

10

ECOWAS and Human Security

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Introduction

Since the turn of the 21st century, the security situation of West Africa appears to be improving with the end of civil conflicts in Sierra Leone and Liberia, and cautious progress in Cote d'Ivoire. Also, the possible outbreak of large-scale civil conflicts in Guinea and Niger appear remote for the time being following ECOWAS' mediation through its use of special envoys and members of the Council of the Wise. Available data, however controversial, appear to point to a decline in the number and incidence of armed conflicts after the upsurge of the 1990s. All of this suggests that the security landscape of the sub-region is ameliorating, thereby raising the critical question: is the sub-region, its member-states and its peoples safer from violence and catalytic upheavals? Indeed, this touches on the crucial – and yet to be fully resolved – contestation about human security: in terms of what is being secured? Against what? Who provides for security? And what method can be undertaken to provide for security?¹⁸¹ The contestation often straddles the divide between security from 'fear' (violence) and 'want' (existential and developmental needs), both of which were reflected in the seven issues highlighted by the 1994 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Report.¹⁸²

Ordinarily, the decline in the number of old and new armed conflict should elicit peace optimism. However, this chapter, focusing on human security component of security thinking, highlights the need for cautious optimism. It warns that despite the lull in rebellions and the commendable recalibration of ECOWAS peace and security architecture, the extent to which extant conflict prevention and management mechanisms reflect or adequately takes care of current and emerging security threats is yet to be adequately tested. This chapter focuses on challenges to the physical security and safety of citizens in the ECOWAS sub-

region. It interrogates how, where and why human security links up to the broader security debate in theory and practice. Through this discourse, it focuses on the 'freedom from fear' component of the broader human security agenda. It contends that emerging sources of human and material destruction, displacement and dislocation, and trans-border insecurity in the sub-region are inadequately reflected and/or prioritised in ECOWAS' peace and security architecture. This chapter acknowledges the commendable formulation, provisions and comprehensive understanding of the security (mostly conflict) condition in the sub-region through the new ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF). However, it footnotes key challenges (resource, institutional and political will), as much as the possible dangers and limitations of pigeonholing human security largely through conflict prevention. It advocates the opposite – making conflict prevention a subset of a broader human security agenda (charter).

The chapter also highlights the need for a West African perspective (charter) on human security that encapsulates and prioritises the pervasive threats (including, but not limited to armed conflicts) to the security of persons in the community. Moreover, it argues that in spite of the transformation of ECOWAS into a supranational authority, the unclear and ineffective definition and untested political will to apply the human security normative principle of intervention (overriding sovereignty) are still major impediments to an effective response to human security challenges.

The rest of this chapter looks at the conceptual evolution of human security on the global arena and pinpoints the decisive role of post-Cold War failings in expected peace dividends as a major catalyst. This is followed by an assessment of emerging human security challenges in the ECOWAS sub-region, including sub-national violence, youth militias, disasters, transnational terrorism, and transnational refugee crises. The third section evaluates ECOWAS' human security architecture with a view to highlighting the need for a West African perspective (founded on a coherent human security agenda and strategy). The fourth section examines the opportunities and constraints to enhanced human security promotion by ECOWAS. The last section is a conclusion that sums up preceding arguments.

Understanding Human Security: The Evolution of a Concept

The word 'security' is rooted in the Latin expression 'Securitas' that translates to tranquillity, freedom from care and the absence of anxiety.¹⁸³ In its elementary definition, security means the absence of existential threats or dangers, that is, to be 'safe or feeling safe from harm and danger' or the absence of threats to acquired values.¹⁸⁴ The field of security studies began in the late 1940s in North America, principally focused on international security, national interests, and power politics, and centrally reflected an American perspective during the Cold War.

The field of international relations was, until 1990, dominated by the realist-neorealist¹⁸⁵ orthodoxy that constitutes security in a traditional, state-centric framework. According to realist thinking, states are central to understanding politics and security; the international system is anarchical as states are autonomous and lacking any supranational authority able to enforce its will independent of states; the capacity for, and the threat of, coercive force is the utmost resource in international politics and security; and finally, the constituent units of the international system, solely states, constantly face the classical ‘security dilemmas’ whereby the preparation for, and protection of, security by one state is perceived as a threat by another state.¹⁸⁶ In short, neo-realism see the state as the only referent of security, interprets security and threats to it in an objective manner (relying on naturalism – physical evidence) that is strictly confined to the political and military spheres, and see the source of insecurity to emanate from the external – the actions and inactions of other states.

The debate about human security started with the publication of the 1994 United Nations Development Program (UNDP) annual report, which raised the critical question of rethinking the intellectual and policy content of security.

The report noted the trade-off between inter and intra-state conflicts as civil conflicts became common; that feelings of insecurity arise from daily existential issues of hunger, deprivation, gender-based violence, religious and ethnic persecution and repression by the state and regimes, as opposed to a cataclysmic world event or the international system (UNDP 1994)¹⁸⁷.

