilize a variety of econometric techniques helping to monitor the external environment and find the same conclusion as Sachs.

As far as the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) is concerned, the rate of real effective exchange increased by 4.8% over the period 2002-2010, hence an average deterioration in the competitive position by 0.5% annually. This loss of competitiveness is in connection with the appreciation of the euro (Gnimassoun, 2012). Its effect on economic performance was, however, mitigated by an inflation differential in favour of the WAEMU (BCEAO, 2012).

In this article, we analyse the impact of the misalignment of the exchange rate on inflation and economic growth of WAEMU countries and the role of coordinating policy in external stability. To do this end, we present stylized facts about the relationship between the exchange rate, inflation and growth, and the literature review (section 1). Section 2 presents the analysis methodology, the various tools used and the results. Finally, the last section concludes.

# 1. Exchange Rates, Inflation and Growth: stylized facts and literature overview

## 1.1 Determination of the real effective exchange rate and stylized facts

The real effective exchange rate (REER) is calculated using the following formula:

$$REER = \sum_{i=1}^n \left( \frac{e_i}{e} \right) w_i.$$

$e_i$  = exchange rate of the currency  $i$  against the dollar (to uncertainty over currency  $i$ );

$e$  = exchange rate of the franc CFA against the dollar (with an uncertain against the CFA);

$w_i$  = weight of  $i$  partner in trade of the country, namely:

$$w_i = \frac{M_i + X_i}{M + X}$$

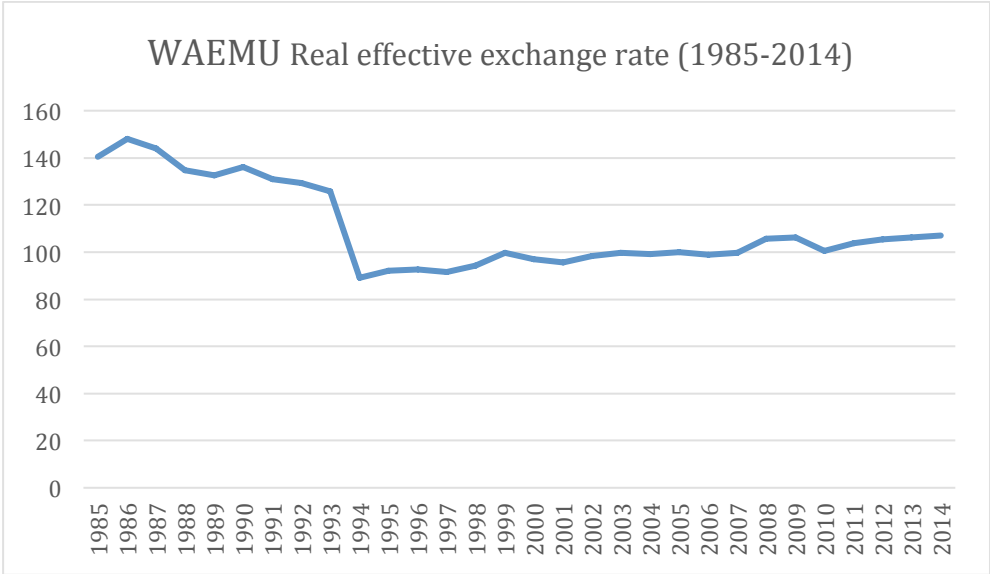
$M_i$ , ( $X_i$ ) represents imports (exports) from the business partner  $i$ .  $M$  ( $X$ ) imports (exports) of country. Taking into account inflationary effects, the rate of real effective exchange rates (REER) is calculated as follows:

$$REER = \prod_{i=1}^n \left[ \left( \frac{e_i}{e} \right) \left( \frac{P}{P_i} \right) \right]^{w_i}$$

$P$  and  $P_i$  respectively the price indices for domestic consumption and trading partner.

The evolution of the real exchange rate of the WAEMU area shows two distinct periods. The first period covering 1985 to 1994 and the second period which is that of the post devaluation covering 1994-2014. The real exchange rate of the WAEMU zone has experienced a downward trend between 1985 and 1994 before undergoing an increase between 1994 and 2014. In the WAEMU zone, over the period 1994 to 2014, the real effective exchange rate increased by 20.27%. The nominal effective exchange rate (NEER) posted an upward trend of 10% between 1994-2014. This increase can let, all things being equal, claim a loss of competitiveness in this period. But the fundamentals of the economy of the area, the main determinants of the equilibrium exchange rate will experience inevitably similar trends.

**FIGURE 1: WAEMU REAL EXCHANGE RATE (1985-2014)**

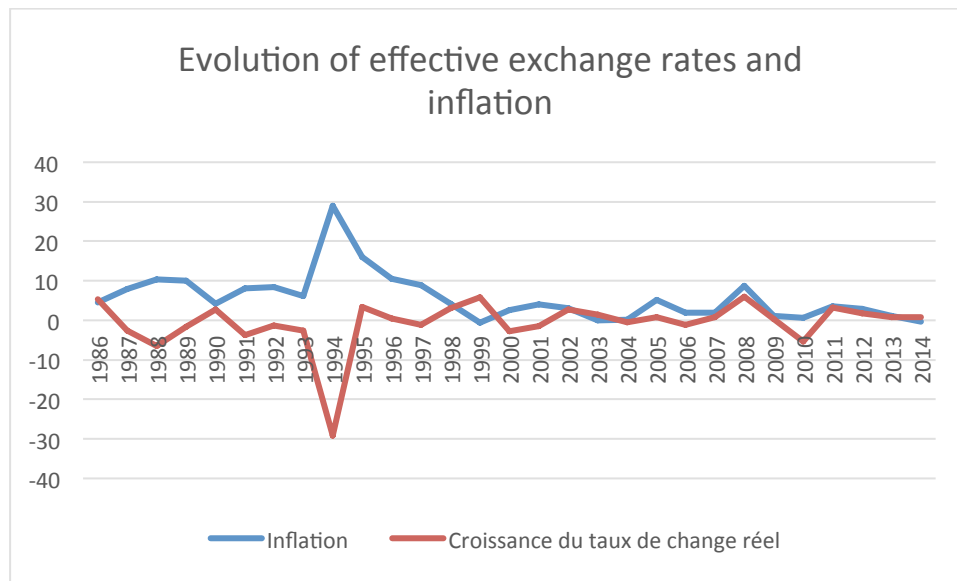


Source: Author by CERDI data and own calculation, 2016

Over the same period, WAEMU zone countries, compared to sub-Saharan Africa, have had great success in reducing inflation. However, only countries outside the franc area conducted a surprise in terms of economic growth. In the WAEMU countries, the reduction of inflation was accompanied by a sustained increase in unemployment. Therefore, a significant portion of disinflation in the area, on this period may explain the low level of growth and output volatility.

In the context of the WAEMU area countries, an analysis of the real exchange rate, coupled with the inflation level shows a change of phase between 1985 and 2002. With the devaluation of January 1994, there is a high inflation (28.94 %) following the uncertainty that accompanied the devaluation. The effect of this devaluation has narrowed in the years 1999. Between 2002 and 2014, the real exchange rate and inflation have similar trends (see chart below).

