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Security by proxy?
The EU and (sub-)regional organisations: the case of ECOWAS

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43 avenue
du Président Wilson
F-75775 Paris cedex 16
phone: + 33 (0) 1 56 89 19 30
fax: + 33 (0) 1 56 89 19 31
e-mail: institute@iss-eu.org
www.iss-eu.org

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Security by proxy?

The EU and (sub-)regional organisations: the case of ECOWAS

The author is currently finishing a Ph.D on the conceptualisations of the EU as a power in international relations. A Research Fellow (2000-2004) and Associate Research Fellow (since 2004) at the Paris-based Institut de Relations internationales et stratégiques (IRIS), he has also taught international relations and European politics at the Institut d'Etudes politiques in Lille since 2001. Bastien Nivet was Visiting Fellow at the EU Institute for Security Studies from September to November 2005, and Associate Research Fellow from December to January 2006, during which time he conducted research leading to the publication of this paper.

Contents

Summary

The European Union (EU) has for a long time paid attention to processes of regional integration and cooperation on other continents. However, the relations the EU has developed with other regional or sub-regional organisations until a very recent period were essentially focused on economic, development and trade issues, partly because of the late emergence of the EU itself as a foreign and security actor.

Today, many of the security challenges and strategic ambitions expressed in the European Security Strategy may plead the case for reinforced partnerships between the EU and (sub-)regional organisations. This is the case with issues such as state failure and organised crime, regional conflicts, conflict prevention and stabilisation, etc. This paper aims to explore both the promises and challenges raised by the possibility for the EU to project stability and security through partnerships with (sub-)regional organisations. For this purpose, the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS) and its relations with the EU has been chosen as a test case.

Indeed, the former organisation has already emerged as a security actor to a certain extent, not least in the field of crisis management, with the interventions of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in several conflicts since the early 1990s. Besides, the past few years have seen a broadening and deepening of EU-ECOWAS relations, which now touch on security matters.

While the West African organisation, along with other actors such as the United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU), is now highly recognised as a key actor in the region, the analysis of its relations with the EU in the field of security also reveals challenges for a fruitful inter-regional strategic partnership.

In a region where the local context implies that the agenda for security cooperation between the EU and the regional organisation is potentially endless, setting a clear agenda and priorities for such a cooperation seems first of all essential although difficult.

Secondly, the right balance between principles such as the respect of local demands, ownerships and initiatives on the one hand, and the realities of European methods, means and ambitions on the other hand, is also sometimes difficult to find.

The development of strong inter-regional partnerships in the field of security also raises important issues of coherence and efficiency, both at the European and West African levels. On the European side, the enlargement of traditional development and cooperation mechanisms towards security issues and the difficulties of Europeanising member states' African policies raises difficulties. As for ECOWAS, the Europeans should be aware that it is occasionally not trusted by its own member states, and that gaps exist between decisions and discourses produced at the regional level, and policies conducted at the national level. While relying on (sub-)regional organisations in order to contribute to security and stability on other continents can be a very valuable approach, the EU should therefore pay attention to the impact of these organisations on their own member states, and to issues of coherence at European, inter-regional and multilateral level (including organisations such as the UN and the AU).

Introduction

Among the numerous tasks and challenges identified for the European Union (EU) in the European Security Strategy of December 2003,[1] several point to the development of enlarged and reinforced partnerships between the EU and other regional or sub-regional organisations.[2]

In terms of 'strategic ambitions', this is the case with issues such as the capacity of the EU to deal with new threats – state failure and organised crime, most notably –, its willingness and commitment to contribute to the prevention and settlement of regional conflicts, and its aim to be able to contribute to the stabilisation and security sector reform processes in other regions and/or countries.[3] In terms of 'method', the exploitation of partnerships with regional or sub-regional organisations clearly fits into the EU's avowed aspiration to strive towards an international order based on effective multilateralism and cooperation, confidence-building measures, etc.

There are various aspects to the rationale for developing such a network of partnerships between the EU and (sub-)regional organisations. It can first, from a very Eurocentric point of view, be a way to export the 'integration-stabilisation' model, which has been experimented successfully in Europe over the last few decades. More obviously, many security issues have regional ramifications, and cannot be dealt with at national level, thus requiring security issues to be thought of in regional terms. It can also be seen as a potentially useful way of building bridges between regions in search of a political basis for efficient multilateralism. More pragmatically, (sub-)regional organisations could constitute useful channels of influence/implementation for the EU's policies and priorities. Last but not least, regional integration processes, especially in the field of security and defence, can be perceived as a way to avoid direct commitment from EU member states by encouraging or relying on regional efforts and promoting local ownership. The first chapter of this research paper discusses these various rationales and debates.

Chapter Two analyses why, in the context of the possibility for the EU of exporting peace and stability through partnerships with regional and sub-regional organisations, the case of the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS) is a potentially interesting test case in many regards. First of all, and although it was first created to deal essentially with development, economic and social issues, this sub-regional group of fifteen states has already acquired experience in trying to deal and think 'regionally' on security and defence issues: it has, among other things, been active in the field of crisis management in the region through ECOMOG (ECOWAS Monitoring Group),[4] it has been developing a crisis prevention mechanism since 1999, and decided on the

[1] Javier Solana, *A Secure Europe in a Better World. European Security Strategy*, document adopted at the European Council, Brussels, December 2003.

[2] The distinction between regional and sub-regional organisations remains as unclear as the definition of what constitutes a region in international relations: common institutions, particular interdependencies, geography, and security complexes do not always match each other. In the case of ECOWAS, its description as sub-regional is mainly relevant with regard to the existence of the African Union, considered as a regional organisation.

[3] This short list is of course far from exhaustive.

[4] For details on the creation and role of ECOMOG, see the second chapter of this paper.

creation of a rapid reaction force in May 2003. ECOWAS is also an interesting case since it covers a region that has witnessed crisis with implications for EU member states in recent years, most notably in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire.[5] Moreover, local governments and authorities occasionally call for more cooperation, assistance or support from the EU and/or some of its member states in several dimensions: institution and capacity building, training, financial or logistical support, etc.

Against this background, the EU has, as is analysed in Chapter Three, gradually deepened its relations with ECOWAS, and extended the scope of these towards stability and security-related issues. It recognises this organisation as one of the most significant and valuable regional partners on these issues.[6]

Based on local/regional security challenges, as well as on the EU's own strategic ambitions as expressed in the Security Strategy, Chapter Four explores a potential *agenda* for EU-ECOWAS cooperation, ranging from regional stability and conflict prevention to crisis management and security sector reform. In doing so, priority fields of cooperation are suggested.

The fifth and final chapter explores the possible *methods* to be followed, and their institutional, financial and political implications for the EU. While avoiding the temptation of extrapolating a model of interregional partnership from the test case of ECOWAS, it attempts to draw lessons for other inter-regional relations where and when possible.

5 For a broader view of the issue of crisis management in Sub-Saharan Africa, see for instance: Fernanda Faria, 'Crisis Management in Sub-Saharan Africa: the role of the European Union', *Occasional Paper* no. 51 (Paris: EUISS, April 2004).

6 Interviews with members of DG Relex and Development and of the Policy Unit of the Council of the European Union, held in Brussels on 9 and 10 November 2005.

Projecting peace and stability through partnerships with (sub-)regional organisations: rationale and challenges

Trends and developments in the field of the EU's external relations show an increasing attachment to regional or sub-regional organisations as partners, recipients or contact points for European policies, be they economic (development, trade issues) or political (diplomatic or security issues etc.). Dialogue processes or structural arrangements of various kinds and functions now exist between the EU and all major (sub-)regional organisations: the AU, SADC, ECOWAS in Africa, ASEAN in Asia, the GCC in the Persian Gulf region, the Andean Pact and Mercosur in Latin America, etc.

Although very diverse in terms of their content and ambitions, these links all demonstrate the importance which the EU attaches to building strong interregional ties, an importance repeatedly emphasised in the EU's international stances, actions, and documents. While initially essentially concerned with trade and development issues, these interregional connections are now increasingly acquiring a broader strategic dimension, progressively deepening and extending towards political and security issues.[7] Not only are they seen as useful in terms of dialogue and 'interdependence management mechanisms', but also (albeit more recently and very variably) as possible tools for the more direct promotion of the EU's own foreign and security policy objectives.

The EU has, clearly, weaved a web of links with most (sub-)regional organisations. This chapter analyses the past and present rationale underlying this phenomenon, as well as the effects and challenges of this trend in terms of stability and security projection, and, more generally, of the EU's influence overseas.

2.1 Exporting models and patterns: the limits of replication

One of the earliest European approaches to regional integration in other parts of the world was to attempt to replicate the European experience by exporting the European regional model abroad. As early as 1964, a report by Haas and Schmitter[8] explored the possibility of exporting the European 'model' to South America. In the 1960s and 1970s, it was largely on this basis that the first links were established with both South America and Western Africa, according to a 'model exportation' logic that was to prove more or less inefficient. Since European integration was associated with stabilisation and cooperation, it was thought that similar processes elsewhere could produce the same effects. Yet, differences in historical background, social and economic realities, strategic context and political leadership mean that it is very difficult for simple institutional scheme transposition to produce the same political and economic results as European integration did. For instance, the relations between regional integration and stabilisation might be twofold: regional integration might indeed have stabilising effects, but a pre-existing political commitment to stabilisation and reconciliation might also be a precondition for successful regional integration. In that way, experiences like the one in Western Africa have clearly shown that the institutionalisation of 'a region' or 'a sub-region' was far from sufficient to guarantee stability, peace and confidence, or even to create a feeling of 'regionness', if it was not shored up by strong political will.

7 In that sense, they are of course following the EU's own evolution...

8 Ernst B. Haas and Philip Schmitter, 'Economics and Differential Patterns of Political Integration: Projections about Unity in Latin America', *International Organization*, vol.18, no.40, 1964, pp. 705-37.

However, the EU continues to project an image of itself as a 'model' of interstate relations, which purposely inspires other regional processes, but on a symbolic or normative basis rather than as a replicable institutional model. The concept of a security community[9] as envisaged from a European point of view may not be appropriate for apprehending the realities of regional security on other continents (such as Africa). Hopes that a 'European-way' associating stabilisation, security, and regional integration and cooperation might be repeatable elsewhere are nevertheless high on the EU's agenda and prominent in its political discourse.

