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"State Fragility" and the
Challenges of Development
in West Africa: Moving from
Reaction to Prevention

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ACRONYMS

AU	African Union
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CPIA	Country Policy and Institutional Assessment
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
DFID	Department for International Development
ECOMOG	ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group
ECOWARN	ECOWAS Warning and Response Network
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ECPF	ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework
EU	European Union
EWS	Early Warning System
FfP	Fund for Peace
FP	Foreign Policy
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	Human Development Index
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICISS	International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty
LICUS	Low Income Countries Under Stress
M & E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MSC	Mediation and Security Council
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
OECD-DAC	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Development Assistance Committee

OMC   Observation and Monitoring Centre

RUF   Revolutionary United Front

UN   United Nations

UNAMSIL United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone

UNMIK   UN Mission in Kosovo

UNOCI   UN peacekeeping force in Côte d'Ivoire

UNOWA   United Nations Office for West Africa

UNTAET   UN Transitional Administration in East Timor

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"To suggest that war can prevent war is a base play on words and a despicable form of war-mongering."

Ralph Bunche (1904-1971)

Research Problem: Conceptual Clarification

Due to the increased focus on dysfunctional states since the 9/11 attacks, sundry development agencies, academic think-tanks, policy makers and government departments have sought to better understand the phenomenon of state fragility in order to develop policies to address it. Sadly, this has led to a muddling up of the concept resulting in what might now be described as terminological chaos. Thus, adjectives like weak, failing, failed, collapsed, vulnerable, quasi, recovering, *inter alia*, have been used to describe different degrees of fragility.[1] The World Bank's Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA), the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DfID), the United Nations' Human Development Index (HDI), the United States' Political Instability Task Force, and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development—Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) have employed *sui generis* terms like Low Income Countries Under Stress (LICUS), complex political emergencies, difficult partnerships, and political instability to indicate their policy thrust. A corollary of this obsession of branding fragile states with catchy and newsworthy labels is the tendency to lump fragile states together for standard treatment.[2] Such branding has also been deprecated as a distraction from concrete challenges of crisis response and post-conflict reconstruction. [3]

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[1] In an attempted taxonomy of failed states, Jean-Germain Gros placed them in five categories: anarchic, phantom, anaemic, captured, and aborted. See: Gros (1996)

[2] Picciotto, *et al.* (2005), p. 8

[3] Patrick & Brown (2007), p. 129

Beyond the terminological chaos, different assessment criteria and frameworks used by different agencies have, on an operational level, resulted in policy incoherence. For instance, the World Bank's CPIA, the CIA-supported Political Instability Task Force (formerly State Failure Task Force) and Foreign Policy's *Failed States Index 2008* use differing, often inconsistent, sets of indicators. As a result, the CPIA classifies 26 countries as fragile; its crony, the DfID, considers 46 countries to be fragile; while the Political Instability Task Force remains strategically taciturn. On its own part, the US Center for Global Development's Commission for Weak States estimates 50 states to be fragile. Even though *The Failed States Index 2008* was a joint research by Foreign Policy (FP) and the Fund for Peace (FfP), their interpretations of the result seem to be a little at variance. While FP categorizes 20 states as critically fragile (colour-coded red), the FfP categorizes 35 states as so.[4]

Short of delving into the debate on whether the term "fragile states" is an appropriate analytical category, I use the term in a generic sense as a continuum of various stages of state weakness. Fragile states are therefore states that have weak institutions of governance thereby making them precarious in their *capacity* to deliver public goods and services to their citizens, and lacking *resilience* in the face of conflict or political instability. These two elements are a common strand in most definitions of fragility, although some writers have given partial treatment to either one or the other. *Per se*, state fragility is a complex phenomenon with multiple layers of causality, and therefore requires multiple layers of engagement feeding off a wide range of policy options that would simultaneously increase the resilience and capability of already fragile states while preventing other states showing early signs of fragility from sinking into the fragility trap. References to prevention in this paper, except where otherwise stated, include both operational prevention—aimed to avert an impending or resolve an immediate crisis—and structural prevention—

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[4] The depiction of which states are critically fragile need not be different, whether the list is abridged or extended, as this would likely affect policy.

addressing the root causes of state fragility in order to prevent the re-emergence of violence.

Locating the discourse in the West African context, there appears to be a strong, mutually reinforcing link between state fragility and conflict.[5] While both terms are not coterminous,[6] this regional dynamic informs the emphasis on conflict and political instability as the main drivers of fragility in this paper. Although regional security challenges, history and geopolitical conflict complexes may be similar, there can be no template of policies for fragile states: what works for Liberia may not work in Nigeria—and may in fact be counter-productive. This makes it all the more difficult to adopt a sub-regional approach to preventing or reducing state fragility, or to adopt an overarching sub-regional strategy in implementing policy in fragile states. The crux of this research paper is a quest to overcome—or redefine—this challenge.

Some elucidation is in order. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) which was established in 1975 to foster economic cooperation and development clearly lacked an integrated security mandate until the *ad hoc* Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) was deployed in response to the carnage in Liberia in 1995. It had become apparent that the insecurity and endemic instability in the sub-region served as a major impediment to integration and development. The ECOWAS defence and security mandate therefore developed in response to emerging threats and concerns as add-ons to the original treaty in supplementary protocols and defence pacts.[7] In a bid to enhance its powers and make its impact felt by the peoples of West Africa, the ECOWAS Revised Treaty of 1993 now confers on the body a

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[5] However, it has been argued that not all states experiencing conflict are fragile and not all fragile states are experiencing conflict. See: Grono (2007)

[6] The US State Failure Task Force equates state failure with events indicating severe political instability: revolutionary wars; ethnic wars; adverse regime changes; and genocides and politicides. See: *State Failure Task Force Report: Phase III Findings*, 30 September 2000, p. v @ http://globalpolicy.gmu.edu/pitf/SFTF%20Phase%20III%20Report%20Final.pdf, last accessed 10 August 2008.

[7] Notably, the ECOWAS Revised Treaty of 23 July 1993; the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-Keeping and Security of 10 December 1999; the Protocol on Mutual Assistance in Defence of 29 May 1981; and the Protocol on Non-Aggression of 22 April 1978.

novel status as a supranational rather than a mere international comity.[8] The ECOWAS Secretariat in Abuja, Nigeria has been transformed into a Commission since January 2007—following the European Union (EU) model—to make it more anticipatory and responsive in an increasingly complex global world. Practically, this structural transformation may still be far from sounding the death knell to the security challenges that plague the sub-region.

Given the imperative of a sub-regional approach to conflict prevention in West Africa and the barrier of state sovereignty, how can a sub-regional framework be made to reflect the security challenges and address the security dilemmas of ECOWAS member states, while still being sensitive to local dynamics?[9] Should there be a top-down approach, translating the sub-regional framework into different country strategies even where the levels of economic and political development vary from one country to another, or a bottom-up approach, adopting a more flexible and adaptable sub-regional framework while recognizing common challenges across the sub-region? My approach to the above issues is based on the hypothesis that it would make for more robust policy engagement in fragile states if preventive measures were context-specific and sequenced—long term, medium term and short term—reflecting the nature, degree and idiosyncrasies of each state's fragility. Select cases will be used to test this hypothesis vis à vis the ECOWAS conflict prevention system.

Approach, Organization, and Choice of Cases

Apparently, the political history,[10] political economy,[11] and neo-classical economics[12] approaches to the study of state fragility all address different fragments of the

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[8] The new ECOWAS Strategic Vision seeks to gives effect to this principle of "supranationality", tracing its mandate to the *peoples* as opposed to *states* of West Africa, thereby seeking to bypass sovereign national walls to make ECOWAS decisions directly applicable in member states. See: § 4, ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF)

[9] The ECPF was recently adopted by the Mediation and Security Council in January 2008.

[10] Huntington (1971); Herbst (1996); Mayall (2005)

[11] Keen (1998); Menkhaus (2003); Reno (2006); Duffield (2001); Cramer (2006)

[12] Collier (2003); Picciotto, *et al.* (2005)

problem, often leading to misleading and reductionist explanations, and not-well-rounded policy decisions. This paper adopts a somewhat eclectic but context-specific approach, drawing from the rich and varied theoretical and empirical base in the literature on state fragility while seeking to understand what works where through the lenses of the so-called fragile states. It advocates a shift in emphasis from the reactionary keeping the fragile peace, intervention in event of humanitarian crisis, and traditional post-conflict reconstruction to more proactive methods of reducing and preventing state fragility. The structure follows the writer's perceived convenience of arrangement and relatedness of the issues treated.

Chapter 1 introduces the reader to the thrust of the research and gives clarification as to the sense in which some concepts are used in this paper, and how they interrelate. It also reviews the state of the discourse on state fragility, challenges some assumptions in the discourse, and finds that peculiar geopolitical dynamics prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa dictate not only that different answers be sought to the menace of state fragility, but also that answers be sought in a different manner. Chapter 2 examines the rationale for and some challenges that beset international engagement in fragile states, suggests ways of overcoming those challenges, and envisages an increased role for sub-regional organizations such as ECOWAS—who are, structurally, middlemen in the international peace and security architecture—in engendering better coordination between the development community and fragile states.

Shifting gears, Chapter 3—which defines this research—advocates a paradigm shift from reaction to prevention. It argues for an integrated, sub-regional approach to conflict prevention, x-raying the challenges, opportunities, and benefits of the early warning and early response system established under the ECOWAS Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-Keeping and Security (the Mechanism) and the recently adopted ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF). Chapter 4 is a logical extension of

the preceding chapter, an attempt to link policy to practice. Its purpose is not prescriptive but deliberative: it does not promulgate specific measures to reduce fragility in all cases but brainstorms on how to improve early response in particular states taking into consideration the history, local context and surrounding circumstances. Adopting a thematic approach, three cases—Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, and Sierra Leone—are examined to consider how preventive policy should be sequenced in weak, failing, and failed but reviving states. Chapter 5 reiterates the main arguments of this paper, draws on the lessons learnt, and incorporates policy recommendations relevant to sub-regional organizations in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly ECOWAS.