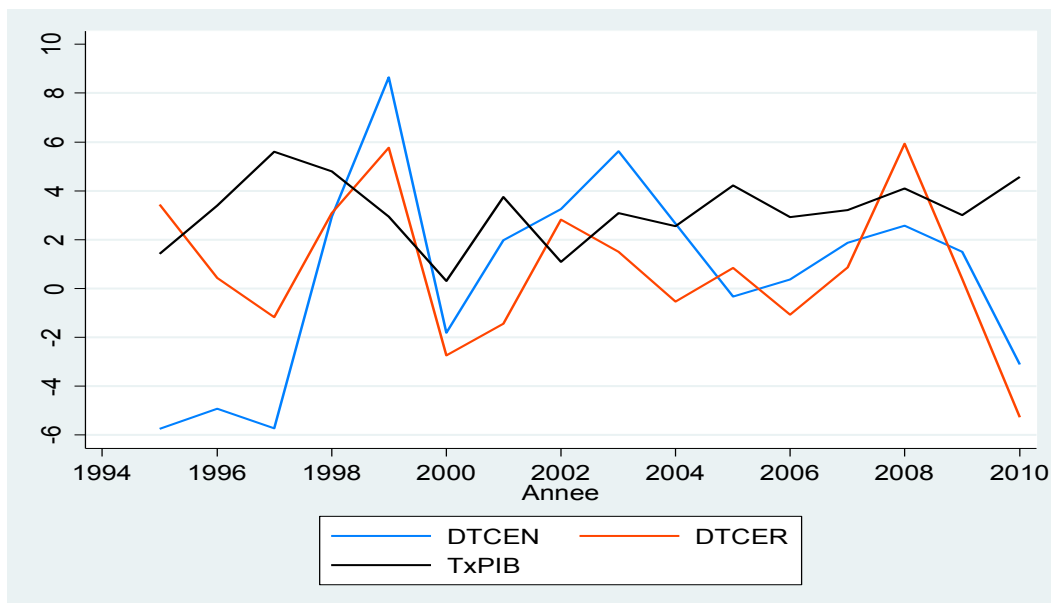
**FIGURE 2: EVOLUTION OF CHANGES IN EFFECTIVE EXCHANGE RATES AND INFLATION (1985-2014)**



Source: Author by CERDI, UNCTAD data et and own calculation, 2016

Moreover, the joint evolution of changes in effective exchange rate and the economic growth rate in the WAEMU zone seems to confirm the negative relationship between the real effective exchange rate and the WAEMU zone growth. The periods of negative changes in the equilibrium real exchange rate were followed by economic growth.

**FIGURE 3: EVOLUTION OF CHANGES IN EFFECTIVE EXCHANGE RATES AND ECONOMIC GROWTH**



Source: Author by CERDI, UNCTAD data et and own calculation, 2016

The literature has identified two (2) main channels through which the exchange rate may affect the domestic wage and price formation. First, a change in the evolution of the



exchange rate could have effects on domestic prices of imported goods. Similarly, a change in the prices of imported goods will affect directly consumer prices when these imports are comprised of consumer goods or indirectly when the imported products represent inputs for production.

A second possible effect is that domestic producers react to the decrease in import prices in order to enjoy their profitability. If this effect is significant, the size of exchange rate effect on consumer prices and not on tradable goods including imports and exports competitive products imported into the price index. This is the competitiveness effect.

The variation over time of the real effective exchange rate is largely attributable to factors qualified as economic fundamentals. The lessons learned from Frenkel and Mussa (1985) models, Chinn and Johnston (1996), and Alberola and al. (1999) suggest that the value of the effective exchange rate equilibrium be determined by the following factors: net foreign assets, productivity bias, total government spending, terms of trade, the degree of openness of the economy and the level of productive investment.

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## 1.2 Exchange Rates, Inflation and Growth: A Literature Review

The consideration of the real exchange rates in analyses allowed to have from the pioneer's work of the equilibrium exchange rate theory, Nurkes (1945) and Artus (1977), four (4) emerging theories from the literature of estimating the equilibrium exchange rate. The theory of parity purchasing power (PPP), called behavioural theory developed by Clark and MacDonald (1998) Behavioural Equilibrium Exchange Rate (BEER), the one called Fundamental Equilibrium Exchange Rate (FEER) developed by Williamson (1983, 1994) and The Fundamental Equilibrium Exchange Rate (FEER) and the Natural Real Exchange (NATREX) of J. Stein (1994).

From the Fundamental Equilibrium Exchange Rate (FEER) approach, Williamson (1994) has made a study on the G7 economies. It shows that the last quarter of 1989 was marked by an overvaluation of 14% against an undervaluation of the Japanese yen of 27%. By using the Computable General Equilibrium Model, Devarajan (1997) finds an overvaluation of the real exchange rate by 9% in Burkina Faso. Elbadawi, Baffes and O'Connell (1999) analysed the misalignment of the real exchange rate in Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso. Contrary to the results obtained by Devarajan (1997), their study found no overvaluation in Burkina Faso. According to the authors, Burkina Faso has experienced an average annual undervaluation of 34% over the 1987-1993 period. Dufrenot and Yehoue (2005) analysed the relationship between real exchange rate and the economic aggregate of sixty-four (64) developing countries. The dynamics of the real exchange rate is explained by certain fundamentals: productivity, terms of trade, trade openness. The results of the study show the significance level of less fundamental for middle-income countries compared to those with low incomes.

Rodrick (2008) studied the misalignment of the real exchange rate and economic growth over the period 1950-2004. Using a methodological approach in time series over 184 countries, the author used an index to measure the degree of undervaluation of the real exchange rate, adjusted by the Balassa-Samuelson effect using the indicator of GDP per

head. The results of the study reveals that overvaluation of the real exchange rate harms economic growth, while the opposite effect occurs in case of undervaluation.

Several studies of the economic literature are devoted to the research of the equilibrium real exchange rate. These works are from Mac Donald (2000), Driver and Westaway (2004) Fic and al (2008). Fic and al study the macroeconomic consequences of fixing of the exchange rate irrevocably fixed in the euro area. They estimated the real exchange rate equilibrium of eight of the ten candidate countries of the European monetary zone after fulfilling the Maastricht criteria. Candelton and al (2013) using a cointegration approach panel did a study on the Baltic States using quarterly data over the period 1993-2001.

Gala and Lucinda (2006) developed a dynamic panel analysis by using the technique of the Generalized Method of Moments (GMM) system with 58 countries covering the period 1960-1999. By measuring the misalignment of the exchange rate by incorporating the Balassa Samuelson, the authors used control variables such as human capital, physical capital, inflation, the institutional environment, the output gap (output gap) and the terms of trade. The study showed that a depreciation (appreciation) of the exchange rate leads to increase (decrease) in economic growth.

