

Review

A review of regional approaches in dealing with security issues

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States have looked to their immediate and near neighbours as well as key external or regional powers as potential sources of threat or of protection. Therefore, rather than at the global or local level, the region is where most post-1945 success in achieving security arrangements has been experienced. The paper seeks to provide an assessment of the level of regionalism that has developed in the three regions of Europe, Asia Pacific and West Africa where regionalization has developed the most, but importantly on different degrees. It uses Bjorn Hettne and Fredrik Soderbaum's 'New Regional Theory' to assess the level and direction of regionalism that has occurred in these regions since the end of the Second World War and in the post-Cold War era in the case of Europe and Asia Pacific. It is argued that the development of regionalism is dependent on the support of the regional great power(s); the extent of reciprocity that exists in the relations of the states in the region; and, the level of strategic reassurance that exists among these states. It concludes that Regionalization has emerged in the three regions through similar processes. They all established precedents for cooperation in non-security issues first (ie the EU, ASEAN and ECOWAS) before extending cooperation to security issues (ie NATO, the ARF and the East Asian Summit, and ECOMOG). However, the degree of regionalism that has developed in each region is significantly different.

Keywords: Cooperation, Regionalism, Regional Power, Security Issues, States.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of the 20th century, states have looked to their immediate and near neighbours as well as key external or regional powers as potential sources of threat or of protection. By focusing on these neighbours, states have sought to devise rules and norms for how states in a particular region should act. Rather than at the global or local level, the region is where most post-1945 success in achieving security arrangements has been experienced. Barry Buzan (1991: 187) argues that the relational nature of security makes it impossible to understand the national security patterns of a state without a firm understanding of the pattern of regional security interdependence in which it exists. As such, the region is the most appropriate level of analysis to examine international order issues. This paper seeks to provide an assessment of the level of regionalism that has developed in the three regions of Europe, Asia Pacific and West Africa where regionalization has developed the most, but importantly on different degrees. It will use Bjorn Hettne and Fredrik Soderbaum's 'New

Regional Theory' to assess the level and direction of regionalism that has occurred in these regions since the end of the Second World War and in the post-Cold War era in the case of Europe and Asia Pacific. It is argued that the development of regionalism is dependent on the support of the regional great power(s); the extent of reciprocity that exists in the relations of the states in the region; and, the level of strategic reassurance that exists among these states. The paper is divided into three sections. The first explores the theoretical underpinnings of the Hettne's 'new regionalism'. The second will assess the level of regionness and regionalism that has developed in Europe and the Asia Pacific and the third will consider the case of ECOWAS.

What is a region?

At its most basic, a region is a group of states in

geographic proximity to each other. However, proximity is not the only consideration in regards to defining a region (and indeed, as we will see below, is not necessarily a requirement). In addition to living in proximity to each other, people and states need to have a common set of cultural values, social bonds and historical legacy (Hettne and Soderbaum, 2002: 39). Robert Jervis (1999: 6) argues that a region (or system in his terminology) can be defined as groups of interconnected states where a change in any relationship within the group will influence the others and that the region as a whole develops characteristics and behaviours that are distinct from those of the individual states. It may seem logical to identify each of the major continents as a region based on cultural and historical patterns and while this is a good rough guide, many regions exist only in a portion of a continent, and others overlap continents. Southeast Asia is an example of the former while the Middle East includes, at least, parts of Northern Africa and Southwest Asia.

Others such as Peter Katzenstein (1997: 7) refute the geographic determinants of regions, as not being 'real', 'natural' or 'essential'. Rather they are 'social and cognitive constructs that are rooted in political practice' (Katzenstein, 2000: 354) and are open to change. Therefore, for Katzenstein a region is a grouping of states that share a communal identity. For example, the idea that either Italy (a Mediterranean state) or Turkey (an Islamic state on the southeastern edge of Europe) is a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is not 'natural', that is, a result of geography or even of cultural ties or historical legacies. Rather, their membership in the alliance is due to acts of political imagination on the part of the 'North Atlantic' political leaders in the early Cold War era.

Another example of a region not bound by geography is the concept of the 'Anglosphere'. James Bennett (2004) argues that as the Anglosphere is 'a network civilization without a corresponding political forum' its boundaries are by their very nature vague. At the core is the relationship between the United States and United Kingdom while Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland and South Africa constitute a much more fluid peripheral group. These states share a common historical narrative such as parliamentary democracy, rule of law, etcetera that is taken for granted. The tightness of the group and indeed the core-periphery division is much more fluid than a geographically bounded region and is tied closely to the domestic politics of the various states. For example, Canada under the Cretian Liberal government had a close relationship with the US during the George Bush Senior and Bill Clinton administrations in the 1990s but moved to the outer-group with the election of George W. Bush in 2001. Likewise, Australia's relations with the US have fluctuated with changes in government in both Canberra and Washington. Under the Hawke and Keating Labor administrations, Australia took a more

independent line while under the Howard Coalition government the alliance with the US was reinvigorated, even more so when Bush replaced Clinton as president, leading to Australia joining the UK as the only other member of the US-led coalition to deploy combat troops as part of the invasion of Iraq in 2003. In addition, relations between the two remained close as both countries elected new governments in 2007 and 2008 with similar political ideals.

Theoretical approaches to regionalism

Regardless of the nature of the regional grouping, the degree to which regionalization occurs is depended upon the amount of regionness that is felt amongst the regional powers. During the Cold War regional analysis existed in an atheoretical framework, or at least with an uncritically realist or neo-realist approach. Here the focus was on the material distribution of resources throughout the region and balances of power between the great powers and their alliances. Following the end of the Cold War the prevailing realist orthodoxy came under critical analysis as assumptions about the nature of international security and how states interact strategically were re-examined. In this, reconsiderations were made of the assumptions states had about how their security interaction enhanced or detracted from their security. Realism was challenged initially by neoliberal institutionalist approaches but was increasingly challenged in the 1990s by critical and constructivist theories of international relations (Acharya and Stubbs, 2006: 126). The focus of the debate between realism and neo-liberalism for regional security was in how they relate to prospects for security cooperation among and between the regional actors.