As indicated in *The Failed States Index 2008*—which measures states' vulnerability or fragility as opposed to actual prediction of collapse or failure—sub-Saharan Africa plays host to four of the top five most vulnerable states and seven of the top ten.[13] I have chosen this index because it includes robust and diverse indicators of social, political, economic and cultural factors—including external involvement—that impinge on the capacity and resilience of states. Although it ranks states based on a cumulative score, the indicators allow for disaggregation of the elements of fragility for comparative analysis, thus showing relative strengths and weaknesses and areas where policy should be targeted. The methodology employs both quantitative and qualitative data analysis, but more can be still achieved by tracking other factors such as parliamentary oversight, the effects of natural and other humanitarian disasters, idiosyncratic factors ("shockers" and "shock absorbers"), the capacity of the civil service, and the state's risk history. As gloomy as the picture is with seven West African countries—nearly half of her numbers—on the fragility radar, there is evidence to suggest slow but progressive improvement in countries like Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. But how can such progress be sustained while minimizing the risk of a relapse?

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[13] See: Foreign Policy & the Fund for Peace (2008). A better title for the index would be "The *Fragile* States Index", as it is loaded to show indicators of instability pointing to future state failure, not manifestations of failure *per se*.

Nigeria is transiting from military to civilian rule, a crossroads in the security and development index. Côte d'Ivoire, a Francophone state, is the joker in the pack, revealing a thin line between stability and fragility. Sierra Leone is still recovering from the ravages of civil war, and might yet wake up to reality when the plug is pulled on development aid. A cursory look at these cases reveals the necessity for differential treatment irrespective of common cross-border security challenges. This runs amok with a one-size-fits-all strategy, thus raising a challenge for an integrated sub-regional approach to peace and security. In turn, an examination of the opportunities that the twin pillars of the ECOWAS conflict prevention system—the Mechanism and the ECPF—offer for the future of these countries follows.

Literature Review: A Dialectical Approach

With the "securitization of development" coming in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, scholarly and strategic attention has shifted from the Cold War paradigm of strong states to weak or fragile states as the main security challenge facing the international community in the twenty-first century.[14] The costs of fragility spread beyond a state's temporal and spatial boundaries and make development more difficult in entire regions. However, academic debate on state fragility is far from settled. Does the relationship between conflict and underdevelopment imply correlation, causation, or mutuality? If the two are mutually reinforcing, how then can states caught in this vicious circle hope to break away from the "fragility trap?" In a globalizing world that sees the salience of the state increasingly shrinking and its competence more or less declining, how does this dynamic affect the experimental states in sub-Saharan Africa whose levels of development betray a need to further strengthen rather than weaken state capacity in order to effectively deliver public goods? Greater understanding and success will be achieved by viewing the problem through the lenses of the so-called "fragile states." By addressing these and other

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[14] This shift is reflected in *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* 2002, p. 1

issues, this research paper articulates a rejoinder to the discourse on state fragility and makes a modest attempt to fill some of the gaps in the literature.

The Vicious Circle: Conflict and Underdevelopment

The correlation of underdevelopment with a high risk of conflict has received a fair share of consideration within development discourse. Paul Collier alludes to a vicious circle when he declares that "war retards development, but conversely, development retards war.[15]" Fragile states are the most off-track in relation to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). From 1990 to 2002 their gross domestic product (GDP) per capita was broadly flat while other developing countries grew at 1.17% a year in real terms.[16] Violent conflict generates social division, reverses economic progress, impedes sustainable development and frequently results in human rights violations.[17] Conversely, development has been a major instrument in the toolbox of policymakers for structural conflict prevention. But the development crusade has also had its downside.[18]

In few regions has the conflict-development nexus played out full circle as in West Africa.[19] Governments have diverted resources for development into financing wars and paying for protection. In neighbouring Chad, revenue from resource windfall which was held in trust for the people was diverted to finance the conflict which erupted in 2005. The government admitted diverting US$4 million of oil investment to boost its arsenal against the northern rebels.[20] Counting the economic and social costs of conflict, state fragility represents development in reverse.[21]

According to Paul Collier, states caught in the "conflict trap" stand a 44% risk of relapsing into further conflict within the first five years.[22] However, the unspoken

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[15] Collier (2003), p. 1
[16] DfID (2005), p. 9
[17] DfID (1997), p. 67
[18] Duffield (2001), pp. 117-121; Easterly (2006), pp. 5-7
[19] *Cf.*: Article 2(a), the Mechanism
[20] Alao (2007), p. 182
[21] Collier, *et al.* (2003), pp. 13-32; Collier (2007), p. 27. He posits that civil war tends to reduce growth by around 2.3 percent per year.
[22] *Ibid.*, p. 83

truth is that conflict in West Africa represents more than just a developmental malaise. The causes of conflict are as diverse as its manifestations, and its effects are equally varied. The ECPF recognizes conflict as a motor of transformation which may be either positive or negative. It can be creatively transformed to ensure equity, progress and harmony, or destructively transformed to engender acute insecurity.[23] Samuel Huntington supports the seemingly counterintuitive but insightful proposition that there cannot be any real development without violence (political contestation and social reconfiguration).[24] According to him, historical, geopolitical and global factors point to dynamics that make countries in the middle of the process of socio-economic and political modernization—the transitional societies in sub-Saharan Africa are presently at this stage—prone to conflict and instability.[25] Even Collier concedes that, "to the extent that civil war has a political rationale it is as *[sic]* a catalyst for social progress".[26]

Yet, it will only be imprudent and amount to reification of conflict to suggest that the countries in sub-Saharan Africa should be left to stew in conflicts in order to chart their own paths to development. A more prudent approach is to focus on cost-effective preventive measures that slow down or even reverse a country's descent into fragility while promoting long term development.

The Dilemma of Declining State Competence:[27] to Decertify or to Rebuild?

Mark Duffield traces the erosion of the competence of nation states to redistribute wealth and public goods within its juridical borders to the early 1970s. This, he attributes to political pressures coming in the wake of globalization that are changing the architecture of the nation state, forcing cutbacks in domestic welfare expenditure, privatization of public goods and services, and leading to growing

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[23] § 8, ECPF
[24] Huntington (1971), p. 3
[25] The US State Failure Task Force reported that partial democracies are seven times more likely to fail than are full democracies and autocracies.
[26] Collier, *et al.* (2003), p. 19
[27] "State competence" here is defined in terms of capacity and resilience. See: p. 2, *supra*

income disparities and polarised life chances.[28] It has been forcefully argued by Joseph Stiglitz that the way globalization has been managed has led to growing inequality, poverty, hunger, massive unemployment, riots and even the exacerbation of conflicts in the still developing economies of the Third World.[29]

Bemoaning attempts by the international community to resurrect failed states, Jeffrey Herbst challenges the current fixation on maintaining existing units. He suggests that most states in Africa were already doomed to failure upon decolonization as they could not exercise monopolies on force in the territories within their boundaries and in any case it was not in the original plan that colonies in Africa would someday become separate, independent states.[30] Spillover of small arms and light weapons from conflicts throughout the continent, coupled with the cheap price of armaments after the Cold War, has helped those who wish to challenge state authority. Moreover, the withdrawal of Cold War patronage has caused countries that were failing to spiral further down.[31] Herbst's point of departure, however, is his support for the decertification of failed states in preference to alternatives like trusteeship or other revolutionary changes to the status quo.

There is little evidence to suggest that African societies suffered from less conflict before they were demarcated into state containers. On the contrary, there is ample evidence to suggest that most states in Africa were not even prepared for the functions of statehood as that new order was imposed on them by colonial authorities, thus disrupting traditional political practices at such speed that was tantamount to aborting the organic link between state and society.[32] In this context therefore, the real dilemma becomes whether to risk a developmental somersault by allowing African societies in their pre-colonial state a few centuries, as it took the Europeans to evolve a stable, agreed political system based on a social contract, or to

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[28] Duffield (2001), pp. 46-50
[29] Stiglitz (2002), pp. ix-x, 5
[30] Herbst (1996), p. 122
[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 123-124
[32] *Ibid.*, p. 130

take a more realistic path by strengthening the capacity and resilience of teetering states while, at the same time, increasing its domestic legitimacy.[33] This latter view finds support in François and Sud.[34]

On closer examination, Herbst's thesis falters on two counts. His suggestion to decertify failed states would do little to cure the mischief. Decertification will not reduce the suffering of people who lack basic needs and security; neither will it reduce the threat to regional and global peace and security constituted by ungoverned spaces. Rather than decertify teetering states, a more effectual political alternative would be to decertify *de jure* governments whose regimes have turned oppressive or unwilling to better the living standards of its people. Zimbabwe is a case in point. The US and Britain have refused to recognize Robert Mugabe as the legitimate leader of Zimbabwe after a flawed re-election in June 2008. This was followed up by imposition of political and economic sanctions—with travel bans and asset freezes—on the leadership and officials of the state and companies linked to them.[35] However, attempt by the UN Security Council to adopt such sanctions in July 2008 was vetoed by Russia and China. But the target was clear: *regime* decertification, as opposed to *state* decertification.[36] Drawing insights from political economy approach, oftentimes, state fragility—a consciously sustained durable disorder—is not as much a result of state's incapacity as individual leaders' unwillingness to provide public goods and security for its people.[37]

Secondly, viable alternatives to the nation-state are no doubt necessary, but the operational challenges of setting up a trusteeship make it all but viable. Aside from the massive finance and political commitment that will be required for such grand projects, the imperialist authority faces a running legitimacy and

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[33] However, this is not to suggest that efforts at "rebuilding" failed states have recorded unqualified success. The substantive issues are addressed in Chapter 3, *infra*.

[34] François & Sud (2006), p. 149

[35] Similar sanctions have also been imposed on the Sudanese leader, Omar al-Bashir, and some state officials.