Berg and Miao (2010) developed an empirical investigation of the misalignment of the exchange rate and growth. Eichengreen (2008) made a review of literature on the exchange rate and growth by structuring his analysis on the impact of the real exchange rate on long-term economic growth. He recommends that small fluctuations in the real exchange rate and its recognition as competitiveness indicator enable the country to make a qualitative leap in growth, evidenced by the strong example of growing economies East Asia.

Hooper and Lowrey (1979) demonstrated that the inflation rate is about 0.8 or 0.9 percentage point higher in each of the first two years after a 10% fall, and perhaps a little more high in the following years too. So a depreciation of the exchange rate could trigger inflationary pressures in the economy. The effects on aggregate demand can exacerbate the inflationary impact.

Dornbusch and Fischer (2003) analyse the role of the exchange rate appreciation of the dollar and find a direct effect of exchange rate movements on wage settlements, beyond the indirect effects via price or production and consumption. Regarding costs, Gordon and Le Roi (1982) show that the price of the exchange rate, the import prices of food and fuel are unchanged by the way of disinflation.

In a world of high capital mobility, the expansionary fiscal policy financed by the issuance of government bonds increases domestic interest rates and attracts more foreign capital in relation to the initial exchange rates (Mundell, 1962). The influx of foreign capital creates a capital account deficit. However, a direct comparison between interest rate differentials and exchange rates can be misleading. The simple observation of particular episodes can even lead to a perverse situation. Consequently, the effect of a change in fiscal policy on the exchange rate is indeterminate.

Indeed, in theory, fiscal policy affects the exchange rate through several channels and the direction of these effects may not be the same, depending on the relative size of the key parameters values. Empirical studies, however, have shown that an increase in the budget deficit leads to an increase in activity. This situation causes a demand for money increased and that of short-term interest rates. The increase in interest rates attracts, in turn, incipient capital inflows and put upward pressure on the exchange rate.

Similarly, a contraction in economic activity results in a deterioration of the current account and an increase in the level of inflation which affects the price competitiveness, i.e., the price performance relative to competitors. The different components of fiscal policy have different effects on economic efficiency based on the exchange rate regime through two main channels, namely changes in labour costs and movements in the nominal exchange rate when the rate of exchange is flexible.

Lane and Perotti (1996), using a panel of OECD countries over the period 1960-1994, showed that a higher salary expense of the state leads to increased labour costs and an appreciation of the nominal exchange rate, and consequently has a negative impact on economic efficiency under a flexible exchange rate regime. The opposite is true for increases in labour taxation. However, an increase in non-salary expenditures and government transfers have minor effects on the exchange rate and economic efficiency.

The theoretical and empirical literature has shown that in the context of monetary policy, a faster pace of monetary expansion in an area, in the context of stable demand, tends to depreciate the nominal exchange rate, and vice versa. In the short term, interest rate changes, consequences of a pulse of monetary policy, have an effect on the exchange rate. Monetary policy has a comparative advantage in controlling inflation and balance of payments therefore, it should be reserved for this purpose as a financial instrument for financial goals and fiscal policy would be a real instrument for real goals.

Under a monetary policy focused on controlling inflation, changes in exchange rates are not expected to affect the trend inflation rate. However, in the short term, any depreciation of the dollar increases the price of imported goods and, consequently, higher production costs. The extent of rising costs and the rate at which it is transmitted to consumers depends on the share of imports into the basket type of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and a number of other factors such as the demand conditions, the price adjustment costs and the perception of the term of depreciation (Lafleche, 1997).

Monetary policy is very important in the management of exchange rates. Wondering if the exchange rate is influenced by monetary policy and whether these effects are permanent or temporary, Simwaka (2004) estimates the misalignment of the real effective exchange rate, and performs causality tests between several measures of monetary shocks and the real misalignment of the effective exchange rate. The results show that excess money supply predicts the misalignment of the exchange rate without retroactive effect.

The formation of exchange rate expectations creates effects of monetary policy shocks in open economies. Pierdzioch (2002) using a dynamic general equilibrium model with two countries suggests that the effects of short-term production of permanent monetary policy shocks diminish if expectations of the exchange rate on the foreign exchange market are regressive.

On the other hand, if the influence of traders is strong enough, a permanent shock expansionary monetary policy may lead to a temporary fall in the production of the country in which it takes place. For Papell (1988), within the USA, monetary policy rule, which stabilizes the nominal GDP growth rate, receives a considerable empirical support. The rule provides a better fit with a number of alternatives, including strict inflation stability, strict stability of production, and stabilization of the real exchange rate.

## 2. Methodology, estimation techniques and data

### 2.1 Specifying equations

Three (3) equations were specified: the equation of equilibrium exchange rates; the equation of relationship between the degree of misalignment and the inflation and the equation of relationship between the degree of misalignment and economic growth.

#### ❖ Equation of the equilibrium exchange rate and misalignment

In this study, we opted for the BEER approach linking the real exchange rate to its fundamental following equation:

$$q_{i,t} = \beta_1 PROD_{i,t} + \beta_2 GOUV_{i,t} + \beta_3 TINV_{i,t} + \beta_4 TE_{i,t} + \beta_5 OUV_{i,t} + \mu_i + \vartheta_t + \varepsilon_{i,t} \quad (1)$$

Where  $q_{i,t}$  is the real effective exchange rate of country  $i$  at time  $t$ ;  $PROD_{i,t}$  relative productivity measured by the the GDP ratio of the country concerned with respect to key partners. The main partners considered in this study are the countries of G20. These G20 countries are considered in this article because the G20 countries are the main partners with which the WAEMU countries maintain their relations. This is also explained by the desire to have a homogenous group of countries with which WAEMU countries maintain trade relations.

DEPGOUV, represents the share of government consumption in GDP;  $INV_{i,t}$ , proportion of total investment in GDP;  $OUV_{i,t}$ , the degree of opening, proportion of foreign trade in GDP, i.e. the sum of exports and imports to GDP);  $\mu_i$ , country-specific effect;  $v_t$  designates the time fixed effect common to all countries ;.  $\varepsilon_{i,t}$ , idiosyncratic and random deviation is assumed independently and identically distributed (iid). The terms of trade (TE) are associated with higher rates of export to import prices and all things being equal, with better trade performance and a real appreciation of the exchange rate over time.

This equation identifies the determinants and calculate the long-term equilibrium exchange rate to derive the degree of misalignment which is the difference between the observed value of the real effective exchange rate and its level of long-term equilibrium.

The level of the equilibrium exchange rate is determined from regression of long-term values of fundamental exchange rate determined assuming the parameters in equation (1) unchanged. The long term fundamental values being determined from the HP filter assuming a smoothing coefficient of annual values equal to 100.

The value of the degree of misalignment is obtained by:

$$MS_{i,t} = q_{i,t} - \hat{q}_{i,t} \quad (2)$$

where  $\hat{q}_{i,t}$ , represents the estimated value from the equation of the equilibrium exchange rate.

