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# Why the United States Should Robustly Support Pan-African Organizations

FRANCIS V. CRUPI

“Ultimately, the path of political and economic freedom presents the surest route to progress in sub-Saharan Africa, where most wars are conflicts over material resources and political access often tragically waged on the basis of ethnic and religious difference. The transition to the African Union with its stated commitment to good governance and a common responsibility for democratic political systems offers opportunities to strengthen democracy on the continent.”<sup>1</sup>

— President George W. Bush

This article presents a rationale for why it should be the policy of the United States to robustly support pan-African sub-regional organizations that seek to have Africans help themselves. To do so, it analyzes one sub-regional organization, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), using the furtherance of stated American policy for peace in the region as a litmus test. The guiding principles of ECOWAS and its record of accomplishment are highlighted relative to the US goals for Africa as promulgated in the National Security Strategy. The article argues that it is in the United States’ interest to support sub-regional organizations such as ECOWAS as a viable way to promote a self-sufficient Africa. A stable and prosperous Africa provides the conditions for political and economic growth and counters the incidence of “failed states” which can serve as terrorist breeding grounds such as in the Sudan.

The article contrasts the sub-regional organization ECOWAS with a regional organization, the African Union, in terms of policies and performance and draws the conclusion that supporting sub-regional organizations offers a greater return on our investment. Supporting a focused transnational organiza-

tion such as ECOWAS is a rational strategy to symmetrically defeat a stateless foe such as al Qaeda. Finally, the article recommends that the United States provide financial and logistical support through third-party organizations and nations that have existing working relationships with ECOWAS. It is in the national self-interest of the United States to promote democracy, safeguard human rights, and foster development in sub-Saharan Africa in order to promote a peaceful and pro-America region. Collaterally, there are compelling economic and humanitarian incentives to actively engaging African sub-regional organizations. In its assessment, the article not only considers the policy and performance of ECOWAS, but its stability and the extent to which it is networked with other international organizations and sovereign states.

The National Security Strategy includes three interlocking strategies for Africa:

- Countries with a major influence on their neighborhood, such as South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, and Ethiopia, are anchors for regional engagement and require focused attention.
- Coordination with allies, friends, and international institutions is essential for constructive conflict mediation and successful peace operations.
- Africa's capable reforming states and sub-regional organizations must be strengthened as the primary means to address transnational threats on a sustained basis.<sup>2</sup>

All of these strategies imply forming "coalitions of the willing" with pan-African organizations. However, the roles of conflict mediation and peace operations are relatively new ones for these agencies. Historically, these organizations have addressed chronic issues on the continent such as promoting democracy, improving access to quality education, confronting the effects of underdevelopment, empowering disadvantaged sub-groups, and documenting human rights abuses. However, both "regional and sub-regional organizations are retooling themselves in two ways: revising their mandates from being purely 'developmentalist' to encompass conflict management and, where applicable, revamping their fledgling regional security mechanisms. Evolving under circumstances of insecurity, the response of these organizations to crises and conflicts is developing in an ad hoc manner."<sup>3</sup> This contrasts sharply with dealing with acute problems such as the apparent genocide in Darfur and the civil war in Cote d'Ivoire. US Joint Publication 1-02 defines peace operations