2.2 Tackling security challenges regionally

A second, much more obvious rationale for dealing with and relying on (sub-) regional organisations is that most of the post-Cold War security challenges have cross-border dimensions. As the EU Security Strategy notes, '*Coherent policies are also needed regionally, especially in dealing with conflict. Problems are rarely solved on a single country basis, or without regional support, as in different ways the experience in both the Balkans and Western Africa shows*'.[10] If armed conflicts since the end of the Cold War have been more and more intranational and not international, arms transfers, displacements of populations and cross-border armed groups also means that conflicts can rarely be solved on a long-term basis without taking into account their regional causes, dimensions, or consequences. Other security challenges such as terrorism, organised crime, arms proliferation etc., also often require a regional approach.

In many ways, security complexes, defined as '*group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another*'[11] operate in various parts of the world. Confronted with these, the EU, in search of the efficient projection of security and stability, has every interest in trying to think regionally when necessary in order to address a security complex and not just part of it. One problem here is that the maps of security complexes do not necessarily match those of (sub-)regional organisations.

2.3 Building bridges for efficient multilateralism

A more recent rationale for the reinforcement and optimisation of EU relations with (sub-)regional organisations stems from the EU's will to contribute to a world governance where dialogue and cooperation is the rule and conflicting relations the exception. As noted in the EU Security Strategy, '*Regional organisations also strengthen global governance. (...) regional organisations such as ASEAN, MERCOSUR and the African Union make an important contribution to a more orderly world.*'[12] In supporting the emergence or reinforcement of regional organisations and associating them in the implementation of its policies, the EU is also somehow contributing to positive structural changes in international relations, in what resembles a 'building (interdependent-) blocks' approach.

Moreover, in the same way as the EU is perceived by some member states as having a potentially magnifying effect on their international influence and margin of manoeuvre, the existence of strong links between the EU itself and

9 On this concept, see for instance: Karl W. Deustch et al., *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957). For a (critical) analysis of the applicability of this concept on the African continent, see for instance: Liisa Laakso, 'What Role for Regional Organisations in Peace and Security?', in *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, issue 381 (September 2005), pp. 389-402.

10 *A Secure Europe in a Better World. EU Security Strategy*, op.cit., p. 20.

11 Barry Buzan, *People, the State and Fear. An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, second edition, 1991), p. 190. On further analysis on the same concept from the same author see, for instance, Barry Buzan, 'The logic of Regional Security in the Post-Cold War World', in Björn Hettne, András Inotai and Osvaldo Sunkel (eds.), *The New Regionalism and the Future of Security and Development* (London: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 1-25.

12 *A Secure Europe in a Better World. EU Security Strategy*, op.cit., p. 15.

other (sub-)regional organisations could be perceived as a way to optimise the EU's influence in various regions of the world. Inter-regional relations might in some contexts provide useful solutions to overcome occasional difficulties or weaknesses of bilateral relations, whether at EU or EU member states' level.

2.4 A case for relative disengagement?

Recent European support or encouragement of (sub-)regional organisations also seems to be motivated partly by the desire to see local actors becoming more capable of tackling security challenges by themselves. In this regard, the reinforcement of both regional institutions and their links and cooperation with the EU might be perceived as a way to foster local problem-solving capacities, thus enabling a lesser commitment from EU member states or the EU itself.

Although not by any means advocating a complete European disengagement from entire parts of the world, European leaders frequently express the view that local actors, including regional organisations, are the first concerned in regional conflicts. As stated in a recent Common Position of the European Union on conflict prevention in Africa: '*the primary responsibility for the prevention, management and settlement of conflicts on the African continent lies with Africans themselves.*'[13] Within this background, regional frameworks are perceived as more efficient and coherent than national, or bilateral, measures or initiatives.

If the EU is to encourage local stabilisation, crisis prevention efforts and capacities enhancement, it should be careful, however, not to give the impression that successful regional achievements and capacity-building are necessarily synonymous with EU disengagement, in particular financially. This would indeed, in some regions and/or areas, have very counterproductive effects and provide very low political incentive for regional efforts and integration.[14]

The right balance between support for local ownership of initiatives and capabilities through regional organisations on the one hand, and a 'buck-passing' attitude from the EU (and, more generally, from the international community) on the other hand, is on some occasions very hard to identify.[15]

[13] Council Common Position 2005/304/CFSP of 12 April 2005, concerning conflict prevention, management and resolution in Africa and repealing Common Position 2004/85/CFSP.

[14] French military sometimes recall that their African partners, when informed of the French project on reinforcement of African capabilities on Peace missions (RECAMP) used to answer: 'RECAMP = DECAMP'.

[15] For a recent analysis of this debate and on the broader links between the EU and regional organisations, see Richard Gowan, 'The EU, Regional Organisations and Security: Strategic Partners of Convenient Alibis?', in *Audit of European Strategy* (Brussels: IRRI-KIIB, December 2004).

ECOWAS as a security organisation and sub-regional partner for the EU

The main rationales for inter-regional partnerships have actively shaped the EU's relations with numerous (sub-)regional organisations. Among these, and in the specific field of foreign and security policies, the EU's relations with ECOWAS are a test case of particular significance for several reasons. Not least because, in comparison with other (sub-)regional organisations or other levels of cooperation (e.g., bilateral cooperation), ECOWAS has some interesting comparative advantages as a partner for EU policies in the region it covers.[16]

3.1 ECOWAS as a regional security actor in West Africa: early declaratory statements

ECOWAS has already emerged, albeit gradually and somewhat haphazardly, as a regional security actor, although it was originally created in 1975 by sixteen states in Western Africa[17] to address economic, social, and development challenges, through the long-term ambition to create a single market and customs union in the region. This regional integration - economic progress dichotomy, as well as the institutions shaped and created to that end, partly reproduced the 'European model'.[18]

However, the continuing instability of the sub-region and patent lack of confidence among member states obviously impeded any serious progress towards ECOWAS economic and developments goals, and led to the progressive assertion of political-security issues as one of the main spheres of action of ECOWAS.

A first incursion of the organisation into the security arena was made in 1978, when the Heads of State and Governments of the member states adopted a Protocol on Non-Aggression. Member states pledged therein to refrain from 'committing, encouraging, or condoning the acts of subversion, hostility or aggression against the territorial integrity or political independence of other Member States.'[19] Adopted in a context of great regime instability and a series of military *coups*, the Protocol was to have little impact on regional security challenges. Providing no instruments whatsoever to put its aims into practice, it very rapidly appeared as a mere declaratory empty shell.

The relative ineffectiveness of the Protocol on Non-Aggression led some West African leaders to plead for a reinforced regional commitment to collective security, which led to the adoption at the Freetown ECOWAS summit of 1981 of a Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance on Defence.[20] Building on the first Protocol's condemnation of any act of subversion or

16 This chapter does not intend to present a global and comprehensive view of all security-related ECOWAS activities and mechanisms, but rather to analyse the way ECOWAS and its member states progressively conceptualised and built themselves up as security actors in the sub-region.

17 Benin, Burkina-Faso, Cap Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. Mauritania withdrew in December 1999. The membership of ECOWAS, unlike that of the EU for instance, is purely dependent upon geography, and not on any other criteria such as political values, economic standards, human rights laws, etc.

18 The ECOWAS 'Authority of Heads of State and Government' thus resembles the European Council in its nature and functions, while the ECOWAS Council of Ministers can be identified with the Council of the EU, the ECOWAS Secretariat being the local variant of the permanent supranational institution that is the Commission for the EU (with the difference that the powers and financial means of the ECOWAS Secretariat are much lower than those of its European counterpart).

19 Protocol on Non-Aggression, Article 2, ECOWAS.

20 A protocol that came into force only in September 1986.

hostility, it declared such acts to be 'a threat or aggression against the entire community'.[21] The sense of security community and defence alliance expressed in this ambition, although contrasting with the prevalent internal origins of threats, was supported by the creation of response means and mechanisms.[22] Both the phrasing of the Protocol and its philosophy seems to have ignored that most of the instability and violence igniting the region had domestic roots and was not necessarily the result of external attacks. The definition of what constituted 'a threat to the community' also remained particularly uncertain, not least as far as internal conflicts with external and regional implications were concerned. As noted by Clement E. Adibe, '*because it lacked a clear definition of the nature, magnitude and conditions that make an internal conflict a matter for regional security concern, the Defence Protocol, like other legalistic instruments of international politics, left the twin issue of interpretation and application to the domain of power politics. This situation was bound to produce some difficulties in the event that its provisions were called into use.*'[23]

The ECOWAS Declaration on Political Principles of July 1991[24] was also more or less directly concerned with security issues, in recognising, at least on a declaratory basis, that issues of political governance were part of the structural security problem of the region.

These various initiatives, of an essentially declaratory nature, had little effect on and indeed largely contrasted with realities on the ground. Lack of transposition of principles asserted at ECOWAS level into member states' behaviour and politics basically meant that the region was accorded a political discourse on security rather than a security culture and instruments. The latter, however, progressively developed during the 1990s.

3.2 Ad hoc experimentation

Strangely enough to European eyes, experience has largely preceded institutionalisation and the establishment of common rules and capabilities in the development of the organisation's security and defence dimension.

The 'operationalisation' of ECOWAS as a security actor began as early as 1990,[25] when the Authority of Heads of States and Governments (the ECOWAS equivalent of the European Council) created an ECOWAS ceasefire follow-up group, ECOMOG (ECOWAS Monitoring Group).[26]

Following the continuing deterioration of the situation in Liberia in the 1980s, violence had escalated and by mid-1990, the country's chaotic situation was perceived as a threat to regional security.[27] Rebel groups – the most important of them being by then Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia – were controlling large parts of the country, floods of refugees were seeking asylum in neighbouring countries, thus fuelling a sense of potential regional disruption. Meeting in August 1990, the Authority of Heads of State and Government decided the creation of an ECOWAS peacekeeping force (ECOMOG). Its mandate

21 Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance on Defence, Article 2, ECOWAS.

22 These include the empowerment of the Authority of Heads of State and Government with the capacity to decide on a military operation, the creation of a Defence Council composed of the ministers for defence and/or foreign affairs, and the creation of a Defence Commission composed of the Chiefs of Staff of the member states, which might oversee the setting up of an Allied Armed Forces of the Community.

23 Clement E. Adibe, 'Muddling Through: An Analysis of the ECOWAS Experience in Conflict Management in West Africa', in Liisa Laakso (ed.), *Regional integration for conflict prevention in Africa: Europe, SADC and ECOWAS* (Helsinki: University of Helsinki/Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2002), p. 116.