### ❖ Equation of the relationship between misalignment and inflation

This equation is specified as follows:

$$\pi_{i,t} = \alpha\pi_{i,t-1} + \delta \sum_{j=1}^N w_{i,j}\pi_{j,t} + \theta MS_{i,t} + \beta'X_{i,t} + \mu_i + \vartheta_t + \varepsilon_{i,t} \quad (3)$$

$\pi_{i,t}$  represents the inflation rate of a country  $i$  at  $t$ ;  $\pi_{i,t-1}$ , the expected inflation rate; and  $IMS_{i,t}$ , indicator of misalignment degree.  $X_{i,t}$  represents all identified control variables: the share of government consumption in GDP; population growth, the degree of opening.

### ❖ Equation of relationship between misalignment and economic growth

To determine the impact of misalignment on economic growth, we specified our model around the equation:

$$y_{i,t} = \alpha y_{i,t-1} + \delta \sum_{j=1}^N w_{i,j}y_{j,t} + \varphi MS_{i,t} + volMS_{i,t} + \beta'X_{i,t} + \mu_i + \vartheta_t + \varepsilon_{i,t} \quad (4)$$

$y_{i,t}$ , represents the logarithm GDP per capita;  $MS_{i,t}$  misalignment of exchange rates;  $volMS_{i,t}$  the volatility of the exchange rate misalignment;  $X_{i,t}$ , represents all identified control variables appropriately in the empirical literature as factors affecting economic growth. This is the relative productivity, the investment rate, the degree of openness, government expenditure inflation.

## 2.2 Data and estimation techniques

The data used within this section are mainly from the BCEAO database of African Economic Outlook and the Ushebrooke University database. They cover the eight UEMOA countries over the period 1985 to 2014. As has been the case of the analysis of panel data with high temporal dimension, unit root and cointegration tests were mobilized. Three (3) unit root tests in panel are used. This is Levin, Lin and Chu (2002) test; Im, Pesaran and Shin (2003) and the test Maddala and Wu (1999) and Choi, (2001)<sup>2</sup> test.

Indeed, the test of Levin, Lin and Chu made the assumption of homogeneity of the autoregressive root in H1. As against that of Im, Shin Pesaran and help answer this criticism that it is unlikely that in case of rejection of the unit root hypothesis we can accept the hypothesis of a common root to all autorégressive people. (Hurlin and Mignon (2005). For Maddala & Wu, the principle is simple and is based on a combination of the significance levels of  $N$  individual tests independent unit root. The test statistic may be selected as the t-statistic with an ADF test; or statistics of any other test of the null hypothesis of unit root.

The results for each of our different variables shows that our variables are either stationary in level or first difference.

In the literature, Westerlund (2007) proposed a panel co-integration test with multiple structural breaks. This is a more general test of co-integration test from Pedroni (1999) which

<sup>2</sup>The test Maddala and Wu and Choi respectively uses statistics from the p-value of the ADF tests and Phillip Perron.

offers the possibility to take into account the multiple structural breaks in both the level and trend of a panel regression with different cointegration statistics construction methods to test the null hypothesis of no cointegration.

Indeed, Westerlund uses an error correction model to examine whether there is an error correction for the overall panel or groups of individuals.

$$\Delta y_{i,t} = c_i + a_{0,i}(y_{i,t-1} - b_i x_{i,t-1}) + \sum_{j=1}^{k_{1,i}} a_{1,ij} \Delta y_{i,t-j} + \sum_{j=-k_2^i}^{k_{3,i}} a_{2,ij} \Delta y_{i,t-j} + \mu_{i,t}$$

$a_{0,i}$  is correcting speed-term adjustment. Before the latter terms include delays and directions  $\Delta x$  to ensure the exogeneity  $x$ . For appropriate values of  $k_i$ , Estimates are doing separately  $\forall i$ . When  $a_{0,i} = 0$ , then there is no error correction,  $y$  and  $x$  therefore are not cointegrated.

**TABLE 1: RESULTS OF COINTEGRATION TESTS**

Variables	Tests	Statistiques	Cointegration <sup>3</sup>
PROD	Gt	-5,04	cointegrated
	Ga	-10,51	cointegrated
	Pt	-6,06	cointegrated
	Pa	-6,92	cointegrated
TE	Gt	-4,031	cointegrated
	Ga	-18,05	cointegrated
	Pt	-11,59	No cointegrated
	Pa	-17	cointegrated
INV	Gt	-4,36	cointegrated
	Ga	-15,23	cointegrated
	Pt	-7,25	cointegrated
	Pa	-12,56	cointegrated
OUV	Gt	-4,034	cointegrated
	Ga	-23,26	cointegrated
	Pt	-9,16	cointegrated
	Pa	-18,78	cointegrated
DEPGOUV	Gt	-4,96	cointegrated
	Ga	-11,71	Cointégrés
	Pt	-14,45	No cointegrated
	Pa	-9,54	cointegrated

Source: Author

If  $a_{0,i} < 0$ , then there exists an error correction therefore  $y$  et  $x$  are cointegrated. A total of four (4) tests based on the group average and pooled panel are used. The large negative values reject the hypothesis  $H_0$  of absence of cointegration. In case of no rejection, the bootstrap procedure is used to obtain robust critical values. The results are shown in the table above.

The results of cointegration tests suggest the existence of a cointegrating relationship between the real effective exchange rate equilibrium and the fundamentals of the economy

<sup>3</sup> Decisions are made at a of 5% threshold

of the area. As a result, three technical estimates of non-stationary data i.e. the Pooled Mean Group estimator (PMG), the Mean Group estimator (MG) and the estimator Fix Dynamics Effect (DFE) were mobilized. Then, the Hausman test was used to select the best technique. Indeed, the PMG estimation procedure is to estimate the model with the assumption that long-term effects are constrained to be equal in all individuals or special groups. By cons, short-term coefficients are allowed to differ. Regarding the MG technology, the model coefficients are calculated from the weighted average of the unconstrained model, entirely heterogeneous.

## 2.3 Results, analysis and discussion

### 2.3.1 Misalignment of the real effective exchange rate

An increase in productivity in the WAEMU zone of 1% with respect to its G20 partners would result from the estimate of PMG, a real appreciation of 0.61%, which shows the presence of Ballassa-Samuelson effect in accordance with the most studies. Our estimates show that the relative productivity is not a major fundamental of the real effective exchange rate.

In the short term, official development assistance (ODA) and the degree of openness seem to be the determining factor in the value of the equilibrium real effective exchange rate. However, in long term, the equilibrium real effective exchange rate is determined by government spending, terms of trade, the net external position, the trade balance, the degree of openness and public aid development (table 2). The coefficients of the latter variables are statistically significant.

From the PMG, government spending have a positive impact on the real exchange rate. An increase in government spending of 10 percent causes a decrease in the real exchange rate of 0.62 percent.

The impact of the balance of trade on the exchange rate is relatively low but significant. Indeed, any increase in the trade balance of the WAEMU countries of one percent generates real appreciation of 0.029%.

