West Africa: Governance and Security in a Changing Region

Africa Program Working Paper Series

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Foreword

IPI is pleased to introduce a new series of working papers on regional capacities to respond to security challenges in Africa. The broad range of United Nations, African Union, and subregional peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding initiatives in Africa underscore a new sense of multilayered partnership in the search for the peaceful resolution of conflicts in Africa. As the total number of conflicts on the continent has been significantly reduced in the past decade, there is widespread recognition of the opportunities for a more stable and peaceful future for Africa. But there is also a profound awareness of the fragility of recent peace agreements, whether in Kenya, Liberia, or Côte d'Ivoire. Furthermore, continued violence in the Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Zimbabwe; the long absence of a viable central government in Somalia; and continued tensions between Ethiopia and Eritrea—to name only a few cases—reflect the legacy of unresolved historic disputes and ongoing power struggles.

The United Nations Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) has selected Burundi and Sierra Leone for its first efforts, and will shortly be addressing the security challenges facing Guinea-Bissau which has become a major transit point for narcotics traffic between South America and Europe. Yet, the impact of the PBC on promoting good governance and facilitating economic growth remains to be determined. In sum, progress toward sustainable peace and meaningful economic development in Africa remains checkered and uncertain.

On April 11-12, 2008, IPI and the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre co-hosted a meeting of African civil society representatives and academics in Accra, Ghana, to consider "Security Challenges in Africa: Regional Capacities to Respond"; and on June 1-3, 2008, IPI held a seminar in cooperation with the Austrian Ministry of Defense and the Austrian Ministry of European and International Affairs entitled "Coping with Crisis in Africa: Strengthening Multilateral Capacity for Peace and Security." Each meeting sought to identify the most important trends facing the continent and to propose effective and far-reaching strategic approaches to meet the new challenges facing Africa in the twenty-first century. Five key points emerged from these discussions:

1) Multiple global challenges in a rapidly changing world confront Africa. No part of the globe suffers more from global warming; no population is more at risk from rising food and energy prices; and Africans are severely affected by the inequities of the current international trading system. At the same time, Africans must face the consequences of misgovernance, corruption, interstate and intrastate conflicts of the post-Cold War era, and the urgent need to repair or replace failed or failing states.

2) Which Africa—2008, 2020, or 2050? While addressing the crises of today, there is an urgent need to look into the future. By 2050 there will be an estimated 1.9 billion people on the continent. The pace of international change is accelerating, but the development of institutional capacities in the African Union and African subregional organizations to respond to new challenges remains challenging and slow. How can the strengthening of these capacities be accelerated? How can comparative advantages among international, continental, and subregional organizations be identified and strengthened?

3) Whose Responsibility? Negotiating the proper balance between the responsibility of the state and the responsibility of the international community in the face of intrastate ethnic violence remains a topic of vigorous discussion. Yet, it is now widely accepted, in the aftermath of the tragedies of the 1990s, that the international community cannot simply stand aside in the face of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. The AU Constitutive Act of 2000 established the right of intervention by the Union to stop genocide, war crimes, or crimes against humanity occurring in one of its member states. And

in September 2005, a summit of world leaders endorsed the concept of the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP). But RtoP is not primarily about military intervention. The idea of "sovereignty as responsibility" puts the stress on building the capacity of states to prevent these crimes and violations in the first place. All states need to be responsible for the safety and wellbeing of their populations, but if they manifestly fail to do so, the broader international community must act. The ongoing violence in Darfur and the difficulties in the deployment of UNAMID (African Union/United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur) reflect how difficult the transformation of words into deeds remains. What more needs to be done to give the African Union, the regional economic communities, and African states the capacity to implement these commitments? And what can international actors do to assist them in this regard?

4) New Actors, Old Conflicts: Key European states, the European Union, and the United States have evinced new interest in strengthening African conflict management capacities. At the same time, China and India, the new actors on the continent, are making major investments in African infrastructure and economic development. While cognizant of African perceptions, arising from Europe's colonial past in Africa, there is an opportunity to forge new partnerships based on contemporary realities. To what extent can these divergent interests be harmonized? To what extent can historic suspicion and distrust be replaced by cooperative agendas based on a common interest in ending old conflicts and producing sustainable economic agendas?

5) Peacekeeping is Not Enough—Creating the Bridge to Peacebuilding: Deployment of UN and African Union peacekeepers to address ongoing conflicts is important but insufficient to meet the challenges ahead. Nor is governmental and international institutional engagement sufficient. The agenda for postconflict reconstruction will be long and arduous. Incentives and encouragement—material and moral—should be created for the involvement of African civil society, international nongovernmental organizations, and the African diaspora in the future of the continent. This will require new openness on the part of the African Union, regional economic communities, and African governments, as well as on the part of outside actors.

Many if not all of the most critical challenges to human and international security today have particular relevance to the African continent. Africa's future will be directly affected by the ongoing international debates over climate change and food insecurity; over how to respond to increased population pressures and the demands of international migration; and over the global impact of the health pandemics that have taken an enormous economic as well as human toll on the continent.

These papers form a part of the IPI Africa Program's four year initiative of research and policy facilitation intended to generate fresh thinking about the multiple challenges facing the African continent in the coming years and decades. Each of the five papers in this series seeks to address one or more aspects of the issues outlined above from the perspective of challenges facing one particular region: North Africa, Southern Africa, Central Africa, Eastern Africa, and West Africa. Yet as the series illustrates, there are many commonalities among the crises and challenges in each region. It is my hope that as you read this paper, and the others in the series, you will give thoughtful consideration to how all of us can best contribute to strengthening African continental and regional capacities in the interest of Africa itself and its many friends around the globe.

Terje Rød-Larsen
President, *International Peace Institute*

Introduction

This paper addresses the challenges to human and regional security in the territory covered by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).[1] It examines causal factors and their effects, profiles the actors shaping the security environment, and describes the nature and impacts of their interventions. Finally, it projects possible future scenarios based on the current security dynamics. The paper examines the geopolitical environment of West Africa, with emphasis on the strategic importance of the region and the vulnerabilities emanating from its location. Within this context, it discusses the roles of local, regional, and international actors in the evolving regional security architecture, sifting through their actions, motivations, and interventions. It analyzes the attempts by national, regional, and international institutions to transform the security environment, highlighting their roles, strengths, and weaknesses; and it projects various security scenarios, proposing policy options to meet the challenges that these scenarios present.

Within the United Nations system, the term "human security" has been stretched beyond the primordial notion of "security" to encompass national, regional, and international interventions on any issue remotely related to the promotion of the organization's concept of international security—"freedom from fear" and "freedom from want." The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) divides human security into seven components: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security.[2] For his part, former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan reckons that freedom from want, freedom from fear, and the freedom of future generations to inherit a healthy natural environment together constitute "the interrelated building blocks of human—and therefore national—security."[3] For the purposes of this paper, "regional security" describes the common political, economic, and security arrangements that a contiguous transnational space of sovereign states

with a degree of "pooled" sovereignty based on shared fears and expectations, may implement to promote mutual assistance and ensure the collective well-being of its population, institutions, and values, and their protection from perceived threats.[4]

Geostrategic Dimensions of Security in West Africa

West Africa's complex security challenges are a function of three broad factors. The first set incorporates the region's natural resource endowments, the vulnerabilities inherent in its geographical location, and environmental and demographic factors. The second source of insecurity relates to internal and international governance processes. Finally, regional and external geopolitics exert distinct pressures on the region's security architecture.

The West Africa region, 4.7 million square kilometers in area, is more than twice the size of Western Europe. Its 6,000 kilometer coastal arc, which stretches from the upper reaches of Angola in south-west Africa to the lower reaches of Western Sahara to the north and washed by the Atlantic Ocean, embodies its value as an area of global geostrategic importance as well as its vulnerable security. The Gulf of Guinea is home to huge hydrocarbon deposits, making it a future resource to meet global energy needs. Nigeria's proven oil and gas reserves are estimated at 40-50 billion barrels. Indeed, the recent oil finds (estimated at 3 billion barrels off Cape Three Points in Ghana), reserves in Cote d'Ivoire, and the optimistic prognosis in the Mano River Union (MRU)[5] basin and Mali, are an indication that almost all the ECOWAS countries sit on huge oil and gas deposits. Besides its hydrocarbon riches, the Gulf is also a reservoir of rich fish stocks. Inland, West Africa is endowed with precious and strategic natural minerals, including gold, uranium, diamonds, and titanium. The lush, but dwindling, tropical rainforest belt stretching from Guinea in the west to Cameroon in the east accounts for more

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1 The Economic Community of West African States comprises Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo; Mauritania quit the organization in 2000.
2 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 1994* (New York: Oxford University Press), pp.24-25.
3 See United Nations, *Secretary-General Salutes International Workshop on Human Security in Mongolia,* UN Doc. SG/SM/7382, May 8-10, 2008.
4 For further definitional issues, see E. Adler and M. Barnett, eds., *Security Communities* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp.29-32.
5 The Mano River Union comprises Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.

than two thirds of global cocoa needs, while further north, the Savannah and Sahel regions are a major source of cotton, peanuts, and shea butter.

VULNERABILITIES IN THE GULF OF GUINEA

Maritime security in the territorial waters of West Africa is precarious. The material assets of the Nigerian navy, the largest and best equipped in the region, with 5,000 personnel and about 2,000 coastguards, consist of not more than fifteen warships, and its maritime reconnaissance capability is limited to four helicopters.[6] In November 2007, the Chief of Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Ganiyu Adekeye, appealed to the federal government to urgently revamp the naval facilities, pointing out that the country's "Naval Forward Operating Bases lacked basic facilities such as jetties, surveillance radars, shore batteries and mobile control towers."[7] The Ghanaian Navy is the second largest with 1,000 personnel. Much of Nigeria's maritime security prioritizes onshore security to police oil exploitation and shipment. There is little or no surveillance and interception capability beyond 100 nautical miles of the vast Gulf coastline, rendering it vulnerable to various forms of criminal activity, including piracy, poaching, and dumping of toxic waste. The sea routes also provide easy channels for arms and human trafficking.