24 In rather classical post-1990 style, this declaration is a declaratory plea for democratic principles in the sub-region, which condemns for instance seizure of power by force of arms.

25 Therefore even before the foundations for the future CFSP and ESDP of the forthcoming European Union were established.

26 For an overall discussion of ECOMOG and broader debates on peacekeeping in Africa and by Africans, see Funmi Olonisakin, *Reinventing Peacekeeping in Africa: Conceptual and Legal Issues in ECOMOG Operations* (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 2000).

27 By October 1990, the number of Liberian refugees in neighbouring Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone amounted to 600,000, posing a serious threat of destabilisation. Figures from the UNHCR, quoted in Funmi Olonisakin, op. cit., p. 93.

was to get parties in the conflict to stop all military activities, surrender weapons, stop importation of weapons, release prisoners, and respect the authority of the interim government of national unity.[28]

Deployed thereafter in Liberia in August 1990 as a monitoring mission, ECOMOG was the first ever African peace mission deployed in Sub-Saharan Africa. Although composed of soldiers from eleven ECOWAS nations[29] and two non-ECOWAS nations,[30] the troops and equipment were largely provided by Nigeria.[31]

Deployed in a hectic local environment, ECOMOG failed to avoid the capture and killing of contested Liberian President Doe, and soon found itself more a party to the conflict than an external, impartial mediation and monitoring force. This transformation was marked by a major upgrading of the force (both qualitatively and quantitatively),[32] changes in the structure of command, and changes of missions and behaviour on the ground, with the forces being increasingly exposed to violence. Lessons learned from this first ECOWAS experience in peacekeeping include poor mandate definition (and respect), difficulties in funding and organising a multinational force, uncertain legitimacy of ECOMOG, and over-reliance on a single country (Nigeria).[33]

The second intervention of ECOMOG took place in Sierra Leone in 1998, following the military overthrow of President Ahmed Teejan Kabbah. Deployed from February onwards, the force reached 12,000 troops at its peak,[34] and its mission was to help restore constitutional legality and order, and stop the fighting. After the belligerents signed the Lomé Agreement Protocol on the final settlement of the Sierra Leone crisis, ECOMOG withdrew in May 2000, to be replaced by the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMISIL). As in Liberia, critics of ECOMOG II insisted among other things on the overwhelmingly preeminent role of Nigeria in the operation.

ECOMOG III was deployed in Guinea-Bissau as from December 1998, under the Abuja agreement of 2 November calling for the formation of a transitional government, the organisation of presidential elections and the disarmament of combatants in the war-torn country. Although plans envisaged a 1,450 strong force, only 600 from Togo, Benin, Niger and Gambia were to be deployed, with major communication and equipment shortages. In May 1999, after the contested President Vieira's failure to accept the disarmament of his own troops, Mane's opposing faction invaded Bissau, the capital city, leading to the exile and renouncement of power by the former president. This thus ended *de facto* the ECOMOG mission, which started to withdraw in June 1999. This new situation led to the replacement of the ECOMOG mission by a UN-led peace building operation.[35]

ECOWAS most recently intervened in Côte d'Ivoire in 2002, after an attempted military *coup* against President Laurent Gbagbo on 19 September 2002.[36] Despite reticence from the Ivorian President, on suspicion that some neigh-

28 Decision A/DEC.1/8/90 on the Ceasefire and Establishment of an ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group for Liberia, ECOWAS.

29 Burkina-Fasso, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. This list of countries covers the entire period of deployment.

30 Uganda, Tanzania.

31 Although varying over the different phases of operations, the Nigerian troops amounted approximately to 70% of the total ECOMOG forces on average.

32 From an initial total of 3,500 soldiers in its early stages, ECOMOG increased to a total of 12,000 by 1993, mainly Nigerian soldiers. Qualitatively, ECOMOG's equipment and weapons were adapted to the increasingly offensive nature of its operations, including fighter jets and ground attack aircrafts.

33 For a detailed account and analysis of the context, successes and difficulties of ECOMOG intervention in Liberia, see Funmi Olonisakin, op. cit., particularly pp. 100-44.

34 Contributing countries included: Ghana, Guinea, Mali and Nigeria.

35 United Nations Peace-building Support Office in Guinea Bissau (UNOGBIS).

36 For detailed accounts of the Ivorian crisis and this ECOWAS operation, see for instance Hugo Sada, 'Le conflit ivoirien, enjeux régionaux et maintien de la paix en Afrique', *Politique étrangère*, no. 2 (Paris: IFRI, 2003), pp. 321-34.

bouring countries had been encouraging, supporting and equipping the rebel uprising, ECOWAS reacted promptly, and decided to set up an ECOWAS mission in Côte d'Ivoire (MICECI/ECOMICI, named ECOFORCE), with the support of the international community (UN, African Union, EU and EU member states). However, for financial, technical and contextual reasons, it was only by April 2003, eight months after the conflict had erupted, that a 1,200 strong force was able to deploy. Interestingly enough, the ECOWAS mission in Côte d'Ivoire received significant support (financial, technical and material) from the international community in comparison with previous missions. Not least, the simultaneous deployment of the French operation *Licorne* has implied direct association and cooperation with that country.

This latest Ivorian case confirms the growing interest of some external actors in seeing the sub-regional organisation being able to play the role of 'firefighter' in the absence of (or before) other possible deployments, such as those mandated by the UN.

Whether acclaimed as signs of regionally-owned peace efforts or disclaimed as ineffective and hegemonic regional attempts, these ECOWAS missions all shared as a common feature their *ad hoc* development, differing from both the letter, principle and spirit of the Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance on Defence of 1981. Besides, converging lessons were learned from ECOWAS's first operations in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea Bissau:

- The domination of ECOWAS and unilateral use of the organisation's cover by member states (mainly Nigeria);
- Absence of permanent or pre-deployment logistical cooperation, leading to poor reactivity and effectiveness in threatening situations;
- Financial and capability shortages;
- Weak institutional preparation and coordination of the operations, leading to poor political control over the military side of operations;
- Lack of transparency on the preparation and management of operations.

3.3 Towards a fully-fledged security organisation?

Largely dictated by the determination to tackle these setbacks, a Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security was adopted by the ECOWAS Authority at its Lomé summit of 10 December 1999. The declared objectives of the Mechanism are to:[37]

- prevent, manage and resolve internal and inter-State conflicts;
- strengthen cooperation in the areas of conflict prevention, early-warning, peace-keeping operations, the control of cross-border crime, international terrorism and proliferation of small arms and anti-personnel mines;
- maintain and consolidate peace, security and stability within the Community;
- establish institutions and formulate policies that would allow for the organisation and coordination of humanitarian relief missions;
- promote close cooperation between Member States in the areas of preventive diplomacy and peace-keeping;
- constitute and deploy a civilian and military force to maintain or restore peace within the sub-region, whenever the need arises;
- set up an appropriate framework for the rational and equitable management of natural resources shared by neighbouring Member States which may be causes of frequent inter-State conflicts;
- protect the environment and take steps to restore the degraded environment to its natural state;
- safeguard the cultural heritage of Member States;

[37] Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, ECOWAS, Article 3.

- formulate and implement policies on anti-corruption, money-laundering and illegal circulation of small arms.
- ensure humanitarian intervention in support of humanitarian disasters.

These ambitions largely reflect an interesting re-conceptualisation of regional security in Africa, mostly recognizing the erosion of the distinction between internal and external risks, threats and conflicts, and integrating the multi-level and multiform roots and consequences of instability and conflicts. Whether these changes reflect a locally grown reflection or a regional appropriation of new international (mainly northerner) concepts of security remains, however, arguable.

In application of this protocol, the Authority (of Heads of States and Governments), is the main institution responsible for the fulfillment of these objectives. However, it is essentially through a newly established Mediation and Security Council (MSC) that the Protocol is to be implemented.[38] Indeed, the MSC, an emanation of the Authority itself, is mandated to take decisions on behalf of the Authority 'on issues of peace and security in the sub-region' and 'shall also implement all the provisions of this Protocol.'[39]

According to the Protocol, the MSC shall therefore:

a) decide on all matters relating to peace and security;
b) decide and implement all policies for conflict prevention, management and resolution, peace-keeping and security;
c) authorise all forms of intervention and decide particularly on the deployment of political and military missions;
d) approve mandates and terms of reference for such missions;
e) review the mandates and terms of reference periodically, on the basis of evolving situations;
f) on the recommendation of the Executive Secretary, appoint the Special Representative of the Executive Secretary and the Force Commander.

The composition of the MSC is designed to avoid past accusations of *de facto* control of the decision-making process by some member states: it includes nine member states, seven of them elected (designated) by the Authority, the other two being the present and last chairman of the Authority. Decisions of the MSC, which is to meet in ordinary sessions at least twice a year, are to be taken by a two-thirds majority voting, the MSC itself being considered properly constituted when at least two thirds of its members meet.[40]

Other institutional arrangements under the Protocol include the creation of three new instruments: a Defence and Security Commission, a Council of Elders, and the institutionalisation of ECOMOG itself.

The Defence and Security Commission is composed of Chiefs of Defence Staff or the equivalent, officers responsible for Internal Affairs and Security and experts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[41] Its role is one of technical advice and assistance to the MSC in the preparation and management of peacekeeping operations (including their mandate and composition).[42]

The Council of Elders, which is to represent the opening of the decision-making process to '*various segments of the society, including women, political, traditional and religious leaders*', is to provide, if and when needed, facilitation, mediation, and conciliation offices and advice. It is composed of a list of persons composed by the Executive Secretary. Although its creation has

[38] Ibid., Article 7.

[39] Ibid., Article 10.

[40] Ibid., Article 9.

[41] Ibid., Article 18. According to the Agenda, the Heads of any of the following services of the member states may also be invited to take part in the Defence Commission: immigration, customs, drug/narcotic agencies, border guards, and civil protection force.

[42] Ibid., Article 19.

been praised as a sign of openness towards civil society, its role and composition remain both uncertain and controversial.[43]

Last but not least, the Protocol also attempts at some kind of institutionalisation of ECOMOG, under the form of civilian and military modules based in their country but ready for deployment.[44] Its missions include:[45]

a) Observation and Monitoring;
b) Peace-keeping and restoration of peace;
c) Humanitarian intervention in support of humanitarian disaster;
d) Enforcement of sanctions, including embargos;
e) Preventive deployment;
f) Peace-building, disarmament and demobilisation;
g) Policing activities, including the control of fraud and organised crime;
h) Any other operations as may be mandated by the Mediation and Security Council.