The range of non-military ‘threats’ to states – the political problems of economic dislocation, political violence, the refugee phenomenon, and environmental degradation amongst others – raised critical questions about the continued usefulness of neo-realism as a policy and scholarly framework for understanding and dealing with the new threats.¹⁸⁸ The report sought to reformulate security to reflect universal applicability and adaptability; its components are inter-dependent given that threats transcend national borders; it is people-oriented; and able to direct policy focus on the people as opposed to the state. The report lists seven areas of potential concern for security – economics, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security. It also lists the main threats to these new security issues to be unchecked population growth, disparities in economic opportunities, migration pressures, environmental degradation, drug trafficking, and international terrorism.¹⁸⁹

Also, the security experience of the Third World was an added reason for the emergence of human security perspectives that challenged the traditional view of external sources of insecurity. According to Ayoob, the definition of in-security in Third World states includes internal and external vulnerabilities ‘that threaten to, or have the potential to, bring down or significantly weaken state structures, both

territorial and institutional, and regimes'.¹⁹⁰ This links the scope of insecurity in many Third World states, mostly in the form of intra-state and civil conflicts, to their state-making process and as inherent features of their 'juridical' statehood.¹⁹¹ It is also contended that the security experiences of Third World states is almost at variance with the preoccupations of realism – that is, the realist emphasis on inter-state security, military issues, and with the international balance of power are irrelevant to insecurity in Third World states.¹⁹²

Theoretically, the profiling of human security in policy and academic discourse is rooted in the questioning of the dominant realist and neo-realist assumptions in mainstream international relations (and security studies) by new (post-positivist) approaches.¹⁹³

Yet, the attempt to broaden and deepen security is not without its own contestations and tensions, thus reflecting the view that security is a contested and contestable concept. Not unexpectedly, the notion of human security has been fraught with serious definitional and ideological contestations at the level of theory and policy.¹⁹⁴ This contestability underlined the inability of the 2003 high-powered United Nations Commission on Human Security (UN-CHS) to arrive at a precise meaning and definition of human security. The commission defines human security as 'protecting the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance freedoms and human fulfilment'.¹⁹⁵ Embedded in this broad definition are two perspectives. The first is a state-centric paradigm that argues for the state as the only referent, and provider, of security.¹⁹⁶ The second is the extra-state perspective that emphasises the need to transcend the state, and recognise other referents of security, including individuals and social groups. This perspective contends that making the state the referent of security misses the crucial reality that 'states are often agents of human insecurity, rather than security'.¹⁹⁷

Similarly, there are divisions in the range of issues covered by the security umbrella: the divide between human security as freedom-from-fear and freedom-from-want. The proponents of human security from fear seek to narrow the range of human security using 'vulnerability' to violence and natural disasters as the defining criterion.¹⁹⁸ The freedom-from-want perspective mirrors Caroline Thomas' (1987) call for including development issues in security thinking and policy. In spite of the contested nature of human security, it is important to highlight some of its usefulness.

First, the rejection of traditional, realist essentialism of security allows for the interrogation of a wider range of actors and issues, especially those connected with gender, social categories, and inter-generational tensions. It is also useful in giving political voice to politically marginalised people through a network of international coalition.¹⁹⁹ Human security is people-centred – that is, it refocuses attention on humans (citizens), rather than abstract entities (regimes, regions, institutions, etc) as the primary object of security. Put simply, 'it implies protection

against, or safety from, a future risk of severe deprivation, injury or death'.²⁰⁰ The concept is also value-based contributing to a normative change in the understanding and practice of security, especially by providing a moral, legal and political basis for overriding traditional principles of non-intervention and territorial inviolability. This underscores the emergence of the principle of 'responsibility to protect' as a new policy and normative component of international relations.²⁰¹ The interventionist foundation of human security shifts sovereignty from authority to responsibility, and empowers supranational entities and even other actors (states, civil society groups, non-governmental organisations) to intervene and provide security for people in theatres of need.²⁰² It thus extends security obligations beyond states, and the security of states beyond their borders.²⁰³ If human security relates to the protection and threats to the physical safety and security of people, it becomes appropriate to interrogate emergent sources and forms of physical insecurity in the ECOWAS sub-region.

Emerging Human Security Challenges in West Africa: Old Roots, New Leaves

Considering the overriding principle of protecting humans from violence, violent deaths and dislocation, this study refocuses its attention on the protection from fear component of human security. It highlights at least six prevalent or emerging threats to the physical security and safety of persons in the ECOWAS sub-region. The issues listed in this section do not overlook the importance and continued relevance of human security concerns already covered in extant literature, such as civil wars, small arms and light weapons, child soldiering, rape and human trafficking.

Rather, the chapter highlights the emergent transformation, mutations, manifestations, and realignment of security threats in the sub-region. It pinpoints the reality of massive human security challenges in the absence of, and/or reduction in, civil wars. The first is the Youth Challenge.