By far though, drug trafficking constitutes the most serious immediate security threat to the region. While proximity and easy access to the Americas make the Gulf of Guinea a high-value source of low-sulfur oil for the US, the same factors coupled with lax maritime security have transformed the Gulf of Guinea into the favorite transshipment zone for the Colombian and other Latin American narcocartels and their local accomplices seeking less-protected routes into Europe and the US. In 2007 alone, security forces seized more than six metric tons of cocaine in the territorial waters, seaports, and airports in seven countries, namely Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, The

Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Mauritania, and Senegal. The largest single seizure occurred in Senegal, where the authorities uncovered a Latin American operation with 1.2 metric tons of cocaine destined for Europe.[8] Nigeria has also been cited as the transshipment point of approximately one-third of the heroin seized by US authorities.[9] According to international antitrafficking agencies, including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), US Drug Enforcement Administration, and INTERPOL, a growing criminal network is being forged between Latin American drug barons and European (mostly Spanish and Italian) and African criminal gangs to facilitate the triangular trade in narcotics.[10] Indeed, rogue security agents have been arrested in several countries in the region, including Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, and Nigeria, for collaborating with drug barons. Ghana's interior minister, Kwamena Bartels, has described as "alarming, police officers' involvement in the illicit trade when they were supposed to combat it."[11] In Guinea-Bissau, an emergent narcostate, the beleaguered government has been forced to adopt a "shoot-to-kill" policy against the barons and their accomplices in a desperate bid to reverse the trend. Thus far, West Africa has been used mainly as a transit point for the trade. While this represents a security threat in itself, the real tragedy will strike when, due to more stringent controls in Europe and the US, the region, particularly its restless violence-prone youth, is groomed into a narcoconsumer society. Already, statistics released by security agencies and medical sources attest to a growing use of Indian hemp, cocaine, and other narcotic drugs across the region. This could herald the emergence in the near future of narco-lords and turf battles in the region.

THE SAHEL-SAHARA DIVIDE

If securing West Africa's territorial waters is a matter of concern, the security challenges along its northern frontiers are even more daunting. The Sahel-Sahara divide that stretches from north-western Chad through northern Niger and Mali to

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6   See Mark J. Sorbara, "The United States and Maritime Security in the Gulf of Guinea," *Petroleum Africa*, July 2007, p.56. See also, International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1990-1991*, (London: Pergamon, 1990), p.139.

7   See Felix Nnamdi, "Overhaul the Navy Now – Naval Chief Tells FG," *The News*, Abuja, November 16, 2007, available at www.thenewsnig.com/zmagazine.

8   See "Drug Trafficking: An Alarming Human Security Threat," WARN Policy Paper, West Africa, September 12, 2007, p.1.

9   See J. Peter Pham, "Securing the New Strategic Gulf," *World Defense Review*, June 7, 2007.

10 See US Drug Enforcement Administration, "Statement before the House Judiciary Committee," September 21, 2006, available at www.dea.gov/pubs/cngrtest/ct092106.html.

11 Ghana Web, "Bartels admits Ghana transit point for drugs," available at www.ghanaweb.com, January 25, 2008.

WEST AFRICA

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Map No. 4242   UNITED NATIONS
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Department of Peacekeeping Operations
Cartographic Section

Mauritania (about 20 degrees north of the equator), epitomizes the rising challenges of complex emergencies in West Africa. The latest low-intensity conflicts in West Africa are located in this vulnerable belt. In Niger, the insurgent Tuareg group, *Mouvement Nigerien pour la Justice* (MNJ), is locked in a deadly conflict with the government over autonomy, uranium revenue, and the broken promises of resettlement following peace accords that ended an earlier rebellion in 1995. As in similar conflicts in the region over the last two decades, genuine grievances have been adulterated with banditry, terrorism, and trafficking in humans, drugs, and cigarettes to transform the Agadez region and other northern parts of Niger (and also the vast Kidal region of northern Mali) into the most insecure zones in West Africa today. As is often the case, external interests are fueling the unrest. Libya lays claim to 30,000 square kilometers of territory in northern Niger, and Niamey has often accused Tripoli of arming and sheltering its rebels. Also, ethnic affiliations make Algeria another favorite rear-base for the rebels.[12]

The porous nature of West Africa's northern borders and the proximity of the Sahel-Sahara divide to the troubled Maghreb states of Algeria and Morocco, as well as to the Middle East and the Persian Gulf, make the region most vulnerable to terrorist incursions, arms trafficking, and destabilization, and also to human trafficking and refugee flows from the conflict zones to the east in Sudan and Chad. The southward encroachment of the desert is adding an environmental dimension to the precarious livelihoods of the pastoralists and nomads, injecting an incendiary element into age-old conflicts with the sedentary farmers further south. In addition, common water sources are becoming an object of conflict across the region.

ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

West Africa is prone to extremes of climate change, alternating between severe cyclical droughts and heavy flooding. Erratic climate change has visited a heavy toll on human life, food security, and health across the region in recent months. Heavy rainfall in the Sahel region of West Africa in 2003 was accompanied by increased breeding by desert locusts that devastated thousands of hectares of crops in Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, and Niger in 2004. Between 2005 and 2006, the knock-on effect of the locust invasion and drought in the same

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12 "Conflit armé dans le Nord du Niger : analyse des enjeux géopolitiques et impacts sur le cadre démocratique," Rapport de synthèse de la Journée de réflexion organisée par l ' ANDDH et Alternative Espaces Citoyens, Niamey, August 11, 2007, p.9.

region led to severe famine in Niger. The beginning of 2007 saw the drying up of the Volta River in Ghana, the source of irrigation and electricity for the country and its immediate neighbors to the north and east, only to be followed by torrential rains between June and September 2007. The ensuing flooding and waterborne diseases left hundreds of people dead, close to half a million homeless, and thousands of hectares of crops washed away in the Savannah regions of Ghana, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, and Nigeria.

Such environmental hazards are in part the result of heavy deforestation, particularly in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, and irresponsible mining practices in the diamondiferous areas and goldfields in the region. In addition, gas-flaring and oil-drilling in Nigeria and the widespread use of dangerous insecticides across the region have resulted in serious water and air pollution. According to Esther Obeng Dapaah, Ghana's Minister of Lands, Forestry, and Mines, Ghana's forest cover which was about 8 million hectares in 1960, had dwindled to less than 2 million hectares by 2007, due largely to over-logging by timber contractors, excessive surface mining, and unregulated conversion of natural forest into agricultural land.[13]

Given the fact that warlords and unscrupulous politicians in the region have often manipulated the rivalries associated with the scramble over scarce natural resources to incite ethnic groups to violence, the continued destruction of arable land and water sources through man-made and natural disasters in the Sahel region adds an incendiary element to simmering tensions. It is not improbable that land and river wars will come to dominate the local and cross-border conflict landscape in the region within the next decade.

Internal and External Dimensions

There is no gainsaying that internal politics, regional power-plays, and bad governance nurture the acute insecurity in West Africa. Richly endowed with human and material resources, the region remains one of the most impoverished in the world for reasons related mainly to a dearth of leadership

and poor political and resource governance capacity.[14] Also, the notion of "territorial integrity," so jealously guarded by member states, sounds hollow when tested against the fact that all the countries in the region are stuck in a stage of incomplete statemaking, with national borders and internal enclaves constantly under contestation from within and without. Thus, much as governance processes within individual countries remain the key drivers of security dynamics in West Africa, the actions of the regional hegemon and other subregional powers also exert a decisive influence on the regional security architecture.

THE ROLE OF INTERNAL GOVERNANCE PROCESSES

Empirical data from conflict zones in West Africa speak unequivocally to the correlation between bad governance and political instability. Prior to the end of the Cold War, governance in much of West Africa was the pastime of an elite civil-military diarchy. These regimes were maintained by clan allegiance, patronage, and repressive security rackets, which were sustained by criminal networks and illicit businesses. In Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau, governance became synonymous with the imposition of a "violent peace" character-ized by institutional corruption and greed, zero infrastructure development, hatred and discrimi-nation along ethnic lines, as well as the alienation and consequent disillusionment of the youth. These factors combined to undermine the integrity of the state, sparking violent conflicts whose effects reverberated across the region. The erosion of state institutions and infrastructure in turn led to the collapse of the formal economy and the rise of the shadow state in which warlordism, impunity, and criminality flourished. Challenges to bad governance from below provoked instability first in Benin and Mali, and later, civil wars that ravaged much of the MRU basin, Guinea-Bissau, and Côte d'Ivoire. These wars exposed the soft underbelly of the security apparatuses of the repressive regimes as, for the first time, civilian warlords, militants, and mercenaries became a serious factor threat-ening the very survival of the region's hitherto state-centric security apparatuses. The ensuing violent conflicts unleashed many of the latent security

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13 See Ghana Web, "General News," available at www.ghanaweb.com, November 24, 2007.
14 UNDP, *Human Development Report 2007/2008: Fighting Climate Change—Human Solidarity in a Divided World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

threats in the region.

The threats included a clash of identities based on skewed notions of citizenship (Côte d'Ivoire), and ethnic and clan-based animosities (Liberia and Sierra Leone). Beyond that, they revealed the extent of the youth crisis and the propensity for natural resource mismanagement. The manipulation of these weaknesses by warlords, corrupt government officials, and shady business and mercenary networks[15] occurred in the unstable context of the immediate post-Cold War era. This provoked acute insecurity in the region that manifested itself on the one hand in collapsed institutions and infrastructure; food insecurity; and environmental and public health hazards; and, on the other, through resource grabs; refugee flows; human trafficking and drug trafficking; the proliferation and criminal use of weapons; and massive violations of human rights.

In countries spared the scourge of civil wars, unrest is nevertheless spurred on by the opulent extremes of the tiny elite minority compared to the abject poverty of the vast majority, the unjust distribution of profits from abundant natural resources, criminal neglect of the social sector and the environment, endemic corruption, and the perceived discrimination against minorities. Banditry and challenges to state authority in large swathes of territory within ECOWAS are notable, especially in the Niger Delta, northern Niger, and Casamance in Senegal. Disputes over land, water, and chieftaincy have claimed hundreds of lives in low-intensity conflicts in northern Ghana, Mali, and western Côte d'Ivoire, among others. The conflicts have created major human and regional security threats through spillover effects and the export of bad practices that have blighted the region's development perspectives. Thus, the Casamance conflict has embroiled neighboring Guinea-Bissau and The Gambia just as the export of worst practice from the Liberian conflict has informed the acute insecurity in western Côte d'Ivoire. In the same way, the insurgency in northern Niger has influenced the resurgence of separatism and banditry in northern Mali among the local Tuareg.

DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESSES AS OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

Even though civil wars grabbed the headlines in the 1990s, democratization processes have been gathering pace since 1990, and today, all sitting presidents in the region have been either elected or confirmed in their positions through the ballot box. This stabilizing factor is creating the required environment for internal investment and economic growth, with statistics indicating an average annual growth of around 5 percent in a number of democratizing states.[16] However, the seeds of instability can also be firmly embedded in these formal democratic processes.

The challenges are economic and ultimately political, because accountable resource governance is predicated on good political governance. Politically, with the possible exceptions of Benin, Cape Verde, and Ghana, democracy is in retreat in much of the region. Some of the regimes bear a greater resemblance to constitutional monarchies, autocracies, and virtual one-party states than to emerging democracies; at best, they are illiberal democracies. It should be remembered that such regimes created the conditions for the emergence of military dictatorships in the late 1960s through the 1980s. Other threats to the democracy project in the region include the unacceptably high cost of political campaigns and electoral administration. They also include the temptation by incumbents to cling on to power, the gullibility and opportunism of sections of civil society and the media, as well as the absence of internal democracy, and organizational and financial capabilities within the political parties, in particular those belonging to the opposition.

On the economic front, democracy is proving notoriously slow in translating "popular" mandates and economic growth into development dividends. Economic growth in the region, reputed to be about 5 percent, masks serious structural weaknesses in production relations. With the current average annual population growth rate of about 3.5 percent, the region would need to grow its economy at the rate of 7 percent or more to be able to significantly impact on poverty. Most troublesome, outside raw

15 See A-F. Musah and J. K. Fayemi, *Mercenaries: An African Security Dilemma* (London: Pluto, 2000).
16 "Towards the Achievement of ECOWAS Vision 2020," ECOWAS Commission Interim Report 2008, Abuja, May 2008, pp. 7 and 13.

material exports, almost all the West African states engage mainly in speculative activities rather than in the production of goods and services, and are actually producing less wealth than they did three or four decades ago.[17]

Meanwhile, the region is experiencing the fastest population growth in the world. From 120 million in 1975, West Africa's population is projected to hit 430 million by 2020, with 45 percent under the age of fifteen.[18] Across the region, educational facilities chronically lag behind the growth in school enrollment figures at the lower levels, resulting in debilitating deficiencies and gender discrepancies. Coupled with the dearth of employment opportunities for the youth (conservative estimates put youth unemployment at 60-70 percent), these factors cast a dark shadow on the future prospects of the region. Against this backdrop, the region is steadily losing its medical and engineering professionals mainly to Europe and the US in an unchecked brain-drain that is seriously undermining health delivery, infrastructure development, and maintenance. Across West Africa, life expectancy stands at forty-six years. Thus, though relative progress has been made on good governance, all the West African states except two remain in the Low Human Development category, with five member states propping up the global league table of 177 states surveyed, according to the 2006 UNDP Human Development Report.[19]

Reversing the potential for human security threats to arise out of the democratization process calls for concerted interventions by all stakeholders—states, civil society, the private sector, ECOWAS, and the international community—directed at strengthening both the democratic and economic processes. In the *Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance* (2001), ECOWAS produced a normative document to guide democratic practice.[20] Its domestication and application in member states, however, remain suspect.

NIGERIA AND THE "ENCLAVE POWERBROKERS"

A few ECOWAS member states exert disproportionate influence on the security dynamics in the region for a number of reasons. While some play a leadership role at the regional level, others influence processes either through their status or the best or worst practices that their leaders project within smaller clusters of states (enclaves). The sheer size of Nigeria, with its unrivaled military and economic might and institutionalized Afrocentric foreign policy doctrine, make it the undisputed regional hegemon. Two other categories of medium-sized states also exert considerable influence on regional security trajectories by virtue of their assumed status within their immediate geographic area: they are the "enclave powerbrokers." The influence of the first group, which includes Senegal, Guinea, Ghana, and Côte d'Ivoire, derives from its members' relative might within their regional enclaves and their ability to form strategic alliances; they may thus project enduring influences. Other enclave powerbrokers, such as Liberia (under Charles Taylor) and Burkina Faso (under the successive leaderships of Thomas Sankara and Blaise Compaore), owe their status to the personality of their respective leaders. Their power and influence are personalized rather than institutionalized and, therefore, ephemeral: a maverick leader may emerge in any given country and transform that country into a temporary enclave powerbroker.

Nigeria's Regional Hegemony: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

Nigeria's role in regional security in West Africa is immense. As the key driver of integration, it has been the decisive force behind much of the progress of ECOWAS over the last fifteen years. It was the central pillar behind the region's daring military interventions in the MRU in the 1990s, in terms of political commitment, funding, troop, and materiel contribution. At one stage, the country was reputed to be spending up to $1 million a day to sustain the

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17 "West Africa: Analysis of Social and Economic Data, 1960-2001," OECD-Club du Sahel, 2004.

18 Ibid.

19 United Nations Development Programme, *Beyond Scarcity: Power, Poverty and the Global Water Crisis*, Human Development Report 2006 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

20 ECOWAS Executive Secretariat, *Protocol A/SP1/12/01 on Democracy and Good Governance Supplementary to the Protocol relating to the Mechanism For Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security*, Dakar, December 2001, available at www.comm.ecowas.int/sec/en/protocoles/Protocol%20on%20good-governance-and-democracy-rev-5EN.pdf.

intervention by the ECOWAS Cease Fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in Liberia (1990-1997). The country committed enormous financial, military, and diplomatic resources to the seminal Liberian elections in 2005 to ensure their success. It threatened would-be spoilers with reprisals and convinced the eventual loser, George Weah, to accept the outcome and restrain his followers. It also led the processes to stabilize the political situation in Guinea-Bissau (2003) and Togo (2005). The country hosts the major institutions of ECOWAS and is by far the largest contributor to the regional body's budget, accounting for more than 60 percent.

The positive influence that Nigeria brings to the region is, however, often at odds with the social, political, and security situation in the country. The eighth leading producer of oil in the world, Nigeria exhibits the worst income disparities in the region, with only 1 percent of the elites controlling 80 percent of accrued oil wealth, almost 70 percent of which is held in foreign banks, while close to 80 percent of the population live below the UN-designated poverty threshold of $1 per day.[21]

The April 2007 elections in the country were invariably described as the worst in its history. The ruling People's Democratic Party was accused of *a priori* targeting and "capturing" almost all the seats in Nigeria's thirty-six states before going through the motions of an electoral charade that has been described as naked political armed robbery. The ruling elite only relinquished opposition strongholds that demonstrated a credible resolve to fight back, such as Lagos and Kano. Indeed, over a year after the elections, the election tribunals are still annulling the worst election results one after another. By June 2008, ten gubernatorial, twelve senatorial, eleven House of Representative, and fifteen state assembly results had been overturned. However, by-elections conducted in the aftermath of the annulments have so far returned to power the guilty incumbents, who had had a year to consolidate their influence. In February 2008, the courts upheld the results of the presidential election,

narrowly averting a constitutional crisis and a possible security meltdown. Contrasting Nigeria's regional posture with its internal political economy, a politician described the country as having an uncanny habit of exporting what is in scarce supply in the country (electricity to Benin and Togo, conflict resolution and democracy to Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, and Togo), while importing what it has in abundance (petroleum products)!

The inability over the years of organized civil society to make any significant impact in the struggle for democracy and accountability could be attributed to the fact that there appears to be an umbilical chord linking almost all identifiable social forces in the country, in particular the emerging private sector, to the all-powerful oil industry which, in turn, is jealously controlled by the state apparatus which, when need be, can turn off the oxygen that animates such reformist-minded and opposition forces.

In response to the extreme inequality and political illegitimacy, militancy and crime are challenging the status quo. The restive Niger Delta is seething with anger at the despicable social and environmental neglect in the oil-producing region and has responded by bunkering oil, stockpiling sophisticated weapons, launching widespread attacks on oil installations, and kidnapping foreign oil workers. Criminal gangs have added spice to the political struggles led by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Niger Delta Liberation Front (NDLF), the Niger Delta Volunteer Front (NDVF), and other established politically-motivated groups. There are obvious regional dimensions to the conflict linked to the pivotal role of Nigeria in regional security matters. Reports of copycat oil bunkering in Ghana and at refineries in Cote d'Ivoire[22] are creeping into the media, and anecdotal evidence has traced some known militants from the wound-down wars in the Mano River basin to the Niger Delta, where they are reported to be teaming up with criminal networks.[23] Small arms and light weapons from the conflicts in the Great Lakes Region, the Sahel, and the MRU

21 See Jerome Afeikhena, "Managing Oil Rent for Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction in Africa," paper presented at the UNU-WIDER Jubilee Conference, "Thinking Ahead: The Future of Development Economics," Helsinki, June 17-18, 2005, available at http://website1.wider.unu.edu/conference/conference-2005-3/conference-2005-3-papers/Jerome.pdf.
22 "ECOWAS, Oil Conflicts, and the Geopolitics of Ungoverned Space of the Gulf of Guinea," concept paper, CDD and WACSOF Civil Society Consultative Forum on Security in the Gulf States of West Africa, Port Harcourt, June 6-7, 2008.
23 From discussions with Niger Delta militants, Liberian refugees, and a UK Department for International Development (DFID) official in Nigeria.

have found their way to the region to fuel insurgency and banditry.[24] Ethnic and religious strife has also become a common feature in mixed communities across the country. Radical Islam has recently been on the ascendancy in the north with several state governments imposing *sharia* laws. Armed robbery and carjacking have become rampant and entrenched in the big cities and on the highways. In response, vigilante groups are mushrooming in the communities while sophisti-cated security gadgets, tracking devices, private security, and armor-plated vehicles have become standard accessories for the rich. With almost two-thirds of the inhabitants of West Africa living in Nigeria, should the country implode, the region would go up in flames with it.