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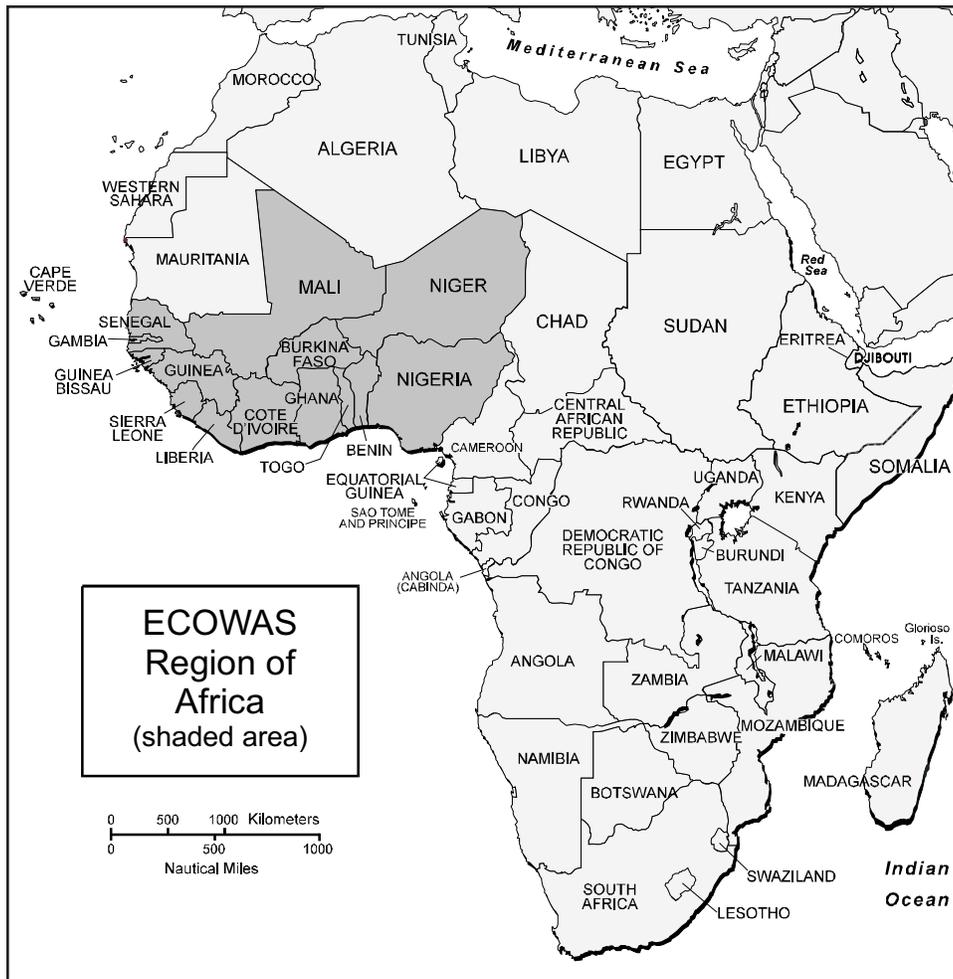


Figure 1. The ECOWAS Region of Africa.

as “a broad term that encompasses peacekeeping operations and peace enforcement operations conducted in support of diplomatic efforts to establish and maintain peace.”<sup>4</sup> Notably, pan-African organizations “are driven, in their interventions, by an internal logic of common interest in economic development, and peace and security. They tend to have more at stake in conflicts within their regions than do external actors.”<sup>5</sup>

There are many reasons why it is in the interests of the United States to support such organizations. Among them are these:

- Through active and resolute support of African sub-regional organizations, the United States can discourage the rise of failed states that can become fertile breeding grounds for terrorism, criminal activity, and pandemic diseases.

- Supporting such organizations logistically and financially reduces the United States' "boots on the ground" footprint and the expenditure of scarce American military forces. Equally, it preserves the support of American public opinion that is loath to jeopardize the lives of its sons and daughters in a continent where many perceive we have no vital interests.

- By supporting ECOWAS and its sister pan-African organizations, the United States symmetrically opposes an asymmetric foe—transnational terrorism. Such organizations possess the agility and statelessness necessary to counterbalance the emergence of non-state actors such as al Qaeda.

- By providing monetary support to African sub-regional organizations, the United States can foster development and elevate the international image of America while nurturing potential trading partners. This judicious investment could pay dividends in both political and economic capital. On the humanitarian front alone, America stands to gain the respect of the global community as well as the satisfaction of having taken the moral high ground.

### ***History of ECOWAS as a Sub-Regional Organization***

In May 1975, ECOWAS was founded in Lagos, Nigeria, as a sub-regional group of 15 of the world's poorest countries to jointly work toward economic integration and development.<sup>6</sup> The goal of ECOWAS is to enhance economic stability and relations between member states with the eventual aim of economic union.<sup>7</sup> S. E. Kufuor, President of Ghana, is the current leader of ECOWAS. The organization's guiding principles encompass equality, interdependence, good neighborliness, human rights, social justice, democratic governance, and a just distribution of economic costs and benefits.<sup>8</sup> Its member states include Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. In 2001, ECOWAS represented roughly 247 million individuals and a combined Gross Domestic Product of \$75 billion (of which Nigeria accounted for \$40 billion).<sup>9</sup> In that year, regional exports were \$26.1 billion, yielding a trade surplus of \$2.5 billion.<sup>10</sup> In terms of economic progress there have been some notable achievements: free movement of persons, construction of regional roads, development of telecommunications links between the states, and maintenance of peace and security.<sup>11</sup> However, there is still a low level of intra-regional trade (11 percent) as compared with third countries, and the region is challenged by heavy external debt.<sup>12</sup> There also are impediments to the ECOWAS goals of integration of member states in the form of bad governance, political instability, and weak economies.<sup>13</sup> Some hopeful signs include the prevalence of democracy among most of the member states, the reduction of state-controlled economies, and a liberalization of trading policies.<sup>14</sup>