Youth Challenge: According to recent study on youth vulnerability and exclusion (YOVEX) in West Africa, by the Conflict, Security and Development Group (CSDG) at King's College, London, over 60 per cent of the sub-region's 250 million are under 35 years. This underlines the claim that countries in sub-Saharan Africa are experiencing a youth bulge – a situation where youth, defined as people between the ages of 15 and 24, constitute at least 40 per cent of adult under 49 years. To be sure, the youth bulge in Africa is actually predicted to be just beginning and the youth's proportion of total population on the continent is already more than four times its 1950 level and is projected to continue growing rapidly over the next two decades at least. Currently, 31 of the 36 countries where youth constitute over 50 per cent of total population are in SSA.²⁰⁴ The projected youth demography for SSA is coming at a time when the youth

proportion of total population in other parts of the world is slowing down and declining. This burgeoning youth bulge in SSA is relatively new, although the region appears historically and culturally skewed towards a youthful population – considering subsistence agriculture and the need for family labour.

For example, in 1946, H.M. Grace (the correspondent for the Council of British Missionary Societies in East Africa) foresaw this demographic pattern, when, in reference to the situation of youth in the region and across Africa, he warned that youth ‘is an explosive force, and though the number may be small, it will have growing power, and it all depends how it is treated now [then] whether it becomes a curse or a blessing’.²⁰⁵ Over the years, advances in primary health care, sustained level and growth in fertility rates, and lower infant mortality have translated into greater survival rates for children. The newness of the current trend is rooted in its extensive scale and the associated socio-economic, political and security challenges it brings. The exposure of more young people to primary and sometimes basic (secondary) education, and trappings of modernity – globalisation and Western consumerism – have created unbridled expectations and a crisis of rising expectation.

Worse still, it is the exclusion of many young people from formal institutions of politics, education, and employment (economic), and their social stigmatisation and criminalisation that constitute the most pressing challenge.²⁰⁶ The coincidence between the onset of the youth bulge and eroding state capacities (under structural adjustment policies of the 1980s and 1990s) in a majority of African countries created a combustible mixture that has manifested in serious socio-economic, political and security upheavals. The multiple cases of state failure and the rupturing of societal fabric by internecine civil conflicts (Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, etc) in which young people played crucial roles (child soldiers for instance) have, since the 1990s, brought the youth issue in Africa unto global policy agenda. Of course, the increases in youth proportion of total population hardly explains the outbreak of civil conflicts in Africa, but the commonality of youth bulges in many theatres of conflicts and violence does draw attention to it. In spite of attempts by demographic transition theorists to explain multiple cases of insecurity in SSA since the 1990s by references to progress on the demographic transition continuum, it is crucial to restate that structural conditions associated with dysfunctional state, neo-patrimonial politics, economic disempowerment and politicisation of extant fault lines (ethnic, religious, regional, and social class) explain civil conflicts in SSA.

Overall, the socio-economic and political disempowerment of youths and their search for coping mechanisms and alternatives (including through urban violence, crime and rebellion) in the sub-region has given rise to negative and criminalised epithets such as area boys, militants and yandaba (in Nigeria), gronah boys (in Liberia) and rare boys (in Sierra Leone). The YOVEX study highlights

that a majority of youth in the sub-region, with minimal engagement with formal state institutions, resort to informal and often illegal resources as coping strategies. In countries recovering from decade-long civil wars (such as Liberia and Sierra Leone) and those experiencing huge levels of internal political volatility and internecine inter-group clashes (such as Nigeria and Ghana), a major coping strategy is the formation of vigilante and militia groups that seek to capture socio-economic and political spaces, and market their capacity to unleash terror and violence on fellow citizens and across national boundaries.

The activities of these youth militias, while not yet openly threatening or challenging for political power (similar to classical rebel and insurgency movements, thereby unlikely to lead to civil wars experienced in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s), pose, nonetheless, considerable threats to human security. The vigilantes and militias in West Africa are rooted in the 'distrust and disillusionment with the security and criminal justice system in the face of widening insecurity...in many instances, all these have degenerated into criminal gangs, thus escalating criminal violence and exacerbating public insecurity'.²⁰⁷ The emergence of youth militias and vigilantes captures an important transition and connection with the phenomenon of child soldiers, especially in post-conflict settings where governments struggle with the overwhelming tasks of economic recovery. Several media and advocacy groups have documented the cross-border recruitment of youth mercenaries in the Mano River basin to the extent that these militias appear to be replacing the foreign (non-West-African) Private Military Companies (PMC)²⁰⁸ that operated in the area in the 1990s. Similarly, youth militias and vigilantes, formed along the lines of ethnic and political identities have emerged and involved in several violent clashes with other groups and in direct confrontation with state security forces.