Nigeria's internal turmoil has often sent jitters across the region. For this reason, while the country's military and economic strength confer on it the responsibility to lead the region, it clearly lacks the moral consistency to inspire. However, compelling mitigating factors call for optimism. Tentative steps have been taken in recent years to combat graft and a few oligarchs have been dragged to the law courts to face corruption charges. On the economic front, there are tangible signs that the country is diversifying away from the oil industry into light manufacturing, banking, and service delivery. Also, a culture of disclosure about foreign currency reserves from oil exports and revenue allocations is gradually taking root in the body politic. Politically, there is growing consensus among the elites across the country on the need to preserve the territorial integrity of the nation at all costs. Further, Nigeria boasts relatively strong security and judicial institutions and a robust media landscape, which make it more resilient to a possible security meltdown. These circumstances bode well for regional security.

The "Enclave Powerbrokers" and Regional Security

Guinea acts as the ultimate powerbroker and "big brother" in the MRU. Besides Nigeria, Guinea was the main backbone of the Sierra Leonean govern-ment's war against Foday Sankoh's Revolutionary United Front rebellion in the 1990s. The late

President Lansana Conte was instrumental, alongside US intelligence, in cobbling together disparate anti-Taylor elements into the insurgency group, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), in 1999 as the arrowhead of the coalition that pushed Charles Taylor out of office in 2003.[25] Though the country managed to avoid outright war, it suffered greatly during the MRU turbulence through refugee flows and cross-border incursions. For over two years now, Guinea has been embroiled in an internal power struggle amid authoritarian rule, economic meltdown, and grave human rights violations.

It is against this backdrop that, after more than twenty-four years of rule, President Conte died on December 22, 2008, having succumbed to a protracted illness. A day after his death, military officers led by Captain Moussa "Dadis" Camara staged a coup and quickly took control of the country, promising to reestablish constitutional rule by the end of 2010. Both ECOWAS and The African Union condemned the coup and suspended Guinea's membership for carrying out an unconsti-tutional change of government in violation of the AU Constitutive Act and the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance. ECOWAS further ordered the junta to restore constitutional order within a year. And on January 15, 2009, the coup leaders established a new military/civilian government in which military officers control the key ministries.

Beyond its borders, Guinea is locked in a territo-rial imbroglio with its recent ally, Sierra Leone, which is accusing Conakry of annexing part of its territory—the Yenga strip—along the states' common border. Since acrimoniously breaking away from French rule in 1958, Guinea has been fiercely nationalistic but also integrationist. The country has been a strong and consistent advocate of regional integration but has often staunchly resisted any "interference" in its internal affairs from the outside, including ECOWAS. For this reason, ECOWAS has struggled to influence the internal dynamics in Guinea.

Côte d'Ivoire was the main powerbroker in Francophone West Africa until the outbreak of civil

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24 See Abdel-Fatau Musah, "Small Arms: A Time Bomb under West Africa's Democratization Process," *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* 9, no.1 (2002): 239-250, see p. 249.

25 Conversation with a top commander of the erstwhile Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, Accra, July 2007.

war in 2002. The country has a history of influence peddling in neighboring states, including its role in the Nigerian civil war of the late 1960s, the overthrow of Ghana's president Kwame Nkrumah in 1966, and the invasion of Liberia in 1989. Even at the height of its own civil war, it still wielded considerable economic influence on the Francophone countries.

Senegal behaves as the overlord state in the Senegambia, a volatile enclave that has often produced maverick leaders and simmering tensions, and which incorporates Cape Verde, The Gambia, and Guinea-Bissau. Mauritania has also often been classified within this enclave. With the recent troubles in Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal also aspired to replace Côte d'Ivoire as the leader of Francophone West Africa. A major contributor to international and regional peacekeeping efforts, Senegal has often striven to punch above its weight in regional matters. With a population of about 10 million and bereft of any economy of scale, the country nonetheless put itself forward as a rival to the continent's big powers for a permanent seat at the proposed revamped UN Security Council. Many analysts have accused the country, which was chair of ECOWAS at the outbreak of the Ivoirian crisis in 2002, of undermining regional efforts to contain that crisis and have blamed the ill-fated Linas-Marcoussis Accords, which were mooted by Senegal and France, for prolonging the conflict. The country has waged a war with Mauritania and has invaded The Gambia and Guinea-Bissau in the past, mainly over control of water access or to prop up embattled friendly leaders. The Gambia has often accused Senegal of harboring intentions to annex the small country that is almost entirely surrounded by its bigger neighbor, and giving sanctuary to dissidents opposed to the regime of Gambian president Yaya Jammeh. The two neighbors have often clashed over access to the Gambia River. President Yaya Jammeh has had running battles with his Senegalese counterpart, Abdoulaye Wade, in the last few years, and has consistently opposed the wish of Senegal to construct a bridge over the river to provide the shortest and most convenient link between the latter's southern and northern territories.

The force of personality of individual leaders has often been critical in the transformation of security dynamics in the region. As a case in point,

President Blaise Compaore's Burkina Faso has undergone a dramatic image makeover since 2003, transforming itself from perceived mischief-maker into peacemaker. Accused in many quarters in the past for supporting rebellions, the country has recently been instrumental in stabilizing the political environment in the region mainly through the personal touch, diplomacy, and commitment of its leader, President Compaore. Ironically, Compaore played a major role in uniting the democratic opposition to Charles Taylor in the build up to the Accra peace process that ended the Liberian civil war in 2003. As chairman of ECOWAS, Compaore is credited with facilitating the dialogue between the Togolese government and the opposition that culminated in the holding of the first truly inclusive and democratic parliamentary elections in more than three decades in 2007. In a twist of fate, he was also to become the main force behind the Direct Inter-Ivoirian Dialogue in 2007 that effectively ended the civil war in Côte d'Ivoire after years of fruitless efforts.

ECOWAS and the Powerbrokers

It is important to appreciate the limits of ECOWAS's influence over member states. Its leverage on Nigeria in particular, and other medium-sized states nominally at peace, is understandably constrained. Though the body condemned the April 2007 elections in Nigeria as deeply flawed, it left the country's judiciary alone to resolve any disputes. Its success so far in the Senegambia enclave has been limited to attempts to wean Guinea-Bissau, the weakest postconflict country in the region, off its militarized politics and criminality, and to push for deep economic and security system reforms. It also successfully brokered a peace deal between Senegal and The Gambia in the dispute over river access. However, appeals by ECOWAS to Senegal not to fiddle with its Constitution on the eve of the February 2007 presidential election fell on deaf ears. The maverick Jammeh in The Gambia rules his country with an iron fist, clamping down on the opposition and muzzling the press. So far, however, he has not faced any sanctions from ECOWAS, beyond thwarting his efforts to assume the chairmanship of both ECOWAS and the AU. In Guinea, the regional organization was able to broker a partial power-sharing arrangement between Conte's regime and the opposition in 2007 only after sustained labor

and civil society demonstrations had pushed the president to the wall. And even then, ECOWAS had to intervene via a former head of state that had the president's ear. In May 2008, Lansana Kouyate, the consensus prime minister proposed by the opposition, was fired and no significant progress was made in the efforts to end the crisis before President Conte's death at the end of 2008. In Côte d'Ivoire, ECOWAS was able to project its influence only after the country's central authority had broken down and anarchy had descended following the 2002 crisis.

THE EXTERNAL DIMENSIONS OF HUMAN AND REGIONAL SECURITY

France and the United Kingdom have held sway over all other powers in West Africa since the colonial era. They are the region's main trading partners and destinations of its raw materials, as well as the focal points for the region's interaction with the European Union. While France has controlled the security environment in the majority of ECOWAS states, the UK has exerted influence in the two most populous states, Nigeria and Ghana. Of the two, France has exhibited the more aggressive geopolitical posture, controlling businesses and maintaining military bases in Dakar (Senegal), Bouake (Côte d'Ivoire), and Lomé (Togo). The UK's influence, meanwhile, has been more subtle, combining military training, business deals, and a human security posture through UK-based humanitarian agencies, such as Oxfam and Christian Aid, to assert its influence and hang on to its interests.

Since 2000, however, the grip of West Africa's traditional overlords has been steadily loosening. France built its West Africa policy around Côte d'Ivoire, the economic powerhouse of Francophone West Africa. However, apprehensive of the desire of the new nationalistic-minded regime of Laurent Gbagbo to diversify foreign economic relations and forge closer ties with other nations, in particular the US and South Africa, the French made strategic miscalculations during the Ivoirian civil war (2002-2007). Today, anti-French sentiments permeate the political atmosphere in the country. In Senegal and Guinea, the US is becoming an important player in

military matters. The handling of the strategic port of Dakar and Senegalese aviation have slipped from French hands into those of the United Arab Emirates and Morocco, respectively, while in Niger, the French nuclear energy giant, AREVA, finds itself increasingly embroiled in the Tuareg rebellion alongside Chinese companies. France under Nicolas Sarkozy has expressed its determination to reassert its influence in the region, but the president has started his charm offensive in the worst possible fashion. His speech in Dakar on July 26, 2007, was widely seen by Africans as condescending, deeply offensive, and the wrong way to go about reasserting French influence in the continent. In it he implied that Africans "never really entered history and had neither the capacity for human endeavor nor the ability to conceptualize progress, and that it was the duty of Europe to help Africa combat disease, hunger, poverty, and war."[26]

The European Union

Almost half a century after independence, the EU remains the main trading partner of West Africa but the region accounts for only 1.2 percent of overall EU trade. ECOWAS states provide 80, 15, and 10 percent of EU cocoa, rubber, and fish imports, respectively. Exports from the ECOWAS region to the EU market increased from $8.8 billion in 2002 to $14 billion in 2005 but much of this was due to the significant increase in the export of oil and mineral products—from 48 percent of EU imports to 69 percent in the same period. Overall, 81 percent of ECOWAS imports from the EU are composed of manufactured products while raw materials, agricultural products, and fish make up 90 percent of the region's exports to the European market.[27] The widening inequalities in economic relations with its traditional partner reflect the principal reason why African countries rejected the proposed Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with Europe at the Euro-Africa summit in Lisbon in November 2007.

Outside trade and military training exercises often conducted by France and the UK, most EU countries have structured their interventions in West Africa around governance and the human security agenda through instruments such as the

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26 See Katy Cisse Wone, *Quand Sarkozy insulte l'Afrique a partir de Dakar*, Walfadjri, August 2007.