Any increase in investment of 10% causes a real appreciation of 0, 047% of the exchange rate of the WAEMU zone. This sign is different from those found by some empirical studies. Indeed, in a study by Baffes et al (1999) on developing countries over the period 1965-1993, the authors found coefficients between -0.43 and -0.27.

**TABLE 2: RESULTS OF THE ESTIMATION OF THE FUNDAMENTAL EXCHANGE RATE ON AVERAGE OF SIX YEARS (1985-2014)**

	<i>Pooled Mean Group</i>	<i>Mean Group</i>	<i>DFE</i>
	(1)	(2)	(3)
	<i>ltcr</i>	<i>ltcr</i>	<i>ltcr</i>
Relative productivity	0.609 (1.814)	-30.65 (40.47)	-3.086** (1.387)
Government spending	-0.0617* (0.0318)	-0.49:7** (0.237)	0.0458 (0.0458)
Terms of trade	-0.0307* (0.0163)	-0.532 (0.480)	-0.0620* (0.0353)
Net foreign asset	0.294*** (0.0753)	0.785 (0.787)	0.108 (0.107)
Trade balance	0.00290** (0.00132)	0.0292* (0.0159)	0.000466 (0.00119)
APD	-0.0200* (0.0111)	-0.0406 (0.0576)	0.00542 (0.0178)
Investment	0.00466 (0.0234)	0.288 (0.254)	0.0247 (0.0156)
degree of openness	-0.0816*** (0.0239)	0.353 (0.288)	-0.0172 (0.0323)
<b>SR</b>			
Relative productivity	-27.84 (23.28)	-24.42 (28.70)	-5.211** (2.649)
Government spending	0.0617 (0.0400)	0.0216 (0.0520)	0.123*** (0.0294)
Terms of trade	-0.0526 (0.0353)	-0.0830 (0.0706)	-0.0204 (0.0205)
Net foreign asset	-0.00604 (0.134)	0.124 (0.210)	-0.0719 (0.0944)
Trade balance	-0.00128 (0.00184)	0.00195 (0.00234)	0.000400 (0.00166)
APD	0.0298* (0.0164)	0.0293 (0.0195)	0.0254** (0.00972)
Investment	-0.00408 (0.0220)	0.0229 (0.0278)	0.0131 (0.0172)
degree of openness	-0.0710** (0.0245)	0.0512 (0.109)	-0.112*** (0.0274)
<i>Dummy 94</i>	-0.285*** (0.0381)	-0.228*** (0.0342)	-0.289*** (0.0378)
<i>_cons</i>	0.690** (0.276)	1.813*** (0.502)	0.854** (0.410)
<i>N</i>	232	232	232
Hausman Test			

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Source: Author by estimation

The figure below (Figure 4) shows the evolution of the misalignment of the exchange rate of the countries of the UEMOA zone. These graphs are from the estimation results of the specification summarized in Table 2 (estimated using the Pooled Mean Group technique on

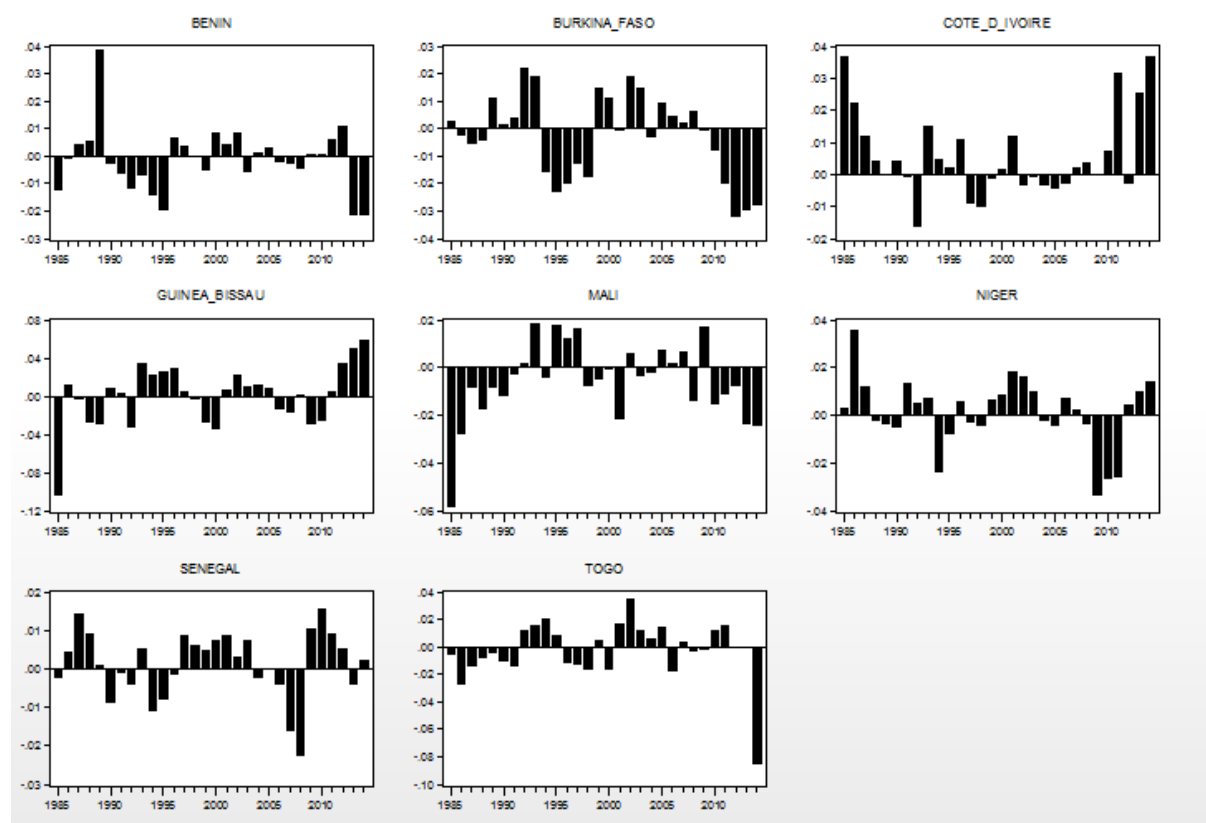


non-stationary panel data) in which we have approximated the relative productivity by GDP ratio of the different countries by one of the main partner countries<sup>4</sup>.

The analysis of the graph shows that all the countries of the WAEMU zone experienced an overvaluation of the real exchange rate in 1993. This has contributed to the devaluation of the CFA franc in January 1994. These countries have experienced an undervaluation of their rates exchange in 1994. This undervaluation of exchange rates with the objective of economic competitiveness in the WAEMU zone has not had a big impact. These effects have worn off two to three years later depending on the different economies (Figure 4 and 6).