The organization also has a peacekeeping and peace enforcement arm known as the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), which was primarily responsible for the restoration of order in Liberia as well as addressing conflicts in Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau in the 1990s.<sup>15</sup> It has been noted that “this regional initiative has improved the conditions of the affected civilian population, at least in the short term.”<sup>16</sup> While the political aims of ECOWAS are in consonance with US policy, economic integration has been hindered by widespread civil unrest in West Africa.<sup>17</sup> Similar to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), pan-African agencies are also “fundamentally constrained by the political environment in which they operate.”<sup>18</sup> In the political upheavals in Liberia and Sierra Leone between 1997 and 1999, for example, ill-equipped and poorly funded ECOMOG forces were unable to defeat the rebels and prevent rapes, pillaging, and killings.<sup>19</sup>

Previously ECOWAS received most of its funding from Nigeria, raising fears of its being an instrument of Nigerian designs.<sup>20</sup> More recently, however, ECOWAS has received funding from the African Union (AU), the European Union (EU), Japan, and Canada. ECOWAS also is networked with the AU under the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) and joined with them in putting troops on the ground in Liberia.<sup>21</sup> NEPAD’s goals are to foster peace and stability by emphasizing pre-conflict early warning, preventive action, and post-conflict reconstruction.<sup>22</sup> The United States has endorsed NEPAD as laying the foundation for increased economic growth for Africa.<sup>23</sup>

Historically speaking, ECOMOG’s intervention into Liberia was a qualified success, as chronicled by Colin Scott of Brown University’s Institute of International Studies.<sup>24</sup> In 1989, Charles Taylor’s National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) ignited a rebellion in Liberia. After Taylor rejected an ECOWAS diplomatic overture in August 1990, an ECOMOG contingent of 3,500 troops entered the capital of Monrovia in an effort to quell the civil war.<sup>25</sup> These forces were successful in pushing the NPFL out of Monrovia by October of that year.<sup>26</sup> ECOMOG established a limited security zone within which the Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU) could operate.<sup>27</sup> Here, ECOMOG reduced hostilities, set up a safe haven for refugees, and prevented atrocities.<sup>28</sup> In October 1992, the NPFL launched a new attack on Monrovia that was repulsed by ECOMOG, which then migrated from a peacekeeping to a peace-enforcement role.<sup>29</sup> The United Nations began humanitarian operations under the UN Special Coordinating Office for Liberia in March 1990 and subsequently deployed an observer mission, the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia, in July 1993.<sup>30</sup>

During this period both indigenous and international NGOs also played a role in humanitarian operations. In this intervention, ECOMOG’s

neutrality was placed in question due to its perceived partiality toward the IGNU and, as mentioned above, the perception of its being an agent for Nigerian ambitions. In Scott's appraisal, he endorsed the backing from the Organization of African Unity (now the African Union) and the possible introduction of East African troops.<sup>31</sup> ECOMOG also was criticized because of a lack of clarity between its military operations and the UN's political and humanitarian initiatives.<sup>32</sup> A clearer command and management structure prior to the onset of combined operations could have been a remedy here.<sup>33</sup> Scott further opined that continued international funding for these operations should be contingent on adoption of these recommendations.<sup>34</sup>

ECOMOG is authorized to intervene in the following instances:

- A situation of internal armed conflict within a member state.
- Conflicts between two or more member states.
- Internal conflicts that threaten to trigger a humanitarian disaster or pose a serious threat to sub-regional peace and security or a situation resulting from the overthrow of a democratically elected government.
- Any other situation that council members deem appropriate.<sup>35</sup>