The activities of such groups are signposted by recurring clashes in Northern Ghana, Northern Mali, and Chad border region (Tuareg crises). This has also been the situation in Nigeria since 1999 with groups such as the Oodua People's Congress (OPC); Egbesu Boys of Africa (EBA); Tiv, Jukun and Tarok militias; and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), among others. The *Human Rights Watch* also documents the huge humanitarian crises in eastern Chad as a result of armed attacks by youth militias (allied to Chadian rebels) especially from November 2006. It is noted that 'some towns in eastern Chad have increased ten-fold in size due to the influx of displaced rural villagers due to massive internal displacement', thereby exacerbating the existing humanitarian challenges occasioned by refugees from Sudan.²⁰⁹ Apart from inflicting considerable human and material damage on civilians, the groups have destroyed socio-economic infrastructures, endangered the physical security of citizens, and made overt threats to regime stability.

Inter-group Clashes: The emergence and activities of youth militias foreground the second human security challenge in the region – inter-group clashes. This form of insecurity, rooted in internal political tensions and struggle for power, dots a majority of countries in the sub-region. Clashes of this nature are often constructed along ethnic, religious and regional identities. In Nigeria, the post-1999 period has witnessed over 60 clashes involving Yoruba (OPC) and non-Yoruba groups (Ijaw, Hausa, Igbo), Ijaw and Itshekiri, Ogoni and Andoni, Tiv and Jukun, and Hausa Muslims versus Christians, etc. The different clashes are reported to have generated over 500,000 internally displaced persons, several thousand deaths and heightened state of fear and insecurity. In some cases, the clashes have resulted in heavy-handed punitive action by the country's security forces. Similarly, inter-group clashes in Northern Ghana between the Nanumbas and the Konkombas has been a recurring phenomenon since the 1990s. This reached its peak in February 1994, up to 2000 people were believed to have been killed and about 100,000 displaced.²¹⁰ Another major conflict in Ghana, also in the northern part of the country, has been in Dagbon, where ethnic groups have engaged in historical conflicts over land and chieftaincy supremacy. Overall, the spate of inter-group clashes have produced levels of civilian casualties, destruction of infrastructures, displacement and atmosphere of insecurity and impunity similar to the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Disasters: The third emergent human security challenge that threatens to, and is already claiming human lives and causing physical dislocations is the increase in the scale of natural and man-made disasters in the sub-region. Using the benchmarks and data by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disaster (CRED), a disaster is 'a situation or event which overwhelms local capacity, necessitating a request to national or international level for external assistance; an unforeseen and often sudden event that causes great damage, destruction and human suffering'.²¹¹ There are two broad types of disasters (based on causes or trigger factors) – natural and technological (industrial accidents, including chemical spills, collapse of industrial infrastructures, explosions, fires, radiation, gas leaks, etc); transport accidents (by rail, air, road and maritime).

Across the ECOWAS sub-region, the record of disasters reveals it is fast emerging as the greatest cause and source of human insecurity. According to reports, over 7m people were affected by disasters in Niger between 1996 and 2005, while in 2005 alone, over 3.6m people were affected. In Senegal, over 1.2m people were affected by disasters between 1996 and 2005. Between 1996 and 2005, over 670,000 people were affected by disasters in Benin; over 471,000 in Ghana; over 220,000 in Guinea; 102,000 in Guinea-Bissau; 215,000 in Sierra Leone, and 602,000 in Nigeria. All this is subsumed under over \$2.2b estimated damages from disasters between 1996 and 2005.²¹² In Nigeria, air-travel disasters

since 2001 and 2006 claimed the lives of key state actors, including heads of armed forces, traditional rulers, lawmakers, chief executives in the public and private sectors, and ordinary citizens. A January 2001 Lagos bomb blast destroyed strategic military installations (barrack, armouries and equipment), local infrastructures (roads, houses, bridges, schools, hospitals, etc), claimed several hundreds of civilian lives, and displaced several thousands of people. Similarly, the September 2002 'Le Joola' ferry tragedy in Senegal claimed almost 2,000 lives.²¹³

West Africa's appalling record foregrounds a broader trend sweeping across Sub-Saharan Africa. This is indexed by data showing that, between 1996 and 2005, 2.2 million people were affected by disasters across Africa, with estimated damages amounting to over \$10 billion. In 2005 alone, about 3m and 19m people were reportedly killed and affected by disasters across Africa respectively.

Transnational Crime: The fourth challenge to human security across ECOWAS states is increased transnational crime (in armed robbery and narcotics) and the spread of international terrorism (especially those associated with militant Islam). The sub-region appears to be experiencing profound increases in cross-border car snatching, smuggling of narcotics and trade in other illegal substances that directly or indirectly endanger the physical security of the wider population. More importantly, there appears to be an upsurge in international terrorism connected with radical Islam, linked to global currents and events in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Middle East. For instance, in January 2004, a local self-styled Taleban group in the city of Yobe in Northern Nigeria, the group stormed police stations, saying they wanted to set up an Islamic state in Nigeria.

