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Consolidating Regional Security: Security Sector Reform and Beyond

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Introduction

The call for a collective and regional approach to addressing security issues in West Africa is not new; it predates 1975, the year ECOWAS was formed. Historically, it constituted one of the basic ingredients of early Pan-Africanism and the debates which started in the 19th century for the total liberation of Africa from colonial rule. One of the torchbearers of such ideas was the elderly Liberian statesman, Edward Wilmot Blyden, who called for a West African state. In a lecture delivered in Sierra Leone in the 1880s and entitled ‘Sierra Leone and Liberia’, Blyden argued that the future of the colony lay within a larger West African state. He also pointed out that ‘the two peoples are one in origin and one destiny and, in spite of themselves, in spite of local prejudices, they must cooperate.’²³¹ Continuing on this issue, initially, Blyden felt strongly that Lagos had become the most progressive place in West Africa and therefore looked upon it as the new centre for West African nationalism. Later he realised that it was no different from Liberia and Sierra Leone, which were paralysed by divisions and local loyalties among Africans which made cooperative effort difficult.²³²

Nevertheless, by 1975, Blyden’s prophecies had become a reality when ECOWAS was headquartered in Lagos before transferring to Abuja, Nigeria. He was also right in his observation about the divisions among Africans, which continue to hamper the efforts towards addressing West African issues through regional approaches. Today, the legacy of colonialism, which manifests itself more pronouncedly in the form of chronic dependency, and the lack of political will, makes it relatively difficult to pursue cooperation.

Against this background, it can plausibly be argued that the formation of ECOWAS in the mid-1970s was a continuation of the call to address African issues through solidarity and collective African efforts. Such notion has implications for consolidating regional security in West Africa. When ECOWAS was established, one of its principal objectives was to integrate the region economically. The need for economic integration was dictated by the existing post-colonial realities. However, by the 1990s, the organisation was pre-occupied with managing and resolving intra-state conflicts. Thus, in the existing literature on ECOWAS, there continues to be recurring references to the fact that ECOWAS has shifted from its original objective of promoting regional economic integration to addressing security issues. While it is true that efforts towards economic integration and development have suffered because of the organisation's focus on conflict management and resolution, this paper argues that, conceptually, this notion is untenable and problematic. Conceptually, it is difficult to divorce economic issues from security issues. Security, when conceived broadly, includes political, economic, social, cultural, cultural and environmental issues; it is not just about the military and state or regime in power; it is also about the people and non-military issues.

Consequently, what has changed is not so much the organisation's focus as the realisation that economic integration could not be divorced from other broader security issues. This view is shared by the former Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, Abass Bundu, who pointed out that, with foresight, the founders of ECOWAS had realised very soon that it was impossible to integrate the region economically without political integration; as security issues were central to this debate. Thus, the latter had to be taken into serious consideration three years after the formation of the organisation.²³³ The protocols on Non-Aggression (1978) and Mutual Assistance on Defence (1981) attest to this reality. As David Wippman has asserted, these protocols originated from the realisation that political and security issues could not be divorced from economic integration.²³⁴

A former Nigerian Foreign Minister, Ike Nwachukwu, also writes that developments in the sub-region exposed the weaknesses of the narrow militaristic notion of security because other dimensions of security hindered the integration of West Africa.²³⁵ These ideas emerged out of the realisation of the need to face the challenges of post-independence realities, which were characterised by military and non-military dimensions of security.

The link between economic development and security was later strongly identified in the revised Treaty of ECOWAS adopted in 1993.²³⁶ This point was reinforced in Article 2 of the *Protocol Relating to the Mechanism on Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security* in which it was stated that the economic and social development of the peoples and states are inextricably linked.²³⁷

Thus, the way we conceive security has serious implications for the way we understand and explain the role of ECOWAS in West Africa. One way to address this issue is to locate ECOWAS' security role within the context of what has transpired over the last two decades years. Confronted by the harsh realities of managing armed violent conflicts, which started with the Liberian civil war (1989–2003), ECOWAS adopted a peace support role. As discussed below, however, peacekeeping, by itself, cannot resolve the underlying basis for conflicts. The process of post-war reconstruction involves economic recovery, and rebuilding of collapsed states. State rebuilding also involves disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration of ex-fighters; reforming of the security sector; legal and judicial reform; public sector reform and the overall strengthening of the capacity of state institutions in ways that will make them relevant, legitimate, effective, efficient, and professional. In all its work thus far, ECOWAS has tended to focus narrowly on the peacekeeping element; but in order to consolidate regional security, the organisation must address the broader security threats facing West Africa.