Cases possibly requiring the deployment of ECOWAS are to be found in the conditions under which the Mechanism may be used:

- In cases of aggression or conflict in any Member State or threat thereof;
- In cases of conflict between two or several Member States;
- In cases of internal conflict that threatens to trigger a humanitarian disaster, or that pose a serious threat to peace and security in the sub-region;
- In the event of serious and massive violation of human rights and the rule of law;
- In the event of an overthrow or attempted overthrow of a democratically elected government;
- Any other situation as may be decided by the Mediation and Security Council.

These cases of seizure of the Mechanism clearly show a shift of attention from purely reactive considerations to more preventive, early-warning preoccupations. A change of approach also materialised with the creation of four 'Observation and Monitoring Zones' equipped with headquarters, which are supposed to help collect, transmit and centralise information of relevance for the security of the region.[46]

Despite these, the role, competencies, and capacities of ECOWAS in terms of crisis management (intervention or mediation) have become much clearer over the past years than its ability to deal with conflict prevention and structural stability. However, difficulties in implementing and turning the Protocol into a successful and efficient regional security mechanism remain. They include: weak political will, particularly in translating ECOWAS declarations and decisions into national policies and behaviour; institutional weaknesses of ECOWAS itself; financial and technical constraints; and the lack of a clear agenda and setting of priorities at ECOWAS level, with the result that member states often (re-)focus either on national policies, or bilateral, or other multilateral levels (such as the emerging AU), to deal with security issues.

These difficulties have, however, helped identify potential fields of cooperation, support and assistance for the EU and its member states, the UN and other international actors. Besides, despite all their deficiencies and setbacks, these early and locally grown experiences and efforts designed to make ECOWAS work as a valuable regional security organisation are now internationally recognised.

[43] Thus, for instance, the first appointed Chairman of the Council of Elders was General Yakubu Gowon, the former Nigerian military ruler, whose record in power hardly placed him as a recognised and respected peace facilitator.

[44] Protocol, Article 21.

[45] Ibid., Article 22.

[46] Zone one is composed of Cap Verde, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau and Senegal, and its headquarters are located in Banjul, capital of Gambia. Zone 2 encompasses Burkina-Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, and its headquarters are located in Ouagadougou, Burkina-Faso. Zone 3 is composed of Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and its headquarters is located in Monrovia, Liberia. Zone 4 is composed of Benin, Nigeria and Togo, the headquarters is in Cotonou, Benin. The installment of headquarters in Liberia's then Taylor regime and Burkina's Campaoré regime has been criticized, along with other aspects.

Existing EU-ECOWAS relations: achievements and challenges

The EU is one among other actors – such as the UN – that have both acknowledged and supported the progressive affirmation of ECOWAS as a regional security actor. Interestingly enough, this European role has largely followed local efforts, rather than originated them.

4.1 From symbolic recognition to institutionalised dialogue and partnership[47]

ECOWAS is already recognised by the EU and its member states (albeit in a rather informal way) as a key security actor, not least with a valuable role to play in the prevention or management of crises in the region it covers. Signs of this are to be found, for instance, in the quasi-systematic mentioning of the sub-regional organisation in EU declarations and common positions concerning Western Africa. Declaratory EU recognition of ECOWAS as a security organisation can be traced back (as far as CFSP is concerned) to 1995, when an EU declaration stated '*The European Union congratulates the ECOWAS, and particularly its President, President Rawlings of Ghana, on their efforts at and commitment to bringing peace to Liberia*'.[48] Since then, conflicts and developments in the region, mainly in Sierra Leone and Liberia, have largely influenced a regionalisation of the EU's approach to West Africa, and a concomitant quasi-systematic mentioning of ECOWAS in CFSP statements on events affecting West African countries.

There is a time-concordance between the progressive Europeanisation of the European perceptions of and approaches towards security issues in West Africa, and the frequency with which ECOWAS is mentioned in CFSP documents and statements regarding events occurring in West Africa. This symbolic recognition of the role and importance of the sub-regional organisation follows the different registers presented in Chapter One.[49] Sometimes, the EU *calls upon* or *encourages* ECOWAS initiatives, in what seems to be an attitude of delegation and incentive-creation towards the sub-regional organisation.[50] On other occasions, it *welcomes, supports, strongly supports* or even acclaims ECOWAS, in what appears to be an attitude of acknowledging and promoting the sub-regional organisation and its legitimacy as a mediator and actor.[51] Last but not least, *joint declarations* and *joint statements* project an image of partnership between the two organisations.[52]

Beyond this declaratory acknowledgement of the 'security actorness' of ECOWAS, the EU has also developed structural working relations with the sub-regional organisation in recent years.

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47 This part emphasises mainly institutional and inter-institutional relations, while practical co-operation is analysed in the next chapter.

48 *Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the peace agreement between the main factions in Liberia*, 19 August 1995; Decision no. 9389/95 (CFSP number).

49 Exporting peace and stability through partnership with (sub-)regional organisations: rationale and challenges.

50 See for instance the Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on Guinea-Bissau of 8 April 2005.

51 See for instance the Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the situation in Côte d'Ivoire of 8 April 2004; or the Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union concerning Togo of 4 March 2005, as well as Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the occasion of the Accra agreement of 30 July 2004, of 5 August 2004.

52 See for instance the *Joint ECOWAS-EU Declaration on the situation in Côte d'Ivoire* of 9 November 2004, and of course, the final statements of EU-ECOWAS ministerial meetings.

An initial EU-ECOWAS dialogue was engaged in 1998 at the level of high-ranking officials. However, growing understanding of the potential role of ECOWAS in the region and of the need to think both 'regionally and collectively' about the region soon led to closer dialogue. As the conclusions of a General Affairs Council held in Brussels in September 2000 suggested, '*In the light of the regional dimension of the conflict, the European Union could contemplate stepping up its contacts with the Presidency and Secretariat of ECOWAS in order to ensure better coordination of positions and policies concerning Sierra Leone and the sub-region as a whole*.'[53]

Based on these kinds of considerations as well as on a relative politicisation of EU-Africa relations and on ECOWAS's own progress in reinforcing its political and security dimension, ministerial EU-ECOWAS meetings were set up in 2000. The first of these was held in Abuja, Nigeria, in October 2000, and asserted in its Final Statement: '*The European Union now acknowledges ECOWAS as an important partner on account of the crucial role that it is playing in West Africa on several fronts. Political dialogue between the two regions has also been intensified, and it is this that has prompted the decision by the European Union and ECOWAS to hold their meeting at the ministerial level for the very first time*'.[54]

Ministerial meetings, usually under troika form, have been held on an annual and then bi-annual basis since. Besides, meetings at different levels have completed these, including:[55]

- Meetings between ECOWAS in Abuja (Executive Secretariat and ECOWAS Heads of Mission in Abuja) and the EU Heads of Mission in Abuja;
- Meetings between the ECOWAS presidency and the EU Heads of Mission in the country holding the ECOWAS presidency;
- Meetings between the national authorities of ECOWAS members states in charge of relations with the ECOWAS Secretariat and EU Heads of Mission;
- EU-ECOWAS-UNOWA dialogue;
- Dialogue between the EU representative for the Mano River Union countries and ECOWAS with regard to conflict prevention and peacekeeping issues.

As is frequently the case with political dialogues of this kind, the EU-ECOWAS ministerial meetings tend to improve over time, progressively shifting from formal broad discussion to fully-fledged political dialogue. If these exchanges still only seldom lead to common decisions, they tend, at least, to make mutual understanding and identification of cooperation opportunities and needs possible, thus providing a favourable ground for later concrete co-operations.

However, enlarging the scope of EU-ECOWAS relations to foreign, security and defence policy[56] has not gone without challenges.

EU-ECOWAS and EU-ECOWAS countries relations have evolved symmetrically to the broad spectrum of EU external relations. From a first stage of trade and development at community level and security and defence relations at the national one, they have evolved towards a broadening of EU policies, progressively compounding both the integrated development and trade policies and more or less Europeanised foreign, security and defence policy initiatives within the framework of the CFSP.

Although it has become commonplace to assert that this extending of the range of external instruments at the EU's disposal raises questions of coherence and inter-pillar cohesion, it may have concrete influence on some relations with (sub-)regional organisations.

A most obvious example lies in the case brought by the European Commission against the Council of the European Union to the Court of Justice of the European Communi-

53 General Affairs Council, Brussels, 18 September 2000. Doc n° 11243/00.

54 Final Statement of the First EU-ECOWAS Ministerial Meeting, Abuja, 16 October 2000. Doc n° 12309/00.

55 Final Statement of the Sixth EU-ECOWAS Ministerial Troika Meeting, held in Accra on 8 November 2004. Council of the EU, doc no. 13296/04 (Press: 291).

56 ECOWAS was already an EU partner (for the Commission most notably) on other issues such as trade and development.

ties.[57] In this action brought on 21 February 2005, the Commission asks for the annulment of the Council decisions to support ECOWAS efforts against the spread of small arms and light weapons,[58] claiming the Council's lack of competences in that matter and arguing that provisions for Community dealing with the issue are provided by the Cotonou Agreement.[59] Although the case barely serves the EU's image as a coherent actor, it has the merit of re-launching a real debate: where does development policy stop and where does security and defence policy start? If the question can hardly be answered in a definitive and comprehensive way, it needs, at least, to be clarified institutionally when developing security-related policies towards a region such as West Africa.

In this respect, inter-institutional cooperation at EU level has been improving in recent times, following notably the joint EU (Commission and Council)/UN assessment mission of ECOWAS's capacities and needs in the field of peace building and conflict prevention.[60] The evolution of EU-ECOWAS relations however serves as a good test case of the promises and difficulties of extending the agenda of external EU relations to security and defence cooperation with third partners.

57 Case C-91/05.

58 Namely decisions 2004/833/CFSP of 2 December 2004 and decision 2002/589/CFSP of 12 July 2002.

59 More specifically Article 11(3) and Article 10(2) of Annex 1V thereof.

60 Held in 2004, this mission and the subsequent report it led to, have since served as the basis for establishing the cross-pillar *EU Strategy for West Africa* which is revised annually. It has also proved a valuable exercise of coordination not only between EU actors, but also between the EU and the UN.