Attackers overran police stations and stole large quantities of weapons, destroyed public and private properties, killed several citizens, and hoisted the flag of the Taleban movement in Afghanistan. The group demanded the proclamation of an Islamic republic, similar to the Taleban rule, in Northern Nigeria.²¹⁴ The group subsequently known as Boko Haram (meaning 'western civilisation is bad and rejected') and escalated its armed confrontation with the Nigerian state in July 2009, and has continued to carryout targeted killings and bombings till date. Post-Cold War clashes in Northern Ghana, although largely described in ethnic terms, have considerable religious undertones. For example, the December 2001 clashes recorded over 150 injured and 50 civilian deaths.²¹⁵ These examples reflect a subtle, yet strong rise in religious fundamentalism and resort to terror tactics of kidnapping, abductions, and wanton violence in the sub-region.

Refugees: The fifth challenge relates to the protection of refugees from non-ECOWAS member-states. This is the situation in Chad's eastern regions of Ouaddai and Wadi Fira and the northern region of Borkou, Ennedi and Tibesti. The region is host to over 250,000 refugees from neighbouring Darfur region (Sudan). The massive influx of refugees has exacerbated the already poor security situation

in the country (linked to over four years of tension and armed clashes between the Zaghawa and the Tama ethnic groups). The increases in population and continued inter-group clashes have endangered civilians in these areas to the extent that the European Union, in an extra-ordinary move, authorised the deployment of a 3,000 strong protection force in November 2007.²¹⁶ The Chadian refugee crises also connect to the Tuareg rebellion, which, although more pronounced in Niger, is spread across the Sahelian region, including Northern Mali. The refugee crises in Chad exposes a complex and complicated human security challenge that transcends national and sub-regional boundaries, intertwined with local (national) power struggles between constituent groups, and interlocks with a wider and internationalised conflict in Sudan's Darfur region.

Regime Brutality: The final human security challenge is the age-old phenomenon of regime brutality or insecurity induced by the activities of national security forces. This exposes the practical tensions and contradictions, often downplayed though, between human and regime security (traditional and human perspectives of security) in Africa. It underlines the blurred lines between legitimate state-led attempts at imposing and protecting security, and threatening human security.

In post-1999 Nigeria, the country's security forces have sacked entire communities, killed several innocent civilians, destroyed socio-economic infrastructures, and violated the human rights of citizens in the context of dislodging militias and exacting 'revenge' for killed soldiers. The invasion of Odi town (February 2000) by the national army is a typical example. Also, in Guinea, the Human Rights Watch notes that over 1700 injured and over 129 deaths were recorded during the brutal repression of a nationwide strike by the country's security forces. It is reported that 'security forces fired directly into crowds of unarmed demonstrators...gunned down demonstrators trying to flee to safety. Scores of Guineans, many of them mere bystanders to the demonstrations, were severely beaten and robbed at gunpoint by security forces, often in their own homes'.²¹⁷

ECOWAS and Human Security: In Search of a West African Perspective

Cilliers (2004) in his discourse of human security in Africa concluded that 'Africa has traditionally followed an expansive approach to the concept of human security'.²¹⁸ Embedded in this claim is the view that African countries define human security in terms of freedom from fear and freedom from want. This underlines the multiple challenges of state making, state building and socio-economic development prevalent across Africa. Article 4 of the Constitutive Act of the African Union reflects this expansive definition of human security given enabling principles such as the respect for democratic principles, human rights, the rule of law and good governance; promotion of social justice to ensure balanced

economic development; respect for the sanctity of human life, condemnation and rejection of impunity and political assassination, acts of terrorism and subversive activities; and the promotion of gender equality. In relation to physical security, the article provides for the right of the Union to intervene in a Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely: war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity; the right of Member States to request intervention from the Union in order to restore peace and security; the establishment of a common defence policy for the African Continent; peaceful resolution of conflicts among Member States of the Union through such appropriate means as may be decided upon by the Assembly; prohibition of the use of force or threat to use force among Member States of the Union; and non-interference by any Member State in the internal affairs of another.

ECOWAS appears to follow a similar trend under its 1993 Revised Treaty, 1999 Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security; the 2001 Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance; and its 2008 Conflict Prevention Framework. All these policy instruments underline the post-Cold War interconnectedness and convergence between traditional development and security (military) issues. The revised treaty, for instance, under Article 3, reaffirms the economic integration foundation of ECOWAS – the promotion of cooperation and integration, leading to the establishment of an economic union in West Africa in order to raise the living standards of its peoples, and to maintain and enhance economic stability, foster relations among member states and contribute to development in Africa.

The ECOWAS revised treaty, under Article 58, provides for cooperation amongst member-states in ‘establishing and strengthening appropriate mechanisms for the timely prevention and resolution of intra-State and inter-State conflicts’. The 2001 protocol on good governance, supplementary to the 1999 conflict prevention protocol, attempts to address the deep-seated political causes of insecurity.