[36] Zartman also supports regime decertification (sticks) together with offers of asylum and other inducements (carrots). See: Zartman (2005), pp. 54-55

[37] Accordingly, DfID policy distinguishes "weak but willing" from "strong and unresponsive" states. See: DfID (2005), p. 8

accountability battle with local populations who are today more politically informed than societies after the Second World War. As pointed out by Cooper and Pugh, the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) and the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) —the contemporary equivalents of trusteeship—resembled the weak states they were supposed to reform.[38]

The state now assumes a somewhat paradoxical place in today's global political matrix. One the one hand, there is an attenuation of state competence in the face of supranational, sub-national, and transnational non-state actors, and a continuing reduction of the salience of state sovereignty; on the other hand, there is a persisting relevance of the state as a power container and as building blocks for any conceivable international or global order. This trend dictates that there should be some fluidity (some element of self determination) in the state system—especially in the "experimental states" of sub-Saharan Africa—allowing for social reconfiguration to accommodate differences in political culture within and between states.[39]

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[38] Cooper & Pugh (2002), pp. 53-55
[39] Political communities in pre-colonial Nigeria were not homogenous: there were monarchical caliphates in the north, quasi-democratic republics in the east, and consociational arrangements in the west.

CHAPTER 2

ENGAGING WITH FRAGILE STATES: THE PROBLEM WITH RESPONSES

"We cannot be both the world's leading champion of peace and the world's leading supplier of arms."

Jimmy Carter (1924-*Bénissez-le*)

Why Engage With Fragile States?

According to the World Bank CPIA ratings, fragile states contain 14% of the world's population but account for nearly 30% of people living on less than one dollar a day and 41% of all child deaths. *Per se*, fragile states lack either the capacity or the political will—or both—to fix the hydra-headed problems that beleaguer them. There now appears to be a consensus in the security and development field that the rest of the world cannot just sit back and do nothing.[40] Indeed, the cost of doing nothing might be more than the cost of intervention. The "regional conflict complexes" manifested in West Africa and the Great Lakes show that state fragility can be infectious. As aptly painted by Paul Collier, the effects of internal conflict emanating from state fragility ripples out in three concentric circles:

> The first ripple is within the country: most of the victims are children and
> other noncombatants. The second ripple is the region: neighbouring countries
> suffer reduced incomes and increased disease. The third ripple is global: civil
> war generates territory outside the control of any recognized government,
> and such territories have become the epicenters of crime and disease.[41]

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[40] DfID (2005), p. 5; Collier (2003), p. 6
[41] Collier (2003), pp. ix-x

However, working with and in fragile states is costly, risky, and poses difficult policy dilemmas. But the nature and purpose of intervention are as important as the commitment to intervene. International responses to fragile states bear some humanitarian, security or developmental impetus, or some mixture of varying proportions of each. Ad hoc humanitarian responses in the face of crisis do not address the twin pillars of statehood: capacity and resilience. Due to the limited success of this approach, there has been a policy shift towards conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction since the mid-1990s. Developmental tools are now targeted at transforming whole societies and attitudes in order to reduce violent conflict and prevent its recurrence. Mark Duffield warns that such "radicalisation of development" is a political project in its own right—for the benefit of the South but largely in the interest of the North—targeted at making fragile states more politically stable and economically cooperative.[42]

Entry and Exit Strategies: Too Little Too Late?

The quantum of official development assistance usually received by fragile states is not commensurate to their peculiar needs and the challenges posed by such difficult environment. This is not unconnected with the insistence of international donors on linking aid to performance, thereby inexorably making fragile states "aid orphans". For instance, the World Bank bases the amount of aid to a country on its score on the CPIA ratings. Since fragile states rank at the bottom of the CPIA scale, they receive relatively smaller allocations than stable states or good performers.[43] The DfID approach of "good enough" governance appears to be a more practical yardstick for engaging with fragile states whose governments are committed to improving the well-being of their people but may fall short of standards of democratic governance

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[42] Duffield (2001), pp. 11 & 39
[43] The bottom 40% of countries on the CPIA ratings received only 14% of bilateral aid while the top 40% received nearly five times as much. See: DfiD (2005), p. 11

or corruption levels acceptable to the West.[44] It encourages making progress in small steps in order to build state capacity for more ambitious reforms in the future.

Also, vast opportunities for reducing fragility are missed due to the wrong timing and sequencing of aid to fragile states. In post-conflict states, there may be a huge influx of aid at the initial period—even beyond the absorptive capacity of the state—when efforts should rather be focused on peace building, only for such aid to dry up precisely when it could become more effective.[45] Corollary to this line of thought, the emphasis usually placed on scoring points by showing quick and visible results within three to five years of engagement in a post-conflict state may only result in creating a paper state that is doomed to collapse once aid flow dries up.[46] State building is a slow and organic process that should ideally evolve over a long term through internal forces. Accordingly, François and Sud suggest "a much more deliberative approach with a considerable smaller commitment of external funds that can be sustained over a long period of time".[47]

The feeble commitment of Western governments to conflict resolution during the darkest years of conflict in West Africa suggests that the sub-region was not considered to be of much strategic importance prior to the twenty-first century. As has been eloquently presented:

> The support from Canada, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States was meagre in comparison to support from Nigeria, which had spent in excess of US$4 billion on operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone, and was reportedly spending US$1 million per day in Sierra Leone.[48]

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[44] François and Sud (2006), p. 155; DfID (2003), p. 20
[45] Collier & Hoeffler (2002), p. 8
[46] The DfID ten-year commitment to support the government of Sierra Leone in 2002 is a commendable break from the past.
[47] François and Sud (2006), p. 153
[48] Olonisakin (2008), p. 44. In contrast, it is estimated that the cost of direct US military operations in the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts since 9/11 is in the range of US$3 trillion, although the actual amount approved by Congress for those interventions is a more conservative US$859 billion. See: Stiglitz & Bilmes (2008). With rising tensions and volatility in the Middle East disrupting global oil flows, the Gulf of Guinea has now become the beautiful bride.

More so, donors tend to intervene only in crisis. At the height of the May 2000 crisis in Sierra Leone, the British government dispatched an 800-man rescue mission to Freetown, ostensibly to evacuate British citizens and other European nationals. This deployment came only after ECOMOG's withdrawal and as a response to the abduction of nearly 500 United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) military observers by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF).[49] Although the force later assisted UNAMSIL to stabilize the situation, an escalation of the conflict would have been prevented if action had been taken in a timely manner. Additionally, the exit strategy mentality prevalent in military and humanitarian interventions often emphasizes arbitrary targets such as conducting elections and deadlines for peacekeeping and peace-building missions. Cooper and Pugh suggest that exit strategies be "replaced with engagement strategies that conceive peace-building as a long-term endeavour, constantly reworked and redefined in the light of new challenges".[50]

Supply-Side (Donors) *versus* Demand-Side (Recipients) Coordination

In a 1999 study, the Centre for Defence Studies, King's College London, identified five entities that "need to be coordinated in order for future responses to complex emergencies to be successful".[51] These are: donor governments, multilateral agencies, NGOs, military establishments, and the corporate sector. With the merging of security and development in the mid-1990s, cross-cutting linkages and networks uniting these entities in their pursuit of liberal peace have been consolidated.[52] Within donor countries, there is a growing recognition that development agencies must join up with other departments with comparative advantages and unique capabilities, particularly diplomatic and defence ministries, in designing strategies

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[49] *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 63 & 139
[50] Cooper & Pugh (2002), pp. 11-12
[51] Von Hippel (1999), p. 151
[52] Duffield (2001), pp. 50-74

for engagement in fragile states.[53] This is the *raison d'être* for the now attractive "whole-of-government" approach.[54] Although policy coherence and coordination of operations within and among these entities continue to be problematic, little attention has been paid to coordinating the recipients.

It is commonsensical that planning for success should involve the subjects—the fragile states—from the early stages given the various key actors in the melodrama and their often conflicting agendas.[55] However, their neglect indicates that fragile states are seen only as the problem, but not part of the solution. A manifestation of such neglect is the practice of by-passing governments and resorting to alternative delivery mechanisms such as NGOs and contractors to channel aid. The recipient government "becomes nothing more than a mere spectator at an essentially donor-driven show".[56] Aside from greatly increasing the cost of delivering aid, as collateral damage, the capacity of the state is further weakened by leaching scarce skilled personnel away from the domestic public sector. It may also fuel resentment that the bulk of the aid actually goes to the donors' agents rather than to the people.[57] Thus inadvertently, international engagement in fragile states still violate the Hippocratic principle of "do no harm".[58] It may be that the development community has not succeeded in reaching a convergence of interests and workable partnership with fragile states not just because the governments in such states are corrupt or lack capacity, but also because the external actors are reluctant to confront the divergent motivations for their efforts.

At the sub-regional level, the recently adopted ECPF attempts to fill this gap by envisaging cooperation with development partners based on the principles of

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[53] Such "joined-up" approach is also referred to as 3D—development, diplomacy, and defence.
[54] Patrick & Brown (2007), pp. 2-3
[55] Duffield also notes the omission of another important community from this list: academics. See: Duffield (2001), p. 52. I argue that anything short of an integrated problem-solving approach to the challenge of state fragility involving a reinforcement of the research-policy-operations linkage will meet with limited success. See: Chapter 5, *infra*.
[56] DfID (2005), p. 12
[57] François and Sud (2006), p. 152
[58] OECD (2007), p. 1

promotion and consolidation of human security; priority-driven programming; sustainability; subsidiarity and complementarity; local ownership, local context and sound analysis; transparency, accountability, mutual respect and trust.[59] Such cooperation aims at building synergy for coordinated interventions in conflict prevention and peace-building. Furthermore, the ECPF lays down guidelines for internal cooperation across all departments and institutions of ECOWAS, and for cooperation between ECOWAS and civil society organizations, member states, AU and the UN. Conceptually, there can be no better articulation of the whole-of-government—nay, whole-of-governance—approach.

