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The EU and Regional Integration in West Africa: What Effects on Conflict Resolution and Transformation?

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1. Introduction

This paper focuses on West Africa and examines the role of the European Union (EU) in the promotion of regional integration in the region. It also addresses the effects of regional integration on regional conflict transformation, through the lenses of the two main regional organisations: the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine (UEMOA), known in English as the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU).

The first section of the paper provides a brief background on the dynamics of conflicts in West Africa along with their regional dimensions. The paper then presents an overview of the main regional integration initiatives in the region, illustrating the different sectors of regional integration. The third section describes the EU activities in the region, examining specifically its policies and interventions and its support for regional organizations. The final sections provide an assessment of regionalism and the EU's impact in West Africa, concluding with some policy recommendations.

2. The dynamics of conflict in West Africa

2.2 The West African region

Since the end of the Cold War, West Africa has been portrayed as one of the most unstable regions in the world (Kaplan 1994). This is substantiated by the numerous conflicts and security crises that have plagued it for the past two decades.

The region covers the part of Africa that is bordered to both the South and the West by the Atlantic Ocean and to the North by the Sahara Desert. It comprises of sixteen geographically proximate and contiguous states “presenting all the socio-political and economic diversity and facing all the challenges readily associated with the entire continent” (N’Diaye 2011: 36). The composition of the West African region includes Benin; Burkina Faso; Cape Verde; Côte d’Ivoire; Gambia; Ghana; Guinea; Guinea-Bissau; Liberia; Mali; Mauritania; Niger; Nigeria; Senegal; Sierra Leone and Togo. According the CIA World Factbook 2013, West Africa had an estimated population of 315 443 201 in July 2013, which is expected to exceed 400 million by 2020 and 500 million between 2030 and 2035. Nigeria occupies a special place, as it is alone home to 50% of the West African population. The diversity of the region is reflected in its political history with an Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone colonial divide, and with socio-cultural, ethnic and linguistic differences. Though European languages (notably French, English and to some extent Portuguese) remain widely spoken in the region, there is a significant number of ‘local’ languages too.

The history of post-independence West Africa, especially in the past two decades, has been marked by numerous violent conflicts. Very few of these conflicts have been inter-state conflicts (Kacowicz 1997), while intra-state conflicts have been the dominant form of warfare. While some of them (Liberia, Sierra Leone) have been particularly violent and resulted in a high number of casualties and deaths, others have been low-intensity or contained. For instance, security crises could be discerned in Burkina Faso, the Gambia, Senegal, though no open warfare prevailed.

Not only are West African conflicts of varying dimensions, durations, scales and intensities, but triggers and catalysts of these conflicts are also multi-dimensional, diverse and highly interlinked. This makes it problematic to come up with a simple classification for them. While Jackson (2006: 22) argues that the occurrence of conflicts in West Africa is due to the accumulation of political, economic, structural, historical and cultural factors, Williams contends that there is no single element to blame (2011: 5). However, there is a broad consensus that at the root of West African conflicts is the absence of effective governance structures (Olonisakin 2011: 8; Musah 2009; Kuerschner 2013), the diffusion of poverty and rampant economic inequality (Interview LECIAD, 2013).

It is worth pointing here that, prior to the colonial period, West African states as currently demarcated did not really exist. There were different types of polities, including stateless societies, city-states and multi-ethnic empires, but no nation states in conventional, Western sense. As was the case with most of Africa, borders were drawn on a map by former colonial powers, which, after colonialism, led to the formation of new countries with little relation to pre-colonial societies.

Ever since political independence in the late 1950s and early 1960s, West African states have experimented with a variety of systems of governance, ranging from multi-party democratic politics to single-party civilian/authoritarian governments and military dictatorships. In fact, the sub-region used to have the highest incidence of military coups and interventions in civilian politics (Francis 2001: 11). Since the end of the Cold War, many states have initiated a process of liberalization, which in several cases has however not led to the establishment of a consolidated democratic state (Van de Walle 2002). The combined effects of the end of the Cold War and the negative effects of globalisation, coupled with the nature of domestic politics based on 'neopatrimonialism', a system "based on personalised structures of authority where patron-client relationships operate behind a facade of ostensibly rational state bureaucracy" (Taylor & Williams 2008:137), have led to state collapse and civil wars as in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, Mali and Côte d'Ivoire.

Repressive, ineffective leadership, exclusionary policies that have haunted not only this region but the African continent as a whole (N'Diaye 2011: 40) have played a major role in all West African conflicts. In the major three full-scale civil wars (Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-

Bissau) that the region has witnessed in the beginning of the '90s, governance became characterized by institutional corruption and greed, very low infrastructure development, hatred and discrimination along ethnic lines, skewed notions of citizenship (Côte d'Ivoire) as well as the alienation and consequent disillusionment of the youth (Musah 2009: 13-14). These factors combined to undermine the integrity of the state, engendering violent conflicts.