The protection from violence component of ECOWAS human security architecture is expressed clearly by its 1999 protocol on conflict management. The protocol, coming against the backdrop of the organisation’s unplanned adventure in peacekeeping duties in Liberia and Sierra Leone, contains elaborate institutional mechanisms for preventing and dealing with outbreaks of conflict and violence that threaten citizens of the sub-region. Article 4 of the protocol identifies the Authority of Heads of State and Government (HSG), the Mediation and Security Council, the Executive Secretariat (commission), and specialised institutions set up by the body as key actors in the promotion of human security in the region. Article 17 lists the Defence and Security Commission (DSC), the Council of Elders and the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) as specialised institutions involved in the practical promotion of human security. The DSC, under Articles 18 and 19, is composed of security chiefs and actors

from member-state saddled with formulating functional mandates for the sub-regional peace-keeping force (ECOMOG), force composition and its rules of engagement. The Council of Elders is composed of eminent personalities in the sub-region who could be deployed as mediators in crisis situations.

The ECOMOG, formed following the May 1990 13th Summit of the Authority of HSG in Banjul by the Standing Mediation Committee (SMC) to intervene in Liberia ostensibly on account of humanitarian objectives of protecting civilians and stemming the tide of insecurity. The Protocol, under Article 22, makes ECOMOG the military arm of ECOWAS human security architecture – a standby peacekeeping force made up of civilian and military elements, with one battalion drawn from each member state to make up a total of 15 battalions. It is entrusted with observation and monitoring, peacekeeping and restoration of peace; humanitarian intervention in support of humanitarian disaster; enforcement of sanctions; and preventive deployment. Other functions include peace building, disarmament and demobilisation; policing activities, including the control of fraud and organised crime; and other operations mandated by the Mediation and Security Council.

The Protocol, under Chapter IV, also establishes an Early Warning System (made up of four zonal bureau) to monitor, process and report data relating to conflict and insecurity in fulfilment of Article 58 of the revised treaty. Other key human security elements of the protocol include the organisation's declared role in combating humanitarian emergencies (disasters) under Article 40; peace-building obligations in societies torn by war and those recovering from upheavals under Articles 42 to 45; control of trans-border crime under Article 46; and its readiness to combat the illegal flow of small arms and light weapons under Articles 50 and 51. The ECOWAS human security architecture is reinforced by its 2006 Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, and its draft 2007 Conflict Prevention Framework that seeks to create a composite groups of actors in the promotion of human security, including civil society groups, the private sector, media, and community groups.

The 2008 ECPF builds on previous protocols with a clearer and more expansive focus on human security. Under the 2008 Conflict Prevention Framework, ECOWAS affirms human (as opposed to regime) security to be the underlining principle. Under Section II(6), the ECPF expressly defines human security as '...the creation of conditions to eliminate pervasive threats to people's and individual rights, livelihoods, safety and life; the protection of human and democratic rights and the promotion of human development to ensure freedom from fear and freedom from want'. This is reinforced in Section V(26) where emphasis is placed on promoting democracy and sustainable development as part of conflict prevention and peace building, and promoting region-wide humanitarian crisis prevention and preparedness.

Overall, the ECPF has 14 focus areas that reflect its broad human security definition – early warning, preventive diplomacy, democracy and political governance, human rights and the rule of law, and media. Others are natural resource governance, cross-border initiatives, security governance, practical disarmament, women, peace and security, youth empowerment, ECOWAS Standby force, humanitarian assistance, and peace education. Impressively, these focus areas reflect the interconnectedness of social, economic, political and security (conflict), as well as key issues that have ignited armed conflicts and political instability in the sub-region since the end of the Cold War. Also novel is the ECPF's clear identification of objectives, benchmarks and requisites for each of the 14 focus areas, thereby improving the basis for implementation, monitoring, assessment, and evaluation.

Despite the elaborate plans and impressive human security architecture, I make four important observations and perhaps limitations. The first relates to questions on the extent to which the normative aspect of human security (the will and readiness to actively intervene and protect people in theatres of physical danger) is embedded in the actual practice of security by the organisation. The current architecture, as stated under Articles 25 and 26 of the 1999 Mechanism, can only be triggered by cases of aggression or conflict in any member state; inter-state conflict within the community; internal conflicts that threaten a humanitarian disaster or poses a serious threat to peace and security in the sub-region; in the event of massive violation of human rights; illegal overthrow of constitutional regimes; or by the order of the Mediation and Security Council. While this covers the broad spectrum of physical threats to people in the sub-region, the record of application belies its practical manifestation. It appears that it is only in Liberia that the ECOMOG has intervened following the 1999 protocol. Extra-regional institutions and actors appear to have taken the lead in promoting human security in Cote d'Ivoire (France), Niger and Chad²¹⁹ (European Union). Similarly, the organisation has been quiet and inactive in a majority of the afore-listed emerging threats to human security in the sub-region.

There has been no record or very minute involvement of ECOWAS at the level of mediation or active negotiation or physical deployment, for instance, in the crises in Nigeria's Niger Delta region, Northern Ghana, Tuareg crises in Niger, and Casamance region of Senegal. A majority of the crises continued to be rationalised as internal security matters of member-states, thereby exposing the poor internalisation and commitment to the normative elements of human security.