This chapter argues that it is only through regional efforts that peace and security can be consolidated in West Africa. This is based on the assumption that the security of any one state or country is indivisible from the rest of ECOWAS member states. Further, the chapter stresses that the reforming of a country's security sector should not be limited to post-conflict societies but every country in the region should undertake this programme. This point is important because of the nature, scope and dimension of transnational security threats and dilemmas facing the region. Finally, the chapter argues that as important as a regional approach to security sector reform is, it will remain inadequate to address the broader security needs of the people in the absence of a regional approach to people-centred economic development. There is a need to bring development back into the debate.

Regional Security Challenges

There are a number of reasons why the consolidation of regional security constitutes an integral part of ECOWAS' role in West Africa. One of the reasons is firmly rooted in the understanding that there are security challenges that cut across the entire region and even beyond. Hence, if the process of consolidating security must become sustainable, the first place to begin is a discussion of the security challenges facing the region.

As discussed in other chapters throughout this book, from 1989 onwards, the region experienced protracted and complex armed violent conflicts in Liberia (1989), Sierra Leone (1992), and Cote d'Ivoire (2002). These conflicts led to state and societal collapse; death of innocent civilians, mainly women, children, the elderly and other vulnerable people in these countries; encroached upon the fragile economies and environment; produced thousands of fighters, mainly young people; and destroyed the infrastructure beyond imagination. Although Liberia and Sierra

Leone have since held post-conflict elections and begun the process of peace-building, the crisis in Cote d'Ivoire remains in a perpetual state of no war and no peace.

There are also armed violent conflicts in Nigeria (Niger Delta), Senegal (Cassamance), Ghana (Dagomas and Komkomas) and Mali (Tuareg), which have the potential to degenerate into the kind of violent conflicts experienced in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire. Unfortunately, they have received less coverage and perhaps less attention by ECOWAS than the previous ones perhaps because they are not national in their scale but are viewed rather as localised low intensity conflicts.

The only notable exception is the Niger Delta crisis, which has received considerable media coverage because of oil and the continuous taking of hostages.

The first type of conflicts has been regional in character and dimension. Thus, ECOWAS has intervened both militarily and diplomatically to manage and resolve them. ECOMOG was formed in early 1990s because of these conflicts and, currently, in 2011 the organisation has created a military unit to deal with similar conflicts and other problems in the region. It is also working towards ensuring that there is a civilian dimension to the Standby Force as part of the overall African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA).

Regrettably, in the case of the second type of conflicts, the role of ECOWAS has been negligible or non-existent. As will be argued later, although ECOWAS has been involved with peacekeeping in the first type of conflicts its role in peace-building remains questionable.

The region also faces the challenge of addressing trans-border crimes including money laundering, human trafficking, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, drugs trafficking, spread of HIV/AIDS and other related issues. From a broader security perspective, there is rising youth unemployment, economic decline, environmental degradation, declining health and educational services throughout the region. This reinforces the point that in post-conflicts contexts, there are broader security issues that are associated with or are integral to peace-building. If left unaddressed, these could derail the peace process and even create the basis for relapse into violent conflicts. In essence, consolidating regional security in West Africa requires addressing the problems that lead to conflict; threaten the physical survival of individuals and entire communities, and encroaches upon the process of democratic change. Many of these issues are certainly beyond security sector reform.