Which agenda for cooperation?

In reporting to the UN Security Council on sub-regional security issues in Western Africa, the Secretary General noted that:

'The increasing use and proliferation of mercenaries, child soldiers and small arms account for much of the instability in the West African sub-region. This is not an exhaustive list of such problems. The culture of impunity, the spread of HIV/AIDS, the continued weakening of the security sector, the proliferation of roadblocks, youth unemployment, environmental degradation, social exclusion, remnants of war, mass refugee movements and other forced displacement, inequitable and illicit exploitation of natural resources, weak national institutions and civil society structures, and violations of human rights, including the rights of women, are some of the other serious cross-border problems afflicting many parts of the sub-region.'[61]

This rather gloomy depiction of the situation in Western Africa has, at least, the merit of showing that the region knows no distinction between 'old' and 'new', security challenges. Hard security issues such as violent conflict and 'human' and 'soft' security issues such as diseases or trafficking co-exist and, more often than not, collide and intertwine. Except for the threat of an external military invasion, the agenda for security cooperation with ECOWAS is therefore potentially endless. Searching for a potential agenda for EU-ECOWAS security cooperation is therefore somehow a Sisyphean task. Drawing on the EU's experience and capacities, as well as on the region's expressed priorities, however, some possible priority fields might be identified.

5.1 Regional stability, conflict prevention and peace building

Since 1990, West Africa has remained one of the most conflict-affected regions in the world. Although most conflicts could be described as intra-state conflicts, all of them have had at least some kind of regional implications. Various phases and levels of instability and conflicts in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone were for instance undoubtedly interconnected, making it impossible to resolve any one of them comprehensively without resorting to a regional approach. West Africa is therefore clearly one area where stabilisation and conflict prevention need to be addressed regionally, and where the EU can 'make a difference'.[62]

Traditional EU instruments, particularly at Community level, have begun to take this into account in recent years.[63] Following the Cotonou Agreement, EU-ACP development aid and cooperation is now organised through regional

61 Report of the Secretary General to the UNSC on sub-regional and cross-border issues in Western Africa, 12 March 2004, Doc S/2004/200.

62 On the precise role of regional integration to that end, see Liisa Laakso (ed.), *Regional Integration for Conflict Prevention and Peace Building in Africa. Europe, SADC and ECOWAS* (Helsinki: Ministry of Foreign Affairs/University of Helsinki, 2002).

63 See for instance, Felix Ngudabaganzi, Caroline Pailhe and Valérie Peclow, 'L'Union européenne et la prévention des conflits: concepts et instruments d'un nouvel acteur', *Les rapports du GRIP*, 2002/02; Félix Ngudabaganzi, 'L'Union européenne et la prévention des conflits africains', *Les rapports du GRIP*, 2000/05; Félix Ngundabaganzi and Federico Santopinto, *Le développement, une arme de paix* (Brussels: GRIP/Editions Complexes, 2003). See also, for an EU vision of the subject, the Communication of the Commission on Conflict Prevention (Com/2001/211/Final) of 11/04/2001, and the relevant developments on this in Fernanda Faria, 'La gestion des crises en Afrique subsaharienne: Le rôle de l'Union européenne', *Occasional Paper* no. 55 (Paris: EUISS, November 2005), and Roland Sourd, 'L'Union et l'Afrique subsaharienne: quel partenariat?', *Occasional Paper* no. 58 (Paris: EUISS, May 2005).

partnership programmes. As for West Africa, the regional indicative programme[64] can be considered as the main EU instrument with regard to long-term stabilisation and conflict prevention in the region.

The programme for 2002-2007 provides a global regional envelope of 235 million euros for the period.[65] Within this, the priority given to sectors such as regional economic integration and support to trade on the one hand, and transport on the other hand[66] gives an idea of the strategy envisaged. Economic and regional integration, and integration in world trade, seem to be envisaged as the main levers for development, be it economic, social or political. This reflects a strategy of long-term structural stabilisation that resembles to some extent other EU stabilisation strategies, such as in the Mediterranean and broader neighbourhood most notably. The rationale behind this emphasis on economic integration also lies in the will to address some structural causes of conflicts (here the deterioration of economic and social conditions in the region mainly). Reinforcement of political dialogue and conditionality since the Cotonou Agreement can also be perceived as an adaptation of development tools to security and stabilisation ambitions.

Thus, while conflict prevention and stabilisation do not appear, as such, in the articles of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) on development and cooperation policies, it is now obvious that the latter policies are becoming important tools for conflict prevention and are more and more 'security oriented', at least in principle.

Beyond these traditional instruments and approaches, the ninth European Development Fund (EDF) for the region also integrate as a non-focal sector conflict prevention and security. Financial commitments in this field amount to 2,365 million euros, mainly in support of ECOWAS initiatives and capacities (1,9 million euros). The early warning mechanism of ECOWAS has in particular received the support of the European Commission. For the ninth EDF, the Regional Indicative Programme (RIP) envisages a total of five million euros for all actions in support of local initiatives in the field of conflict prevention.

The EU is also engaged, in cooperation with the UN, in assisting ECOWAS in elaborating a regional strategy for conflict prevention, which mobilises mainly development tools aimed at addressing the structural causes of conflicts.

It is worth noting that a large part of EU action in the region in the field of conflict prevention and regional stability is dedicated to the support of ECOWAS initiatives and mechanisms.[67] The EU and its member states should, however, be careful with regard to 'oversold' preventive measures and early warning mechanisms, whose expensiveness is sometimes rather disconnected from their practical output.[68]

5.2 Crisis management and peacekeeping

EU member states have been committed, at national level or through participation in UN missions, in many peacekeeping operations in the sub-region since 1990.

Direct involvement in peacekeeping missions remains largely at national level in the region, with the UK having intervened in Sierra Leone and France in Côte d'Ivoire for instance. Other member states do, however, occasionally

64 This programme is not an EU-ECOWAS one, in so far as both ECOWAS and the WAEMU represent states of the region. Mauritania, a member of neither of these organisations, mandated ECOWAS within this framework.

65 Which adds to the money provided by the National Indicative Programmes.

66 As concentration sectors within the ninth EDF for the region, these two sectors amount to 118 and 82 million euros, thus representing respectively 50% and 35% of the total financial commitment for the period 2002-2007.

67 Other actions include support to transversal issues such as exploitation of natural resources as a source of conflict, the EU being for instance strongly involved in the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme for Diamonds, which is an important issue in post-conflict countries such as Sierra Leone.

68 On these grounds, some observers argue that support to peacekeeping missions and conflict resolution might therefore, unfortunately, have priority over such fields in EU policies towards ECOWAS.

support local troops deployed within ECOWAS or UN operations. While ECOWAS has received 50 million euros in support of its West African Peace Force in Liberia from the EDF (2003), support for ECOWAS crisis management and peacekeeping capacities and operations remain mainly dealt with at national level. The ECOWAS mission in Côte d'Ivoire (ECOMICI) has, for instance, received support from various EU member states.[69]

At EU level, pledges have been made to '(...) *support, over the long term, the enhancement of African peace support operations capabilities, at regional, sub-regional and bilateral levels, as well as the capacity of African States to contribute to regional integration, peace security and development*'.[70] In doing so, given the EU's own financial and political constraints, actions envisaged tend, however, to focus on low-level technical assistance for planning and data collecting.[71] In the absence of sufficient European financial capacities and political will to finance peacekeeping forces and/or operations as such, support activities such as partial equipment, advice and training tend to take the lead in the EU and member states' agendas. One major challenge here is to make sure that EU actions in the field of crisis management and peacekeeping, mainly supporting ECOWAS institutions and mechanisms, are not condemned to inefficiency for failing to be backed up by the provision of credible national contingents. Better coordination between the Commission's support activities to ECOWAS and national actions by EU member states towards regional states is required here.

Last but not least, there exists a problem of appropriation and co-ordination between the recent EU initiatives and reflections on helping ECOWAS improving its capacities and efficiency in crisis management and peacekeeping, and the pre-existing ECOWAS structures, mechanisms, and means.[72] This is a problem that might gradually be reduced by a deepening of the contacts and cooperation between both organisations.

5.3 Small arms and light weapons

In all the conflicts that have affected the region over the last fifteen years, small arms and light weapons (SALWs) have played a major role. Within this context, the exact number of illicit SALWs circulating in the region remains uncertain, but estimates range between seven and ten million.[73]

Trying to address the problem, ECOWAS declared a Moratorium on Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of SALWs in October 1998, as an attempt to tackle collectively and regionally the spread and illicit proliferation of such armaments in the region. Originally signed for a three-year period, the Moratorium has been renewed twice since (in October 2001 and November 2004). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), launched a Programme for Cooperation and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED) in 1999, in order to help ECOWAS member states

69 While the EU has provided ECOWAS with a 500,000 euro grant to finance ECOWAS' negotiation/mediation efforts in the Ivorian conflict, Belgium has supported the Benin contingent deployed, with Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Spain and the UK supporting either other contingents or ECOMICI.

70 Common Position 2004/85/CFSP, Article 6-1.

71 Although not rejecting in principle other forms of co-operation and actions, the EU Action Plan for ESDP support to Peace and Security in Africa (16 November 2004) contains mainly as agreed actions: technical advice for planning and management capabilities, provision of a list of relevant EU documents to be used by the African Union and sub-regional organisations, appointment of EU liaison officer, database of African officers educated or trained in EU member states, provision of experts for support to planning and SSR/DDR activities in Africa, etc.

72 A problem somehow recognised by some members of DG Development and of the Policy Unit of the Council of the EU interviewed within the framework of this research.

73 Adeji Ebo, 'Security Sector Reform as an Instrument of Sub-regional Transformation in West Africa', in Alan Bryden and Heiner Haggi (eds.), *Reform and Reconstruction of the Security Sector* (Geneva: Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2004), Chapter 4.

implementing the 1998 moratorium. This programme has more recently been replaced by an ECOWAS programme on light weapons (ECOSAP), still financed by the UNDP and other partners, and may turn into a fully-fledged Convention.[74]

This seems to have brought very limited benefits to the region's security situation. In a 2004 report on cross-border issues in West Africa, the UN Secretary General insisted indeed on the fact that the Moratorium suffered from a lack of political will from some ECOWAS member states, weak national security institutions, violation of the Moratorium itself by some signatories, etc.[75] Beyond institutional, financial and staff shortages, one of the main problems for the efficiency of ECOWAS mechanisms and procedures on SALWs remains that member states are given the primary responsibility for its application, while the ECOWAS Secretariat's responsibility lies mainly in giving overall political direction and coordination to the process.