Overvaluation of the CFA franc in the WAEMU zone is observed over the period 2002 to 2004 for most economies of the West African sub-region and an undervaluation of 2011-2014. Over the study period (1985-2014), the level of misalignment of the exchange rate of the countries of the WAEMU zone varies between 0.56 and 0.12. The highest rate of overvaluation over the 1985-2014 period is achieved by Guinée Bissau which has recorded a recent overvaluation of 5.79 the years 2013 and 2014. The average level of volatility of the misalignment of the WAEMU real exchange rate varies from one economy to another with a higher variability for Guinea Bissau (3.12) and a lower level of variability achieved by Senegal (0.86) over the study period. The evolution of misaligned exchange rate is compiled into the graph in Figure 4.

**FIGURE 4: MISALIGNMENT OF EXCHANGE RATES OF WAEMU COUNTRIES (1985-2014)**



Source: Author by estimation data

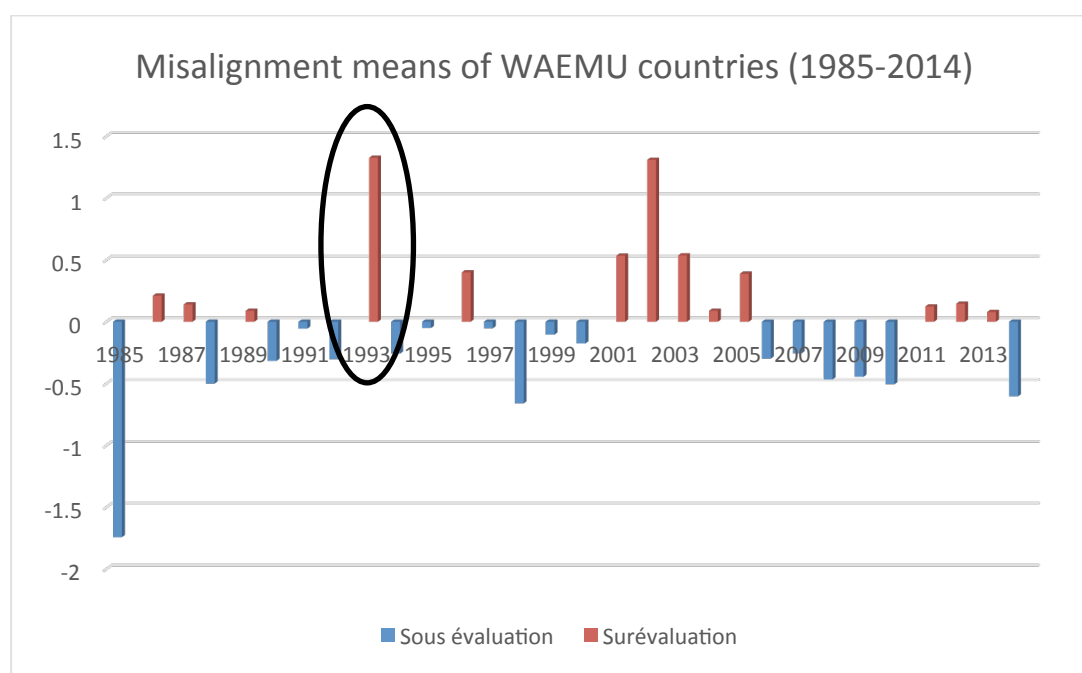
<sup>4</sup> The main partner countries considered in the context of this article is the G20.

**FIGURE 5: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF THE MESALIGNEMENT OF WAEMU COUNTRIES**

	BENIN	BURKIN A FASO	COTE D'IVOIR E	GUINE E BISSA U	MALI	NIGER	SENEGA L	TOGO
Mean	-0.121	-0.2672	0.5856	0.00763	-0.5616	0.1037	0.1198	-0.2351
Median	-0.0634	-0.0266	0.1912	0.4279	-0.4502	0.352	0.2661	-0.0895
Maximum	3.8276	2.1698	3.6807	5.7949	1.8137	3.5643	1.5533	3.4779
Minimum	-2.1478	-3.2014	-1.6057	10.4068	-5.8116	-3.3051	-2.2667	-8.5412
Std. Dev.	1.1415	1.5084	1.3107	3.1228	1.6112	1.4361	0.8591	2.0871
Skewness	93.2363	-33.3246	100.240	-	-	-	-	-
Kurtosis	623.253	216.455	339.849	96.3695	96.1496	48.5363	-79.7548	194.763
Jarque-Bera	3	9	5	7	5	9	359.1522	9
Probability	1740.80	142.771	522.256	1186.95	954.361	195.536	361.779	7266.99
Sum	9	8	7	3	3	2	16.3835	9
Sum Sq. Dev.	0.0166	48.9751	7.344	0.2646	0.8465	37.6182	16.3835	0
Sum	-3.6313	-8.0146	17.5695	-0.2289	16.8492	3.1099	3.5932	-7.0517
Sum Sq. Dev.	0.3779	0.6598	0.4982	2.828	0.7528	0.5981	0.214	1.2633
Observations	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30

Source: Author by estimation data

**FIGURE 6: MISALIGNMENT MEANS OF WAEMU COUNTRIES**



Source: Author by estimation data

The analysis of the impact of misalignment on inflation and economic growth is made with the estimator of GMM to avoid potential endogeneity bias resulting from the presence of lagged variables in the different models.

### 2.3.2 Misalignment and inflation

The figure below and Table 3 presents the empirical results of the analysis of the misalignment of the exchange rate on the inflation rate.

From estimating the GMM, the autocorrelation test of second order Arellano and Bond help to accept the hypothesis of no autocorrelation of second order. The over-identification test and Sargan Hansen obtained from Table 2 with p-value = 1 shows that the null hypothesis  $H_0$  of validity of the over-identifying restrictions cannot be rejected. Instruments used for the estimate are valid inducing the validity of the results.

Three estimates were made. The estimate (2) and (3) have taken into account the impact of the relative productivity of WAEMU countries in comparison with these partners on inflation the particularity of estimate (3) is that the latter did not take into account the 1994 devaluation.

Indeed, the delayed inflation has a negative and statically significant effect of the order of 0.55 to 0.58. Following low price level in the WAEMU zone during a year, the economic agents expect a price increase for the coming years. Suppose the European Central Bank cut its key interest rates to boost the economies of the euro area. In view of the productivity differential between the euro area and the WAEMU zone on the one hand and the existence of the fixed parity between the CFA and the euro, the BCEAO is also expected to lower its key rate to reduce the rate differential interest leaving the flight of capital to maintain investment in the WAEMU zone. The price level having experienced a decline, economic agents will anticipate future price increases. As a result, the price level is adaptive in the area.

The results of the empirical analysis of the impact on inflation by a policy change that alters the exchange rate, but not the production seems suggested that the strength of the CFA franc has played a major role in the disinflation process of the area. Periods during which the CFA franc zone has appreciated were accompanied by lower inflation. Indeed, the impact of the misalignment of the exchange rate and its volatility in inflation is negative. A level of undervaluation of exchange rates in the WAEMU zone is synonymous to high inflation with a coefficient of -1. Whatever the estimate (1), (2) or (3), the results indicate that the misalignment of the exchange rate exerts an opposite effect on the inflation rate. The order of magnitude is between 0.375 and 1. However, the coefficient is not statistically significant.