Following the end of the Cold War a new school of regional analysis adopted a constructivist/critical security approach and began to raise questions about how notions of regional identity were being advanced. This 'new regionalism' school differs from previous study of regions in that the earlier study focused on the 'functionalist' nature of integration that emerged in Western Europe in the 1950s and 1960s. The problem here is that while functionalism can explain how regional structures operate and how they generate 'spillovers' that spur even greater integration, they are unable to explain how regional orders are created in the first place. Nor do they address the important role that the development of regional identities plays in regionalism (Breslin and Higgott, 2000: 335; Beeson, 2005: 971-2).

The debate between each of these theories reflected the importance of the transformation. The debate centred on how realists, neoliberal institutionalists and constructivists differed in their assessment of the rationales for state cooperation. Realists argue that as states are power or security maximizers they may not

cooperate with each other even when they share common interests because the 'self-help' international system makes cooperation difficult (see Grieco, 1990; Mearsheimer, 1990, 1994-5; Waltz, 1979). Institutionalists such as Robert Keohane (1984; Keohane and Martin, 1995) argue that institutions help to overcome international anarchy by helping to shape the interests and practices of states.

While realist and institutionalist approaches appear to be alternatives, policy makers are able to choose between them to address different issue-areas or even different issues within a specific issue-area. Indeed, Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye (1987) argue that realism and institutionalism are compatible with one another as they share a utilitarian view of the international system in which individual actors pursue their own interests by responding to incentives. Both doctrines posit similar conceptions of international political action: a process of political and economic exchange, characterized by bargaining among states. They both assume that rational decision-making drives state behaviour. The difference between the two rests in their assumptions about the goals of the actors in the international system. For realists military force is the most important determinant of states' power due to the 'self-help' international anarchy in which they exist.

For institutionalists, however, economic and political incentives are just as important as concerns for military security (Keohane and Nye, 1987: 728-9). Hedley Bull ([1977] 1995: 67) argues that states will accept limitations on their actions when they recognize the benefits of reciprocity for strengthening cooperation. Such reciprocity rests upon two aspects: contingency and equivalence. 'Contingency' is the principle of rewarding positive actions of others while punishing negative actions. It thus rewards cooperation while deterring non-cooperation through the threat of punitive action.

Reciprocity, therefore, returns ill for ill and good for good. 'Equivalence' refers to a rough equality in the level of reward exchanged between states. In cases where the actors have unequal power capabilities, equivalence will generate reciprocity of goods and services that hold mutual value to the actors but are otherwise incomparable. 'These exchanges are often, but not necessarily, mutually beneficial; they may be based on self-interest as well as on shared concepts of rights and obligations; and the value of what is exchanged may or may not be comparable' (Keohane, 1986: 5-8). This is essential to reciprocity, as a 'lack of equivalence is likely to lead actors to misunderstand the strategy and tends to produce escalating feuds rather than cooperation' (Milner, 1992: 471). The importance of reciprocity in facilitating inter-state cooperation is demonstrated in nature of the cooperation between France and Germany during the Cold War: Germany provided the economic might for, and the French exercised political control over, the emerging West European regional cooperative

structures. Through this, the Germans gained increased recognition as a 'normal' state while France benefited from, rather than feared, a German revival. In turn, this led to the development of a strong Franco-German amity that was almost inconceivable during the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries.

Unlike realist or institutionalists, the constructivist school of thought argues that as international politics are 'socially constructed', so are relations between states. That is, the basis of the structures of the international 'system' are not just the distribution of material resources but also include social interactions and that these shape the actors identities and interests, not just their behaviour. For constructivists the structure not only includes the distribution of material capabilities but also social relationships. Alexander Wendt (1995: 71-3) argues that these social structures have three elements: shared knowledge, material resources and practice.

Shared knowledge refers to the nature of the relationships between the actors in the system. The social patterns of enmity and amity are important here as competition will result when states are so distrustful of one another they make worst-case assumptions about each other. Cooperation, on the other hand, exists when amity exists between states such that there is a sufficient level of trust among the states that none will use force to resolve their disputes. The distribution of material resources is also important but this only becomes problematic when assessed in relation to the shared knowledge of states.

Wendt gives the example of 500 British nuclear missiles being less threatening to the United States than five North Korean nuclear weapons. The amity between the US and Britain makes it impossible to conceive of a situation where the British would ever consider using their weapons on the US, while the enmity between the US and North Korea make such an event, although unlikely, conceivable. Finally, constructivists argue that such a social structure exists not only because we think it exists, but also because the policy makers believe it exists and, as such, act in accordance to that shared knowledge; thereby, recreating the social structure through practice. Moreover, Wendt (1995: 74) gives the example that 'the Cold War was a structure of shared knowledge that governed great power relations for forty years, but once they stopped acting on this basis, it was "over"'.

New regionalism theory

In identifying the importance of the need to manage the social structures of the region Bjorn Hettne (2000) argues that there is a need for a region to have its own identity, that is, an identity, however nascent, as an independent actor that is different or distinct from that of the constituent member states. He refers to this as a 'new

regionalism' or 'regionness', that is, 'the degree to which a particular region in various respects constitutes a coherent unit' (Hettne, 2000: xviii). Hettne (1997: 97) argues that the difference between 'old' and 'new' forms of regional security analysis is that in the past the region was not an actor itself, only a "level" or "space" of action'. It is through the development of its regionness that a region moves from being a passive part of the structure to an actor in its own right (Hettne and Soderbaum, 1998: 8). The degree to which a particular region achieves this distinct identity differs from region to region but can demonstrate the degree to which the individual states have internalized the shared values and norms of the regional identity (Ayoob, 1999: 249).

Hettne (1997: 97) argues that there are five distinct degrees or levels of regionness. The first or most basic level is the simple geographic unit of states that exist in a natural physical collection. These states have limited or no interconnection with each other, especially in regards to security collaboration. They exist in the international system of anarchy and their security interactions are limited to crises or conflict with their immediate neighbours. States in such a region can only rely on their own resources, or at the most, limited or temporary alliances in their approach to their own security. The 'self-help' nature of the regional interactions will limit any such alliance to be temporary in nature and involve a small number of states. Such cooperation is dependent on the existence of an imminent threat, or the perception of such a threat, and will dissolve once the threat has passed.