Against this background, the EU has only recently emerged as a supportive actor to these initiatives and processes. Its actions fall into two categories: funding on the one hand, and technical assistance on the other. While it has developed its own agenda and policies on SALWs over the years,[76] the EU's intervention in ECOWAS countries and its support to ECOWAS in the field of SALWs has first developed essentially as a financial support to local and UNDP-operated existing programmes. Developed and managed by the Commission within the framework of the Cotonou Agreement, this role of a funding agency (rather than security actor) has enabled the EU to take part in meetings, and supports a rather clear division of labour between itself, the UN, ECOWAS and other national and regional actors.

A different approach is that taken by the Council within the CFSP framework, implying direct technical and financial assistance to the ECOWAS Secretariat itself. Decisions taken by the Council[77] commit the EU to '*offer a financial contribution and technical assistance to set up the Light Weapons Unit within the ECOWAS Technical Secretariat and convert the Moratorium into a Convention on small arms and light weapons between the ECOWAS Member States*'. While entrusting the Commission with the financial implementation of the decision,[78] this CFSP action not only overlaps with a field of intervention already covered by development activities, but also implies a shift of cooperative method. This method relies on direct EU Council-ECOWAS Secretariat cooperation, rather than on financial support to pre-existing programmes and initiatives. Although both approaches may have their own practical interests for the security of the region, and may somehow be complementary, their co-existence also reveals some contradiction of principles. Not least, the objectives and means outlined in the Council's decision barely correspond with the rhetorical objectives of 'locally-owned initiatives', in that it aims at influencing directly the shaping of the future regional Convention on SALWs. This example clearly indicates that the boundary between technical assistance and an infringement of the European discourse on local ownership may sometimes be very thin indeed, making discourse on local ownership rather elusive.

74 On these evolutions of local and international measures on small arms in West Africa, see for instance: Albert Chaïbou and Sadou Yattara, 'Afrique de l'Ouest, vers une convention sur les armes légères? Du PCASED à ECOSAP', *Rapports du GRIP* no.2005/4, Bruxelles, GRIP.

75 *Report of the Secretary-General on ways to combat sub-regional and cross-border problems in West Africa*, 12 March 2000, doc S/2004/200, paragraph 11.

76 Fundamental decisions in that regard include (in chronological order): Joint Action1999/34/CFSP on the contribution of the EU in combating the accumulation and destabilising spread of small arms and light weapons of 17 December 1998; Joint Action 2002/589/CFSP of 12 July 2002 on the same subject, and Joint Action 2003/276/CFSP of 14 April 2003.

77 Mainly Joint Action 2002/589/CFSP and Council Decision 2004/833/CFSP implementing Joint Action 2002/589/CFSP.

78 Council Decision 2004/833/CFSP, Article 3.

5.4 Security sector reform and DDR

While security sector reform (including for instance democratic control of armed forces or good behaviour within the state's security apparatus) is frequently raised as a fashionable concept to promote,[79] this broad approach is of very limited relevance for a region such as West Africa, where the 'security sector' as understood in Westerns minds accounts for only a small part of the security actors acting locally.[80] In West Africa, the proliferation of armed groups (whether large-scale rebel movements or local brigands and persecutors) basically means that the security sector is not limited to the government level. Other sub-national, trans-national and regional actors are to be taken into account, drawing a very complex map of the regional security sector. Before developing elaborate discourses on concepts such as 'good governance in the security sector', one priority field of action could be the identification and delimitation of the security sector itself.

Yet, even if limited to state-owned actors such as the army, police forces and related governmental actors, the security sector has proved, in itself, a major source of insecurity in the region. As some observers have pointed out, '(...) deterioration of state institutions, the continuous weakening of political authority and the consequent dereliction of military power, are progressively transforming some West African security forces into one of the greatest factors of insecurity for states and people'.[81] This has been particularly visible in countries such as Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea-Bissau, where the armed and security forces are perceived as one of the main sources of instability and insecurity. The region has for instance the sad record of having the highest rates of military seizure of power, military coups, and highest number of mutinies on the African continent.[82]

The field of SSR in West Africa has remained largely unexplored at EU level, partly because of the difficulties inherent in externally-driven processes in that field,[83] partly because of member states' reluctance to extend EU policies to military cooperation and related fields. Besides, other international actors, such as the UN or individual states, are already committed to SSR and DDR in West Africa. The EU might have an interest in assessing clearly what is and what is not being done by others, so as to integrate itself, if needed, in a complementary way to existing processes. Besides, as some recall, '*the essential question of 'security sector reform for what?' has remained essentially outside the purview of most SSR programmes in West Africa*'.[84]

DDR is another fashionable concept that would require further reflection and analysis as far as its meaning for the stabilisation of a region such as West Africa is concerned.[85] Recent assessments recognise that porous borders and widespread circulation of combatants and SALWs hamper efforts and actions from local actors and/or the international

79 For a brief presentation of debates surrounding the concept of SSR itself, see for instance: Michael Brzoska, 'Development donor and the concept of SSR', *Occasional Paper* no. 4 (Geneva: Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), November 2003). See also Malcolm Chalmers, *Security Sector Reform in developing countries: An EU perspective* (London: Saferworld, January 2000).

80 For a broader discussion on this debate, see for instance Adeji Ebo, op. cit.

81 Workshop on 'Security Sector Reform and Conflict Prevention in West Africa: Challenges and Opportunities', UNOWA, 22-23 December 2004. Background paper containing the quotation and other relative documents available from http://www.un.org/unowa.

82 Source: UNOWA, op. cit.

83 On the challenges and difficulties of externally-driven SSR processes, see for instance Michael Brzoska and Andrea Heinemann-Grüder, 'Security Sector Reform and Post-Conflict Reconstruction under International Auspices', Chapter 6 in Alan Bryden and Heiner Haggi (eds.), *Reform and Reconstruction of the Security Sector* (Geneva: Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), 2004).

84 Adeji Ebo, op. cit.

85 For a broad analysis of the concept(s) of DDR itself, see for instance: Béatrice Pouligny, 'The Politics and Anti-Politics of Contemporary '"Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration" Programs' (Paris: CERI/SGDN, September 2004). (Available in both English and French versions from http://www.ceri-sciencespo.org).

community in West Africa.[86] While it is obvious that each DDR programme can only be designed according to local social, economic and political reality, this calls for, at least, some kind of regional coordination, cooperation and understanding.[87]

In most cases, the 'Ds' (Disarmament and Demobilisation, usually under UN auspices) seem to be more successful than the 'Rs', which imply heavy and sustained financial commitment, and a broader social, economic and political long-term agenda. The wide range of actors with their own definition of what DDR is or ought to be also sometimes raises difficulties. Against this background, there might be little margin of manoeuvre for direct EU commitment to programme-building on DDR in West Africa. Rather, National Indicative Programmes towards individual states of the sub-region could provide a useful tool to support or integrate existing efforts being made at national level (through the DDR Commissions) or at international level (through financing and association with externally-driven or regional bases mechanisms and processes).

In comparison with other regional security challenges, SSR and DDR are two fields of intervention where the EU, as for now, has tried to commit itself in West Africa only to a very limited extent. Reasons for this may include the prevalence of other national or international actors in the post-conflict countries and the region, the high level of financial and political commitment often required, the limited local ownership, etc. Although issues of SSR and DDR frequently appear in dialogues such as the ministerial (Troika) EU-ECOWAS meetings, concrete actions remain largely at national level, individual member states such as France, the UK, Germany, Sweden, etc. being committed to national efforts in the region. Caught between the reluctance, inability or lack of mandate of development agencies and actors (such as the Commission's DG for development) to deal with security and defence issues and the reluctance of member states to Europeanise these sectors of intervention (through the CFSP/ESDP for instance) until a very recent period, the EU is somehow lagging behind on these issues, especially in West Africa.

Ingredients for an efficient and more active role of the EU in the region on issues of SSR and DDR do, however, exist. The experience of some member states, the intensifying dialogue, cooperation and understanding of both the Commission and Council towards local security actors and challenges, and the improving use of complementarities between the two institutions, could be better used.

In that regard, a significant test case will be the current initiative of the Commission (under Article 11 of the Cotonou Agreement) to reallocate 5 million euros of the NIP to SSR issues in Guinea-Bissau taken from EDF fund. According to members of the Commission, National Indicative Programmes may be better channels for SSR and DDR programmes, as they allow for better priority and agenda setting than the regional level.[88]

5.5 Setting an agenda for inter-regional partnership: 'sprinkling' or focusing?

In a regional context such as Western Africa, security challenges spread through an extensive range of fields, from health and economic development to democracy and human rights, from regional integration to peace enforcement, and so on.

[86] See for instance the assessments made by the UN meeting on Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration of ex-combatants (DDR) in West Africa, available on the UNOWA pages from http://www.un.org.

[87] It is believed, for instance, that former child combatants operating in Liberia were recruited again and surged through the Liberia-Côte d'Ivoire border in November 2004. Source: UN Security Council, *Progress report of the Secretary-General on ways to combat sub-regional and cross-border problems in West Africa*, 11 February 2005, Doc. No. S/2005/86.

[88] Interviews with members of the DG Relex and DG development held in Brussels in November 2005.

The danger (and temptation) therefore exists for the EU of trying to have a policy on all of these, according to its perception of an emergency situation or depending on local demands for EU assistance or support. After all, if the question is about 'presence' rather than 'influence', this strategy of 'sprinkling' EU aid or commitments across all of the security agenda is acceptable. The quest for the optimisation of scarce public resources, and the search for maximum strategic output of EU engagements in any region might, however, call for some kind of 'focusing' rather than 'sprinkling'. In that sense, a few questions need to be answered prior to developing any regional policy: What are the main reasons for EU involvement in the region (strategic, economic, moral, political, humanitarian obligations)? How do these compare with local demands for EU partnership, assistance, or support? In what fields of action is the EU best suited to provide complementary efforts/resources to regional actors and institutions, EU member states, or other international actors such as the UN and its agencies, the US, etc.? Which EU instruments (community or CFSP/ESDP, association of both) are best suited? What is the expected output of EU partnerships/support with a particular regional organisation?