In summary, the nature of conflicts, trans-border crimes and the other broader security issues such as pervasive poverty, youth unemployment, declining health and educational opportunities, environmental degradation and others outlined above constitute a major challenge for the ECOWAS Commission and the region

as a whole. The impact of these threats on human lives, economic development and governance and democracy makes it imperative for ECOWAS to begin to examine its role not just in post-conflict situations but in countries in democratic transitions. While ECOWAS has begun to think about ways and means of addressing some of these problems, implementing its programmes remains a major weakness and challenge for the organisation.

Existing Regional Security Efforts

Since its formation, ECOWAS has undertaken a number of security efforts aimed at ensuring peace and security in West Africa. As briefly discussed earlier in this chapter, ECOWAS intervened in intra-state conflicts and based upon this experience, in 1999, the organisation adopted the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, which provides the framework for the pursuit and consolidation of regional security. Subsequently, it adopted the Supplementary Protocol on Good Governance and Democracy. Prior to these instruments, the organisation, as far back as 1978 and 1981, adopted the Protocols on Non Aggression and Mutual Assistance on Defence respectively. Although the appropriate measures proposed in these documents were not put in place before ECOMOG intervened in Liberia, they offered a starting point for addressing security issues collectively.

The Mechanism constitutes a major step in the right direction because it provides the normative framework and institutional basis for addressing security issues in West Africa. The key institutions established by the Protocol include the following:

- a) The Authority of Heads of State and Government
- b) The Mediation and Security Council
- c) The Executive Secretariat (now the Commission).

The Mediation and Security Council is crucial to the debate on consolidating regional security in West Africa because it makes key decisions on this issue. It comprises nine members of which the Authority can elect seven whereas the other two shall be the current chair and the immediate past chair of the Authority.²³⁸

In keeping with Article 10 of the Mechanism, the Council takes decisions on issues of peace and security in the sub-region on behalf of the Authority and has the following functions:

- a) decide on all matters relating to peace and security
- b) decide and implement all policies for conflict prevention, management and resolution, peacekeeping 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

- d) review the mandates and terms of reference periodically, on the basis of evolving situations
- e) on recommendation of the Executive Secretary (now President), appoint the Special Representative of the Executive Secretary and the Force Commander.²³⁹

In fulfilment of the above, the following organs were established to support the Mediation and Security Council:

- a) The Defence and Security Commission
- b) The Council of Elders
- c) ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG).²⁴⁰

Thus, in theory, ECOWAS has put in place institutions that can serve as essential entry points for regionalising security agenda and working towards the consolidation of regional security in West Africa. For example, the *Mechanism* provides the basis for bringing synergy into the peace and security initiatives in the region. This can be done through the Defence and Security Commission, which brings together critical defence and security actors in the region. The regular meetings of West African defence and security personnel at the highest level provide a forum for sharing of knowledge, experiences and also to create networks for addressing transnational security issues.

Currently, the organisation is working assiduously on a standby force that will feed into the AU standby force. While the latter is not a panacea to the region's problems and cannot address trans-national security challenges on its own, it can contribute immensely to African peace support operations. Such operations will require both military and civilian personnel.

ECOMOG, which will inevitably serve as the fulcrum of this force, is supposed to engage in humanitarian intervention in situations of humanitarian disaster; engage in preventive deployment; engage in peace-building, disarmament and demobilisation and other peacekeeping and restoration activities.²⁴¹ Thus, as will be argued later, the future of the Commission's role in West Africa will need to extend beyond the remit of narrow traditional peacekeeping to broader peace-building efforts.

Synergising Regional Security Efforts: SSR

In order to consolidate regional security in West Africa, it is important to bring synergy and harmony into regional peace and security efforts including Security Sector Reform (SSR) undertakings. But before addressing the specific issue of SSR, I think it is also important to stress that there is an entry point for ensuring synergy and harmonisation of security practices and thinking. The Defence and Security Commission, which falls under the authority of the Mediation and Security Council brings together the following key security actors in the region:

- a) Chiefs of Defence Staff or equivalent
- b) Officers responsible for Internal Affairs and Security
- c) Experts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Depending on the Agenda, heads of the following agencies may be invited:

- a) Immigration
- b) Customs
- c) Drug/Narcotic Agencies
- d) Border Guards; and
- e) Civil Protection Force.²⁴²

All of these institutions are critical to the process of consolidating regional security in West Africa. Their collective role is crucial to maintaining peace and security, and points out the need for a regional approach to SSR initiatives in West Africa.