The second level involves a more complex set of social interactions among the states through what Barry Buzan (1991b) describes as a security complex. Here all the regional states are interconnected and dependent on each other in regards to their own security. This does not mean that the security interactions between all the states in a region need to be direct, however, as states at opposite edges of the region are unlikely to have a great deal of contact with each other, but they may both be drawn into the same set of alliances and crises. Informal institutions or norms to help govern security relations across the region may also exist at this level. These may range from the informal alliances similar to those of the first level, to the development of other types of institutions or norms to govern state behaviour.

The third level is where any form of organized cooperation exists through the establishment of formal regional institutions such as a collective defense organization. Collective defense organizations or formal alliances are structures whereby regional actors seek to ally themselves with other like-minded states against a perceived common threat or enemy. Robert Osgood (1968: 17-31) defines an alliance as a formal agreement that commits states to combine their military forces against a certain state or group of states. Alliances usually also bind at least one of the participants to use force, or at the very least to consider using force

in specifically defined circumstances. As alliances are primarily comprised of like-minded states, they form to meet an external threat or enemy and seldom contain any dispute settlement mechanisms for internal threats.

There can be a difference at this level between the 'formal' region, (ie the institution) and the 'real' (ie the geographic) region. Hettne (1997: 97) argues that should the formal region not match the real region and, as was common during the Cold War, the formal region be divided between two rival security institutions, then regional security, if not stability, may be threatened. In the later, the approach of each sub-regional institution is likely to be of collective defense where each alliance seeks to balance against the other. However, should the formal and real regions coincide then there is likely to be greater security and the region will adopt collective or cooperative security approaches.

Collective security differs from alliances in that in the former members are not necessarily like-minded states but have agreed not to use force to resolve differences and to respond collectively to any violation of this rule. That is, unlike collective defense where the commitment is to act in defense of a known or perceived aggressor, in a collective security system the commitment is to respond to an unspecified aggressor in support of an unspecified victim.

Cooperative security differs from both collective defense and collective security in that it attempts to deepen understandings of the mutuality of security as well as to broaden the definition of security beyond the traditional military concerns to include environmental, economic and social concerns. Cooperative security adopts a gradual process that seeks to shape policy makers' attitudes about security and offer alternatives to the definition of security from the narrow military only focus. It attempts to change the motives of state behaviour from competition with other states to cooperate with those states. What cooperative security really provides is a means to challenge long-held or emergent fears, to overcome the hesitancy that accompanies political risk-taking, to lower the walls which have been erected between societies, governments, and countries in the wake of colonial, pre-independence and Cold War periods, and to transcend the barriers of sectarian and national interests (Dewitt, 1994: 8).

The fourth level of regionness exists when the relationships among the states has developed to such a degree that some form of civil society has developed throughout the region. In this, the organizational framework of the regional institutions facilitates and promotes social communication and convergence of values throughout the states and people of the region. Here the region attains the status of a security community. A security community, as defined by Karl Deutsch (1957), exists when a shared sense of belonging to a community or 'we-ness' is developed throughout the region. Through a security community an expectation of

only peaceful relations between states is developed. This does not imply that tensions and disputes cannot emerge within the region but that the disputants will seek only peaceful means to resolve these issues.

Critics of this approach accuse Hettne of being too Eurocentric in his articulation of the need for civil society to be developed. While this critique has some validity, it is important that some level of regional identity is developed both among the regional policy-makers but also among the local populations for this level to be attained.

Hettne's fifth level of regionness occurs when a 'region-state' is developed. A region-state has its own distinct identity, capability and legitimacy. In addition to being a collection of states with common objectives, ideas and policies, there is a need for the region itself to have a decision-making structure independent of the member-states for conflict-resolution for issues not only between the member-states but also within these states.

The new regionalism theory takes from constructivism and critical security studies the notion of social interaction as the main defining feature of a region. 'Regional identity' while a contested topic, plays a significant role in regards to the degree of regionalization that is developed. 'To a certain extent, all regions are 'imagined', subjectively defined and cognitive constructions. To be successful, regionalization necessitates a certain degree of homogeneity of compatibility of culture, identity and fundamental values' (Hettne and Soderbaum, 1998: 13).

Critics of this approach such as Zoleka Ndayi (2006) argue that the social constructivist aspect of the new regionalism theory confuses the structure with the process. The degree to which a region has established its 'regionness' is determined by the extent that the member-states adopt the ideology of regionalism through regionalization. In this, 'people develop awareness of their interdependence because they are from the same geographic area. Because of the commonalities and developed shared interests, they establish amongst other factors, a sense of belonging together' (Ndayi, 2006: 123). However, that fact remains that regionalization has developed throughout the various regions of the world at radically different paces. These differences must certainly be a result of differences in *process* rather than *structure*.

It is also important to note that the degree of regionalism can **increase** or **decrease** in a particular region and when it increases it leads to regionalization.

Development of regional security in Europe and the Asia Pacific

Europe and the Asia Pacific have both developed the highest degrees of regionalization but even these are below Hettne's fifth level of a region state. Moreover,

even in these two regions there is unevenness in regards to both the geographic scope of regionalization but also the degree of integration that has occurred across different sectors. In these, and indeed globally, economic integration has been the most successful with political while and security integration lags behind.

European regionalization emerged first through the development of West European economic, political and security integration developed during the Cold War through institutions such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the European Union (EU) and their predecessors. Following the end of the Cold War this success was extended to all of Europe, albeit slowly. Over time, the degree of regionness in Europe has deepened and extended beyond the initial West European states to include almost all of Europe, with the important exception of the Balkans. However, the Europeans remain at Hettne's fourth level of regionness, that of a civil society and not of a region state.

The pace of regionalization in Europe has also been sporadic with debate emerging over the pace and scope of the integration. While the Europeans have been relatively successful in the development of common market conditions throughout the European Union members, they are reluctant to transfer too much political power to the regional level. The 2005 defeat of the European Constitution will force the proponents of further regionalization to address the concerns of many of the European people to further centralization of political power at the regional level. The 2007 Lisbon Treaty has regained some of the lost momentum, but does not go as far as the Constitution would have.