The wide range of regional stability and security challenges in West Africa makes the answers to these apparently naïve questions much more complicated than it may seem at first sight. The sheer number of actors and donors engaged is also a source of complexity.

It is clear from recent developments of both ECOWAS and the EU, and other external actors, that conflict prevention and regional stability remain domains where EU-ECOWAS partnership provides higher returns than cooperation on other issues or at different levels of cooperation (such as bilateral relations among member states for example). This is also the case with regard to transversal issues such as SALWs. On other issues, such as SSR and DDR, the EU might be better advised to start by co-ordinating individual efforts among its member states and then cooperate with (whether through CFSP/ESDP instruments or through development and cooperation policies) pre-existing efforts led by ECOWAS and other actors. This might be the case with regard to issues on which external actors such as the UN (and its agencies and programmes) already operate in the region in partnership with ECOWAS, and for which the EU lacks either the capacities or the political will and coherence (or both) to address them.

Inter-regional relations in the field of security: developing new methods of partnership

This brief overview of EU-ECOWAS relations and co-operation on security-related issues highlights both signs of encouragement and uncertainties on the value of inter-regional partnerships. As far as the case studied here is concerned, relations have considerably deepened, but further challenges need to be analysed and addressed.

6.1 From assistance to partnership: the challenge of developing support mechanisms and means for locally-owned initiatives and capabilities

'Local ownership', 'regional initiatives', 'local actors' demands': all these terms have now become commonplace in the European discourse and in EU approaches on how best to support and/or encourage stability and security in other regions, particularly in Africa.[89] While interestingly showing a shift from a relationship marked by a traditional 'dependency' or even 'post-colonial' mentality to more equal and partnership-like relations, this also raises uncertainties.

To be labelled as a partnership, any inter-regional relationship, such as that between the EU and ECOWAS, needs to meet a few prerequisites:

- Equality, at least in principle, among partners, allowing methods of negotiations to be agreed rather than having them 'imposed'.
- Existence of shared interests, values and objectives;
- Existence of a minimum of mutual trust and recognition;
- Common methods;
- Complementarities.

These conditions are only partially fulfilled in the case of EU-ECOWAS relations.

Within the field of development and cooperation policies, the negotiation of regional and national indicative programmes follow a negotiating method that is rather unique and 'partnership-like'.[90] The corpus of EU-ECOWAS documents also indicates the existence of a basis of common declared interests and objectives, ranging from economic and trade development to regional integration, stability and security. The continuing reinforcement of EU-ECOWAS dialogue and contacts also indicates that both organisations recognise each other as a valuable partner and obvious complementarities also exist between the two organisations.

However, signs of an unequal North-South partnership and residual old trends do persist. Not least, the agenda setting and agenda building functions in EU-ECOWAS relations seems to be largely European-born. Reading the regional indicative programme for West Africa, or even the Cotonou Agreement, and the major

[89] As far as security concerns in Africa are concerned, this shift of approach can probably be dated back to the Council's Common Position on the Prevention, Management and Rresolution of Conflicts in Africa, of 14 May 2001.

[90] The notion of partnership, introduced in the first Lomé Convention, has been constantly reiterated since in EU-ACP documents, not least within the political dialogue created by the Cotonou Agreement, which insists in its article 8 (Title II) on an equal and balanced dialogue. For a broad analysis of EU-Africa Partnership covering both economic and political fields, see for instance Roland Sourd, 'L'Union et l'Afrique subsaharienne: quel partenariat?', *Occasional Paper* no. 58 (Paris: EUISS, May 2005).

importance themes such as regional integration, free trade, human rights, etc., occupy in them is enough to understand where the priorities emanate from. The putting on the agenda of issues such as terrorism in the aftermath of 11 September 2001 is just one example of how EU-ECOWAS (and beyond that, EU-Africa) relations may be diverted from local priorities.[91]

Most issues of moral or political importance to the EU such as gender equality or respect for human and minority rights, good governance and transparency in economics, regional cooperation, etc., are indeed frequently mentioned in ECOWAS declarations and decisions, be they internal or intended for EU member states and agencies. However, this may largely reflect a reproduction of the discourse of the northern agenda in the declaratory stances and policy priorities emanating from local actors such as ECOWAS and some of its member states. There exists an obvious trend among West African partners, in some cases, of articulating European-like normative discourses at regional level, without turning them into functional policies.[92] This means that on some occasions, a regional organisation such as ECOWAS can act or be used by local actors as a kind of political façade to the outside world and donor community, rather than as a policy-making institution.

External actors such as the EU should therefore pay as much attention to ongoing reforms and the political agenda in member states as to regional agreements and protocols that may not go beyond the purely declaratory level. Furthermore, the above-mentioned tendencies mean that locally owned initiatives are sometimes only partially local, and owned. This has clear implications for the degree of local political will for turning the agenda into political, economic and social policies and realities.

6.2 Institutional requirements: do institutions matter?

As highlighted previously, EU-ECOWAS relations are now well institutionalised,[93] both at Commission and Council level. They could, however, be upgraded on some aspects, notably:

- Dialogue between the Commission and the ECOWAS Secretariat;
- Meetings and exchanges between the Political and Security Committee (PSC) and the ECOWAS Secretariat and Defence Commission;
- Appointment of an EU liaison officer towards ECOWAS;
- Appointment of a permanent and regional-based EU special Representative in Western Africa;
- Encourage parliamentary meetings (at the fringe of the EU-ACP parliamentary assembly for instance).

Beyond the aspect of EU-ECOWAS relations, a lot of thought also needs to be given to the linkages to be instituted and developed between the EU and the broader security architecture currently emerging on the African continent. The United Nations, the African Union, and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) are all a vital part of this and are potentially valuable EU partners. Any EU policy towards West Africa needs efficient cooperation and coherence between all of these. The concrete shaping of this security architecture remains uncertain. The RECs have different institutional and political backgrounds and capacities, and operate in a varied context. This is true in particular as far as security and defence issues are concerned, with ECOWAS seeming to be the most forward and efficient of the RECs as far as these matters

91 It is indeed notable that the issue of terrorism, which had never figured on EU-ECOWAS declarations and statements, appeared suddenly as one point of discussion at the Second EU-ECOWAS Ministerial meeting, held in Brussels on 12 October 2001 (see paragraph 9 of the Final Statement).

92 According to a member of the Delegation of the European Commission in Abuja (Nigeria) interviewed within the framework of this research, transposition of ECOWAS decisions and policy advice at national level in the sub-region remains one of the most critical points in EU-ECOWAS cooperation.

93 See Chapter 4 of this paper: 'Existing EU-ECOWAS relations: achievements and challenges'.

are concerned. For its part, the African Union has only recently started to devote much of its efforts to peace and security issues, and the situation developing in Sudan looks like a decisive test case for its assertion in that direction.

Within this context, the EU has a major role to play in helping and supporting these organisations to design a suitable security architecture that will avoid overlapping, competition, and duplications of activities between organisations. By providing, in itself and through its policies, a strong incentive and element of recognition of the importance of the regional and sub-regional levels, it has a vital role to play. While recent developments show that the way in which African (sub-)regional organisations evolve partly depends on leadership and the political will of a number of countries and/or leaders, some kind of mapping of the respective role of organisations needs to be established.

For instance, while it is now assumed that the AU is the main and primary interlocutor of the EU on the African continent for dealing with the political and security issues,[94] this should not be to the detriment of pre-existing sub-regional organisations, mechanisms and efforts. In that sense, the EU should urge for the signing and implementation of the long-awaited protocol on relations between the AU and sub-regional organisations.

In the end, however, attention should focus at least as much on the political behaviour and practices of regional actors as on institutional arrangements and statements. The experiences and records of both ECOWAS and the AU since their origins reveal that there might be rather flagrant differences between these two levels.

6.3 Financial implications: from a 'policy of the wallet' to a wallet to support politics?

In West Africa as in many regions in the world, the European Union remains largely perceived as an economic and financial actor rather than a strategic and political one. Trade and development policies have dominated European external relations for decades, and although the EU's external action has been progressively politicised over the past fifteen years,[95] the inertia of mutual perceptions among actors has meant that this European evolution has only been appreciated very slowly by third actors.

In order to build strong partnerships between the EU and (sub-)regional organisations 'the strategic way', a change of image is somehow needed if the EU is to avoid being confronted, yet again, with the dilemma of being the cash cow of security processes being decided elsewhere. The example of West Africa clearly shows that expectations towards the EU as an external actor remain largely economic and financial.[96] The reality of EU and EU members states' actions in the region are partly responsible for this. Assisting, training and equipping the ECOWAS peace forces is dealt with by the member states,[97] while development aid, trade talks and financial support for regional integration and institutional building is dealt with mainly at EU level. This reflects a tacit division of labour that is accurately perceived and integrated by local actors. Although managing at member states' level sectors such as equipment of regional forces or logistical support for

94 This is the case for instance as far as the method ruling the use of the Peace Facility for Africa is concerned. The special EU-AU relationship is also acknowledged in most CFSP and ESDP documents on conflict prevention, management and resolution in Africa.

95 This is due, of course, to the development of the CFSP and ESDP, but also to the wider politicisation and creeping securitisation of other external policies such as development and cooperation policies.

96 A good example (which is far from being an exception), is provided by the document: 'Lessons from ECOWAS Peacekeeping Operations: 1990-2004: Report from the ECOWAS Workshop', released by the ECOWAS Secretariat on 23 March 2005. Individual EU member states appear as direct support to ECOWAS peacekeeping operations (p.15) and former divisive actors for the region (p.33), NATO and its member states as a possible help for doctrine framing (p.26) and the EU as such as an 'external donor' (p.33).

97 Not to mention direct interventions.

ECOWAS peace operations is not *per se* a bad thing, a strong coordination among EU member states (and with regional actors) is at least required in this field.

In that respect, after having politicised the financial dimensions of EU external relations in the 1990s, the EU now faces the challenge of struggling to finance its political ones. It's ambition to contribute, in an enabling approach,[98] to ECOWAS's efficiency as a regional stability and security actor needs more than pure political dialogue and support. Not least because, as long as ECOWAS member states' commitments of resources to the development of regional security instruments will mean a diversion from social and economic developmental agendas, this will create little incentive for focusing on security. In this context, the five million euros provided to security issues as a non-focal sector within the ninth EDF appears rather low.[99] This is a limited amount of money that the additional funds provided by National Indicative Programmes do not adequately supplement.