27 Mohamed Ibn Chambas, "The Role of the Economic Community of West African States in Achieving the Economic Integration of West Africa," Lecture at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, DC, October 19, 2007.

2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the 2007 OECD-DAC Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations, which put emphasis on strengthening governance institutions, and ensuring local ownership and proper coordination among donor countries. In the last five years, single-issue initiatives by individual EU states targeting major security threats in Africa have become fashionable. The Tony Blair Africa Commission made significant inroads into debt cancellation through the G8 while the Danish government has established its own Africa Commission with youth empowerment as its focus.[28] The EU maintains close cooperation with ECOWAS within the framework of the International Contact Group (ICG), which coordinates joint interventions to stabilize the region's postconflict countries. Also, the EU makes considerable contributions to the ECOWAS budget for internal capacity building and preventive diplomacy in the region. On another front, the European nations collaborate closely with the United States around common concerns in the region, namely terrorism, illegal migration, and the rising influence of China.

The United States of America

Threats to US energy security emanating from the acrimonious relations with Venezuela, the crisis in the Persian Gulf, and the unpredictable nature of a resurgent Russia make Africa a high-value source of low-sulfur oil to the US. According to Peter Pham, by March 2007 Nigeria had overtaken Saudi Arabia as the third largest supplier of oil to the US, delivering 41,707,000 barrels to Saudi Arabia's 38,557,000.[29] Oil deliveries from Africa currently account for more than 20 percent of American imports and this figure is projected to reach 25-30 percent by 2015, according to conservative estimates. Overall, oil accounts for more than 70 percent of all US imports from Africa. Concerns over energy and maritime security in the Gulf and the fear of terrorist attacks on American soft targets in the region define the American strategic objectives in the region. Its strategy prioritizes

military assistance, encompassing joint military and naval exercises, military training, visits to the Pentagon by senior African military officers, and negotiating forward operating bases. It also includes intelligence-gathering activities through the embedding of military and intelligence officers in countries and regional organizations, wire tapping, and "free" communication and internet services.

The capital outlay of the US for "soft" security assistance under the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) and the Millennium Challenge Account pales in significance compared to the human and financial resources devoted to military security, to which the former, in any case, is tied. The cost in lost revenue to the US as a result of AGOA facilities to Africa from 2004 to 2014 is projected to be only $368 million.[30] Meanwhile, the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP), with a budget of $500 million over five years,[31] was set up in June 2005 by the US State Department as a bilateral and multilateral initiative that combines strategically targeted military and development assistance to root out and deny safe havens to terrorist organizations in the countries of northwestern Africa.[32] TSCTP replaced the $125 million Pan-Sahel Initiative, which was set up in 2002 and targeted only a few countries in the Sahel region. It incorporates Algeria, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Tunisia. Under the initiative, American search-and-destroy troops have been slipping in and out of the region in pursuit of terrorist leaders. Similar arrangements are in place under the African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) with the help of the Military Professional Resources, Inc. (MPRI) and DynCorp, two Pentagon-linked private military companies with mixed human rights records in the Balkans, Colombia, and the Niger Delta.

The US Africa Command (Africom) began life as a stand-alone military headquarters responsible for all military operations in Africa[33] in October 2007 with a start-up budget of $50 million. In public,

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28 The Danish Africa Commission was established in April 2008.

29 J. Peter Pham, "Securing the New Strategic Gulf," *World Defense Review*, June 7, 2007.

30 See H.R. 4103, AGOA Acceleration Act of 2004, as cleared by Congress on June 24, 2004.

31 See Global Security, "Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative," June 16, 2005, available at www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/tscti.htm.

32 Communication with Kane Moussokoro, USAID official in Accra, January 30, 2008.

33 Before Africom's establishment, military operations in Africa were shared by the European, Central, and Pacific Commands.

major African powers, including Nigeria, South Africa, and Libya have expressed concern over any US military encirclement and have rejected any idea of stationing the Command on African soil. President Umaru Yar'Adua's declaration of support for the initiative during his December 2007 visit to Washington provoked consternation and anger within the public and military circles in Nigeria. General William Kip Ward, the Commander of Africom, insists that the US has no plans to station the Command, which will be half-military half-civilian, on African soil, and that it will be operating from Stuttgart, Germany.[34] Nonetheless, small units of the Command, such as reconnaissance, logisticians, and other forward planners, would be based on the continent.

In any case, the US has already developed contingency plans to circumvent any opposition. In 2002, the Pentagon signed an agreement with the small oil-rich island-nation of São Tomé and Príncipe that included the situating of a naval forward operating base on the island. In another move, the US entered into a $200 million military agreement with Liberia, $35 million of which is earmarked for building up the Liberian military largely through DynCorp. Besides Africom, however, even State Department-controlled organizations, including the US Agency for International Development (USAID), are steadily expanding their governance and humanitarian engagements in Africa to incorporate military-related interventions. USAID is the leading financier and technical support base for the continental and regional early warning systems.

There is growing apprehension within African civil society that the US African security doctrine risks undermining fledgling democratization processes in favor of "strong leaders" who can guarantee oil flows and clamp down on perceived extremists at the expense of human rights. The critics argue that wherever and whenever the narrow strategic interests of the US clash with democracy and human rights, the US privileges strong and autocratic leadership, as can be seen from examples in Pakistan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. Also, given the fierce competition between the Americans, Chinese, and Russians for energy sources and markets, the region could once more become an arena of Cold War-style clientelism and proxy wars.

After the events of September 11, 2001, it is difficult to fault American interest in counter-terrorism. Weak indigenous security capabilities in Africa also justify the American preoccupation with hard regional security. However, just as African countries had no say in the operations of the European and other commands under which the US hitherto projected its military might in Africa, so too are they powerless to oppose Africom, which is a solely American security arrangement. At best, African leaders would have to put their act together to minimize any negative impacts from the new development. African opinion would prefer that US assistance go solely toward building up indigenous capability to carry out the policing rather than toward American military build-ups along their shores. More importantly, the US will fail to achieve its strategic objectives if it does not place human security in Africa higher on its agenda than military security. Examples from the Niger Delta and elsewhere in the region indicate that there can be no military solution to problems that are rooted in bad governance and exclusion. Military assistance will continue to contain only the effects of regional insecurity until the US reinforces its preoccupation with interventions that deliver a comprehensive regional package to underpin infrastructure development, trade access, political and corporate governance, and to combat chronic youth unemployment and the Malaria and HIV/AIDS pandemics.

China and Other Newcomers

China has emerged as the second largest consumer of world energy and a powerful industrial giant. Motivated by an insatiable appetite for new energy and raw material sources as well as the search for new markets, the country has made a comeback to the African scene over the last decade. The reemergence of China as a development partner has generally been welcomed by policymakers, who are increasingly fed up with the West's democracy lectures and what they see as the "give-with-the-right-take-with-the-left" development policies.

In China, many African leaders see a partner that is investing in areas that are key to rapid industrialization and competitiveness in the world market—

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34 General W.K. Ward, Speech at the ECOWAS Strategic Level Seminar organized by the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, Bamako, Mali, February 24-29, 2008.

infrastructure development, market access, and the cancellation of debt. Since 2002, China has been systematically increasing its development assistance to Africa, from $1.8 billion that year to $10 billion pledged at the Sino-African summit in Beijing in 2006. Additionally, the country has written off $1.3 billion of African state debts, and has opened a $24 billion credit facility to Africa (expected to rise to $100 billion by 2010) through the China-Africa Development Fund, which is managed by China Development Bank. The bank has already advanced a soft loan of $8.5 billion to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, seen by experts as the potential motor of African industrialization, for infrastructure development.[35]

In West Africa, China has in principle agreed to fund the construction of a regional railway network and other capital-intensive infrastructure ventures identified by the region. Beijing is not averse to technology transfer and is actively engaging in the manufacturing, construction, and service sectors (hotels, stadiums, dams, and other public facilities) in several West African states. In Nigeria, China has already struck a deal to fund a $3.46 billion hydropower project in Mambilla and a country-wide railway network in exchange for oil and gas exploration rights.[36] Similar deals are underway in Ghana (for the construction of the Bui Dam), Sierra Leone, Mali, and many other states.

India's new Africa policy mimics the Chinese model while Russia is replacing its past model (weighted heavily in favor of military cooperation) with one based on business, led by its energy industry. Russia's gas giant, Gazprom, has indicated its ambition to "upstage" the West, China, and India in Nigeria by revamping Nigeria's underperforming gas sector and buying out Western contracts in exchange for wide-ranging exploration rights. China, Russia, and India fit into the new thinking about the need to raise horizontal south-south cooperation to a higher level, thinking that has also helped countries such as Brazil, the United Arab Emirates, South Africa, Morocco, and Nigeria become big players in the aviation, banking, retail, entertainment, and telecommunications sectors.

From the security point of view, there are concerns over China's policy of flooding the region, already suffering from mass youth unemployment, with cheap labor, much of it reportedly drawn from its prisons; rough estimates put the influx of Chinese migrants into Africa in the last five years at 1 million. Other concerns include the country's poor human rights and democracy record, its cynical exploitation of the "political noninterference" and "sovereignty" arguments by professing to separate business from politics, and the export of low quality, and at times, unethical products to the subcontinent, including dangerous pesticides and conventional weapons. However, so long as the traditional powers do not refocus development assistance into priority areas that African countries have identified to enhance their competitiveness in the world market, no amount of scaremongering will deter African countries from what they perceive as win-win relations with China and other emerging powers. The danger, as far as Africa is concerned, lies in the growing rivalry between the West, China, and Russia, which may foist a new Cold War on the continent.