In regards to regional security, the Europeans have tended to rely on the US-led NATO for their security cooperation. Indeed, there exists a divide in Europe over the role of the United States in European security. While most support a continued role for the US as the principal state in NATO, some in Europe, led by the French, prefer a European only security and defense structure. The tensions between these competing visions for Europe are not new and indeed were responsible for the demise of the European Defense Community in the 1950s. In 2003 these tensions re-emerged over the US-led War in Iraq. In this, a division within Europe emerged between what the then US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld (2003) famously described as 'old' and 'new' Europe. Old Europe were those states in Western Europe, especially France and Germany, who were opposed to the war and new Europe were the mainly Central and East European states that were more supportive of the US actions. While the dispute was formally over support for the US action in Iraq, it was much more a reflection on divisions between France and many of the Central and East European states over the direction of European regionalism. The French vision was for a more independent (of the US)

Europe with regional security integration overseen by the EU. The Central and East Europeans were more opposed to this as they were concerned as to the level of control France sought to continue to exert over the EU. They were also reluctant to support moves to weaken US security guarantees that they saw as vital insurance against potential threats from a resurgent Russia.

Because of these tensions, the Europeans have found it difficult to develop a common foreign and security policy (CFSP) or a European security and defense policy (ESDP) beyond agreements to adopt multilateral approaches and to develop military forces geared toward the so-called Petersberg Tasks of humanitarian, peacekeeping and peacemaking. It is expected that this will improve as the European External Action Service, established through the Lisbon Treaty, come into existence and can better coordinate EU foreign and security policy.

It should also be noted that despite growing tensions over the three post-1990 grand projects of the EU—the Euro, the Constitution, and climate policy—there is generally strong public support for the CFSP and ESDP.

Asia pacific regionalism

While the level of regional security institutionalization in the Asia Pacific is not at the same level as in Europe, the region has been successful in developing its own sense of regionness. Like in Europe, the basis of the contemporary Asia Pacific regional integration rests on the foundations of sub-regional regionalization developed during the Cold War and extended region-wide following the end of the Cold War. The Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) formed in 1967 has successfully developed the political and economic integration of the non-communist states of Southeast Asia. The success of ASEAN is that it seeks to promote the goal of 'regional reconciliation through a gradual process based on functional cooperation' (Zhang, 2005: 60).

There is very little debate in Southeast Asia as to the value of ASEAN as a regional organization, indeed, without ASEAN Southeast Asia would be a less secure place (Bisley 2009: 14). While ASEAN did not officially deal with security issues, the underlining emphasis of its security outlook was that regional stability was the responsibility of the indigenous states (Acharya 1993; Snyder, 1996). The Southeast Asian states recognized the need, as small states, to 'band together' to better respond to external pressures from their larger and more powerful neighbours and extra-regional great powers. Through cooperation, they sought to develop a system to limit intraregional competition that could otherwise disrupt their economic development and political stability (Acharya, 2009: 177).

Moreover, the Southeast Asian states recognized that through ASEAN they attained a greater role in regional

and indeed global affairs than they would otherwise enjoy as individual states (Acharya, 2009: 177). However, the record of regionalism in Southeast Asia is far from perfect and there are two main critiques of the success of regionalism in Southeast Asia. First, that ASEAN has not achieved much beyond some low level trade agreements and general principles of non-interference in each other's affairs (indeed, an achievement more often observed in the breach) and the non-use of force to resolve disputes. The second critique is that ASEAN has focused too much on pragmatic functional cooperation while putting aside the more normative goals of human rights, democratization and conflict resolution mechanisms.

In regards to exporting the norms of regionalism to the wider Asia Pacific region, some success has occurred, through the extension of the principles of the 'ASEAN Way' through a series of regional institutions such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN plus Three and the East Asian Summit (EAS). Despite this institutional development, problems still exist. The Asian Financial Crisis of the late 1990s derailed, or at least delayed progress in economic integration as well as put pressure on the political institutions of regionalization that had been developed.

Greater institutionalization has also been a much-debated issue. Singapore has been the driver of greater economic integration while Thailand, Philippines and Indonesia have been supportive of developing an 'ASEAN Community'. At the 12th ASEAN Summit in 2007 the ASEAN states agreed to establish an ASEAN Community by 2015. This would comprise three pillars: a security community (renamed the ASEAN Political-Security Community at the 2009 summit); a social and cultural community; and, an economic community. The second step in the institutionalization of ASEAN was achieved in 2008 with the launch of the ASEAN Charter. The Charter turns ASEAN into a legal entity and aims to create a single free-trade area for the region.

It is too early to tell just how effective this Charter will be in transforming the pragmatic cooperation of ASEAN into a more normative civil society or a security community necessary to achieve Hettne's fourth level of regionalization.

However, the inability of ASEAN to issue a joint communique at the 2012 ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Cambodia (July 2012) does raise questions as to the degree that regionalism has been integrated throughout the region. Cambodia exercised its role as Chair to block the issuing of the joint communique due to disagreement between some of the ASEAN members and China over territorial disputes in the South China Sea (Thayer, 2012; Perlez 2012).

The further debate within ASEAN is over the broader regional architecture, both in regards to who should be included, but also as to ASEAN's role in the wider regional structures. The question as to who should be included in the region focuses on whether non-Asian

states should be included. Malaysia has been the leading proponent of a very limited membership—restricted to the East Asian states. This dates back to the 1990s with the Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad's proposal for an Asian only alternative to the Australian/US led Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) group. Mahathir's vision for an East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC) was for it to serve as the Asian equivalent to NAFTA or the EU while also promoting the integration development of 'Asian Values'. The proposal met with limited success due to American opposition and Japanese caution. A broader more inclusive definition of regionalism is supported by Singapore, Indonesia and Japan that looks to a broader group of states based on their acceptance of regional norms and practice.

In regards to the debate over the role of ASEAN in the broader regional architecture, the debate centres around the success that the ASEAN states have achieved in their own cooperation, versus the question as to how successful small and medium powers can be as leaders of regional cooperation. Tensions between the regional great powers as well as a lack of notions of reciprocity and strategic reassurance over the Korean peninsula and other security issues in Northeast Asia hinders any region-wide regionalization.

The case of ECOWAS

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was established in 1975 by developing West African states as part of their strategy to promote economic development and prosperity for their respective countries. However, following widespread conflict and instability in the sub-region in the 1990s and early 2000s, the leaders came to the realization that economic prosperity cannot be achieved in the absence of peace and security. Beginning with a process that saw the adoption of nascent security protocols in 1978, the region has today developed and institutionalized elaborate conflict resolution, peacekeeping and security mechanisms.