The interventions into Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau all fell under the third rubric of ECOMOG's charter. In Sierra Leone, ECOMOG restored a democratically elected government after a military overthrow. Unfortunately it did not achieve its peacekeeping objectives in Guinea-Bissau, where the democratically elected government was ousted.<sup>36</sup> In all three conflicts, ECOMOG was plagued by insufficient funding and logistical support (it employed 712 ECOMOG troops in Guinea-Bissau), and by political differences between its member states.<sup>37</sup> In December 1999, ECOWAS promulgated its "Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security," which "provides for collective armed intervention in the internal affairs of member states, when conditions in those states threaten sub-regional peace and security."<sup>38</sup> This was a groundbreaking departure for African states, which historically have viewed national sovereignty as sacrosanct.<sup>39</sup> This mechanism also divided the region into four zones of observation in order to provide an early warning of conflict.<sup>40</sup> In October 1998, ECOWAS also published a moratorium on the export, import, and manufacture of small arms and light weapons. This pronouncement has yet to be translated into concrete action.<sup>41</sup>

### ***ECOWAS in Contrast to the African Union***

The African Union was established in 1999 as a regrouping of the states which comprised the Organization of African Unity. The charter of the AU is to promote African solidarity, to defend state sovereignty, to protect

people's rights, to advance peace in the region, and to further good governance and democracy.<sup>42</sup> Within the AU are a Peace and Security Council (PSC); a Pan African Parliament; an Economic, Social, and Cultural Council; and a Court of Justice.<sup>43</sup> There is also an AU Commission responsible for the day-to-day management of the AU. Olusegun Obasanjo, President of Nigeria, is the current chairman of the AU. The PSC's charter is conflict prevention, management, and resolution, and combating terrorism.

The African Union has been involved in monitoring the civil war and attendant atrocities currently being committed in Darfur in Western Sudan. Internally, the PSC has requested that the AU Commission Chairman submit a plan to enhance the cease-fire monitoring mission with a possibility of transforming it into a peacekeeping mission to protect civilians.<sup>44</sup> The United States has contributed \$144.2 million (another \$600 million is expected) for relief, and the UN is in the process of officially determining whether genocide is occurring. The AU has pledged to Darfur a peacekeeping force of 3,320 personnel, including 2,341 military, 450 observers, and 815 civilian police to provide humanitarian relief and oversee the return of refugees.<sup>45</sup> In October 2004, then-US Secretary of State Colin Powell characterized the extent of AU's role to date as a "presence" only, insufficient to monitor an area roughly the size of France.<sup>46</sup> The AU has played an observer role in the cease-fire talks in Chad and was delegated the task to set up a Cease-fire Commission in Darfur pursuant to an 8 April 2004 cease fire agreement.<sup>47</sup> Collaterally, the AU has been involved in nation-building in Somalia and in conflict resolution in Cote d'Ivoire, two countries in various stages of civil war.

Like ECOWAS, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) established a "Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution" (MCPMR) in 1993.<sup>48</sup> In doing so, the organization recognized that peace and security is a necessary precondition for economic and social development.<sup>49</sup> The MCPMR thrust the OAU into the peacekeeping and conflict management arena that was formerly the exclusive preserve of the United Nations and sub-regional organizations such as ECOWAS. Previously the OAU provided an Early Warning System that was intended to identify potential conflicts by analyzing social, political, and economic indicators. However, data integrity had been a chronic problem, and OAU's system remained underdeveloped.<sup>50</sup> The OAU also had been insufficiently networked with governments, sub-regional organizations, and civil society.<sup>51</sup>

Much of this difficulty can be attributed to poor communications and publicity. Today, the African Union has a website that promotes understanding of the organization's objectives, accomplishments, and current actions it is taking in pursuit of peace on the continent. The AU also has a model of successful cooperation with the UN when the OAU jointly deployed peacekeepers to

monitor the cease-fire between Eritrea and Ethiopia. Here again, the UN deployed 4,200 soldiers while the OAU contributed only 11.<sup>52</sup> It is obvious that the OAU reconstituted itself as the African Union to more effectively pursue its peacekeeping mission (the OAU had been constrained by its charter from intervening in the internal affairs of member states). The OAU also established a panel that investigated the Rwanda atrocities and published a detailed report on lessons learned.<sup>53</sup>