6.4 Political implications: the (sub-)regional level and the challenge of political coherence and efficiency

One main political requirement for the development of a stronger partnership lies in the degree of regionalisation of political and strategic issues that member states are ready to assume.

In the case of ECOWAS, the regional level is now seriously and widely perceived as an appropriate and indispensable level of discussion or management of various issues. Not least because the importance given to regional cooperation and integration by external actors such as the EU and the UN acts as an incentive for regional approaches and efforts on issues of conflict prevention, mediation, crisis management and peace settlement.

The now well developed West African discourse on the importance of regional integration and policies to tackle security and stability challenges in the region reaches its limits when it comes to the transposition of these elements of discourse into concrete political realities. ECOWAS member states are occasionally reluctant to grant recognition to the organisation as a legitimate actor for mediation and conflict management. Recent cases in Togo and in Côte d'Ivoire clearly indicate that the EU should take due account of the perception of ECOWAS itself in the region so as to avoid over-relying politically on an organisation whose legitimacy may be strongly eroded on the ground on occasion. ECOWAS has for instance been presented as '*partisan*' because of '*direct implication of some of its members in the Ivorian conflict*' by the President of Côte d'Ivoire Laurent Gbagbo.[100] In a region such as West Africa, the (sub-)regional level may not always be considered, even by member states, as a real and legitimate political level. Informal networks and relations among heads of states (past and present) are to be understood, taken into account and used for any efficient action. Dialogue with and understanding of individual ECOWAS member states remain therefore of crucial importance.

The willingness of EU members states to Europeanise their African policies is, for its part, not exempt from criticism and uncertainties. As far as security and defence issues are concerned, a limited number of member states have been

98 On this idea of *enabling action*, see for instance, Sébastien Loisel, *European Conflict Prevention and Crisis Management Policies in African Regional Conflict*, paper presented at the European Foreign Policy Conference, London School of Economics, 2 and 3 July 2004; as well as Albert Mathias, Thomas Diez and Stephan Stetter, *The European Union and the Transformation of Border Conflict: Theorising the Impact of Integration and Association*, paper presented at the CEEISA/ISA Convention, Central University, Budapest, 26-28 June 2003.

99 Out of 35 million euros for all non-focal sectors, which also compounds issues such as fishing, experience and information-sharing in the field of the cross-border aspects of health, etc. The total amount of aid of the ninth EDF for the region is 285 million euros. A further 5 million euros are expected to be allocated to security issues.

100 Bourahiman Ouattara, 'Réunion de la Cedeao : un vrai coup d'État contre la démocratie en Afrique, estime-t-on au pays de Mbeki', *Fraternité Matin* (Abidjan), 21 September 2005. Many other examples of local distrust towards the organisation do exist, not only in Côte d'Ivoire, but also in Togo, Liberia, etc. On this point, valuable sources from the West African press may be found on http://www.allafrica.com.

playing an active role in the sub-region, whether through direct military involvement or through support to local or regional process and activities. The willingness of those member states to share more than the financial burden and the diplomatic *cul-de-sac* at European level is indispensable for any EU security policy in the region. As for now, the global tendency is that of a European day-to-day cooperation with countries at times of peace, and a return to member states' initiatives and policies in times of crises. This tacit division of labour does not necessarily mean inefficiency, but may reinforce local perceptions that the EU remains largely a funding agency, while the challenges of *hard politics* are dealt with by individual European states and the UN rather than by the EU.

Beyond these well-known challenges of foreign and security policy coherence in the EU, the development of relations between the EU and regional organisations raises other issues of coherence. Not least among these is the fact that regional and sub-regional organisations constitute one category of actors among many that may be considered as efficient partners in dealing with issues of stabilisation, conflict prevention and/or management. In the case of ECOWAS, recent experiences show that a lack of coherence between the international actors such as ECOWAS itself, the EU (and its member states), the UN and the African Union can have disastrous effects on the security situation. In a context of crisis or open conflict, if no convergent effort and position exist between regional states, ECOWAS, the UN, the EU and the AU, conflicting parties have the opportunity to play these actors off against one another, trying to exploit their lack of convergence and coherence to win time and/or interests. The standstill in Côte d'Ivoire during the autumn of 2005 is a clear signal of this, with the rebel forces and government authorities calling either for ECOWAS or AU or French or UN mediation according to what they perceived would be the most favourable external actor for them. On this occasion, the rebel forces called for ECOWAS mediation, while President Gbagbo favoured mediation by the AU.[101]

For the EU to exploit fully regional or sub-regional organisations as strategic partners, it needs not only to have a coherent policy itself, but also to direct its efforts at building and supporting consensus among the variety of international actors that are potentially committed/useful. Besides, in a context that might plead for 'agenda focusing', coordination with other international actors may also enable burden sharing with them, thus avoiding overlapping, competing, or duplicating initiatives, investments and actions.

In this respect, the monthly donors' conference organised by ECOWAS itself provides a useful basis and example, which needs to be further developed and implemented, not least with regard to peace and security issues.[102]

Besides, EU-UN dialogue and cooperation in the region has also developed and improved since the signing of the EU's strategy for West Africa in May 2004. The special representative of the UN Secretary General, Ambassador Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, regularly takes part in EU-ECOWAS meetings, and a joint EU-ECOWAS-UNOWA Trilateral Action Plan for Peace and Security was signed on 18 May 2005,[103] which might serve as a political basis for further coordination among the three organisations.[104]

101 Michèle Pepe, 'Médiation: les rebelles soutiennent Obasanjo et la Cedeao', *Fraternité Matin* (Abidjan), 22 September 2005; source: http://www.allafrica.com.

102 A Working Group on Peace and Security bringing together ECOWAS and external donors concerned also exists, but meets separately from the donors' conference, on a scheduled quarterly basis.

103 EU-ECOWAS-UNOWA Trilateral Action Plan for Peace and Security, available on the UNOWA pages from http://www.un.org.

104 According to the Terms of Reference for Political Dialogue between the UNOWA and the EU Heads of Mission in Dakar, the main focus of the dialogue is: elaboration of a conflict prevention strategy, the follow-up of the UNSG Report on cross-border issues in West Africa, the ratification of international law instruments and the role of ECOWAS in the region.

The EU should also further promote cooperation and coordination among regional and sub-regional actors and organisations. The length taken for the discussion and signature of the Memorandum of Understanding between the AU and ECOWAS[105] is a clear signal that intra-African inter-institutional coherence is to be attentively followed.

105 This Memorandum of Understanding, which has been discussed and pushed forward by the EU since 2003, had still not been signed at the time of writing.

Conclusion

Having the possibility to work and associate with a (sub-)regional organisation such as ECOWAS can be very valuable for the EU, especially with regard to its expressed ambitions to export peace and stability. In facilitating the tackling of cross-border issues, in helping the development of cooperative neighbouring relations, in enabling actions impossible at national level, etc., the development of inter-regional relations can create interesting perspectives for turning some of the EU's international ambitions and principles into reality.

If the frequently asserted European attachment to regionalism and regional integration of other continents is to turn into concrete action and provide satisfying strategic output on issues such as stability and security, a series of elements need, however, to be kept in mind.

From the analysis of EU-ECOWAS relations, it seems first of all that differences of political and social context make it very hard indeed to envisage a mere reproduction of European institutional, legal or operational experiences, as a security providing tool. Second, the projection of stability and security through partnerships with regional organisations (the logic of 'security by proxy') requires strong European coherence and efficiency to provide satisfying output.

Dealing with (sub-)regional organisations also raises issues of multi-level coherence, between not only various EU institutions and member states, but also between other actors: regional organisations as such and their member states, the UN and other international actors (the US, NGOs, etc.).

In the end, although (sub-)regional organisations can be rightly perceived as a legitimate and valuable forum for dealing with many security issues, they may also suffer from some difficulties.[106]

- On some occasions, local actors tend to prefer to deal with external actors (the UN, the US, etc.), than with their neighbours within a regional organisation.[107] Lack of trust, conflicting interests and rivalry among neighbours are not eradicated by discourses on regional integration. Expectations towards (sub-)regional organisations as tools for the EU to exert 'security by proxy' should keep this tendency in mind, and avoid investing too much symbolic power or responsibility in organisations that may, for instance, not be recognised by warring parties as legitimate actors or interlocutors in some cases. In that respect, a strong understanding of mutual perceptions in a specific region seems indispensable for EU actors to optimise partnership with the organisation that covers the region.
- (Sub-)regional organisations, because the EU and other international actors use them as a channel of negotiations, may on some occasions turn into a 'façade' for states in a particular region. For instance, donors' discourse reproduction may be high at the regional level, in order to comply with external donors' political and moral requirements, without the regional organisation having the power to turn this into policy implementation at national level. Clear

[106] For an insight into these kinds of perspectives, see for instance Björn Möller, 'The Pros and Cons of Subsidiarity: the role of African regional and sub-regional organisations in ensuring peace and security in Africa', *DIIS Working Paper* no. 2005/4, (Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies, 2005), available from: http://www.diis.dk.

[107] After all, the same could be said on some occasions about Europeans themselves.

attention should therefore be paid to the impact of sub-regional organisations on their own member states, and to coherence between regional activities and initiatives, and national policies.

The case studied in this paper also reveals that, on some occasions, various EU ambitions and principles collide with or contradict each other. Experience shows that exporting peace and stability, helping resolve regional conflicts and assuring European presence and influence may, for instance, not coincide with respect for African ownership, regional integration and local initiatives. This may not however so much raise questions about inter-regional relations in particular, as about foreign and security policy-making in general, whether at European or national level.

Annex

Abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AU	African Union
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
ECOMICI	ECOWAS Mission in Côte d'Ivoire
ECOMOG	ECOWAS Monitoring Group
ECOSAP	ECOWAS Small Arms Control Programme
ECOWAS	Economic Community of Western African States
EDF	European Development Fund
ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
EU	European Union
GCC	Gulf Co-operation Council
MICECI	Mission de la Communauté économique pour le développement des Etats de l'Afrique de l'Ouest en Côte d'Ivoire
MSC	Mediation and Security Council
NIP	National Indicative Programme
PCASED	Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development
REC	Regional Economic Community
RIP	Regional Indicative Programme
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SALWs	Small Arms and Light Weapons
SSR	Security Sector Reform
TEU	Treaty on European Union
UN	United Nations
UNAMISIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNOWA	United Nations Office for West Africa
WAEMU	West African Economic and Monetary Union

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