Adopting an integrated sub-regional approach would also help overcome the donor-recipient coordination challenge at the level of individual states if ECOWAS—progressively assuming its supranational authority—can act as a go-between in coordinating, implementing and monitoring donor programmes in member states. Such an option finds legal support in Article 40 of the Mechanism which confers on ECOWAS the right and responsibility to intervene in member states in the event of humanitarian crises, conflict and disaster. In this way, the issues of legitimacy, knowledge of local context and mutual trust might be put to rest. This is a good sign, but the workability of this concept is yet to be put to the test.

New Rules of Engagement: Breaking the "Fragility Trap"

Robert Picciotto admonishes that to do things right in fragile states, things must be done differently and different things must be done concurrently.[60] Already, some recommendations encapsulated in the *Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations* have been considered in the foregoing discourse.[61] However, more can still be done.

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[59] See: ECPF (2008), pp. 54-58
[60] Picciotto, *et al.* (2005), p. 8
[61] OECD (2007)

Standard development practice needs to be adapted to the realities of state fragility and be flexible enough to align with local priorities. This would entail adopting the "good enough" governance approach which typically implies the lack of a capable and/or legitimate state. Budgetary support to strategic ministries in fragile states rather than financing costly and often haphazard state-building projects through alternative channels would help in building capacity in the long term. The primary goal of engagement in fragile states should be sustainable development and human security. Coordinating efforts at the sub-regional level will, hopefully, help overcome most of the operational problems with international responses to state fragility.

Curiously, the quest for a panacea to state fragility may appear to be counterintuitive to the rapidly expanding security and development industry,[62] but a lot more will be achieved if weak but willing states are empowered to set their own priorities and drive their developmental process. Resilience is an appurtenance of legitimacy and will only come in due course as the organic link between the state and society is strengthened, and not with the cobbling together and instruction of military and police forces in quick-fix security sector reform processes as happened in the case of DynCorp in Liberia.[63]

The single most important factor which has the potential to break the fragility trap is the prioritization of prevention in order to lower the risk of future conflict and to help weak governments avoid failing in the first place. It is to an examination of the challenges and opportunities for preventing state fragility in West Africa that I now turn.

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[62] "Industry" is used here for want of a better word. Duffield refers to this as "liberal strategic complexes". See: Duffield (2001), p. 50. *Cf.*: Cooper & Pugh (2002), pp. 57-58

[63] This is not to suggest that SSR does not play a vital role in state-building, but the manner in which such processes have been undertaken in post-conflict states in sub-Saharan Africa leaves much to be desired. See: Ghebali & Lambert (2007), p. 21

CHAPTER 3

MOVING FROM REACTION TO PREVENTION

"The only way to win World War III is to prevent it."

Dwight Eisenhower (1890-1969)

Conflict Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect

According to the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, the international community spent approximately US$200 billion on interventions in seven major conflicts in the 1990s—Bosnia and Herzegovina, Somalia, Rwanda, Haiti, the Persian Gulf, Cambodia and El Salvador—but could have saved US$130 billion through a more effective preventive approach![64] This only proves the axiom that prevention is better than cure—and cheaper too. Although the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) identified the responsibility to prevent as being of foremost importance in its report, *The Responsibility to Protect* (R2P), most scholarly and policy attention has been focused on the concept's reaction component rather than to its prevention component.[65] Prevention of deadly conflict and, by extension, state fragility is—as with all other aspects of the responsibility to protect—first and foremost the responsibility of sovereign states.[66] But the failure of prevention bears egregious international consequences. It is therefore not surprising that numerous legal and policy frameworks on both operational and structural conflict prevention have been developed by regional and multilateral organizations.[67]

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[64] Gareth, *et al.* (2001), p. 20
[65] Bellamy (2008), p. 135
[66] Gareth, *et al.* (2001), p. 19
[67] The focus here, however, is on operational conflict prevention.

Among other things, the UN Department of Political Affairs works to ensure coherence between the different departments and agencies of the UN through the Inter-Departmental Framework for Coordination on Early Warning and Preventive Action. At the regional level, Article 4 of the Constitutive Act of the African Union (AU), 2000 articulates a commitment to conflict prevention and the responsibility to protect potential victims of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. The Protocol on the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the AU creates a number of conflict prevention instruments: the Panel of the Wise, the African Continental Early Warning System, the African Standby Force, and the African Common Defence Policy. At the sub-regional level, the ECOWAS Mechanism—and the recently adopted ECPF aimed at making the Mechanism operational through a coherent, strategic approach—also creates organs parallel to those at the continental tier.

But policy frameworks alone have not prevented fragile states from plunging into conflict. As noted by the ICISS:

> For the effective prevention of conflict... three essential conditions have to be met. First, there has to be knowledge of the fragility of the situation and the risks associated with it – so called "early warning." Second, there has to be understanding of the policy measures available that are capable of making a difference – the so-called "preventive toolbox." And third, there has to be, as always, the willingness to apply those measures – the issue of "political will".[68]

Good Neighbourhood Principle:[69] The Imperative of a Sub-Regional Approach
The international security architecture can be pictured as a model of four concentric circles. It follows naturally that if there is a toxic leak in the innermost circle, it will diffuse into and contaminate its surrounding environment. In real life, this is a

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[68] Gareth, *et al.* (2001), p. 20
[69] Article 4(e), ECOWAS Revised Treaty

geopolitical complex: the national is a subset of the sub-regional; the sub-regional is a subset of the regional; which is in turn a subset of the global. But human groupings are not inanimate circles and so take self-preservative measures when faced with a "toxic leak". When states become fragile—and as a result lack the capacity or the political will to remedy their situation—it naturally falls to the sub-region, which will bear the most direct consequence if nothing is done, to take necessary remedial measures. This makes it essential for the sub-region to develop the capacity for prevention and reduction of state fragility.

Article 33 of the UN Charter even recognizes the comparative advantage of proximity when it defers to "regional agencies or arrangements" for pacific settlement of disputes between states, although the shifting asymmetry of state fragility is now marked by conflict within states.[70] Moving further inwards, Article 16 of the AU Peace and Security Council Protocol, and the Common Africa Defence and Security Policy, stress that the sub-regional mechanisms will form the building blocks of the AU's peace and security architecture, including the African Standby Force (ASF). This more or less shifts some responsibility to prevent, resolve and respond to threats to international peace and security emanating from fragile states to the sub-regions. Today, greater realism informs the United Nations Office for West Africa's (UNOWA) support to ECOWAS on capacity building for early warning and early response, thus bypassing the intermediate regional circle. The rationale for establishment of UNOWA was "to bring regional UN activities in the areas of conflict prevention and peace-building closer to the local realities and needs.[71]" UNOWA, which has a diplomatic presence in Dakar, Senegal, promotes an integrated sub-regional, as opposed to country-by-country, approach.

Beyond mere conjecture, there are numerous practical reasons to justify a sub-regional approach to the prevention of state fragility. Paul Collier alludes to the

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[70] Notably, the UN Security Council still retains the mandate to invoke peace enforcement action against a country pursuant to Chapter VII of the UN Charter.
[71] UN, *The UN Office for West Africa*, p. 1 @ http://www.un.org/unowa/unowa/bckgrdnew.pdf, last accessed 10 August 2008.

dynamics of growth spillovers from neighbours as a nuanced driver of development.[72] Likewise, conflict spillovers from bad neighbours bear grave security and development implications that affect entire regions: refugee flows and the spread of disease, proliferation of weapons, violence and transnational crime, and the like. The invasion of Sierra Leone by the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in the first half of 1991 has been described as "a belligerent strain of virus from neighbouring Liberia,"[73] and would not have happened without the support of the architect of the Liberian war, Charles Taylor. Guinean and Nigerian troops joined forces with the Sierra Leonean government to squelch the insurgency, ostensibly to avoid being infected by the contagious war and its ripple effects. Regional dimensions tend to complicate the conflict continuum, as experienced in the complementary war economies of Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea, Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire.[74] Such dynamics gets even worse where a country's natural resource endowment constitutes a honeypot to its neighbours. For instance, it cannot be ruled out that Charles Taylor saw an opportunity to tap into Sierra Leonean alluvial diamonds as a veritable source of sustaining his revolutionary campaign.[75]

As the diagnosis reveals an essentially sub-regional ailment, the prescription should therefore be a sub-regional therapy.

Planning from the Future: Boosting Early Warning and Early Response Mechanisms

Planning from the future does not require that we consult soothsayers in order to avoid state fragility; it is all about institutionalizing a systematic way of identifying, diagnosing, and defusing conflict drivers that might have a negative impact on the capacity and resilience of states. Prior to the setting up of the ECOWAS early warning system (EWS), early warning about conflict had been essentially ad hoc,

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[72] Collier (2007), pp. 56-57
[73] Stewart & FitzGerald (2001), p. 156
[74] Pugh & Cooper (2004), pp. 103-110.
[75] However, Keen points to other retributive and strategic motivations for Taylor's support of the RUF incursion into Sierra Leone. See: Stewart & FitzGerald (2001), p. 159

informal or haphazard. The local and foreign media, NGOs, and human rights groups like International Crisis Group (ICG) and Human Rights Watch (HRW) can be credited with alerting the world to the threat, onset and consequences of state fragility in sub-Saharan Africa. However, aside from the concern with accuracy and reliability of such early-warning information, not much could be done to avoid conflict escalation because it addressed only one side of the equation.[76] Early warning will be futile if it is not backed up with early preventive action, i.e., early response. Institutionalizing early warning systems involves a number of processes: developing the capacity for systematic data gathering and analysis; translating the result into cogent policy prescriptions; and having a wide range of early responsive measures whose propriety will be determined on a case-by-case analysis. This is what I refer to as the research-policy-operation nexus.