Underlying economic problems have also featured prominently in all recent West African conflicts. Poverty and the propensity for natural resource mismanagement are important factors in shaping conflicts. It is important to highlight here that, though several West African countries are very richly endowed in mineral resources (oil, gold, uranium, diamonds and titanium, just to mention a few) or agricultural resources (such as cocoa, coffee, cotton, palm oil), the West African region has not been able to use this situation to the benefit of its people. According to the 2013 Least Developed Countries Report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), eight out of a group of 49 countries among the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in the world are from West Africa. Similarly, many of the West African states have low percentage of their populations with regards to access to sanitation and health services. According to the African Development Bank (AFDB) (2012: 186, 199, 223, 246), the following countries had the lowest percentages with regards to access to sanitation in the year 2006: Mali (20%); Niger (9%); Sierra Leone (12%). Similarly, in comparison with other African regions, West Africa figured in the bottom three with regards to access to health services in the year 2010 with only 26% (AFDB 2012: 65). At the same time, the income distribution in West Africa is one of the most skewed of the continent with up to as much as twenty times of the national income controlled by the top 10% than the share controlled by the bottom 10% of their poorest fellow citizens (African Development Bank 2012: 62). Added to these are unemployment, particularly the youth, infant, and child mortality, which also favour the emergence of conflicts.

West African conflicts also have important international dimensions. The US along with former colonial powers such as France (whose former colonies make up the majority of the states in the sub-region) and, to a lesser extent, Great Britain, have over the years impacted the nature, evolution and outcome of various conflicts in the sub-region (N'Diaye 2011: 48). Especially during the Cold War, they have done so often by supporting (through arms transfer and financial backing) repressive regimes in the sub-region, whether Samuel Doe in Liberia, Eyadema in Togo, Houphouët-Boigny in Côte d'Ivoire or others. External power support has ensured some short term stability, but when it has dwindled, notably with the end of the Cold War, these countries have been left with all the ingredients and domestic factors of conflict in place (N'Diaye 2011: 52). In some cases, such as Sierra Leone and Mali, former colonial powers should be credited for conducting successful peace enforcement operations, by virtue of their superior military capabilities. The

United Nations (UN) has also been deeply involved in peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts within the region. It has a dedicated office for West Africa and has conducted peace operations in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire and Mali.

While the root causes of West African conflicts have remained largely unchanged through time, the actual level of violence has not been constant. The Cold War was a period of relative (albeit perhaps illusory stability), as authoritarian regimes in the region were propped up by either Western or Eastern powers, which helped to repress potential challenges to their rule, especially in the French speaking countries. The end of the Cold War, on the other hand, has coincided with an outburst of major conflicts. Today, West Africa offers a picture of a region that is not fully pacified, but where violence has been contained and brought under control. The security situation is very different from what it used to be at the beginning of the '90s, when the situation of the region was described as the 'coming anarchy' (Kaplan 1994). Full-scale civil wars have mutated into low level or 'frozen' conflicts (such as criminal violence, intra-communal violence). Without under-estimating the impact of these conflicts on the well-being of conflict-affected populations, the death toll of the recent and contemporary conflicts in Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Nigeria is a small fraction of what used to be the death toll of previous major insurgencies. Other conflicts revolving around ethnic and economic issues have been successfully contained, such as the Casamance insurgency in Senegal and community conflicts in Northern Ghana. On the other hand, there has been an increase in the level of non-conventional threats, particularly terrorism, with Islamic radical organizations emerging in the Sahel and Northern Nigeria, electoral violence and maritime piracy. It is expected that the trend will continue and that West Africa will be more and more confronted to these phenomena rather than full-scale civil wars.

2.2 The regional dimension of conflicts

An important dimension of wars and armed conflicts in West Africa is the regionalisation of domestic civil wars. Although West African wars are considered internal conflicts, they cannot escape the influence of realities and dynamics of the immediate sub-regional, regional, and wider international environments in which they unfold. Conflicts in any state in West Africa have affected neighbouring countries, all due to the complexity and depth of the demographic, political, economic and cultural ties between countries (Musah 2009: 49). For instance, the Casamance conflict has embroiled neighbouring Guinea-Bissau and the Gambia just as the influx of mercenaries from the Liberian conflict has exacerbated insecurity in western Côte d'Ivoire. In the same way, the insurgency in northern Niger has influenced the resurgence of separatism and banditry in northern Mali, particularly among the local Tuareg.