Evolution of ECOWAS security regionalism

The 1975 ECOWAS treaty provided no security role for the sub-regional grouping. This is not unique to ECOWAS, as several other regional organizations have gradually assumed security and foreign policy functions by default. The European Union is a classic case in point. Founded as an economic union, the EU has gradually developed security and foreign policy capacity with the adoption of the Treaty of Maastricht and has been instrumental in devising the Common Foreign and Security Policy. Roper (1998) considers evolution into

security regionalism to occur as a result of a military threat or instability.

In the West African context, conflict and political instability in several member states made ECOWAS to realize that economic development cannot be achieved in the absence of peace and stability. The need to add a defense protocol to the ECOWAS Treaty became imperative in the 1970s when two ECOWAS states became the victims of external aggression. In November 1970, Guinea experienced an attempted invasion by Portuguese mercenaries whilst Benin became the target of another failed mercenary attack in January 1977. Added to these cases of external aggression are the military coups prevalent in West Africa during the 1970s.

It is in this context of external aggression and internal instability that ECOWAS leaders moved to adopt measures that will safeguard the sub-region's security. The organization's gradual movement into security started in 1978 when ECOWAS adopted the Non-aggression Treaty which called on member states to '...refrain from the threat and use of force or aggression' against each other (ECOWAS, 1978). Critics regard this protocol as merely idealistic as it failed to provide an institutionalized response mechanism in the case of a breach. In recognition of this weakness, West African leaders ratified the Mutual Assistance on Defense (MAD) Protocol at the 1981 Summit in Freetown, Sierra Leone and it came into force in September, 1986. This protocol committed member states to 'give mutual aid and assistance for defense against any armed threat or aggression' directed at a member state and considered them to constitute 'a threat or aggression against the entire community' (ECOWAS, 1981).

The protocol spelt out the circumstances requiring action. These include cases of armed conflict between two or more member states after the failure of peaceful means, and in the case of conflict within a state 'engineered and supported from outside' (art. 4). It created response mechanisms which include a Defense Council, Defense Committee and a sub-regional intervention force: the Allied Armed Forces of the Community (AAFC). However, this protocol have been criticized for its lack of effective conflict prevention, management and resolution mechanisms. Moreover it focused heavily on external threats and did not envisage a role for the regional body in the coups that destabilized the sub-region in the 1970s and 1980s, and the internal conflicts that swept through West Africa in the 1990s.

Critics regard this as regime protection strategies meant to serve the interest of leaders. In addition to these limitations, the institutions provided for in this protocol were never established. A possible reason responsible for the non-implementation of this protocol lies in Francophone suspicions of Nigerian hegemonic ambitions. These suspicions were further deepened by the protocol's call for the withdrawal of foreign troops from all member states. With strong military ties with

France, most of the Francophone West African states depended on their former colonial power for defense and security. In addition to these security concerns, the presence of a rival Francophone security mechanism adversely affected the chances of success of MAD. The *Accord de Non Aggression et d'Assistance en matière de Défense* (ANAD) was signed by Francophone West African states in 1977 following the border dispute between Mali and Burkina Faso. Unlike MAD, all the institutions of ANAD including its secretariat were made operational by 1981 (Dokken, 2002). The Liberian crisis, which started in 1989, represents a critical stage in ECOWAS' transition into security.

Faced with unprecedented scale of human suffering and international disengagement from African conflicts, and with no institutions to respond to the conflict ECOWAS was forced to devise ad hoc security mechanisms for keeping the lid on this conflict. In May 1990, ECOWAS established a Standing Mediation Committee (SMC) charged with the responsibility of finding a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Following weeks of unproductive talks with various faction leaders in July 1990, the SMC took the bold step of establishing and deploying the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) amidst bitter opposition from then rebel leader Charles Taylor and some West African leaders. In neighbouring Sierra Leone, ECOMOG was able to reinstate the ousted President Kabbah and acted as the *de facto* army in the absence of a national army. In 1998, this ad hoc sub-regional peacekeeping force intervened to restore peace to Guinea

Bissau following a revolt in the national army. In December 2002 ECOWAS sent its peacekeeping mission to Cote d'Ivoire and in August 2003, a peacekeeping mission was deployed in Liberia for the second time following the relapse of that country to violent conflict.

The dynamics and unpredictability of conflicts in the sub-region posed significant challenges to the traditional conceptualization and practice of humanitarian intervention. State collapse, which can be both a cause and consequence of complex political emergencies, have expanded the remit of humanitarian interveners from the 'fire brigade' mentality to efforts aimed at rebuilding collapsed states. ECOWAS peacekeepers therefore established safe havens, shared their limited military supplies with starving civilians and secured humanitarian relief corridors. To varying degrees of success, ECOMOG missions also engaged in peace building efforts, including implementing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, security sector reform and organizing elections.

These interventions also provided an opportunity for the UN to co-deploy with a regional organization in peacekeeping as was envisaged in the UN charter. In Liberia and Sierra Leone, ECOMOG co-deployed with UN observer missions whilst ECOWAS Missions in Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire provided rapid deployment

forces that were transformed into UN peacekeepers. Despite the problems of co-ordination, logistics and differences in mandate and culture, the co-operation between the UN and ECOWAS allowed each organization to maximise its comparative advantage whilst working together to resolve the conflicts. Lessons learned in these missions have provided a blueprint for how the UN and regional organizations can work together.

However, despite the achievements and successes outlined above, ECOWAS peacekeeping missions faced serious challenges and setbacks in their attempts to restore peace to war-torn countries. These include the force's lack of capacity to effectively safeguard civilians under their control, poor human rights record of troops, lack of neutrality and complicity in exploiting the natural resources of the host countries (diamonds in Sierra Leone and Timber in Liberia). ECOWAS missions were also hampered by financial, military and political difficulties. The endemic funding and logistical constraints suffered by ECOMOG severely limited the capacity of the force. Another crucial factor that adversely affected ECOMOG's operations was the rivalry and lack of political consensus between French and English speaking West Africa.