The higher the level of the real exchange rate from its equilibrium level is high in the WAEMU zone, the more we see a level of disinflation. The countries of the WAEMU zone being fixed exchange rate with the euro zone, the zone does not have the leeway necessary for automatic stabilization of the exchange rate except to opt for a devaluation. This is consistent with economic reality because the main objective of the BCEAO, is controlling inflation. Although the incidence of misalignment on inflation is not significant, volatility plays an important role in the evolution of the price level in the zone.

The impact of the volatility of the real exchange rate on economic growth is more stressed with a significant negative coefficient. Facing volatile real exchange rate of 10 points, the general price level declined by 12.39 points. The higher the volatility misaligned real exchange rate increase, the more the level of inflation decreases. Thus, high volatility of the equilibrium exchange rate is synonymous with low inflation in the WAEMU zone. The figure below shows the relationship between the level of misalignment and inflation in the WAEMU zone.

An increase by 10 points output gap leads to increase in the inflation level by 0.01 points. My estimates show that economic growth is positively correlated with inflation. An increase in the economic growth of a point is followed by inflation of 0.28 points. Thus, a gain of economic growth is a source of inflation in the zone. The similar effect is also analysed in Table 4 or study to determine the impact of inflation on economic growth.

The devaluation of the CFA franc in January 1994 had a high positive impact (6.84 in (1)) on the level of inflation in the WAEMU zone. This devaluation has allowed an increase in the general price level of 28.89% in 1994.

Moreover, since the countries of the WAEMU exchange a lot with the euro zone of which certain economies belong to the G20 and since the CFA franc is pegged to the euro the price of the European market will have a significant effect on domestic prices of manufactured food and products. An increase of productivity in these economies with comparison to the economies of WAEMU synonymous with a decrease in the relative productivity could appear on the prices for domestic consumption, with a much greater impact than the share of direct import of food is higher. Therefore, a decrease in the relative productivity leads to higher prices therefore an inflationary situation.

An increase in total government spending by one seems to have negative and statistically significant effects (estimate 3) on the inflation rate of around 13.86.

**TABLE 3: MISALIGNMENT AND INFLATION FROM 1985 TO 2014 (AVERAGE OF SIX YEARS)**

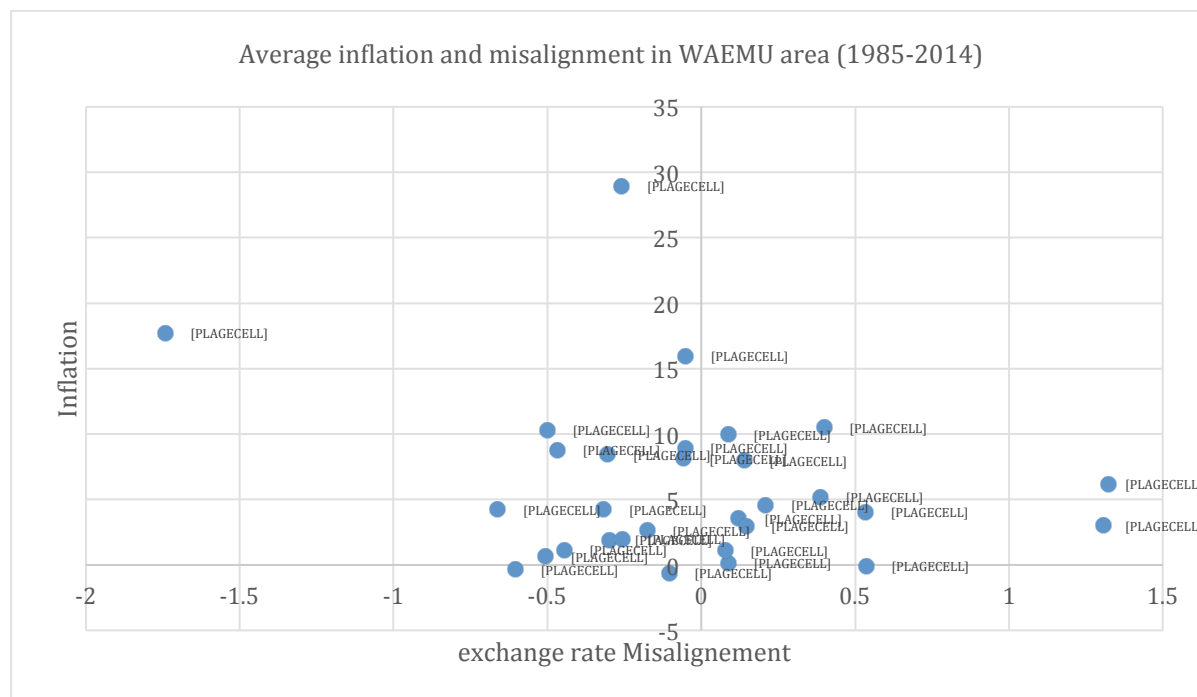
	(1) Inflation rate	(2) Inflation rate	(3) Inflation rate
Lagged Inflation	<b>-0.550<sup>***</sup></b> (0.0259)	<b>-0.586<sup>***</sup></b> (0.0332)	<b>-0.584<sup>***</sup></b> (0.0862)
Misalignment	-1.066 (0.917)	-0.527 (0.910)	-0.375 (1.146)
misalignment of volatility	<b>-1.239<sup>***</sup></b> (0.213)	<b>-1.050<sup>**</sup></b> (0.368)	-1.107 (1.138)
GDP growth	0.288 (0.242)	0.00554 (0.282)	-0.222 (0.442)
Output gap	0.00101 (0.000670)	0.00104 (0.000716)	
Investment	1.420 (1.353)	0.930 (1.632)	-2.243 (3.677)
degree of openness	-5.216 (5.398)	-2.445 (5.384)	-9.027 (9.560)
Government spending	-10.14 (7.452)	-6.512 (6.949)	-13.86 <sup>**</sup> (6.093)
Population growth	1.315 (0.714)		
dum94	<b>6.848<sup>***</sup></b> (1.213)	<b>7.730<sup>***</sup></b> (1.152)	
Relative productivity		-25.38 (18.29)	-21.88 (62.39)
_cons	-0.0336 (0.463)	0.341 (0.386)	3.240 (1.591)
<i>N</i>	32	32	32
<i>F</i>	394.9	44.44	10.24

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Source: Author

**FIGURE 7: EVOLUTION INFLATION MISALIGNMENT IN WAEMU AREA (1985-2014)**



Source: Author by estimation data

### 2.3.3 Misalignment and economic growth

The estimation results (from three (3) estimates) of the misalignment effect on growth are shown in Table 4. From the estimate with the GMM, the autocorrelation test of second order Arellano and Bond materialized by 0.26 scalars; 0.22 and 0.39 according to estimates (1), (2) and (3) do not reject the hypothesis of no autocorrelation of second order. The Sargan over-identification test and Hansen obtained from Table 4 with p-value = 1 shows that the null hypothesis  $H_0$  of validity of the over-identifying restrictions cannot be rejected. The result is that the instruments used for estimation are validated inducing the validity of the results.