Second, the majority of emerging threats to human security in the sub-region and the organisation's inertia in responding to them suggest that the actual understanding and practice of security is still rooted in traditional notions of security. It appears that the security architecture is still structured to reflect intentions and readiness to intervene in 'classical' civil war situations, similar to Liberia

and Sierra Leone in the 1990s. Notwithstanding the mention of humanitarian intervention, violation of human rights and internal conflicts as triggers of the 1999 protocol, the reality suggests the overtly political and politicisation of human security concerns. Although the draft Conflict Prevention Framework is expected to provide alternative platforms for non-military intervention in internal crises through coalitions of civil society groups, it is still early days and it is doubtful if this will overcome the age-old traditionalisation of security and systemic obsessions with sovereignty and territorial inviolability.

Third is the perennial role of national security forces in causing, threatening and exacerbating human security concerns. This, again, is rooted in the delicate imbalance between regime and human security, avowedly skewed in favour of the former. More importantly, it points to a lack of common, coordinated and standardised defence (human security) doctrine among the member-states' armed forces. The DSC is ostensibly to plan joint missions, as opposed to coordinate common defence doctrines, military ethos, and rules of engagement in internal security operations. Regime brutality that threatens human security appears to be tolerated within the context of sovereignty as authority, and it saves the organisation the burden of peacekeeping intervention (through punitive quelling of internal security).

Finally, in spite of the broad definition and the expansive 14 focus areas of the ECPF, there is an embedded recognition and over-prioritisation of violent conflicts as the key element in ECOWAS human security agenda. Clearly, the framing and embedding of human security in a conflict prevention framework decidedly equates preventing armed conflict to human security. For instance, the ECPF is intended 'to serve as a reference for the ECOWAS system and Member States in their efforts to strengthen human security in the region ... [through] durable cooperative interventions to prevent violent conflicts within and between States, and to support peace-building in post-conflict environments'.²²⁰ Section II (7) reaffirms conflict prevention as the key human security driver in West Africa through emphasis on transforming conflicts, achieving organisational synergy in conflict prevention, and enlarging the scope of actors and participants in conflict prevention.

Furthermore, Section IV highlights the ECPF focus to be on operational (early warning, mediation and reconciliation, preventive deployment, etc) and structural (peace-building, governance, culture of peace and developmental reforms) issues in conflict prevention. While the havoc occasioned by violent conflicts in the sub-region cannot be denied, emerging threats to human security appear to transcend civil wars (as indicated in aspects of the ECPF).

ECOWAS and Human Security Challenges: Opportunities and Limitations

It is important to restate that ECOWAS at the level of policy articulation has made substantial progress in addressing specific human security issues as reflected in its 1999 Protocol and 2008 ECPF. For instance, it launched initiatives covering cross-border crime, small arms, security governance and interventions in civil war situations as witnessed in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The organisation's elaborate and still evolving peace and security architecture thus provides an invaluable take-off point for formulating a coherent human security policy. This will involve incorporating human security specifically as a supplementary but a key cosmopolitan principle into existing protocols and active engagement in emerging human security challenges, especially disaster prevention, monitoring and management, cross-border militia activities, and coordinated military and defence doctrines founded on common security sector reform programmes.²²¹ The second opportunity for enhanced human security promotion in the sub-region lies in ECOWAS emerging supranationality, a development that can provide for systematic embedding of human security normative values in the textual and practical promotion of human security.

The transformation of the organisation's secretariat into a commission in 2006, the inauguration of a sub-regional parliamentary and court system, the assumption of supranational powers in line with the 1993 revised treaty, and the acknowledged linkages between security and development issues harbours considerable potentials for enhancing human security in the sub-region. To this extent, ECOWAS supranationality offers an alternative voice and legitimising device for human security actions (sanctions). The third opportunity for promoting human security lies in the organisation's increasing recognition of non-state actors as important stakeholders and providers of human security.

The formation of civil society groups and their representation (participation) together with the private sector in ECOWAS summits and their envisaged active and collective role under the draft conflict prevention framework is another resource for promoting human security in the sub-region. The role of civil society groups, especially non-governmental organisations and the media can serve to expose and check the excesses of national regimes (through active reporting) in undermining human security. Perhaps, building on the existing West African Civil Society Forum (WACSOF) framework, and with improved institutionalisation and coordination with ECOWAS Commission, this can be transformed into a sub-regional human security partnership or network on human security.

The constraints and limitations to human security in the sub-region include changing the perception and understanding of member-states as the principal providers of human security in the sub-region. This relates to the loose

institutionalisation of the normative component of human security. The extent to which the role of member states could be changed from providers to facilitators of human security (through the creation of enabling socio-economic, political and safe environment), and from a traditional understanding and practice of security remains an overwhelming challenge.²²² The second limitation lies in coordinating the internal conduct, ethos and rules of engagement for national armies involved in internal security operations. The prospect of a standard common defence doctrine through coordinated security sector reform programmes appear weak considering the strong influence of former colonial powers and legacies across the sub-region.