In Liberia and Sierra Leone, for example, French-speaking countries were less co-operative with some even supporting rebel groups against ECOMOG. For example, in December 1989, Charles Taylor used Cote d'Ivoire as a staging ground for the invasion of Liberia. A UN Panel of Experts also implicated Burkina Faso in providing support to the RUF and NPFL in Sierra Leone and Liberia respectively (UN, 2001). This lack of political consensus on the part of the mandating body complicated an already complex situation and further derailed efforts to resolve the conflicts. Even amongst troops on the ground, there were differences of approach and strategy. In Sierra Leone and Liberia, whilst Ghana favoured traditional peacekeeping strategies, Nigeria adopted more robust enforcement action. This difference of strategy led to problems with inter-contingent co-ordination and chain of command. These tensions were exacerbated by the lack of effective ECOWAS oversight of both forces and the sub-regional resentment of Nigeria's hegemonic position.

Institutionalizing Conflict Resolution in West Africa: The ECOWAS security mechanism

The problems encountered and lessons learned in the various ECOWAS peacekeeping operations led to the initiation of a process meant to improve future interventions. ECOWAS therefore made moves to institutionalize conflict resolution, security and peacekeeping mechanisms. The revised ECOWAS treaty of 1993 represents the first serious attempt to establish

such a permanent mechanism. Besides strengthening economic and fiscal ties to face the challenges of globalization, the treaty addressed issues pertaining to security, conflict resolution and management.

In recognition of the nexus between human rights, good governance and conflicts in the sub-region, ECOWAS in 1991 agreed on the Declaration of Political Principles which committed member states to respect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. This was followed in 2001 by the adoption of the Protocol on Good Governance which addresses the root causes of conflict such as corruption and bad governance. To address the link between small arms proliferation and conflict, ECOWAS member states agreed on a Moratorium on Small Arms in October 1998. The Moratorium was transformed into a legally binding convention in June 2006 and a Small Arms Unit has since been established within the ECOWAS Commission to monitor its implementation.

The most important security protocol adopted so far is the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security signed in December 1999. As its name implies, this mechanism seeks to strengthen the sub-region's conflict prevention, management and resolution capacity, as well as build effective peacekeeping, humanitarian support and peace building capabilities. It also addresses cross border crime which is becoming a major problem for the sub-region. In a bid to realize these ambitious aims, the ECOWAS Security Mechanism (as it is known for short) establishes a number of institutions, arms and strategies which include the Mediation and Security Council, an early warning system, and a stand-by force. The subsections below look at the various arms and agencies of the mechanism and assess their strengths and weaknesses.

The mediation and security council (MSC)

Comprising Heads of State and Government, Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Ambassadors, this body makes important decisions relating to matters of peace and security and the deployment of peacekeeping/enforcement troops. Membership to the MSC is on a rotational basis and comprises nine states elected for a two-year period with no permanent seats. To facilitate the council's work, a *Committee of Ambassadors (CA)* with dual accreditation to ECOWAS and Nigeria and a *Defense and Security Commission (DSC)* made up of defense chiefs and security technocrats work out the details and technicalities of an operation and make recommendations to the MSC.

Early warning and response network (ECOWARN)

An early warning system has been established with

regional observation network and observatories. These observatories undertake risk mapping, observation and analysis of social, economic and political situations in the sub-region which have the potential of degenerating into conflict and present appropriate threat perception analysis. To this end, four zones were established as follows: *Zone 1*: Cape Verde, The Gambia, Guinea Bissau, and Senegal with Banjul as the capital; *Zone 2*: Burkina Faso, Cote D'Ivoire, Mali and Niger with headquarters in Ouagadougou; *Zone 3*: Ghana, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, HQ Monrovia; *Zone 4*: Benin, Nigeria and Togo, HQ Cotonou. The reports coming from these zones inform the ECOWAS Commission President and the MSC in devising suitable response strategies.

Four options are available to diffuse any potential threat to security identified in the various zones and they include: (a) the setting up of a fact finding commission; (b) the use of the good offices of the Commission President; (c) calling on the services of a Council of the Wise; and if all else fails (d) the employment of military force. The Council of the Wise can be seen as a traditional African conflict resolution mechanism. Made up of 15 eminent persons, one from each member state, this council is charged with the task of facilitating negotiation, mediation and conciliation in a potential conflict. The focus on conflict prevention and early response is a step in the right direction. However, the placement of one of the observatories in Burkina Faso, a country notorious for supporting insurgencies in the sub-region, is misguided. The ability of the observatory to gather and disseminate critical information on this government will be adversely affected, as the government in question might restrict the system's work.

Critics have also accused ECOWARN of lacking an early response capacity. The system also suffers from a lack of integration and co-ordination with other agencies and initiatives within ECOWAS performing prevention and peace building roles such as those responsible for youth and gender equality. The development of the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (discussed below) aims to address this drawback.

ECOWAS standby force

ECOMOG became formally established as a standby force for the community and, reflecting the changing nature of peacekeeping, its role was expanded to cover conflict prevention, humanitarian intervention, enforcement, peace building and the control of organized crime. In June 2004, the ECOWAS Defense and Security Commission renamed ECOMOG as the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF). The force will be made up of 6500 highly trained soldiers to be drawn from national units. It will include a rapid reaction Task Force of 1500 troops which will have the capability to be deployed within 14 days (instead of the 30 days previously planned in line with African Union Standard), whilst the entire brigade

could be deployed within 90 days. The ESF will form one of the components of the African Standby Force and will be under the operational control of the African Union.

To enhance the force's strategic, tactical and operational readiness, ECOWAS is in the process of implementing a training programme. This involves a series of specialised modules consistent with UN standards to be delivered in three designated Centres of Excellence: Nigerian War College in Abuja, the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Centre in Accra, Ghana, and the Ecole du Maintien de la Paix in Bamako, Mali. ECOWAS is also in the process of organising military exercises with the aim of enhancing the peacekeeping capacity of troops and harmonising strategies and equipments. Some of the exercises held so far include the Command Post exercise in Dakar and Accra in June 2006 and December 2007 respectively; the West Battalion Exercise in Thies, Senegal, December 2007, the Command Post Exercise in Bamako, Mali, June 2008 and 'Operation Cohesion' in Benin in April 2010. To address the perennial problem of logistics, ECOWAS has designated two logistics depots – a Coastal base just outside Freetown, Sierra Leone; and inland base in Mali. In July 2010, the Government of Sierra Leone donated 18 acres of land to ECOWAS for the building of the Logistics base and ECOWAS has already disbursed \$10 million dollars for the first phase of the project.