Organizations such as ECOWAS and the African Union both have good governance, democracy, and development as goals for their respective regions. Both of their constitutions argue for peace and security, political and economic progress, and unity among peoples.<sup>54</sup> Therefore, the US National Security Strategy and the respective charters of these African regional and sub-regional organizations are in consonance. Both organizations have had limited successes in conflict resolution and peacekeeping, with ECOWAS also having peace enforcement in its repertoire and more extensive experience in interventions in member states. Peace enforcement is defined as the “application of military force, or the threat of its use, normally pursuant to international authorization, to compel compliance with resolutions or sanctions designed to maintain or restore peace and order.”<sup>55</sup> The African Union enjoys the higher international regard for being an autonomous organization, whereas sub-regional organizations are more subject to being co-opted by hegemonic states such as Nigeria or South Africa (in the case of the South African Development Community). The AU also has proved to be marginally more adept at effectively working with the UN, sovereign states, and NGOs by agreeing on a framework of operations and then cooperating closely after intervention to address any emergent issues. Both organizations are moderately strong, with the AU evidencing greater unity and ECOWAS having a more extensive record of achievement in conflict resolution and peacekeeping operations.

Perhaps the key difference is that ECOWAS, as a sub-regional organization, has a greater stake in the prevention and resolution of conflicts in West Africa. The African Union is fundamentally an umbrella organization that relies on capable sub-regional organizations to implement its policies. The AU can augment sub-regional forces, as is presently occurring in the mini-crisis in Cote d’Ivoire, or it can take the primary peace enforcement role where sub-regional organizations are relatively weak (the Intergovernmental Authority on Development as a sub-regional organization for Sudan). However, ECOWAS has maintained a high profile in West Africa, and President Kufour has been directly involved in discussions with the AU, UN, and country leaders in member states such as Cote d’Ivoire, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. To quote an early 2004 article in *AfricaFocus Bulletin*:

Of all the sub-regional bodies, the West African group ECOWAS continued to play the most prominent role in addressing conflicts in Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia. In May, the ECOWAS security committee resolved to create a rapid response military force to tackle sub-regional crises, and also agreed to strengthen the regional arms moratorium. ECOWAS is also in the process of establishing early warning centers in the troubled West African region.<sup>56</sup>

A contingent of 1,300 ECOWAS troops coordinated with 3,800 French forces in monitoring the fragile cease-fire that ended the civil war in Cote d'Ivoire begun in September 2002.<sup>57</sup> In addition, 3,500 ECOWAS peacekeepers were deployed to Monrovia, Liberia, after former President Charles Taylor stepped down. ECOWAS then brokered an August 2003 cease-fire and an agreement to establish an interim government in Liberia.<sup>58</sup> At the direction of the African Union, ECOWAS established a Rapid Reaction Force of "6,500 highly trained and equipped soldiers that could be deployed immediately in response to crises or threats to peace and security in the region."<sup>59</sup> Finally, ECOWAS has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the United Nations Office for West Africa. This MOU is aimed at promoting good governance, democracy, and stability in West Africa; encouraging a regional approach to crisis prevention and conflict management; and promoting civil society's participation in early warning systems for conflict prevention and recovery.<sup>60</sup> Ultimately, the African Union is not in competition with ECOWAS for maintaining regional security and fostering development in West Africa. Rather, the AU supports and underwrites ECOWAS as a capable organization to fulfill this mission, and so should the United States.

### ***US Support for ECOWAS to Combat Failed States***

A major reason for the United States to underwrite ECOWAS and other sub-regional organizations is that they act to prevent the rise of failed states, such as the Sudan and Somalia in East Africa. Cote d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, and Liberia are all borderline failed states, and the active presence of ECOWAS is a force for stabilizing them. The final report of the bipartisan Commission on Post-Conflict Reconstruction provided a number of useful observations with respect to failed states:

One of the principal lessons of the events of September 11 is that failed states matter—for national security as well as for humanitarian reasons. If left to their own devices, such states can become sanctuaries for terrorist networks, organized crime, and drug traffickers as well as posing grave humanitarian challenges and threats to regional stability.<sup>61</sup>

The commission goes on to state that the United States cannot get involved in all failed states and should use discretion based on the interests and

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values in question. The United States should craft a vision of what role it should play in the region and what roles to share with other international actors.<sup>62</sup> One possibility is the recent Trans-Sahara Counter Terrorism Initiative, whereby the United States will train troops from nine West and North African nations over the next seven years.<sup>63</sup> In West Africa, ECOWAS can assist in this effort, shoring-up American interests by working to prevent states from failing. One of the principal recommendations of the commission is the creation of a multinational Integrated Security Support Component responsible for post-conflict security. This role fits neatly with the repertoire and mission of ECOWAS. In its report, the commission made 17 specific recommendations regarding post-conflict reconstruction which are particularly applicable to the role of ECOWAS in West Africa. These recommendations include ownership of the reconstruction process by the countries in question, security as the sine qua non of post-conflict reconstruction, rapid mobilization of needed resources, and the timing of an operation being driven by circumstances on the ground rather than by bureaucratic fiat or artificial deadlines.<sup>64</sup> The thrust of the recommendations is that international partners should remain in the background lest their intervention undermine indigenous efforts to stabilize the situation. Though there are states in crisis in West Africa, it has been through the efforts of ECOWAS, with international support, that there have been no Sudans, Somalias, or Rwandas there over the past 25 years.