These results indicate that the estimated coefficients are negative, statistically significant and robust for variables delayed GDP volatility in the output gap, inflation, population growth.

In general, the results suggest that an appreciation of 10 degree point misalignment results in a decrease in the GDP growth rate by 0.36 points. In the event of volatility rate misalignment of the real exchange rate, the impact on growth is stronger. Following a volatile misalignment of 1 point misalignment rate, economic growth decreases by 0.86 points. These results show the negative impact that the deteriorating competitiveness of the region on the economic growth of various eight (8) countries of the WAEMU zone. A Gain of competitiveness has a positive impact on economic growth. Rodrik (2008) found in the case of China that undervaluation of their currency is accompanied by a revival of economic growth of around 1.35% over the period of five years.

As in most studies, the impact of inflation on economic growth in WAEMU countries over the period of study is negative and significant. Any increase in inflation of 1% leads to a reduction in economic growth by 0.72%.

**TABLE 4: MISALIGNMENT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH 1985-2014 (AVERAGE OF SIX YEARS)**

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Dependent variable	Real GDP growth	Real GDP growth	Real GDP growth
retarded Real GDP growth	-0.933 <sup>**</sup> (0.245)	-1.041 <sup>**</sup> (0.209)	-0.866 <sup>**</sup> (0.195)
Misalignment	-0.360 (0.328)	-0.144 (0.245)	0.0638 (0.473)
misalignment of volatility	-0.860 <sup>*</sup> (0.404)	-0.861 (0.466)	-0.898 (0.510)
Relative productivity	-83.96 <sup>**</sup> (27.66)	-76.11 <sup>***</sup> (13.53)	-60.18 (33.18)
exchange rates	2.092 <sup>*</sup> (1.049)	2.263 <sup>**</sup> (0.883)	1.842 (1.184)
Government spending	-5.502 <sup>*</sup> (2.412)	-2.984 (2.796)	-1.930 (4.004)
Inflation	-0.728 <sup>**</sup> (0.229)	-0.597 <sup>**</sup> (0.238)	-0.671 <sup>**</sup> (0.278)
Square inflation	0.00967 <sup>*</sup> (0.00435)	0.00740 (0.00487)	0.00882 <sup>*</sup> (0.00418)
Dummy 94	3.480 <sup>**</sup> (1.070)	2.966 <sup>**</sup> (1.108)	3.236 <sup>**</sup> (1.080)
degree of openness			3.269 (3.868)
degree of openness	-0.550 (3.036)		
Net Foreign asset			0.0569 (0.128)
Const	18.63 (15.44)	9.189 (7.156)	6.582 (9.823)
<i>N</i>	32	32	32
<i>l.meanpibcr-1</i>	-1.93 <sup>***</sup>	-2.00 <sup>***</sup>	-1.86 <sup>***</sup>
<i>AR(2)</i>	0.268	0.22	0.39
<i>Hansen Test</i>	1.00	1.00	1.00

Standard errors in parentheses

<sup>\*</sup>  $p < 0.10$ , <sup>\*\*</sup>  $p < 0.05$ , <sup>\*\*\*</sup>  $p < 0.001$

Source: Author

### 2.3.4 Misalignment and policy mix

WAEMU being fixed peg to the French franc and after the euro, the result is that the degree of misalignment of the CFA is largely explained by securing the CFA to the Euro (which generally experienced real instability in recent years) and the inability of the central bank to ease monetary and financial conditions under the trilemma it is facing.

Certainly over post devaluation period, the inflation rate has been mastered and there is a consensus among economists that there is no way to reduce the long-term inflation rate without eventually reduce the growth rate of the money supply.

However, the optimal strategy would consist in having flexibility in the conduct of monetary policy in order to maintain an external stability which will help reduce the sacrifice ratio in order to achieve the desirable level of unemployment and adequate welfare. Indeed, the most important post devaluation misalignments of real exchange rate were achieved between 2001 - 2005 and in 2011. That of 2011 having followed the subprime crisis has

caused speculation risk of further devaluation of the FCFA. They are largely due to the rise of the euro against the dollar, the euro dollar exchange rate has reached the level of 1.60 in 2008. In addition the marginal efficiency of capital is lower in WAEMU than in the majority of emerging countries and industrialized countries.

Also, the relative investment ratio must exceed 100 on average to significantly improve competitiveness.

Unquestionably the policy mix in the WAEMU zone has focused on the prudent orientation of monetary and fiscal policies of controlling public spending that the area has practiced on post devaluation period to display favourable inflation differentials in Union, which in 2011 reached 3.3% compared to South Africa, 9.4% in Nigeria and 11.9% in Ghana. But it could not stabilize the external balance to maintain the competitiveness of the area. If we assume that the reduction in inflation will result in the short term in an upward effect on the sacrifice ratio and the long term effect will be beneficial to production one would hope that in the future the area will prosper. But when looking at the performance of West African counties non member of WAEMU particularly Ghana and Nigeria and especially how these countries use the political and budgetary serving their economies, the issue of securing the CFA franc and the role of the policy mix remains relevant. For example in Ghana over the same period, the depreciation of the cedi against the CFA franc is explained by the importance of the overall budget deficit (about 8.0% of GDP), financed by advances from the Ghanaian banking system more generally by the expansive monetary policy, resulting in an increase in the money supply over 30% per year over the period.

In Nigeria, the poor performance of the course of the naira in the foreign exchange market is due to the alignment policy on the rate of the parallel market and the decline in reserves related to the contraction of revenues from oil exports. Moreover, the worsening budget deficit due to the contraction in tax revenues, combined with a high level of public expenditure and the conduct of accommodative monetary policy contributed to the depreciation of the naira.

## Conclusion

The work conducted in this article confirms that over the period 1985-2014, the WAEMU zone has generally been an overvalued real exchange rate and thus a loss of competitiveness with sequential levels per period. Indeed, the results suggest that the continued overvaluation of the real effective exchange rate has led to a loss of economic growth in the area.

The main conclusion is that such misalignment leading to overvaluation was not generated by the current configuration of policy mix. However, non-accommodative monetary and financial conditions coupled with inappropriate exchange rate policy with regard to the structural evolution of the euro area appear to be responsible for this misalignment. This Conclusion challenges the Central Bank to think about either finding an optimal system of monetary management so that the disadvantages of a strong franc CFA does not outweigh the benefits or finding the exchange rate regime adapted to economic conditions, monetary and financial zone.

In any case for the WAEMU zone, the trend of the appreciation of the CFA franc and misalignment of the real exchange rate in the short term calls for a reorientation of the policy mix configuration in order to stimulate a real continuous depreciation after this long period of appreciation. Therefore, one might consider a policy mix of the WAEMU zone characterized by a restrictive fiscal policy but focused on the financing of important reforms coupled with flexible monetary policy designed to make monetary and financial conditions more accommodative.



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