In order to achieve a regional approach, it is important to stress from the onset that SSR programmes in West Africa should not be based merely on downsizing and reducing the budgets of security agencies, particularly the armed forces. In almost all the countries of the region, the security forces are experiencing institutional and professional weaknesses; and often they are bloated both in terms of sheer size and the cost involved in maintaining them. Hence, it is easily attractive to begin with the downsizing or reduction of budgets. Such measures should, however, be undertaken within the specific contexts of individual countries. Depending on the local situation, these measures can either lead to efficiency, stability, and an improvement in civil-military relations or this can also lead to instability and worsen civil-military relations.

One of the things that should be taken into consideration in the pursuit of regional approach SSR is the need to do what Rocky Williams refers to as indigenisation of the programme. As Williams argues, unless security reform initiatives are thoroughly indigenised and imbued with practical, local contents, African civil-military relations will be no more than a sordid imitation or poor reflection of imported non-African systems.²⁴³ Williams also argues that SSR efforts should focus on 'national decision-making process, the role of government, parliament and the armed forces within this process, and the inculcation of normative principles of civil-military relations within the officer corps of the African armed forces'.²⁴⁴

In light of the above, it is important to ensure that the constitutional principles upon which the forces will be managed should be clarified. This process should include clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the different elements of the sector in the Constitution. There is the need to ensure that there is clear policy framework and that, in the higher ranks of the armed forces, there are constitutionally minded officers.²⁴⁵

Further, there are a number of measures that must be taken and certain key issues that must be considered in order to bring synergy into any regional approach to SSR. One of the measures required for this process is the need to harmonise security legislation, thinking and practices in the sub-region. Unless this is done, the chances of addressing transnational security issues will remain extremely weak.

As Adedeji Ebo also suggests, SSR in individual states and the region is a dynamic and mutually reinforcing process. Thus, SSR in member states can impact on collective security arrangements while the latter also impacts on what occurs in member states.²⁴⁶ If there were reforming states within the sub-region, such project could be undertaken but as Ebo argues, such states remain lacking.²⁴⁷ With the exception of the countries emerging out of conflict situations where there are efforts to reform the security sector, most of the West Africa states have never carried out any comprehensive reforms in this direction.

In terms of regional institutions, the ECOWAS Commission has a critical role to play in ensuring that SSR is considered at the regional level. The ECOWAS Commission, Authority of Heads of State and Governments, ECOWAS Parliament and the Defence and Security Commission, serve as an integral part of the evolving ECOWAS security architecture. All of these have oversight responsibilities over the emerging ESF. The emerging civil society bodies such as the West Africa Civil Society Forum (WACSOF) do have a role to play in ensuring that even at the level of individual states, its affiliate organisations and others provide some sort of oversight responsibilities.

Beyond Security Sector Reform

As important as the transformation of the security sector is crucial to the overall process of consolidating regional security, the point should also be made that a reformed and transformed security sector by itself cannot ensure peace and security. It can certainly contribute towards the consolidation of regional security, but in order for ECOWAS to be effective in its regional security initiatives, particularly within the contexts of post-conflict situations, the organisation must begin to look at broader security issues. As Ebo has argued, 'in the context of underdevelopment, any viable change in the governance of the security sector would need to address issues of poverty alleviation, predicated on a human security agenda'.²⁴⁸

Conceptually, the human security agenda entails more than physical survival. Emancipation from oppressive power structures – be they global, regional, national or local in origin and scope – is necessary for human security.²⁴⁹ According to Caroline Thomas, in as much as human security is about meeting the basic material needs of the people; it is also about achieving human dignity. This incorporates personal autonomy, control over one's life, and unhindered participation in the life of the community.²⁵⁰

Therefore, the missing link in the peace and security efforts of ECOWAS is the failure to promote the broader human security agenda. Given its role in post-conflict situations and because of the dynamics of the West African security situation, there is the dire need to begin to think about the Commission's intervention beyond traditional peacekeeping. As peace-building features in the recent documents adopted by the Commission, issues of post-war economic recovery; state rebuilding and transformation; democratic governance; natural resource management, and others should be included in the agenda of ECOWAS. ECOWAS must begin to rethink its notion of regional security by moving towards 'developmental regionalism' that will be all encompassing to include social, economic, political and cultural processes. However, the first real challenge has to do with achieving these within the context of the inadequacies of the neo-liberal economy and procedural democracy. Second challenge is that many African leaders are either unwilling or unable to think outside the neo-colonial box.