Another limitation to human security promotion in the sub-region is the often-slow responses to, or indecision over or continued politicisation, of clear human security issues. This underlines the continued failure of ECOWAS to adequately respond to human security needs in Chad and Niger on account of ostensible connections to regional and extra-regional territories and actors. Moreover, the failure to constructively engage in cases of internal clashes between groups and those involving the state underscores the continued toleration and, perhaps, the rationalisation of human insecurity within the context of sovereignty and non-interference. The reality suggests that, in a majority of cases, the state, itself, is either the object of claim or a party to the clashes, thus requiring the intervention of an alternative authority to mediate and guarantee the fears and safety of populations.

In fact, Hussein, Gnisci and Wanjiru (2004) list the challenges to human security in West Africa to include translating the concept into practice; enhancing security system reform; laying the foundation for a coherent security regime in Africa; operationalising the role of ECOWAS in stabilisation and peacekeeping efforts; and achieving greater self-sufficiency in peace-keeping operations. Other are coordinating military assistance on a regional level and enhanced effort to halt the proliferation of small arms, light weapons and anti-personnel mines.²²³

Admittedly, it could be argued that the 2003 creation of WACSOF (involving organisations like the West African Network for Peace – WANEP) could potentially offset some of ECOWAS limitations in relation to human security. This appears latent in WACSOF's goal of galvanising the initiatives of civil society organisations (CSOs) and partner with ECOWAS for the improvement of human security, regional integration, as well as economic and social development in West Africa. The organisation also aims to strengthen and institutionalise a relationship between West African civil society and ECOWAS; hold a biennial People's Forum for members of WACSOF with the purpose of submitting recommendations to West African ministers and heads of state on human security issues; audit the implementation and legislative domestication of ECOWAS treaties, protocols

and decisions relating to human security and peace in the region; establish national and sub-regional monitoring mechanisms on the status of human security in West Africa; popularise ECOWAS in the consciousness of West Africans – particularly youth – through appropriate programmes such as popular media; and to actively promote a sense of community citizenship between ECOWAS member states and CSOs.²²⁴ While the potential role of civil society groups like WACSOF in advancing human security cannot be underestimated, the challenge requires strong organisation, strategic direction and leadership inherently lacking in ECOWAS. Moreover, WACSOF appears to suffer from acute lack of capacity, marked by its poor institutionalisation, monitoring and reporting incapacity, and poor coordination between different national chapters. Also, there is a seeming tension and unease by national governments in relation to WACSOF at national and sub-regional levels. Also, the institutionalisation of the normative elements of human security in the sub-region transcends a single organisation. This process calls for – and merits – partnerships.

Finally, there are acute organisational capacity needs, such as financial resources, and lack of capacity for effective advocacy and communication strategies, monitoring and evaluation required for enhanced human security promotion by ECOWAS.²²⁵ This has been a perennial problem across the broad spectrum of ECOWAS activities, including its military and peacekeeping missions. Although a Peace Fund was created under the 1999 Protocol, and donor countries and agencies have intervened in specific areas of capacity building in recent years, however, the enormity of institutional capacity needs to undertake an effective human security strategy remains massive.

Conclusion

This chapter has raised the scale of human security challenges in the ECOWAS sub-region. It argues that while ECOWAS' current security architecture provides an invaluable asset to promoting human security, this is only in potential and less in reality. Critically, the 2008 ECPF represents an innovative milestone in addressing insecurities connected to violent conflicts. However, the sub-region's overall security architecture cannot be said to conclusively insulate or protect its populations from emerging, let alone old, threats to human physical security. In spite of the possible adaptability of the ECPF and other protocols to emergent human security threats, it is least contestable to say the people of West Africa are hardly safer from physical insecurity compared to the 1990s. The level of civilian casualties (deaths, injuries, dislocations and deprivations) parallels those of the 1990s, although the sources and types of threats have either changed or mutated into new forms. Perhaps, the sovereignty of member states and ruling regimes remain more protected (and has been strengthened) than, and at the expense of the, security of

the population. It can be argued that the sub-region's security architecture falls short on account of lack of a clearly defined human security agenda and strategy, and poor embedding of the normative elements of human security.

This chapter has highlighted the need to transform the state from current roles as the sole providers to facilitators of human security, and the need for existing security plans to transcend regular peacekeeping roles. Finally, it is suggested that a clearly defined human security charter with specific priorities be formulated for the sub-region. Such a West African perspective will build on existing structures and protocols to highlight and prioritise extant and emerging threats to human security (beyond armed conflicts), enhance the institutionalisation of human security norms and create a periodic (annual) monitoring and reporting mechanisms (beyond the current early warning system is appears to be dedicated to regular civil war scenarios). This does not suggest the absence of old and new human security challenges on ECOWAS's policy agenda, however, they appear to still be poorly coordinated and there is a lack a coherent strategy for dealing with them in a crosscutting manner.