In comparative terms, therefore, West Africa has made appreciable progress over the last fifteen years with regard to political governance and economic growth. However, weak state and civil institutions, poor leadership, and bad social policies, have combined to stunt development and entrench poverty. The desire by the ruling elites to cling on to power, excruciating poverty and the pressures on land and other scarce resources make the populations vulnerable to manipulation along ethnic, religious, and citizenship lines. The unfolding youth crisis constitutes a time-bomb which, if not defused sooner, could reignite acute regional insecurity. West Africa's rich natural endowments make it a high-value asset in the strategic calculations of regional and world powers. The promise of inward investment flows that this situation holds will be undermined if proactive steps are not taken to fight greed and corruption on the one hand, and to prevent the transformation of the region into an arena for proxy wars. It is also to be observed that

35 See United Nations, "Presentation to the Roundtable on Shifting Donor Paradigms," November 16, 2006, available at www.un.org/africa/osaa/speeches/Brussels_EU%20Development%20Days.pdf; Jacques deLisle, "Into Africa: China's Quest for Resources and Influence," February 2007, available at www.fpri.org/enotes/200702.delisle.intoafricachinasquest.html; and AFP, "China Key to DRC Reconstruction," Praag.co.za, December 8, 2007, available at http://praag.co.za/content/view/1215/107/.

36 *BusinessDay* 6, no. 257, December 27, 2007.

the region lacks credible deterrent and emergency preparedness capabilities at a time when it is most vulnerable to external destabilization and climatic shocks, thus making it increasingly susceptible to terrorist incursions, irregular migration, food insecurity, and environmental emergencies.

Responding to Security Challenges

The ability to project legitimate power, preserve territorial integrity, and assure the welfare of the people is the cornerstone of any sovereign state, and the UN rightly places primary responsibility for peace and security with member states. In the developing world of incomplete state formation, weak institutions, and competing demands between regime and human security, the state has often failed in this cardinal responsibility. Collective responsibility by diverse actors has often been called upon either to complement national efforts or to defend and promote human and regional security. In this regard civil society and humanitarian agencies, as well as regional and international organizations, play critical roles.

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

Much of the success in the incremental transition toward open societies and the rule of law in the ECOWAS region can be attributed to the pivotal role being played by civil society. Civil society groups have been at the forefront of the relentless struggles against dictatorship and bad governance in West Africa over the years and continue to lead the processes to strengthen human security.

While the media-savvy pro-democracy and human rights organizations are more likely to capture the headlines, it is the community groups, women's associations, and traditional and faith-based groups who have made a real impact on conflict management and human security. For example, the Mano River Women's Peace Network and the traditional and religious communities were instrumental in nudging warlords to the nego-tiating table and mitigating the effects of infrastruc-ture collapse and displacements in the conflicts in the region. Likewise, the promotion of conflict-sensitive development is led by local developmental advocacy groups. Organizations grouped under the West African Action Network on Small Arms (WAANSA) are at the forefront of the campaign for

practical disarmament; in the campaign for fair trade and against environmental degradation, local groups have taken the fight to the rich nations and the extractive companies, often in conjunction with international advocacy groups. Today, civil society groups do not only continue to mobilize against repression, as in Guinea and The Gambia, but they are also actively engaged in the efforts to promote dialogue in Niger, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, and Togo. They also organize capacity-building workshops for election administration and monitoring bodies, and oversee the conduct of elections across the region.

Often, however, the impact of civil society has been hampered by the lack of a sustainable resource base, weak coordination capacity, as well as a propensity for spontaneity and susceptibility to cooptation. ECOWAS has sought to address some of the challenges by facilitating the emergence of a coordinating structure for the disparate civil society groups in the region. As a consequence, the West African Civil Society Forum (WACSOF) has been set up with the objective of facilitating capacity enhancement and networking among CSOs, popularizing ECOWAS initiatives in member states and mobilizing critical civil society and research inputs across the region to strengthen and accompany regional integration efforts. ECOWAS has also cultivated partnerships with the private sector to support work in the energy, transport, banking, and youth empowerment sectors. The private sector is the main driving force behind ECOWAS flagship infrastructure projects, including the $700 million West African Gas Pipeline project designed to pump cheap and clean gas from Escravos in the Niger Delta across the region from 2008 and the setting up of the West African shipping company, Ecomarine.

THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES

Among Africa's regional economic communities, the Economic Community of West African States is a leader. Arguably, it demonstrates the greatest political will to transform a regional group of states into a "security community" on the continent. Recent indications of this include the decisive interventions to end wars in the MRU, the evolution of the ECOWAS Standby Force, and the increasing supranational role of ECOWAS in setting regional norms of behavior and negotiating

deals with external partners on behalf of the region.

ECOWAS emerged in 1975 with regional economic integration and collective bargaining as its terms of reference. However, the institution is gradually transforming the region into a people-oriented security community. The evolving conflict dynamics in West Africa in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War convinced its leaders to rethink the interrelationship between security and development and to raise security issues to the same status as the development agenda. ECOWAS accordingly enacted new statutes to reflect the new realities, adopting the *Declaration of Political Principles* on freedom, people's rights, and democratization in July 1991. Two years later, the ECOWAS treaty was revised to confer supranationality on the regional body. In 1999, it adopted the *Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security,* followed closely by the *Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance* in 2001.[37] Together, these legal instruments were designed to provide a comprehensive normative framework for confronting the new threats to human and regional security on a more permanent and predictable basis.

ECOWAS is better known for its record in regional security matters, especially its peace enforcement and peacekeeping exploits. Three factors facilitated the relatively successful ECOMOG interventions: the presence of a regional hegemon (Nigeria) ready to commit resources and troops to the cause; the high level of political will; and the fact that several ECOWAS member states, including Ghana, Nigeria, and Senegal, had long been associated with international peacekeeping operations. In the process, ECOWAS has developed a comparative advantage in the area of conflict management and has become a model for the continent.

From an ad hoc institutional framework in 1990, ECOMOG is in the process of being transformed into a multipurpose composite standby brigade, the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF), composed of military and civilian units from member states within the framework of the African Standby Force arrangement. When ready in 2009, the ESF will be on standby for observation and monitoring missions, and preventive and humanitarian deployment in addition to ECOMOG's traditional peace enforcement and peacekeeping assignments within and outside the region. A noted weakness in the region's peace support operations is the absence of a regional humanitarian intervention capability. Neither ECOWAS nor the region's nongovernmental organizations possess the capacity to predict, avert, or even mitigate the effects of natural disasters that could result in social and political upheaval. Relief activities have become the exclusive preserve of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and foreign humanitarian agencies. To redress this imbalance, ECOWAS has taken steps within its Emergency Response Team and the ESF to promote effective humanitarian crisis prevention and preparedness within the region and to create a bridge between relief and medium-term rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts in postconflict and disaster settings.

Also learning from the shortcomings of past ECOMOG interventions with regard to human rights, humanitarian matters, and logistics backup, ECOWAS has prioritized the development of a civilian component to complement the military element of ESF. Thus, future interventions will see the deployment of police, engineers, medical personnel, social workers, and political and legal officers alongside the military. It is also actively developing logistics and humanitarian depots to stock equipment and relief supplies to support effective deployment. Three regional centers of excellence have been adopted by ECOWAS to facilitate the rapid build up and professionalization of the ESF in the areas of strategic planning, operational and tactical training respectively, with support from the US, UK, France, and the Europe-based Multinational Standby High Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG).[38] Indeed, ECOWAS is well-placed to be the first regional economic community to deliver its brigade toward the creation of the continental standby force; currently, the ESF serves as the lead institution in the development of standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the

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37 ECOWAS, *Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security*, Lomé, December 10, 1999, available at www.ecowas.int; ECOWAS, *Protocol A/SP1/12/01 on Democracy and Good Governance*, Dakar, December 2001.

38 The centers are the National Defense College in Abuja, Nigeria, the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center in Accra, Ghana, and the *Ecole de Maintien de la Paix Alioune Blondin Beye* in Bamako, Mali.

continental standby force.

Currently, ECOWAS is perfecting its conflict-prevention capabilities, particularly in the areas of early warning and preventive diplomacy. It operates an early warning system composed of four zonal bureaus for early warning based in the field and a situation room and coordinating department at headquarters. The bureaus cooperate closely with member states and civil society groups in the gathering and processing of conflict data from the field. The situation room furnishes incident and trend reports on peace and security, as well as real-time preventive response options, to ECOWAS policymakers to facilitate early interventions to avert or defuse situations of acute tensions. It also cooperates closely with the African Union in the development of the continental early warning system. So far, however, the contribution of the system to ECOWAS's response capability has been minimal for various reasons. First, the system relies heavily on open-source information, which often is dated before action can be taken. It is therefore more useful for generating responses to short- to medium-term human security challenges. Second, it has yet to secure effective cooperation from national intelligence agencies and skeptical member states concerned with regime security.

Often, ECOWAS has deployed special mediators and members of its Council of the Wise (a group of eminent personalities, including former heads of state, ministers, diplomats, and other high achievers) in fact-finding, facilitation, mediation, and negotiation missions in areas of potential conflict. The effective application of traditional alternative dispute resolution on the ground by the Council and the information it feeds back to the ECOWAS hierarchy have been critical in averting or defusing potential flashpoints across the region. The ECOWAS heads of state also apply methods such as peer influence, peer pressure, and consensus building to resolve lingering crises, behind the scenes and often to good effect. The efforts of the Council and special mediators were critical in ensuring peaceful outcomes in sensitive elections, in particular the presidential election in Liberia (2005) and the 2007 presidential election

that resulted in regime change in Sierra Leone; they are also currently being applied to facilitate dialogue in the ongoing crises in Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Togo, and Niger.

Integration with Emphasis on Prevention

Since January 2007, the ECOWAS Secretariat has been transformed into a commission with a vision to speed up the integration process by facilitating greater collective responses to human security challenges, including poverty reduction, infrastructure development, implementation of common agricultural, environmental, and water policies, as well as trade negotiations with external partners and the consolidation of democracy and regional peace and security.[39]

Underpinning the new vision is the organization's determination to transform the region from an "ECOWAS of States" into an "ECOWAS of the Peoples" by enhancing free movement, forging a common community citizenship, and progressively eliminating other barriers to integration. Indeed, West Africa is the only region in Africa to guarantee visa-free movement and settlement across borders. Its macroeconomic policy convergence program aims to establish a single currency—the eco—by 2010. This will lay the foundation for a single-currency zone and market in West Africa, boost intraregional trade, and strengthen the region's bargaining power in relation to external blocs.