If we take the issue of economic recovery, it is clear that it is not only countries emerging out of conflict situations that require attention. The vast majority of the countries in the sub-region are going through economic crises, which are manifested in economic decline and stagnation, high unemployment, poverty and other associated problems. It is important to stress from the beginning that in terms of origins and causes, the factors that continue to undermine economic development are both external and internal.

Externally, colonial legacy and the integration of our economies into the global capitalist economy have adverse effects on economic development because of the unequal international trade regimes. For example, the conditionalities imposed by the Bretton Woods institutions are factors that have been discussed in the literature on economic development in our part of the world. Moreover, although the scramble for oil in the Gulf of Guinea has led to renewed interest in Africa by the big powers immediately after the Cold War, Africa was placed on the margins of world politics by the so-called big powers who did not need it as a battle ground for its proxy wars; remained marginalised within the global capitalist economy; it is left behind in the global development process; and all the recipes that were offered by the IMF and World Bank for growth and development for Africa have yielded no fruitful results.

What we continue to see in our region are deepening crises in the social, economic and political realms. The flow of refugees in different parts of the region; the plight of internally displaced persons (IDPs) who receive less attention; increasing unemployment, particularly among the youth population; and increasing decline in access to education and health care constitute real problems for the people of the region. The flows of young Africans to Europe and America under gruesome, unbearable, and life-threatening conditions say a lot about the plight of the people. Indeed, the impact of this is manifested in the brain drain

of Africa, which has adverse effect on development and security. About 20,000 African professionals leave the continent each year. About a dozen countries including Ghana, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Kenya have lost 40 per cent of their professionals or even more.²⁵¹ Nigeria also falls into this category of states. As argued elsewhere in this book, some of the Africans who are forced to live in the Diaspora have direct link with conflict situations in the sub-region. In an effort to escape the sufferings and humiliation in the Diaspora, some of them would rather support armed rebellions in order to return home as state officials.

Unfortunately, some of these individuals are not interested in replacing the status quo ante. On the contrary, they do exactly what the old regimes they replace were doing to undermine development and security. They are neither interested in promoting the broader security of the people nor in the looting of the fragile economies through corruption.

Externally-driven agendas also undermine African initiatives. Thus, as Thomas suggests:

although it is true that most African states are responding to the external pressures of the international financial institutions, their governments still bear responsibility for promoting an approach to development that in its adulation of all things modern sometimes fails to understand and value African socioeconomic systems that have evolved over generations. Some such systems have evolved to manage the risks inherent in pursuing self-sufficiency in harsh climatic conditions. The simple but important point is that just as all things modern are not necessarily helpful in human security terms, all things traditional are not necessarily unhelpful. Attention to specifics is important.²⁵²

Internally, the lack of good governance which expresses itself in poor resource management and corruption explain why the sub-region is also going through crises. However, by focusing on economic and monetary integration and, ultimately, development, ECOWAS will be dealing with the capacity and 'credibility deficit' generated by programmes that have had little impact on the living conditions of West Africa's 230 million people.²⁵³ On the issue of the relationship between politics and economics, Claude Ake argues that the former is the greatest enemy to economic development in Africa. West Africa is no exception to this.