Challenges

Preventive action is premised upon accurate prediction, but too often preventive analysis fails to take key factors into account, misses key warning signs, or misreads the problem. Such gaps in analysis therefore translate to missed opportunities for early action or application of the wrong tools.[77] The ICISS identifies a number of problems that weaken analytic capacity to predict violent conflict: the multiplicity of variables associated with the root causes of conflict and the complexities of their interactions; the associated absence of reliable models for predicting conflict; and the perennial problem of securing unbiased, accurate information on which to base analyses and action.

Pursuant to Chapter IV of the Mechanism which establishes a sub-regional peace and security observation system, the ECOWAS Early Warning Department has set up an internet-based, open-source, feedback-enabled network, the ECOWAS Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN), operated by the Observation and

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[76] Besides, fragile states either lacked the capacity or the political will to take any preventive action based on such early-warning information.
[77] Evans, *et al.* (2001), p. 21

Monitoring Centre (OMC).[78] ECOWARN is to serve in coordinating the data collection activities of the OMC, located at the Commission, with the Observation and Monitoring Zones with headquarters in Banjul, Cotonou, Monrovia and Ouagadougou. In order to reduce bias and political influence from member states, the Mechanism extends privileges and immunities to cover the operations, property, assets and staff of the zonal headquarters and the bureaux.[79] The OMC is mandated to collaborate with the UN, the AU, CSOs, research centres, and all other relevant international, regional and sub-regional organisations in early warning data collection and analysis.[80] This virtual and cross-cutting network has the potential to break the institutional silo posture and rigid bureaucracy that discourage interactive information and knowledge sharing, both internally and externally. However, it appears that the process of developing capacity in this respect has been slow and tortuous.[81]

To boost capacity in a conflict EWS, continuing improvements to the system are essential. This informs the establishment of networks and exchanges with researchers and practitioners on methodology and the interpretation of the system results. However, there is a perennial difficulty in the research-policy-operation nexus. This can be referred to as the "translational problem": the disconnect in translating research and analysis on early warning into operational terms in a cogent way that will be palatable to the policy maker in order to boost capacity and improve response. A sister concern to this logjam is: how do we relate challenges encountered and lessons learnt back to the research-policy-operation nexus in order to improve future responses?

The ECPF seeks to break this logjam through the process of Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E). The purpose of the M & E shall be to assess progress on a

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[78] This initiative has benefitted from the technical expertise of the West Africa Network for Peace-building (WANEP)
[79] Article 24, the Mechanism
[80] Article 23, the Mechanism
[81] The ECOWARN interactive website is yet to be fully operational. See: ECOWARN @ http://ecowarn.org/, last accessed 10 August 2008.

regular basis with a view to gauging impacts on the conflict landscape in West Africa and applying corrective, incremental or reinforcing measures, wherever and whenever necessary, to maximize outcomes.[82] Laudably, under the ECPF, M & E shall be carried out at the community, national and regional levels. However, M & E is a difficult task since we need to find an answer to the question: how do we know when early warning and early response actually succeed and how do we measure success? Intriguingly, a warning on a situation which doesn't result in a conflict could be either correct—the warning caused a response which prevented the outbreak—or incorrect—even without a response, the situation would not have escalated into conflict.[83] Henrik Lundin proposes two models for assessment: the one he calls the comparison approach, and the other I call the escalation – de-escalation meter.[84] But how does one know that it was the response which de-escalated the situation and not some other factor?

Opportunities

When it is established through an EWS that a state is fragile and risks facing conflict, what should be the next step? In other words, what is the toolbox of options for early response available to the policy maker? An early warning system can incorporate options whose suitability will be determined on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration a country's history, conflict drivers, current state and past experiences. The tools envisaged by the Mechanism—read jointly with the ECPF which breathes life into the dead letters of the Mechanism[85]—include: preventive diplomacy (mediation, conciliation, facilitation, arbitration); observation and monitoring; preventive deployment; peace-keeping and restoration of peace; humanitarian intervention in support of humanitarian disaster; enforcement of sanctions including

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[82] § 123, ECPF
[83] Lundin (2003), p. 34
[84] *Ibid.*
[85] However, it should be noted that the ECPF is only a referential document (practical guide) to direct policy in order to fulfil the objectives of conflict prevention, which is only one out of several limbs of the Mechanism. The ECPF therefore has persuasive, not binding, force. See: § 5 & 7, ECPF

embargo; and any other operations as may be mandated by the Mediation and Security Council (MSC). More extensively, the ECPF comprises fourteen components that span a chain of initiatives designed to strengthen human security and incorporate operational and structural conflict prevention activities as well as aspects of peace-building. These include: early warning; democracy and political governance; human rights and the rule of law; the media; natural resource governance; cross-border initiatives; security governance; practical disarmament; women, peace and security; youth empowerment; humanitarian assistance; and peace education (the culture of peace).[86]

The ECPF also recognizes four organs established by the Mechanism to assist the MSC in its conflict prevention and early response role. These are: the Defence and Security Commission, composed of representatives from the security sector, foreign and internal ministries of member states; Special Mediators, appointed by the Authority from among the Heads of State and Government; the Council of the Wise, which is constituted from a list of eminent but neutral persons from various segments of society, including women, political, traditional and religious leaders; and the ECOWAS Standby Force, which shall be composed of several stand-by multi-purpose units (civilian and military) in their countries of origin and ready for immediate deployment.[87]

Under the Mechanism, the choice of preventive and early response options in each case follows a fairly logical decision-making process. Overarching powers in conflict prevention, management and resolution, peace-keeping, humanitarian support, inter ali*a*, are vested in the Authority, which is composed of Heads of State and Government of member states. However, by automation, the Authority delegates its mandate to the MSC to take, on its behalf, appropriate decisions for the

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[86] §42, ECPF. Specific activities are enumerated under each component, and the prioritization and implementation of these activities will form the subject of the proposed four-year ECOWAS Plan of Action to be developed by the Commission. See: §112, ECPF

[87] See: Articles 17 & 22, the Mechanism. Note however the change in nomenclature over time. The Council of the Wise and the ECOWAS Standby Force were referred to as The Council of Elders and the ECOWAS Cease-Fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) respectively in the 1999 Mechanism.

implementation of the provisions of the Mechanism.[88] The legal implication of this delegation, which is made "without prejudice" to the Authority's wide-ranging powers, is significant. The Authority does not, by such blanket delegation, abdicate its responsibility or become divested of its powers. It can be assumed that functional convenience dictates that a body (ministers and ambassadors of the seven member countries of the MSC, together with their Heads of States and Governments) which can meet more regularly than the Authority and as often as the need arises, be handed the portfolio.[89] Being supreme, the Authority reserves the right to review any decision of the MSC by invoking its residue of power. This therefore acts as a check on the MSC in the exercise of its discretion.

However, the ECPF envisages a more decentralized, participatory, and speedier decision-making process and early response based on feedbacks from a number of bodies and organs, and tailored to the circumstances of each case.[90] This also represents an expansion of the toolbox and moves towards a more creative problem-solving approach. Since the transformation of the ECOWAS Secretariat into a Commission in 2007, the decision-making power of the MSC has been diffused. The President of the Commission is now empowered to make certain decisions on early preventive action in consultation with the MSC. A positive outcome of this might be de-politicization of the decision-making process—the temptation to pick and choose where and how to intervene. The missing link here is the political will to put policy into action. The next chapter will examine if and to what extent these opportunities for conflict prevention have been utilized in curbing the menace of state fragility in West Africa.

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[88] Articles 6 & 7, the Mechanism. Emphasis mine.

[89] However, the distinction between the Authority and the MSC is not clear-cut as the delegation of functions does not always translate to separation of persons when the MSC meets at the level of Heads of State and Government. For such meetings, the Heads of State and Government of the MSC, in effect, only act as a sub-committee of the Authority. See: Articles 11 & 12, the Mechanism.

[90] See for instance: § 49, ECPF on preventive diplomacy.

Benefits

An EWS can help in reducing state fragility and in preventing the outbreak or escalation of conflict. In terms of a cost-benefit analysis, the cost of institutionalizing and boosting of early warning and early response capacity for West Africa greatly outweighs the high risk, high probability, and damaging consequences of conflict. Sub-regional economic integration and sustainable development will accelerate with political stability. However, the potential of the ECOWAS EWS is yet to be fully maximized. For instance, the ECPF laments the "weak internal coordination, underutilization and misdirection of existing human capacities as well as the deployment of limited instruments" in implementation of the preventive aspects of the Mechanism.[91]

Gladly, an EWS has a cross-cutting, multi-functional capacity, thus making it interoperable in the areas of conflict prevention, disaster management and human development. At the level of the ECOWAS Commission, this would entail greater internal coordination and information sharing among the departments dealing with Political Affairs, Peace and Security; Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources; and Human Development and Gender. In reality, there can be no water-tight compartmentalization of peace and security concerns and issues of environmental and humanitarian disasters, drought and famine, youth vulnerability and exclusion, or unemployment, as some of these impinge on state capacity and resilience. Therefore, the monitoring of trends and indicators germane to these issues—which follows a similar systematic process of data gathering, analysis, policy and response as a conflict EWS—should be integrated into the existing instruments in ECOWAS in order to improve state capacity and disaster response preparedness.[92] This is the essence and benefit of planning from the future.

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[91] § 2, ECPF
[92] See: §28(b), ECPF. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) monitors and publishes high risk hazards and countries at risk in West Africa and other regions in its quarterly *Disaster Risk Trends*. The monitoring is done by the Virtual On-Site Operations Coordination Centre which is similar to the OMC of the

CHAPTER 4

LOCATING MECHANISMS IN CONTEXT: WHAT WORKS WHERE?

"They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore."

Isaiah, 2:4 (765-681 BC)

The Weak: Nigeria

Nigeria is ranked as the 18th most fragile state on *The Failed States Index 2008* better than only Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea in West Africa. Her rating on the economy and human rights is favourable, but low on uneven development along group lines, progressive deterioration of public services, security apparatus as a "state within a state", group grievances and a legacy of vengeance, the rise of factionalized elites, and chronic human flight. These indicators highlight areas where efforts to improve the capacity and resilience of the state should be channelled. However, for those efforts to be effective, they need to take stock of "how we got here" to be able to avoid past mistakes, and be sensitive to the local context and present conditions in order to do no harm.