According to Sebastian Mallaby, Sub-Saharan Africa is demographically challenged by high birth rates and unchecked diseases, providing conditions which give rise to failed states that can then become havens for terrorist activity.<sup>65</sup> Mallaby posits that the best hope for failed states is for the rich countries belonging to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to finance reconstruction through the World Bank's lending program.<sup>66</sup> This fund would require money, troops, and the commitment of lender nations under the leadership of the United States.<sup>67</sup> The role of ECOWAS is to be an indigenous organization that can broker these resources in the sub-region and thereby reduce the international footprint in sovereign

states. By the consensus of its member states, ECOWAS is mandated to intervene in the affairs of its members when peace and security is threatened. When Western powers attempt remedial action in the form of political or military intervention in failed states, there is the risk of creating a perception of re-colonization or having other suspect motives imputed.<sup>68</sup> As an intermediary, ECOWAS can mitigate such perceptions.

In failed states, governments are no longer able to satisfy the basic needs of their people, or their people are denied or stripped of their rights as citizens.<sup>69</sup> Ultimately, a failed state is no longer able to uphold the rule of law, it is unable to fulfill its international obligations, and it is unable to prevent transnational criminal organizations from using its territory as a base of operations against other sovereign states.<sup>70</sup> The report of the Commission on Post-Conflict Reconstruction notes that some degree of European action already has been taken by France and Britain and that an institutional architecture needs to be established whereby failed states can be rescued.<sup>71</sup> Here again, the United States can work through European sponsor nations as a third party in assisting ECOWAS. Such a third wave of support could do much to stem one of the principal effects of state failure, the mass exodus of refugees. This pressure of migration out of failed states into neighboring countries and even to developed nations destabilizes the region as the displaced inhabitants attempt to find suitable living conditions. The report concludes that “security and security structures must be at the heart of a more integrated approach to the question of failing states.”<sup>72</sup> The security structure of ECOWAS as first responders, European countries as the next echelon of support, and the United States as a third-party sponsor holds the promise of an effective mechanism to combat failed states in West Africa.

### ***US Support for ECOWAS to Ensure Access to Oil***

Besides removing potential bases of operation for transnational terrorism, the United States is also obviously interested in oil, and West Africa is a major global oil producer. West Africa accounts for most American oil imports from the continent, with the bulk of the oil being produced by the sub-regional anchor nation of Nigeria. West Africa is the continent’s second largest oil producing sub-region. Nigeria alone accounts for 99.4 per cent of West Africa’s oil reserves and exports two million barrels per day.<sup>73</sup> As the world’s sixth largest oil producer, Nigeria accounts for 11 percent of the oil imported into the United States, ranking behind Saudi Arabia, Mexico, Canada, and Venezuela in order of volume.<sup>74</sup> The United States imports roughly 1.2 million barrels of Nigerian oil per day.<sup>75</sup> This is also the vast majority of the oil the United States imports from Africa, as the continent accounts for approximately 16 percent of incoming oil flows.<sup>76</sup> One of the advantages to im-

porting oil from Africa is the fact that much of the oil is produced offshore, and is thereby insulated from domestic political and social turmoil.<sup>77</sup> In Nigeria, ExxonMobil alone is currently producing around 600,000 barrels per day (about half of what the United States imports) and plans to invest \$11 billion through 2011 in order to double that output.<sup>78</sup>

Given this American interest in West African oil production, the United States obviously desires peace and tranquility in the sub-region. However, “political and ethnic strife in West Africa, including violence, kidnapping, sabotage, and the seizure of oil facilities, often disrupts Nigerian oil production.”<sup>79</sup> Fuel theft alone amounts to about \$2 billion yearly, and inter-ethnic tensions have disrupted oil production, both domestic supply and exports.<sup>80</sup> The execution of Ogoni environmental activist Ken Saro-Wiwa in November 1995 is one manifestation of this ethnic strife, coupled with the local youths’ clamor against the oil companies and government for their share of the profits. Some portion of these benefits accrued to the government through the oil trade needs to be passed on to the people.