The ECOWAS conflict prevention framework

The ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) was developed in January 2008 to inform and guide the organization's conflict prevention efforts. It aims to provide a strong conceptual understanding of conflict prevention, strengthen ECOWAS' conflict prevention capacity and integrate existing initiatives of ECOWAS institutions and mechanisms responsible for conflict prevention and peace building. These aims are to be achieved through a set of 14 components covering a broad spectrum of areas that enhance human security: Early Warning, Preventive Diplomacy, Democracy and Political Governance, Human Rights and the Rule of Law, Natural Resource Governance, Cross-Border Initiatives, Security Governance, Practical Disarmament, Women, Peace and Security, Youth Empowerment, ECOWAS Standby Force, Humanitarian Assistance and Peace Education (The Culture of Peace). To enable its implementation, the ECPF calls for increased advocacy and communication of the goals and activities of ECOWAS, resource mobilization to support peace and security efforts, cooperation with the AU, UN, member states and civil society and participative monitoring and evaluation.

The ECPF is a very comprehensive framework document that addresses a key limitation of earlier security mechanisms – the failure of coordination

amongst various departments and institutions within ECOWAS and member states responsible for peace and security programming. For example, prior to the ECPF, various agencies responsible for conflict prevention and peace building such as ECOWARN and initiatives to promote good governance, gender equality and youth empowerment operated in isolation leading to duplication of efforts and inefficient use of scarce resources. It also provides a strong conceptual understanding of conflict prevention which goes beyond the prevention of imminent outbreak of violence to addressing the fundamental causes of conflict and human insecurity in the region. However, whilst the document calls for better co-ordination and integration of peace and security initiatives, it fails to specify organs or institutions responsible for this task neither does it clearly define roles and responsibilities for its implementation. Without clearly defined roles and action plans, the ECPF risks becoming one of many high sounding declarations and protocols of ECOWAS that are hardly implemented.

ECOWAS and civil society

Another important feature of the emerging peace and security architecture of ECOWAS is its engagement with civil society groups. This reflects the new ECOWAS vision of moving from 'an ECOWAS of states to an ECOWAS of peoples'. In this respect, ECOWAS with the help of local and international NGOs created the West African Civil Society Forum in 2003 to act as a platform for civil society interaction with ECOWAS policy makers. This new people centred approach has already resulted in civil society playing an active role in matters of regional peace and security including helping to develop the region's small arms control convention, the ECPF and working alongside ECOWARN to enhance ECOWAS early warning capacity. Organizations such as the West African Network for Peace building (WANEP) and the West African Network on Small Arms (WANSA) are notable in this regard.

However, critics have accused ECOWAS of only working with selected organizations that have the capacity to access the ECOWAS Commission (Ekiyor, 2008). For ECOWAS to be considered serious with its people centred approach, it must seek to work with a wider set of civil society actors and organizations and increase representation.

Opportunities and challenges to peace and security in West Africa

The ECOWAS peacekeeping and peace building intervention in West Africa opened up new possibilities for the maintenance of international peace and security in Africa and challenged the stereotype of Africa as the

'hopeless' continent. These interventions represent a significant shift in Africa's international relations, previously characterised by the traditional Westphalian principles of state sovereignty and non interventionism in the internal affairs of states. ECOWAS also deserves commendation for Institutionalizing peacekeeping and incorporating conflict prevention and peace building into its security mechanism. Humanitarian and peace support operations in today's complex political emergencies call for a coherent and effective peace building component to prevent a relapse into violence. The experiences in Liberia and Sierra Leone are indicative of the importance of incorporating peace building into humanitarian intervention.

The ECOWAS peace and security mechanism stands out as very progressive and has influenced the establishment of similar structures in other African regions such as SADC and ECCAS and most importantly the AU's Peace and Security Council (PSC). The focus on conflict prevention and early response is another step in the right direction. Another encouraging feature of the ECOWAS Peace and Security Architecture is its engagement with civil society. WACSOF is playing an important role as an interface between states and people and it is contributing to regional policy and debates. Across countries in the sub-region, civil society organizations are also becoming stronger and playing an active role in campaigning for good governance and managing conflicts. For example, the West African Network on Small Arms (WANSAs) and the West African Network on Peace building are both very instrumental in advocating for better peace building measures.

The emerging policy shift within ECOWAS towards issues of human security and good governance is also encouraging. The Protocol on Good Governance, which is closely linked to the Security Mechanism, addresses the root causes of the sub-region's security crisis and sought to shift attention towards the well being of the individual. Whilst there are still cases of bad governance and threats to democracy in a number of countries in the sub-region, on the whole, governance appears to be improving across West Africa.

ECOWAS has also appeared to be tough on some of its members who have displayed blatant disregard for democratic principles. For example, Guinea and Niger were suspended following military coups. The regional body has also taken the bold step of recognizing the universally recognized winner of the November 2010 Ivorian elections Alansan Ouattara.

The co-operation between the UN and ECOWAS in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire provided useful lessons for peace and security interventions in West Africa and formed the basis of an emerging framework for task sharing and division of labour between the AU, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the UN. In West Africa, this emerging complementarity model is based on ECOWAS providing a rapid reaction force to

stabilize a volatile conflict situation and handing over to a larger, well resourced UN mission whilst leading peacemaking efforts. This has given ECOWAS a leadership role in matters relating to peace and security in the sub-region. In most cases, the AU and UN has been content with following the ECOWAS lead and endorsing its positions and resolutions.

Despite the above positive outlook for peace in West Africa, a number of challenges remain. The institutional and financial incapacity of ECOWAS poses an obstacle in realizing the aims embodied in its emerging peace and security architecture. The problem of funding is not new to the organization. The organization's financial crisis is characteristic of the weak economic status of its member states. The 'Community Levy', a 0.5 per cent tax on all imports into ECOWAS member states is meant to help fill the gap between states' contributions and ECOWAS expenditure.

However, due to competing national priorities, a number of states have so far failed to apply this levy. This means ECOWAS has to rely on external donor support to fund its peace and security mechanism. In 2003, it created the ECOWAS Peace Fund to mobilise resources to support peace and security interventions. A number of Western countries have contributed to the fund. To help with institutional capacity building, France, the US and UK are also collaborating with ECOWAS to implement a number of capacity building programmes. Whilst this external support is needed to boost the capacity of ECOWAS, this risks eroding local ownership of security structures and encourage a disproportionate dependence on outside prescriptions and funding.