One of the challenges of bringing economic development back into the ECOWAS agenda is the attitude of the leaders in the region. Most regimes in the sub-region are more interested in maintaining the status quo than pursuing those things that could address the broader security needs of the people; than to pursue development, which improves the living conditions of the people. For example, it should be recalled that most states in the sub-region replaced the former colonial states without necessarily transforming the institutions they inherited. This view is shared by Christopher Clapham, who argues that:

like the colonial state from which it is descended, the third world state has to maintain itself by extracting resources from the domestic economy, and especially from the trade generated by the economy's incorporation into a global structure of exchange. Whereas the developmental functions of the state are often patchy and inadequate, sometimes almost non-existent, its extractive ones are omnipresent.²⁵⁴

Such behaviour has serious implications for security and development because it makes the state highly vulnerable to shocks in the global economy and also to its people because it has no capacity to address their broader security needs: health, education and other social services, which are vital for the survival of the population. They trample upon human dignity.

Clapham also argues strongly that in many third world states, economic management is concerned with political control through the imposition of force and the manipulation of economic reward and in states where authority is fragile and force consequently dangerous and difficult to impose, economic manipulation provides a vastly preferable option.²⁵⁵ Thus, rather than create an enabling environment for gainful employment of the people and therefore enhance political stability, they are concerned about how long they will stay in power.

Moreover, one of the instruments of political manipulation and the pursuit of narrow political objectives is foreign aid. Too much dependence on international trade and investment is easily encouraged to the detriment of meeting the real development needs of the people.

As Ake would argue, 'dependent development' is a politically driven decision for the purpose of political survival – even though it, ironically, illustrates that many of these leaders are committed to development. With few exceptions, African countries came to independence with hardly any discernible vision of development and no agenda for its realisation. He further explains that most of the newly independent countries relied heavily on expatriates for their development plans, which were usually collections of policy targets and programmes that took for granted the validity of the inherited economic structure.²⁵⁶ What we fail to realise in West Africa is that the dependence on externally-generated revenues has direct political consequences. The most basic is that it becomes almost impossible for most states to contemplate any strategy for economic development that will result into any substantial reduction in their participation in international trade.²⁵⁷ Thus, this is not about autarky but the refusal to uncritically accept, institutionalise and implement the World Bank's and International Monetary Fund's orthodox market reforms, which to an extent can be both anti-developmental and people-unfriendly.

Currently, the issue of donor driven development agendas continues to haunt every country in the sub-region with catastrophic effects. Because these agendas are not rooted in the national contexts of the recipient countries; they are based on 'one-size-fits-all' and generic development recipes and flawed assumptions.

This point is reinforced by Ake who also writes that development strategies are not made and carried out in a political vacuum, especially since development is a collective enterprise. Every development strategy is always contextualised in a particular state, social structure, culture, and meaning. It implies a structure of politics, but it also influences political interactions, practices and outcomes.²⁵⁸ Such practice corroborates the assumption that if you manage and control the economy, then you also control and manage the people in it.

As Ake pointed out, what have really passed for development plans were, regrettably, mere aggregations of projects and objectives informed by the latest fads of the international development community such as import substitution and export promotion. He stressed that as these fads changed in the larger world, so were they abandoned in Africa.²⁵⁹ This critical observation has serious implications for the pursuit of development in West Africa. Certainly, we should bear in mind that development is not just about increasing wealth but increasing the welfare of the people. This means that development agendas must put at their forefront social issues such as education, health, employment, rural development including the improvement of agricultural production. With the vast majority of the people still living in the rural areas, ECOWAS must realise that incentives to rural farmers constitute the most important contribution to private investment in our part of the world.

Thus, if West Africa is to comprehensively deal with the dynamics of conflicts including their rooted causes, then the issue of development must be brought into the debate about the future of the sub-region. Maybe it is about time that West African states revisit the Lagos Plan of Action of 1980 whose basic tenets are very much valid and relevant today. This plan was designed to restructure the African economies on two basic principles: self-reliance (national and collective) and self-sustaining development. To restructure along the lines of self-reliance entailed changing the position of our economies within the global capitalist economy and its unequal division of labour; changing from primary goods and commodities to manufactured goods; and relying on internal sources of raw materials, spare parts, management, finance and technology.²⁶⁰ Achieving this will require collective security efforts in the broader sense of the word because this is the only way that Africa's vulnerability to the global capitalist economy and the donor community can be reduced. We need to make use of our natural resources and promote trade and cooperation within the sub-region in order to consolidate peace and security. We have to realise that most of what we have tried to do as countries and people have partly failed because it has become clear that we are saddled with development agendas and strategies in which our leaders and people do not believe. They only pursue some of these agendas for continuing donor support. As argued elsewhere in this book, African leaders should begin to believe the states they run by being committed to people-oriented development.