With between 25 and 35.2 billion barrels of oil reserves in either coastal or offshore oil, Nigeria likely will remain a significant source of American oil for the foreseeable future.<sup>81</sup> Therefore, it is a rational US strategic policy to support ECOWAS as a capable organization for advancing good governance and economic development in West Africa.

### ***Case for US Economic Stimulus in West Africa***

Concerning economic development in West Africa, the US National Security Strategy is committed to advancing free trade with Africa under the auspices of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). Specifically, this act states that “we will also offer opportunity to the poorest continent, Africa, starting with the full use of the preferences allowed in the African Growth and Opportunity Act and leading to free trade.”<sup>82</sup> Enacted in May 2000, the African Growth and Opportunity Act gives preferential trade access to African nations that open their economies and build free markets.<sup>83</sup> Of the 15 nations comprising ECOWAS, 11 are eligible for AGOA benefits. Nigeria is the largest exporter to the United States, and at \$17.9 billion accounted for almost 70 percent of American purchases from Africa in 2003.<sup>84</sup> In signing the subsequent AGOA Acceleration Act of 2004, President Bush stated that this legislation has encouraged African nations to reform their economies and governments in order to take advantage of the opportunities that AGOA provides.<sup>85</sup>

ECOWAS has taken the initiative in this regard in the form of two projects, Trade in ECOWAS Countries (ECOTrade) and Growth through Empowering Enterprise in ECOWAS Countries (ECOGEE). The first of these projects supports a common external tariff for West Africa, while the second

is intended to remove obstacles to trade within the sub-region.<sup>86</sup> The Commission on Capital Flows to Africa has stated in a recent report that greater attention should be paid to sub-regional initiatives, recognizing that sub-regions differ in commercial and economic drivers.<sup>87</sup> The commission recommends that the United States should support sub-regional organizations such as ECOWAS that have begun to create free-trade areas to expand markets and facilitate the movement of goods, capital, and services.<sup>88</sup>

ECOWAS is also the sub-regional focal point for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the US-sponsored Millennium Challenge Account (MCA). These two initiatives are interlocked, with NEPAD providing a framework for growth, development, and globalization, and MCA offering a 50 percent increase in development assistance for those countries meeting its qualifications. Both initiatives stress good governance, peace, security, the rule of law, human rights, privatization, and regional integration. One of the principles of NEPAD is to ensure that its partnerships are linked to MCA's goals.<sup>89</sup> Within West Africa, the countries of Nigeria, Senegal, Mali, and Ghana are NEPAD partners, while Benin, Ghana, Mali, and Senegal are eligible for MCA assistance. The Commission on Capital Flows to Africa links Foreign Direct Investment to economic growth "when there is an educated work force and hospitable conditions for investment."<sup>90</sup>

### ***Engagement of ECOWAS through European Sponsors***

A promising way for the United States to engage ECOWAS is through the European Union. The EU encompasses the former colonial masters of the states comprising ECOWAS and, as such, has historical ties with West Africa. The EU also has adopted a sub-regional strategy for working with ECOWAS and is committed to the principle that economic development is a precursor to peace and stability. Additionally, both ECOWAS and the EU are in agreement that regional economic integration is necessary to fight poverty and prevent conflict in West Africa and are working toward ratifying an Economic Partnership Agreement by the end of 2007.<sup>91</sup> Both organizations share a comprehensive strategy on peace and security aimed at securing porous borders, eliminating trafficking in small arms, and providing jobs for unemployed youth. The EU remains in dialogue with ECOWAS and supports its entering into a memorandum of understanding with the African Union. The EU is currently providing \$6.5 million euros to ECOWAS under the 8th European Development Fund for five projects including conflict prevention, regional integration, common currency, regional transport, and computer software support.<sup>92</sup> Richard Ryan, Irish Ambassador to the United Nations, speaking on behalf of the EU, stated that "the European Union enjoys a rich and deep engagement with Africa, both directly and in partnership with the

United Nations.”<sup>93</sup> He punctuated his address by adding, “Nowhere has the need for a sub-regional approach been more evident in recent years than in West Africa.”<sup>94</sup>