In line with its new strategic vision with emphasis on prevention, ECOWAS adopted a regional human security strategy document, the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework,[40] in January 2008 to serve as an operational tool to guide cooperation with member states, civil society, and external partners to meet the challenges of cross-border crime, arms proliferation, the youth crisis, women's marginalization, as well as political, security, and natural resource governance. It has also set up a Security Unit to backstop cross-border cooperation among security agencies to combat money laundering, trafficking in arms and drugs, as well as terrorism and dumping. To this end, the organization has brought the regional security body, the

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39 These are the five medium-term priority areas under the new ECOWAS vision.

40 See ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework, Regulation MSC/REG.1/01/08, January 26, 2008, available at www.wacsi.org/wacseries/785vc7691r2u3h68594OP-ED.pdf.

West African Police Chiefs Committee (WAPCCO), under its wing with support from the UN system and INTERPOL. Besides fighting crime, the initiative seeks to promote regional citizenship and harmony among cross-border communities through the promotion of model border communities, civil-military relations, and community policing.

Chronic underfunding has been the bane of the African Union and the regional economic communities as they strive to meet the challenges of human and regional security. Often, member states are either reluctant or unable to make their financial contributions. ECOWAS has by and large succeeded in overcoming this handicap by devising the innovative system of community levy, whereby 0.5 percent of taxes levied by member states on all imports entering the Community is automatically credited to the institution. The levy generates almost 80 percent of ECOWAS's annual operational budget, with external funding making up the rest. Also, the institution has set up the ECOWAS Peace Fund to strengthen its regular and unforeseen peace support operations, with contributions from the community levy, the African Development Bank, and development partners. This fund is complemented by a pool fund that is supported by development partners and intended for internal capacity building.

Alongside the achievements and promises, however, ECOWAS has been hampered in its efforts to promote human security by its internal capacity deficit, the exigencies of regional security, and lingering divisions in the region. Perhaps more significantly, the clash between the supranationality of ECOWAS and the religiously defended sovereignty of member states hampers the ability of ECOWAS to oblige member states, in particular the regional and enclave powerbrokers, to abide by regional norms and standards beyond behind-the-scenes pleas.

This situation may only change with sustained civil society advocacy and pressure. Civil society can contribute immensely to the transformation of the region into an ECOWAS of the Peoples by interrogating and transforming the regional decision-making processes and modes of representation at the regional level, such as at the Community Parliament. Left on their own, the

heads of state would not be in a hurry to commit political suicide by surrendering their control over such processes.

Similarly, lingering tensions between Francophone West Africa and the Anglophone member states is hampering the drive to integration and collective decision making, which is based on consensus. Since the end of the Cold War, the region has witnessed an increasing convergence of the Francophone *Union économique et monétaire ouest africaine* (UEMOA) and ECOWAS. In 2000, UEMOA agreed to concentrate on economic matters and to collapse its peace and security mechanism under the ECOWAS mechanism. ECOWAS and UEMOA cooperate closely in the areas of regional monetary convergence, infrastructure, and agriculture, and have formulated a common regional position in the ongoing EPA negotiations with the EU.

THE AFRICAN UNION

ECOWAS is recognized as a building block for the African Union. It cooperates with the continental body in several areas, not least in the development of the continental early warning system and the African Standby Force. Indeed, the two most recent former AU chief executives were from West Africa. All the major ECOWAS peace initiatives have been made in concert with the AU and UN. Despite its intentions, however, the continental body has remained relatively peripheral to the region's peace and security efforts for a number of reasons. First, the spillover effects of conflicts and the need for early response compel regional organizations to take ownership of peace and security processes and lead from the front. Second, the AU is evolving at the same pace as, if not slower than, the regional economic communities (RECs), such as ECOWAS. In several areas, the RECs have actually set the pace in peace and security matters. Thus, though ECOWAS is a subsidiary to the AU, its comparative advantage in West Africa and proactive stance on conflicts, as well as its internal organization and institution-building capacity, are often ahead of similar processes within the AU.

The AU's desire to set the continental agenda often runs into internal limitations, resulting in piecemeal and often uncoordinated interventions. The AU often sends token observers, independent of ECOWAS, to elections in the region without any

coordination between the two institutions, and high-level meetings between the AU and the RECs are rare. Indisputably, states' commitment to their RECs appears much stronger than to the AU as they identify more intimately with local concerns. Given the circumstances and its internal capacity deficit, the AU will struggle to exercise oversight of regional processes, including the development of the regional standby arrangements.

In frantic efforts to reverse this trend, initiatives are currently being rushed to inject a new sense of purpose and urgency into AU-REC relations. At the AU Summit in Accra in November 2007, African leaders called for regular consultations and greater cooperation between the AU and the RECs at the highest level; they also recommended the exchange of liaison officers between them. Building on this initiative, the RECs and AU signed a comprehensive memorandum of understanding at the January 2008 Summit in Addis Ababa to enhance and streamline their cooperation on the implementation of the continent's peace and security agenda. The memorandum is underpinned by the principles of subsidiarity, complementarity, and comparative advantage. Thus, while recognizing the primary responsibility of the AU in the maintenance and promotion of peace, security, and stability in Africa, the memorandum also acknowledges the role and responsibility of RECs in these domains in their respective regions of mandate.

THE UNITED NATIONS

In contrast to the current cooperation between ECOWAS and the AU, relations between ECOWAS and the UN in the maintenance of regional security have been more consistent and productive. This owes much to the comparative advantages that the two bodies bring to the table. ECOWAS has demonstrated a remarkable capacity to intervene quickly in violent conflicts. On the other hand, the UN possesses greater expertise and experience in sustainable peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and peacebuilding; it also commands greater resources. Thus, ECOMOG interventions in West Africa often created the necessary bridgehead for the subsequent deployment of larger UN peacekeeping and international humanitarian missions through the rehatting of troops.

Progress in human security cooperation between the two institutions has, however, been patchy over the last few years. The UN put Sierra Leone on the agenda of the newly established Peacebuilding Commission, and Guinea-Bissau is soon to be considered. However, the process of identifying priorities and developing a program of action has not been inclusive enough. ECOWAS, a key stakeholder in the region's peace processes, is not adequately involved, nor are meaningful and inclusive consultations held with stakeholders within the beneficiary countries. Often, the development of a blueprint for international assistance is left in the hands of the ruling government which, in an immediate postconflict situation, is often partisan and epitomizes the enduring divisions within the community. The UN Secretary-General appointed a special representative to West Africa and set up the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA) in Dakar in 2002 for the purposes of coordinating the efforts of UN agencies in the region to support ECOWAS interventions, but there has not been any significant coordination or joint action of note. Joint cross-border and peacebuilding initiatives agreed between the UN and ECOWAS over the past three years have stalled. This situation owes more to the frequent changes in personnel at UNOWA and the aggressive competition for resources and territory among the various agencies within the UN system than to a lack of desire to cooperate. Since the beginning of 2008, however, UNOWA-ECOWAS cooperation appears to be steadily growing with the appointment of Said Djinnit, who comes with vast experience in conflict management at the AU level, as the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General in February 2008.

Since 1994, the UN has held a series of high-level meetings with regional organizations on cooperation to maintain international peace and security. Security Council Resolution 1631 of October 17, 2005, requested the Secretary-General submit a report on the opportunities and challenges of the cooperation between the UN and regional organizations. The high-level meetings have identified several axes of cooperative interventions in peace and security, and the requisite capacity-building requirements for the regional organizations in these efforts. Considering the capacity discrepancies between the AU and the RECs touched on earlier, the challenge facing the UN is to devise an effective three-way cooperative arrangement with the AU and RECs, instead of a top-down approach via the AU, to avoid bureaucratic delays and ensure better

efficiency of delivery and complementarity of agendas.

The Future of Human and Regional Security in West Africa

Predicting the future of human and regional security in West Africa is fraught with risks. Impressed by the relative progress that the region has made in the areas of economic growth, democracy, and human rights, local and international observers are urging countries to stay the course. More cautious critics applaud the advances but urge greater efforts to consolidate the gains. The pessimists are not convinced about the security situation and predict a new cycle of doom and gloom. The realistic outlook lies somewhere between these prognoses.

STAYING THE COURSE

There is no denying the fact that West Africa has made steady progress in the last fifteen years compared to the "lost decades" (1970-1990) when all human development indicators pointed downward. Not only has the region, led by ECOWAS, succeeded in stabilizing the conflict situation, but it has also seen steady gains in the promotion of democracy and human rights. Signs of sound economic management are also gradually emerging: the region has enjoyed steady annual growth of 5-7 percent, even though the people have yet to see the dividends in their daily life. Civil society has become more proactive in the promotion of human security. ECOWAS is growing in sophistication and expertise in matters relating to regional security and it is putting mechanisms in place to deal with challenges in a more sustainable and predictable manner. Above all, it enjoys the confidence and support of the population, regional leaders, and external partners. Even though insecurity persists in several areas, ECOWAS and its member states appear capable of containing it.

Given this "normal" scenario, the optimists would argue that "if it ain't broke, don't fix it," and that the gradualist, incremental approach would eventually yield sustainable human and regional security. It is however obvious from earlier analyses that demographic trends (the youth crisis) and food insecurity are fast outstripping economic growth.

Threats are building up within the region and along its external borders, and the unpredictable environmental challenges have to be factored in as well. Consequently, the region will continue to react to events rather than preempt them. To even ensure this posture of containment, West Africa will need to deepen democratization. While a number of leaders continue to exhibit a tendency toward authoritarianism, they lack authority and legitimacy. Civil society will have to increase its vigilance to prevent the vulgarization and derailment of democracy by democratically elected leaders. ECOWAS and member states will have to instill public discipline and a culture of maintenance in the conscience of the people. Beyond that, the region will need to maintain a high tempo of economic growth and institute deliberate policies to encourage the emergence and consolidation of an autonomous entrepreneurial class.

The raw-material-based economies of the region, so susceptible to the vagaries of the global market, make such a scenario improbable. West Africa already finds itself at the bottom of the global human development league table. As it were, the viability of the cautious approach would continue to rely heavily on external assistance directed at supplementing national budgets, internal capacity building, and the social sector; and this is not guaranteed. This "do-nothing-radical" approach is, therefore, not sustainable in the long run, and sticking to it would eventually lead to a doom-and-gloom scenario.