Past Records: Root Causes

A coastal state on the shores of the Gulf of Guinea, Nigeria is made up of over 250 different ethnic groups contained in 36 states, a federal capital territory, and 775 local government councils across six geopolitical zones. The name "Nigeria" was first used in 1897 by the wife of Lord Lugard, the colonial Governor to Nigeria, as a

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ECOWAS system. See: *Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System* @ http://www.ocha.unog.ch/virtualosocc/, last accessed 20 August 2008.

convenient appellation for the vast territories encompassing the diverse peoples whose homelands were adjacent to the Niger River area. The present day Nigeria came into existence in 1914, when the Colony of Lagos and the Protectorates of Southern and Northern Nigeria were amalgamated: the state is more or less a forced alliance of divergent and seemingly incompatible nationalities. This artificial state status has its origin in the infamous Scramble for Africa[93], during which the Victorious Allies partitioned different African nationalities into juridical containers (states) for administrative convenience.[94] Some have argued that this ghastly fact of history doomed most states in sub-Saharan Africa to failure. Even the ECPF traces the root causes of violent conflict to such "fault-lines in the architecture of the post-colonial African state".[95]

The British colonial administration set the stage for divisions by imposing a tribal template upon the country. Divide and rule was the strategy: creating and encouraging divisions among the subjects in order to forestall alliances that could challenge colonial authority. Moreover, the policy of indirect rule engendered uneven socio-cultural, political and economic development across the country that still persists today.[96] Bemoaning the fragility of the Nigerian polity, some scholars of politics see the construction of a nation out of this complex configuration as inherently perverse, and an ideal whose realization is impossible.[97] The various ethnic nationalities that constitute Nigeria predate the imperial presence and it is the attempt to dislodge loyalties to these centuries-old *ethnies* in the new invention in order to transfer loyalty to the centre that constitutes the main challenge of nation-building in the country.[98] However, save for the violent contestation of her territorial

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[93] The Berlin Conference of 1884-1885.
[94] Griffiths (1986), p. 204
[95] § 10, ECPF
[96] Ukiwo & Okonta (2006), p. 11
[97] Okoye (2007), p. 2; Adedeji (1999), p. 225
[98] Okoye (2007), p. 4

sovereignty during the thirty-month-long Nigeria-Biafra civil war,[99] the Nigerian state continues to survive, albeit as an uneasy and precarious alignment.

Present Dilemmas: Escalation

The Nigerian state was more capacity-fragile and less resilience-fragile—though it lacked legitimacy—during the military era which spanned 28 out of the 48 years of her independence. As ghastly demonstrated by the Ken Saro Wiwa saga, the juntas condoned no political opposition. In this warped sense, the polity was relatively stable, though repressed grievances were simmering underneath the calm surface. Economic development was at its lowest ebb as the country's treasury, oiled by natural resource wealth, was fritted away to feather the nests of generals and their cohorts. The massive rents that have accrued to the state since the oil boom (1971-1977) fuelled corruption and the Dutch disease syndrome.[100] Bureaucratic and infrastructural decay became the norm. These features marked it as a "strong but unresponsive state".

The bottled-up grievances found expression—often in radical and violent manner—with the opening-up of democratic space on the country's return to civilian rule in 1999. Aspirations of the people for social, economic and political goods outran the already depleted capacity of the state to provide same, thus leading to civil violence.[101] Today, the state's monopoly of the legitimate use of force within its territory is challenged by ethnic militias and other armed groups. The Niger Delta region has turned from a safe haven to a dweller's nightmare, mirroring the consequences of relative deprivation of minority groups. The poor management of her natural resource wealth is a persisting conflict accelerator as the state is yet to devise a revenue-sharing formula acceptable to all its geopolitical zones. Though

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[99] It is noteworthy that the civil war predates the formation of ECOWAS and its EWS and therefore will not be considered on this ground. However, the divisive effects of the war still persist.

[100] Collier (2007), pp. 38-52. It is ironical that Nigeria which produces over 2.5 million barrels of crude per day still relies heavily on imports of refined petroleum to satisfy local energy needs. This has been attributed to the breakdown of her four major oil refineries which were neglected during the long years of military rule.

[101] Huntington (1971), pp. 1 & 2

Nigeria contributes immensely to peacekeeping in parts of Africa, keeping the peace at home remains elusive. However, since 1999, enormous resources have been devoted to boosting state capacity to cater to the needs of its people, and accelerating economic development.[102]

Thus, democratization marked a turning point in the country's fragility index: Nigeria is now proportionately less capacity-fragile and more resilience-fragile, thus making it "weak but willing." Progress is agonizingly slow, but it is progress none the less. Considering that transitional states are more prone to fragility, there is the need to adopt a cautious approach and keep our expectations modest for a few decades more. Every state needs to find its right balance and pace, but development and human security need to be synchronized. [103] To illustrate this point, education overwhelmingly outruns employment in Nigeria. This is a conflict accelerator. To defuse such accelerator, the need of the people to secure their future by getting educated has to be matched with the state's capacity to absorb the educated or promote worthy alternatives. Likewise, the need of the people to secure their lives and property by enlisting the services of vigilantes and militias—who often turn around to prey on their masters—has to be surpassed by the state's capacity to maintain a police force and hold accountable a security sector that will inspire trust and confidence.

Future Opportunities: De-escalation

Now, what can ECOWAS do to bolster conflict prevention in Nigeria? What options exist if we reach into the toolbox assembled by the ECOWAS Mechanism and the ECPF? As enunciated in the R2P, primary responsibility to prevent conflict lies with the Nigerian state, thereby making any ECOWAS effort in this respect only

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[102] The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), which was launched in 2003, is Nigeria's home-grown poverty reduction strategy.
[103] See: § 6, ECPF for a definition of "human security".

complementary.[104] The principle of being complimentary is therefore wedged by sovereign walls.

The nature of Nigeria's fragility suggests that emphasis should be placed on context-relevant but unobtrusive measures like promoting human security, capacity building and national integration, which are middle and long term objectives, respectively. In this situation, a two-pronged approach to address both the root causes and conflict accelerators is favoured, thus falling within the ambit of structural conflict prevention: restoration and maintenance of economic and social infrastructure; restoration and reform of governance institutions (political, economic, and security); ensuring justice, social equality and the rule of law; and conflict-sensitive development.[105] To this list, one should also add natural resource governance and the protection of minority rights to take care of the clear and present security concern in the Niger Delta. Informal, non-state security actors should also be the subjects of security sector governance.[106] And youth restiveness—accompanied by human flight when no vent is found for discontent—can be addressed by comprehensive initiatives to reverse youth vulnerability and exclusion.

The Failing: Cote d'Ivoire

As indicated in *The Failed States Index 2008*, Côte d'Ivoire ranks as the most fragile state in West Africa and the 8th in the world. In fact, this is an improvement on her last year records. This may be linked to the uneasy calm that has returned since the signing of the peace accord on 4 March 2007 which was facilitated by the Burkinabe President Blaise Compaoré under the aegis of ECOWAS, and further extension of the mandate of the UN peacekeeping force in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) and the French troops supporting it by the Security Council.[107] Côte d'Ivoire ranks low on severe

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[104] This is confirmed by Article 3(a), the Mechanism and § 115(a), ECPF
[105] § 19(b), ECPF
[106] § 73(d), ECPF
[107] UN SC Resolution 1828 of 29 July 2008. The 1,300 ECOWAS peacekeeping troops (ECOMICI) was upgraded and absorbed into a 9000-man strong UN force at the behest of ECOWAS. Such cooperation is envisaged by § 116 (b) & 119, ECPF.

economic decline, security apparatus as a "state within state", group grievances or group paranoia, chronic human flight, arbitrary application of the rule of law and widespread violation of human rights, and external intervention by other states and political actors.

Past Records: Root Causes

Côte d'Ivoire [108] sits contentedly on the Gulf of Guinea and is bounded to the east, north and west by Liberia, Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso and Ghana, from where some of her peoples can be traced.[109] France took an interest in the territories comprised in her borders from the 1840s, enticing local chiefs to grant French commercial traders a monopoly along the coast. French Admiral Bouët-Willaumez signed treaties with the Grand Bassam and Assinie kingdoms in 1843-1844, placing their territories under a French protectorate. Thereafter, the French built naval bases to keep out non-French traders and began a systematic conquest of the hinterland. In contradistinction to the British system of indirect rule, French West Africa was administered from Paris until World War II. After World War II, General Charles De Gaulle's provisional government granted French citizenship to all African subjects. The right to political participation and elective principle were recognized and consolidated by the *Loi Cadre* of 1956, and various forms of forced labour were abolished.

At independence in 1960, Côte d'Ivoire was one of West Africa's most prosperous states, contributing over 40% of the sub-region's total exports. This feat was a point of reference in all of sub-Saharan Africa: the "Ivorian miracle". As the country's first president, Félix Houphouët-Boigny promoted economic diversification and foreign direct investment. His government gave farmers subsidies to further stimulate production. Houphouët-Boigny was considerably

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[108] French word for "Ivory Coast". Because of the vagaries of translation into sundry international languages, in October 1985 the government requested that the country be known as Côte d'Ivoire in every language. According to national law, the name of the country shall not be translated from French.
[109] It is believed that the Kru people migrated from Liberia; the Senoufo and Lubi moved southward from Burkina Faso and Mali; the Akan people, including the Baoulé, migrated from Ghana into the eastern area of the country; and the Malinké migrated from Guinea into the northwest.

more conservative than most of his African contemporaries, maintaining a one-party state and close ties to the west. This contributed to the political and economic stability the country enjoyed at the time. French support to Côte d'Ivoire extended into the Cold War Era.[110]

However, things started to fall apart in the late 1980s.[111] Intriguingly, the post-colonial history and politics of Côte d'Ivoire show that self-rule could be as politically challenging as imperial rule, and demonstrates how nationalist mantras could be manipulated to political ends—via a constitutional amendment in 2000:

> The country's political fortune has fluctuated from Houphouët-Boigny's iron-fisted paternalism (1960-1993) to Henri Konan Bedie's crass ineptitude, Robert Guei's authoritarian rule, and Laurent Gbado's arrogance and xenophobic policy of 'Ivoirite'. The concept of Ivoirite, which translates literally to 'Ivoirien-ness' or 'Côte d'Ivoire for pure Ivoiriens' has become the bane of governance and politics since the advent of Laurent Gbagbo.[112]

How did a country with such a relatively stable past and the promise of a bright future just two decades ago descend so rapidly into the fragility trap?