By bolstering ECOWAS through the European Union and such former colonial powers as the United Kingdom and France, the United States can leverage their existing relationships while conserving scarce resources and improving our international profile. The United States can effectively collaborate as a third-order power, funneling resources through the European Union and thereby achieving policy goals with a smaller regional commitment. Also, we can allow the United Nations to act as an honest broker for peacekeeping and humanitarian operations in West Africa. The United States does not need to do all the heavy lifting in a sub-region that is challenged by issues such as the settlement of refugees and trafficking in human beings. By allowing the international community to engage in West Africa while pursuing its own economic incentives, the United States can shift the primary burden to ECOWAS, supported by the European Union, the UN, the African Union, and other interested parties. The current civil war in Cote d’Ivoire is a case in point, where ECOWAS has collaborated with France and the United Nations to defuse the crisis and pave the way for national elections in October 2005.<sup>95</sup> Factoring in the al Qaeda inspired terrorist attacks in Spain and Great Britain in 2004 and 2005, Europe can ill afford to neglect Africa, where 25 percent of the foreign fighters in Iraq originate.<sup>96</sup>

### ***Recommendations***

Several recommendations can be derived from the above discussion. These recommendations, if implemented, could advance American national security interests in Africa and provide policy leverage with minimal resource requirements.

First, the United States should support ECOWAS and other African sub-regional organizations as a workable way to promote American interests for good governance and economic prosperity in the region. The US goal should be to engage the primary stakeholders, encouraging them to assume responsibility for arresting internal conflicts and promoting development. This can be effectively accomplished through financial and logistical support to ECOWAS and its pan-African peer organizations.

The United States also should support sub-regional organizations such as ECOWAS as a preferred strategy over focusing on regional organizations such as the African Union. Sub-regional organizations have a greater stake in conflict resolution and peacekeeping operations because they are policing their homeland. African Union nations can return to their own sector of

the continent after their deployments are over. Nations constituting sub-regional organizations are there for better or for worse. What the African Union seeks to accomplish with limited resources is commendable, yet it is preferable to commit indigenous forces that have a stake in the outcome of the struggle.

When feasible, the United States should engage sub-regional organizations through their European sponsors with which they have had historical ties. One way to support these organizations is through the European Union, which has been involved in Africa recently and also shares an interest in peace on the continent. Many of the EU nations have continuing relationships with their former colonies and are well positioned to assist them in their present crises. The United States can work through these European nations in a tertiary role, providing our expertise and resources when and where needed.

Finally, the United States should support ECOWAS because that organization has a history of conflict resolution, peace enforcement, and peacekeeping operations in West Africa. ECOWAS is a relatively stable organization with a commitment to democratic reform and economic progress. ECOWAS also has networked with other international groups such as the United Nations, the African Union, and other sub-regional bodies. It has established a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security and is united with the African Union under the New Partnership for Africa's Development. It has cultivated relationships with the United States, the European Union, Japan, and others.

### ***Conclusions***

This article concludes with several assertions that logically follow from the arguments and recommendations presented above. They define a national security policy and strategy toward Africa aimed at effectively furthering the interests of the United States in the region.

First, the United States should robustly support pan-African organizations such as ECOWAS because it is in our national self-interest that good governance and economic development prevail in Africa. Without peace and prosperity on the continent, the United States faces the dangers inherent in failed states that are prevalent in Africa in varying degrees. These dangers encompass transnational terrorism, international drug trafficking, and the spread of disease within and outside Africa.

The United States should support ECOWAS because the organization is in a well-leveraged position to influence the peace and progress in West Africa necessary for industry and commerce to thrive. The United States should analogously examine the benefits of supporting other sub-regional

organizations in order to influence their development in the direction of the National Security Strategy.

The United States should primarily support ECOWAS rather than the African Union in West Africa because the former has a greater stake in the development of the sub-region and a more extensive track record in peace-enforcement operations.

The United States should collaborate in a supporting role with the European Union and European nations by bolstering African sub-regional organizations such as ECOWAS. There is a mutual interest in such “coalitions of the willing,” and there is an opportunity to capitalize on existing relationships that these nations enjoy with their former colonies.

Finally, it should be US policy to robustly support ECOWAS and other such pan-African organizations because employing these groups as surrogates mitigates the risk of political and military entanglements. With a resource-constrained military and a people reluctant to take on additional international commitments, this qualifies as a judicious course of action. Such a policy serves US national security interests, achieves our desired ends, and is a sensible and workable methodology in light of our limited resources.

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