In light of the above, it is correct to argue that development is not a project but a process; through which people create and recreate themselves and their life circumstances to realise higher levels of civilisation in accordance with their own choices and values. Thus, the people are the means and ends as well as targets and agents of development but others can facilitate it.²⁶¹ The issue, therefore, is not whether this has been done or is possible now; it is more about what can be done in order for the African people to save their skins, dignity and integrity. This point is valid because a process that is not emancipatory cannot be conducive to development.²⁶²

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is vital to stress that the issue of regionalisation and regional security is not a new debate; it started long before ECOWAS was conceived. In fact, ECOWAS is a product of the debates about creating a West Africa community. As argued in the introductory section to this chapter, Blyden championed this cause and it was a response to the colonial subjugation faced by the peoples of this part of Africa. Like today, they sought to create a cohesive community that would respond to the challenge of addressing the broader security needs of the people.

When ECOWAS was formed, it focused on a narrow aspect of security: economic integration. To many writers, the intervention of ECOWAS in intra-state conflicts constituted a shift from its previous focus on integration. This chapter argues that ECOWAS has not shifted from its original focus. What has changed is the perception about security. While initially conceiving security in militaristic and state-centrist terms, ECOWAS soon realised that security was more than this; it has non-military dimensions that are crucial to address in order to manage and resolve conflicts in sub-region. In essence, ECOWAS has not abandoned its efforts towards economic integration; only that this also hinges on peace and security. It is a realisation of the nexus between security and development that informs ECOWAS's priorities in the sub-region.

Regional efforts have been undertaken to implement peace support operations in conflict and post-conflict situations. But the Commission has not developed the capacity to address the issue of peace-building in a holistic way. It is one thing to go into a conflict area and create a buffer between armed factions; but it is totally a different thing to settle the conflict and create an enabling environment for addressing the root causes of the conflict through sustainable peace-building initiatives. Security Sector Reform is an important element of the overall post-war peace-building process because of the role of the sector in fuelling and conducting wars. As discussed above, SSR is characterised by inherent challenges that must be addressed in order to become effective. To begin with, the SSR should be conceived within the broader governance agenda in every West African

country. Accordingly, it should be fully concerned with processes and not just structures or mere institutional reforms. It should be about the role that ordinary people can play in making decisions about the sector.

Moreover, because this is a highly political process, it is important to note that it is often characterised by resistance because there will always be those who see themselves as losers and others as winners in this process. How you strike a balance between these two extreme thoughts and positions constitutes a major challenge for SSR practitioners. There is the need to pay close attention to the politics of pursuing SSR.

In a sub-region that is emerging out of long years of one party rule, military rule and authoritarianism, to begin to talk about, let alone to carry out, wide ranging reforms that will lead to civilian democratic oversight of the security sector is a major challenge. Often, the consequent lack of political will coupled with the culture of militarism that have permeated the fabric of West Africa political practices and the lack of expertise in the area also constitute a major challenge.

In addition to SSR efforts, ECOWAS must consider placing on its agenda development issues because security and development are inextricably linked. This will require, as suggested in Olawale Ismail's chapters, mainstreaming human security issues. Human security is not just about meeting the basic needs of people; it is also about transforming the oppressive power structures of society and so is about emancipation. Therefore, it is about change and processes.

None of the above programmes can be achieved without the resources to implement them. This is where ECOWAS has proved inadequate because it continues to rely on external donors in order to carry out most of its work. If the sub-region must move forward in consolidating regional security in the broader sense of the word, then the issues of security and development should feature high on its agenda. The sub-region has registered electoral democratic gains but all will remain quadrennial bonanzas if the security needs of the people are not addressed.