Present Dilemmas: Escalation

The decline of Côte d'Ivoire teach us an important lesson: not all root causes of violent conflict can be traced directly to fault-lines in the architecture of the post-colonial African state.[113] Although the country comprises more than 60 ethnic groups—existing more as a state-nation[114] than as a nation-state since the great

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[110] In 1971, French troops squelched a rebellion by Gbagbo's *Bete* ethnic group against Houphouët-Boigny's government, and several coup attempts were foiled with the help of French intelligence.
[111] See: ICG (2007), *Conflict History: Côte d'Ivoire* @ http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?action=conflict_search&l=1&t=1&c_country=32, last accessed 20 August 2008
[112] 'Fayemi (2004), p. 15
[113] See: § 10, ECPF
[114] Rejai & Enloe (1969), p. 140

partitioning at the Berlin Conference—surprisingly, ethnic resentment had little to do with the conflict. Rather, it was official corruption and unresponsiveness of the governments to the needs of its people that spelled doom. The IMF and World Bank-sponsored Structural Adjustment Programme cut back on the state's capacity to provide basic social services, thus worsening the economic woes of the country. With Houphouët-Boigny's death in 1993, successive battles for the presidency derailed the democratic process. Disintegrating economy and governance were cited by General Robert Gueï's as justifications for the December 1999 *coup d'état*

Piecemeal efforts to restore stability and build peace have been made by French military forces, the South African government, the AU and the UN. Côte d'Ivoire is a major Francophone state with discernible French sympathy and an anti-Anglophone predisposition.[115] The ECOWAS Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (ECOMICI) in 2002—a peacekeeping force of 1,300 soldiers—was designed to end the war and monitor the ceasefire, thus creating space for peace negotiations and humanitarian operations. But French troops had already arrived in October 2002, interposed between the south and the north to monitor the *zone de confiance*[116]. Early attempts at mediation by ECOWAS were rejected in September 2005 by Laurent Gbagbo who pointed out that some ECOWAS countries—notably Liberia and Burkina Faso—were involved in the rebellion.[117]

Côte d'Ivoire continues on the path to peace one year after the ex-Forces Nouvelles (FN) rebellion leader Guillaume Soro was appointed prime minister by his former adversary, President Laurent Gbagbo, with the signing of the Ouagadougou Peace Accord on 4 March 2007. But will this be just one in a long line of peace accords?[118] An acid test of the fragile peace is yet to come as the country

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[115] 'Fayemi (2004), p. 12. Houphouët-Boigny was one of the founders of the *Rassemblement Démocratique Africain* (RDA), the pre-independence inter-territorial political party for French West African territories. This development resulted in a schism between Francophone and Anglophone West Africa in political affairs post-independence.
[116] This means, literally, zone of confidence; practically, a partitioning of the north and the south to stem the conflict.
[117] UNOCHA (2005), *Côte d'Ivoire: New Peace Effort Under Way but Gbagbo Refuses Role for West Africa* @ http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2005/09/mil-050928-irin02.htm, last accessed 20 August 2008.
[118] ICG (2007), *Ibid.*

gears up for presidential elections in November 2008, after several postponements. Gory tales from Kenya in December 2007 and Zimbabwe in March and June 2008 are reminders that elections in sub-Saharan Africa could be the matchstick action to a keg of gunpowder waiting to explode.[119] This is yet another early warning signal.

Future Opportunities: De-escalation

ECOWAS' late response to earlier warnings of fragility in Côte d'Ivoire has received severe vilification. According to Alade Fawole, it was either that ECOWAS simply lacked the capacity to discern when explosive trouble was brewing, or that it lacked the political will to:

> ...censure any of its members, more or less shielding an errant leader from open blame. It is not uncommon for African rulers, most of them similarly inclined towards authoritarian rule, to close ranks and give each other a clean bill of health, even when the sick nature of their rule is too glaring for all to see.[120]

Incidentally, another opportunity for conflict prevention, conflict de-escalation, and peace-building beckons. Priorities should be sequenced: short-term measures of peace-building with mediation between the parties and disarmament of soldiers[121] to create the political space and conditions favourable for free and fair elections; medium-term measures of reconstruction to reinforce governance institutions and social infrastructure; then long-term measures of national reintegration which should begin with dissolution of *la zone de confiance*. In line with the graduated strategy for building peace which shall be implemented as a continuum, Articles 42 and 45 of the Mechanism—which provisions are complemented by Articles 11 to 18 of the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance 2001—obligates ECOWAS to be involved in the preparation,

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[119] See: § 12-14, ECPF on conflict progression from root causes to accelerators and triggers.
[120] 'Fayemi (2004), p. 20
[121] Pursuant to Articles 50 & 51, the Mechanism and § 78 (f), ECPF

organisation and supervision of elections in member states in order to stem social and political upheavals and restore political authority.

In its next steps, ECOWAS should establish conditions for the political, social, economic and cultural reconstruction of governance institutions;[122] implement disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes, including those for child soldiers; and facilitate the resettlement of refugees and internally displaced persons.[123] Ensuring civilian control and democratic governance of the state's security apparatus, and promoting national integration by first, a repeal of the constitutional provision adopting the xenophobic policy of 'Ivoirite' will go a long way in defusing conflict. A fundamental principle of the Mechanism to which member states commit is the protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms and the rules of international humanitarian laws.[124] In times of armed conflict however, human rights and the rule of law fly through the window. For this reason, the Mechanism provides that the development of respect for human rights and enhancement of the rule of law and the judiciary should be undertaken simultaneously with the restoration of political authority.[125]

The Failed but Reviving: Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone gradually climbs the stability ladder, coming midway as the 31st of the 60 most fragile states rated on *The Failed States Index 2008.* Since the cessation of armed conflict in the country, she has embarked on a DDR process, an ambitious reconstruction programme, and has undergone a successful democratic transition. However, she still ranks low on severe economic decline and sustained human flight. What can be done to build on the gains already made while avoiding the possibility of a relapse into conflict?

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[122] § 53 (a), ECPF
[123] Article 44, the Mechanism
[124] Article 2(d), the Mechanism; See also: Articles 32-35, Supplementary Protocol
[125] Article 45, the Mechanism

Past Records: Root Causes

On the mountainous peninsula and the adjacent islands at the tip of the Gulf of Guinea, British merchants founded Sierra Leone, a colony for free slaves, in 1787. British control and influence were extended over the lands in the interior, and in 1896, a British Protectorate was declared over these annexed lands as part of Sierra Leone. The administrative system reflected the dual nature of the legal status of the people in the two regions: whereas the colony was governed in accordance with British governmental principles, the protectorate was in accordance with the system of indirect rule. [126]

Development was uneven in the two regions. There are at least 17 ethnic groups contained in the territories of Sierra Leone. The new administrative units grouped people of different ethnic backgrounds, who often shared a long history of warfare, together. Harsh British fiscal policies often provoked rebellion against the administration. This led to the deposition or demotion of some defiant paramount chiefs and served as a deterrent to others. As revealed by John Bobor Laggah et al., the imposition of Ruling Houses on certain ethnic groups who were not used to hereditary monarchical rule "was to play a key role in fuelling conflicts in subsequent years, down to the present day". [127] Moreso, visible disparities in development between the northern and southern regions of the country were later to be capitalized on by disingenuous politicians to promote their own interests.

Under colonial rule, a pattern of economic predation based on the extraction of largely unprocessed raw materials combined with widespread corruption among Sierra Leonean politicians and local chiefs to create deep pools of resentment among those excluded from the booty.[128] During the immediate post-independence era, efforts to revive the economy and develop the country's infrastructure and social services met with limited success. Despite an abundant natural resource endowment, Sierra Leone seemed to have been infected by the Dutch disease. With

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[126] Adedeji (1999), p. 174
[127] *Ibid.*, pp. 175-176
[128] Stewart & FitzGerald (2001), p. 157

the World Bank and the IMF-sponsored privatization schemes in the 1970s and 1980s, the state started losing control of the economy to businessmen and their political allies who favoured strong monopolies instead of the redistribution of wealth. President Siaka Stevens played a key role in these monopolistic concerns, rewarding his loyalists through the good offices of the government. As state revenues and capacity spiralled downwards, the state became unable to suppress discontent.[129]

Present Dilemmas: Escalation

The dynamics of the conflict in Sierra Leone confound the long-held sporting model of warfare which presumes principled contestation between government and rebel forces, and the anarchic model which presumes mindless violence resulting from centuries-old tribal hatreds. The outbreak of the conflict can neither be linked to a just cause based on unaddressed grievances and relative deprivation, nor can the escalation be explained away as a slide from root causes to accelerators and a trigger event. The trigger event in this case was a surprise unconnected with the internal dimensions of fragility. David Keen proffers a more asymmetrical explanation in the economic functions of war. According to him, warfare can be a rational enterprise premised on economic gains to the key actors who remain immune from the direct consequences of violence.[130] Such actors may even be unlinked to the outbreak of conflict but have interest in perpetuating it.