WORST CASE: DOOM AND GLOOM

The collapse of fledgling internal democracy and development projects, negative external pressures on the fragile economies, resurgence of civil wars, and the criminalization of politics in a number of countries could spell doom for West Africa within the next fifteen years. An environmental or external shock, such as a collapse of world markets, massive flooding, or drought, could well hasten this doom-and-gloom scenario. Internally, the region could fail to transform its rich natural and human endowments into capital for sustainable food security and the expansion of economic and social infrastructure due to the persistent weakness of institutions, a return to bad governance, and worsening corruption. This could result in increased poverty and youth desperation. Under these conditions, the narcotics and arms problems

could spiral out of control, sound the death knell of the fledgling democracy project in the region, and herald the return of the warlords, shady business, criminalized politics, and wars of attrition.

The worsening global financial environment, if not halted, would dry up inward investment and remittances from the diaspora, worsen capital flight, and add an exacerbating influence on the downward peace and security spiral. Should the fragile economies in the region lose their desperate fight for survival against the established markets, the scene could be set for the erosion of the modest gains made in the areas of human rights, democracy, and development.

West Africa's survival as an integrated security community will be closely tied to developments in Nigeria. Consequently, Nigeria's internal political dynamics, particularly the fate of democracy and trends in the Niger Delta, would serve as the barometer for regional security. Besides Nigeria, the collapse of the peace processes in the MRU and Côte d'Ivoire, and worsening conditions in the Senegambia enclave, the Sahel-Sahara divide, or the Gulf of Guinea could have a catalytic effect on a regional security meltdown. Without proper management, the region could find itself caught between the anvil of home grown crises and environmental threats on the one hand, and the hammer of external power struggles played out on its soil on the other.

BEST CASE: EL DORADO

On the brighter side, the eternal optimist could imagine the West African region transformed into an ideal community, self-governing and free from fear and want, within the next quarter- to half-century. As the ECOWAS mission statement puts it, this golden scenario would be "a borderless region and integral part of the continental space in which the peoples have access to and are able to harness its enormous resources through the creation of opportunities for sustainable production and development, and in which they transact business and live in dignity and peace under the rule of law and good governance."[41]

Buoyed by consensus among the elites on governance and the imperative of deeper regional integration in which regional institutions acquire greater supranationality, El Dorado would be a disciplined, self-governing, and self-regulating society in which democracy would become routine nationally and at the local level, and where discrimination and marginalization would disappear. The region, just like the rest of the continent, would boast capable parliaments, independent and conscientious judiciaries, and security agencies that are well equipped and guided by democratic control and human-rights principles. These democratic institutions would control corruption, efficiently police society, and enjoy the confidence of the populace.

Volatile internal enclaves would have been pacified through permanent dialogue to resolve grievances, accountable and equitable natural resource management, and the availability of sustainable social amenities and job opportunities. The society would flourish within secure external borders achieved through effective cross-border cooperation with external neighbors and internal policing, it would be equipped with an efficient crisis-and-disaster prevention-and-management capability.

ECOWAS in this scenario would be a valuable partner within the international community, and a dependable contributor to global peace and security. In the economic sphere, the era of raw-material production would be replaced by a healthy mix of sustainable food production and agro-based industries. Trade with external partners would be based on fairness and mutually beneficial transactions.

Conclusion: A Strategy for Sustainable Human and Regional Security

West Africa faces daunting security challenges and, against the backdrop of the region's weak internal capacities and its peripheral status in the global market, the prognosis for the state of human and regional security over the next two decades appears grim. However, through properly coordinated and calibrated measures aimed at incrementally strengthening democratic institutions, expanding

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41 ECOWAS Strategic Vision 2020 as adopted by the ECOWAS Summit, Abuja, June 2008. For information on "ECOWAS Vision 2020," see www.ecowasvision2020.org.

infrastructure, and creatively transforming the myriad of other negative indicators enumerated in this paper, the security environment could witness significant improvement in the coming years.

Success in these endeavors will be predicated on the effective division of labor and greater coordination, cooperation, and sensitivity among the key stakeholders in the evolving security architecture, namely member states, civil society, ECOWAS, the private sector, development partners, the AU, and the UN. As frontline implementation agencies, member states bear principal responsibility for peace and security. Together with civil society they must ensure the domestication and implementation of regional norms and standards aimed at strengthening collective peace and security. ECOWAS, for its part, has a responsibility to promulgate minimum regional norms, standards, and policies with regard to key conflict-inducing issues, including natural resource exploitation, and political and security governance. It should also facilitate the internalization of such standards and monitor compliance within member states.

A systematic approach to consolidation should begin by strengthening institutions at regional, national, and local levels, and promoting responsible leadership among political aspirants, the youth, and women. To achieve this goal, ECOWAS and its member states must execute a paradigm shift in their security posture, moving from a reactive to a preventive mode by paying greater attention to the "soft" (developmental) aspects of human security and building capacities to confront the current and emerging threats to regional security—extremism, terrorism, drug trafficking, and environmental degradation.

AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

Policies and practices at the national level exert considerable influences on human and regional security. Consequently, attention must be focused on building the capacities of national institutions (including at the local government and community levels) to take ownership of the design, implementation, and monitoring of initiatives in the strategic areas of natural resource governance, political governance, youth empowerment, and infrastructure development. Against the backdrop of the limited resources at the disposal of governments, the role of the private sector assumes even greater importance for development. Encouraging local

entrepreneurship in the manufacturing sector through tax breaks, grooming, and the adoption of forward-looking macroeconomic policies is a sure way of promoting infrastructure development and job creation. In addition, the private sector and development partners should fund capital-intensive ventures in infrastructure, technology transfer, and youth employment.

The costs of electoral administration and campaigns in these winner-takes-all processes are often obscene and at variance with the abject economic conditions of the countries; this undermines the postelection development agenda. Caps on these expenditures must be written into law and strictly implemented. Civil society institutions and the media must be strengthened to enhance their watchdog role. These measures, in addition to the emergence of common platforms that offer avenues for dialogue and the peaceful resolution of election-related disputes, would transform electoral processes into routine episodes in the democratization process instead of the periods of tension and violence that they have become. The capacities of national parliaments need to be enhanced in several areas, including in basic computer literacy, parliamentary procedures, and links with constituencies. Above all, national legislatures should concentrate on the development agendas that flow from regional priorities and which promote national cohesion.

Political parties constitute the basic organizational unit in the democratic process and, as such, must constitute the object of targeted policy interventions at the regional and national levels. There exists the need to push for the rationalization and strengthening of political parties which, with the independent electoral management bodies, civil society, and the media, represent the levers that must further pry open the democratic space by ensuring adherence to the principles of the separation of powers, democratic control of the security services, the independence of the judiciary, the rule of law, and popular participation.

AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL

The region's economic salvation, however, lies in the ability of ECOWAS to follow through on its mission by ensuring the emergence of a common market and integrated citizenry. This will need to entail a massive commitment to infrastructure development with the collaboration of the private

sector, and the prioritization of the production and manufacturing sectors, particularly the agro-based industries.

ECOWAS should also lead in the design and facilitation of programs for regional transport, energy, and telecommunication networks. Further, the institution should develop minimum regional standards and regulatory frameworks to meet the challenges of natural resource governance, including the management of liquid and solid minerals, the scramble for land and water, and the accompanying ethnic and religious tensions. It should also lead the efforts to build up the region's political, intelligence, and military capabilities to confront the menace posed by the evolving scramble for energy resources and markets in the Gulf of Guinea, transnational and cross-border crime, as well as terrorism and increasing local militancy. Above all, urgent action needs to be taken to strengthen regional capacities to anticipate, prevent, and combat environmental disasters and killer diseases, and mitigate their effects.

A common factor underlying these challenges is the worsening youth crisis and gender inequality, which call for a comprehensive regional and national agenda that prioritizes the expansion of social infrastructure, including schools, health, and other social amenities to underpin youth empowerment, employment opportunities, and affirmative action. Discourse within the region and with development partners about migration should not be focused mainly on halting so-called illegal migration, but conceptualized within the framework of the development agenda. Thus, Europe and America should be willing to compensate the region for the loss of medical professionals and engineers, who are often enticed by attractive packages to migrate, after huge sums have been spent in West Africa to train them at a time when pandemics like malaria, river blindness, and HIV/AIDS are ravaging the region.

A MULTISTAKEHOLDER COMPACT FOR REGIONAL SECURITY

A sustainable development agenda cannot be achieved if concomitant steps are not taken to address the direct and intermediate regional security challenges, including securing external borders against terrorist incursions, combating drug trafficking and related cross-border crime,

and enhancing regional preparedness against natural disasters and humanitarian crises. Emphasis must be put on building up local capacities in the security sector. The security forces and services in the region are grossly underfunded. The failure of the military, border, and custom officials to control trafficking and other crimes is not due so much to a lack of ability as to a lack of suitable equipment and motivation. External partners in military cooperation must take on board the fact that the sustainability of any strategy designed to secure the region in the long term must be based on strengthening the capacities of the ESF and national security agencies to enable them to take the lead in security matters. Similarly, UN agencies operating in the region, particularly UNHCR and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, would be promoting sustainable human security if they focused more on building local capacities rather than simply being delivery agencies.

Successfully containing the security challenges emanating from the Sahel-Sahara belt and the Gulf of Guinea is beyond the capacities of individual member states and ECOWAS. Besides the efforts of member states sharing the Sahel-Sahara belt, the cooperation of ECOWAS, the Maghreb Union, and the Intergovernmental Agency for Development (IGAD) will be needed in any meaningful initiatives designed to eliminate the many threats that have been identified. The AU would play a most useful role under such circumstances just as the involvement of the United States, France, and the UN would be required for reasons of capacity building, legitimacy, and sustainability. The challenges of the Gulf would also require a similar formula involving ECOWAS, the Economic Community of Central African States, the Southern African Development Community, and the AU from the continent, as well as the UN, US, and other development partners.

With properly choreographed and coordinated interventions by all the identified stakeholders aimed at strengthening local capacities and ownership, and with sufficient financial injections, transfer of know-how and the guarantee of fair trade, West Africa can raise human and regional security to a higher level by institutionalizing democratic governance, improving living standards, and protecting physical security.

Further Reading

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