Another major threat towards the realization of the sub-region's peace and security aspirations is the fact that ECOWAS leaders are known to be making high sounding declarations and policies which they are slow to implement. For example, since the Convention on Small Arms was signed in 2006, it took nearly 4 years for it to come into effect because countries delayed in ratifying the treaty. The reciprocal support given by some states within the sub-region to each others' insurgents and dissident groups also undermines the collective security ideals embodied in the ECOWAS peace and security mechanism.

ECOWAS is making moves to address human security issues and become a more people-centred organization, it still struggles to deal with endemic human security problems in the sub-region such as corruption, disease and the growing poverty and economic hardship. Corruption in the sub-region continues to undermine economic recovery efforts and robs the population of the expected peace dividend. 11 of the organization's 15 member states occupy the bottom 80 places of Transparency International's 2009 Corruption Perception Index (Transparency International, 2009). Although macro-economic figures and growth forecasts for the sub-region are getting better, however, the pervasive

poverty and poor social and economic indicators pose the biggest challenge to peace in West Africa. For example, twelve of the sub region's sixteen countries fall within the Low Human Development category of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)'s Human Development Index Report of 2009 due to factors such as low life expectancy, high infant mortality rate, high levels of illiteracy, low per capita incomes and abject poverty.

The greatest challenge facing the emerging ECOWAS peace and security architecture is how to respond to the ongoing crisis in Mali. There are echoes of the forgotten crises of Liberia and Sierra Leone as world attention is currently moved away from the Arab Spring and events in the wider Middle East whilst Mali plunges to violent civil war and security threats from militant Islamists.

Concluding analysis

Regionalization has emerged in the three regions through similar processes. They all established precedents for cooperation in non-security issues first (ie the EU, ASEAN and ECOWAS) before extending cooperation to security issues (ie NATO, the ARF and the East Asian Summit, and ECOMOG). Moreover, since the end of the Cold War Europe and Asia have extended and deepened their cooperation throughout their respective regions with the admission of several former communist states to both low and high politics regional cooperative mechanisms. However, the degree of regionalism that has developed in each region is significantly different. Europe and ECOWAS has achieved the fourth level of Hettne's new regionalism theory, that of having established a regional civil society. In comparison, Southeast Asia has clearly met Hettne's third level of regionalism. Moreover, through norms such as the ASEAN Way and the non-interference in the internal affairs of the member states as well as feelings of regionalism among, at least, the policy-makers it is establishing the basis for the fourth level, that of a security community. However, at the wider Asia Pacific level, the situation is less promising. ASEAN's engagement with the states of Northeast Asia (China, Japan and South Korea), North America, Australia, New Zealand and India remain only at the third level with debate over which of these states will be included in any further regionalization still unsettled. However, some nascent forms of regionalism have been developed at the regional level through the adoption of principles of the ASEAN Way and the norms of amity and cooperation through institutions such as the ASEAN Regional Forum and the East Asian Summit. The reasons for the divergence between the three regions can be explained through the difference in the three criteria set out at the start of the paper; that is the support of the regional great power(s); the extent of reciprocity that

exists in the relations of the states in the region; and, the level of strategic reassurance that exists among these states. In Europe, the United States has supported the expansion of NATO and the European Union to the Central and East European states. While Russia formally opposed much of the expansion of the West European regime to the former Soviet bloc, their efforts were ineffective given their own weakened status. While there have also been some disputes over the nature of the reciprocity in relations between regional states, as can be seen in disputes between the Central European states and France over European-US relations, the Central and East European states have more or less readily accepted the rules and norms of the European institutions. In ECOWAS, the nature of reciprocity between the countries is sometimes strained by the perceived hegemonic tendencies of Nigeria by Francophone countries.

During the post-Cold War era there has been a high degree of strategic reassurance among the regional powers. Where sub-regional tensions emerged, the other European states were able to make common ground in regards to containing the conflict to the immediate area and sought to mediate the dispute. With a resurgent Russia, as can be seen with the disputes over gas exports to Ukraine and other former Soviet Republics and the 2008 conflict in Georgia, this strategic reassurance may diminish and further expansion or deepening of this regionalization may be difficult. This strategy of containing conflict to the immediate area and mediating the dispute is equally practiced by ECOWAS. The Asia Pacific has not achieved a similar level of regionalization primarily because of a lack of support by the great powers. Both the United States and China were initially distrustful of multilateral approaches to regional cooperation. While the United States remains sceptical of the multilateral approach, China has sought to maximise its influence in the region through these institutions. The Chinese have used institutions such as the ARF and ASEAN+3 as part of their so called 'Charm Offensive' with the Southeast Asian states. In Northeast Asia, the US and China have been able to work together through the Six Party Talks to, at least, at times, engage North Korea.

Greater reciprocity in relations among the Asia Pacific states has also developed through the extension of the ASEAN Way throughout the region through the ARF and East Asian Summit. There are however pockets of mistrust, most notably with and around North Korea but also between the democratic, semi-authoritarian and authoritarian regimes throughout the region. While the continued tensions and mistrust between the US and China hinder the development of strategic reassurance in the region, their cooperation through the Six Party Talks could help to build habits of cooperation between the two and lead to greater regionalization in the Asia Pacific

Established as an economic integration union, ECOWAS has developed the most elaborate conflict

prevention, management and resolution mechanism in Africa. State collapse and conflicts in the 1990s and early 2000s and the ensuing international disengagement from African conflicts prompted an ad hoc response in the form of ECOMOG. Subsequently, the sub-regional body intervened in conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau and Cote d'Ivoire undertaking tasks ranging from safeguarding civilians to implementing peace building programmes.

The organization has achieved mixed results in these interventions with relative successes in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire and abysmal failure in Guinea Bissau. The various interventions have been plagued by several problems including financial and logistics, lack of political consensus and the absence of a coherent peacekeeping and humanitarian strategy. Nevertheless, despite the portrayal of West Africa and indeed the entire continent as 'hopeless', the conflict management and peace building intervention of ECOWAS deserves commendation and is a manifestation that Africa is taking ownership and responsibility for its conflicts. The ongoing efforts at Institutionalizing peace and security response mechanisms are steps in the right direction as are efforts to promote good governance and economic development in the sub-region. The greatest challenge to this emerging peace and security architecture, however, is how the sub-regional body is responding to the Malian crisis.

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