The Charles Taylor-sponsored RUF's incursion into Sierra Leone was a military strategy to tie up ECOMOG troops that would otherwise have been deployed against him in Liberia. The direction of the attack in March 1991 was also strategic, leveraging on local grievances and ethnic fission between the eastern and southern provinces on the one hand, and the northern province on the other. It served to magnify political and socio-economic decay which made the state more

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[129] *Ibid.*, p. 158
[130] *Ibid.*, pp. 155-157

susceptible to conflict.[131] Again, the conflict quickly metamorphosed into a "war economy" often bringing together Liberia's NPFL rebels and Sierra Leonean soldiers in informal cross-border trade; traditional Ruling Houses and RUF rebels in protection rackets and warmongering; Sierra Leonean soldiers and RUF fighters exploiting civilians; Lebanese traders, Sierra Leonean soldiers and RUF fighters in illegal diamond mining.[132] The informal economy impinged on the capacity of state to raise revenue.[133] This represents not just the collapse of a system but the creation of an alternative system.

Future Opportunities: De-escalation

Another lesson for policy: root causes and accelerators make countries more prone to—and less resilient in the face of—outbreak of conflict, but there is no root cause—accelerator—trigger domino effect. Triggers are less predictable, but a wholly external trigger is a different case altogether: a surprise. This exposes a challenge to any early warning system as surprises spring from below the radar. Having learnt a costly lesson from Liberia and Sierra Leone, ECOWAS has now developed capacity to guard against such surprises—rapid deployment by the ECOWAS Standby Force—especially in internationalized internal conflicts, or internal conflicts that threatens regional peace and security.[134] But surprises will always remain surprises. In which ways can the ECOWAS system build the shock-absorbing capacity of the Sierra Leonean state to withstand future surprises and avoid sliding back into conflict?

Huge amount of foreign aid gave Sierra Leone the kiss of life after her failure. However, much of the aid has been channelled through local and foreign NGOs and contractors, thereby missing an opportunity to build state capacity to provision for

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[131] *Cf.*: Adedeji (1999), 186-187
[132] Stewart & FitzGerald (2001), pp. 162-163
[133] Diamond smuggling reached around US$300 million per year, and probably increased as the conflict progressed. *Ibid.*, p. 158
[134] However, the constitution, composition and command of the UN peacekeeping force in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) suggests that ECOWAS capacity in peacekeeping, both human and material, is still grossly inadequate.

its citizens. It is feared that the manner of post-conflict reconstruction and state building will only end up constructing an anaemic state dependent on foreign aid and therefore not sustainable, or building a paper state that lacks capacity and resilience and will therefore crumble again. A number of actions need to be taken. First, priority should be given to fostering integration through peace-building. Peaceful coexistence is a precondition for effective and enduring state building and reconstruction.[135] Developing a culture of peace (peace education) involves targeted orientation to shift the thought and behavioural patterns of people away from a confrontational mode towards amicable resolution of disputes.[136] Paragraph 98 of ECPF further enumerates activities ECOWAS shall undertake in member states to promote a culture of peace. The activities of illegal miners and informal diamond trade networks have been curtailed with the Kimberley Certification Regime for Conflict Diamonds, but more can be done by ECOWAS to enable the state institute an efficient natural resource governance regime. Award of contracts, exploration and exploitation of resources, and redistribution of benefits accruing from such resources should be transparent, environmentally-friendly, and equitable to ensure sustainable development, social cohesion and stability.[137] These can be achieved with the active involvement of CSOs. The negative trend of human flight would be reversed in due course when successes in even economic and infrastructural development, boosting state capacity to provide basic services, and national integration are consolidated.

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[135] Article 44(b), the Mechanism

[136] Article 51(a), the Mechanism; § 97, ECPF

[137] § 64 & 65(c), ECPF

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

"One day we must come to see that peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek, but that it is a means by which we arrive at that goal. We must pursue peaceful ends through peaceful means."

<div align="right">Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-Éternité)</div>

Next Steps: Policy Recommendations

To prevent and reduce state fragility, different things must be done and things must be done differently, but more importantly, the right things must be done.[138] However, adopting a sub-regional approach involves balancing two seemingly irreconcilable ends: streamlining measures across contiguous states and adopting a broad, transformative framework. For ECOWAS to get things right in West Africa, it needs to wear a Janus face. Looking inwardly entails mainstreaming and boosting its anticipatory, adaptive and responsive capacities to the menace of state fragility. Looking outwardly would entail a more nuanced approach to the varied security and development needs of disparate societies.

The Research-Policy-Operation Nexus: Challenges, Gaps and Feedback

For best results and to improve capacity in an EWS, there is the need to forge a reinforcing link between research, policy and operation in a process of continuing interaction, improvement and adaptation. Such interaction entails that actors at each stage understand the nature of the others' roles for better synergy. Short of swapping roles, virtual windows should be created to peep into the others' roles and

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[138] *Cf.*: Picciotto, *et al.* (2005), p. 8

to generate feedback. However, international decision making is a complex process that involves consensus building and the political will necessary to translate early warning to early response. For starters, policymakers should realize the practical use of academic research in improving methods of gathering and analyzing data and early warning signals. The tendency to see researchers as idealists who only censor policymaking decreases reliance on research results and often starves research of needed funding. On the other hand, researchers—whether in-house, commissioned or independent— should realize that policymaking and implementation is not a bed of roses. In this regard, the aim of research should be to support and inform policymaking through policy-relevant briefs.

Human beings and human groupings do not always kowtow to strict, mechanistic laws or predictable behaviour. Policy should therefore be sensitive to the local context and dynamics. Lessons should be drawn from the practical challenges encountered in implementing policy, and bottom-up feedback from operations (M & E) should inform research and policy. In the end, the joined-up contributions and interactions of policy, research and operations should seek to rebalance economic structures and the socio-political environment so as to defuse the causes and drivers of state fragility.

Supranationality versus Sovereignty

The ECOWAS Revised Treaty of 1993 conferred the status of "supranationality" on ECOWAS. Pursuant to this, the ECOWAS Strategic Vision 2020 seeks to transform the sub-region from an "ECOWAS of States" into an "ECOWAS of the Peoples".[139] This is a futuristic goal which will progressively transfer the mandate of ECOWAS to the *peoples* as opposed to *states* of West Africa, thereby seeking to bypass sovereign national walls to make ECOWAS decisions directly applicable in member states. Practically, this goal meets the challenge of state sovereignty and the corollary

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[139] § 4, ECPF

principle of non-intervention.[140] The ECPF recognizes this challenge by restating that ECOWAS member states bear primary responsibility for peace and security, but proffers a solution thus, "the tensions between sovereignty and supranationality, and between regime security and human security, shall be progressively resolved in favour of supranationality and human security respectively".

However, this progressive transformation should be embarked upon cautiously to avoid potential friction as it would result in further shrinking the sphere of state sovereignty. States—nay, regimes—in sub-Saharan Africa are not wont to sharing sovereignty. Shrewdly, the Revised Treaty avoids any mention of state sovereignty in its Fundamental Principles but rather emphasizes inter-dependence and good neighbourliness.[141] Intrusive measures beyond harmonization, coordination and facilitation of policies in member states as envisaged by the Revised Treaty will likely be rejected. The principle of complementarity in ECOWAS relations with member states seeks to strengthen state capacity rather than supplant state authority.[142] However, as experience with external involvement in fragile states shows, the implementation of such mandates could indeed weaken the very states they are meant to support. Success will entail unwavering commitment and political will to turn policy into action.

Top-Down versus Bottom-Up Strategy

As can be drawn from the cases considered in this paper, historical factors, cultural patterns, social configuration, geophysical characteristics, economic considerations and political expedience often reinforce the nature of a state's fragility. The obvious implication of this contextual challenge, that each case merits sui generis consideration, does not of course invalidate the search for an overarching sub-regional strategy/framework for the prevention and reduction of state fragility.[143]

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[140] Article 2(e) & (f), the Mechanism
[141] Article 4, ECOWAS Revised Treaty
[142] § 115, ECPF
[143] *Cf.*: Cooper & Pugh (2002), p. 12

The ultimate test, however, lies in making the sub-regional strategy flexible, case-sensitive, and reflective of the needs of each state. This would involve a delicate process of synchronizing the priorities of external proposals and the need for local ownership.

Local ownership involves making the people part of the process of finding a solution to their problems by adopting a grassroots and inclusive approach, rather than handing down to them proposed solutions to what we believe their problems are. Such a process would engage with local stakeholders both within and outside the institutions of government. The articulation and deliberation over security and development needs should not end in national parliaments, but should be extended to town halls, churches, mosques, university auditoriums, civil society seminars, labour congresses, disgruntled groups, and even warlords or ethnic militias which are the wellsprings of conflict. In the end, the process—by building trust—will make the devised formulae credible in the eyes of the people, make the implementation of the policies legitimate, and make the people more committed to meeting goals which they were more or less involved in setting.

A meeting point between the top-down sub-regional strategy and a bottom-up local priority setting will be the proposed four-year ECOWAS Plan of Action and Logical Framework for the ECPF. The process of drafting the Plan is bound to be as important as the Plan itself. The ECPF forecasts that the supplementary Plan will catalogue identified priority activities to be undertaken in member states, but remains mute on the procedure for identifying the priorities.[144] If ECOWAS is to start living up to its goal as an "ECOWAS of the people" and its overall aim of strengthening human security by prioritizing conflict prevention, then this presents an opportunity to make a quantum shift from traditional, headquarters-oriented policymaking to grassroots, people-orient problem-solving.

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[144] §29 (f) & 122, ECPF

The Last Word

Peculiar historical, geopolitical and local dynamics prevalent in different states in West Africa dictate not only that different answers be sought to the menace of state fragility, but also that answers be sought in a different manner. Although this paper envisages an increased role for ECOWAS in fostering better coordination in fragile states, practical challenges call for caution in adopting an integrated, sub-regional approach to the prevention of state fragility. There is the need to move beyond an overarching sub-regional strategy in boosting the capacity and resilience of fragile states towards a more nuanced, bottom-up approach. For better results, preventive policy should be sequenced—short term, medium term and long term—depending on the nature and extent of each state's fragility.

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