The regional dimensions and dynamics of violence often fuel and sustain these wars through the activities of ‘peace spoilers’, that is, those diverse interests that benefit from the exploitation of the war economies and would do anything to ensure the prolongation of the war (Francis, 2009: 91). In some cases, conflict-affected countries accuse neighbouring states of having played a surreptitious role in their predicament and either threaten to take or actually take reprisal actions. For instance, at a point during the Côte d’Ivoire conflict in September 2003, in Senegal throughout the 1980s and the 1990s, throughout the Mano River basin, neighbouring countries have accused one another of interference.

It is also important to point here that West Africa is a showcase of arms proliferation, notably Small Arms Light Weapons (SALW). Vast quantities of arms have flooded the region despite their rampant misuse by state and non-state actors alike. The widespread availability of small arms, especially to abusive actors, poses a major threat to West Africa. There are several reasons why SALW are extreme tools of violence in West Africa. These weapons are cheap and widely available; they are also lightweight, and so can be used by child soldiers, who have played a significant role in major conflicts in West Africa (Keili 2008: 5-12).

A significant element in the proliferation of small arms is the porous nature of West Africa’s borders. Unmanned border crossing points and widespread corruption facilitate illicit trafficking in small arms. Despite the ending of many conflicts in the sub-region, smuggling and the illicit trade in small arms are reported to be on the increase.

The porous nature of West African borders facilitates also other illegal traffics, such as trafficking in persons and drugs. Even the smuggling of otherwise legal goods, such as diamonds (Sierra Leone) or cocoa (Côte d’Ivoire) can contribute to the regionalization of conflicts, by favouring the development of war economies, which sustain violent conflicts and create vested interests in their perpetuation.

The circulation of fighters and terrorists is of particular concern. Mercenaries in particular routinely commit abuses against, and often terrorize civilians. The use of such forces has been witnessed in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d’Ivoire. Many of these fighters hire out their services in conflict after conflict (Misol 2004).

West African conflicts cease to be an internal affair also because of the movement of populations (in need of assistance and protection), the victimization of foreign national and the severe economic disruptions they often occasion. In particular, all major West African conflicts have generated massive refugee flows. Fighters can be mixed with ordinary refugees and use refugee camps situated close to borders as military sanctuaries. The presence of refugees also puts economic strain on already very poor neighbouring countries.

Having said all of the above, the paper now turns to providing an account of regionalism in West Africa and its various endeavours in tackling conflicts within the region.

3. Regionalism in West Africa

This section begins with a brief overview of the history and main features of regional integration in West Africa. It then analyses the key sectors of regional cooperation and it presents existing initiatives of regional organizations to address violent conflicts.

At the continental level, all West African states are members of the African Union (AU). Sub-regional integration initiatives are however also well established. Since decolonization, West Africa has seen a proliferation of regional integration initiatives (Asante 1986). Although many small organizations exist across the region, such as the Mano River Union, the Conseil de l'Entente or the Liptako Gourma authority, two institutions occupy a central role because of their extended membership, ambitions and broad mandate.

The first is the Economic Community of the West African States (ECOWAS). All West African states, except Mauritania, which withdrew from ECOWAS in 1999, are members. ECOWAS was born in 1975, after several failed attempts at regional integration in the immediate post-independence period. The adoption of a revised treaty in 1993 has significantly modified the institutional framework and objectives of the organization. The key institutions of ECOWAS are the Authority of the Heads of States and Government (AHSAG), the Council of Ministers and the ECOWAS Commission, which before 2007 was called Secretariat. The 1993 Treaty also provides for a Court of Justice, a Community Parliament and an Economic and Social Council.

The Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine (UEMOA), also known in English as West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), was created in 1994 from the merger of two previous organizations, the Union Monétaire Ouest Africaine (UMOA) and the Communauté Economique de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (CEAO). The organization groups all the French speaking countries of West Africa, with the exception of Mauritania and Guinea Conakry, which opted out for historical reasons. Guinea Bissau also joined UEMOA in 1997. UEMOA has an institutional structure similar to ECOWAS, with a Conference of Heads of State, a Council of Ministers, a Commission and a Court of Justice. A key institution of UEMOA is the Banque Centrale des Etats de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (BCEAO), headquartered in Dakar, which manages UEMOA's common currency, the CFA Franc, and has a semi-autonomous status. UEMOA has also several consultative organs, the Consular Chamber, the Inter-parliamentary Committee, the Labour and Social Dialogue Council and the Council of Local Governments.

Thus, formal regional governance in West Africa is characterized by a dualism between the region as a whole and its French-speaking members. Although ECOWAS and UEMOA today stress the complementarity of their efforts and have signed a common agenda for regional integration (ECOWAS and UEMOA 2006), the two organizations have historically rivalled with each other (Adedeji 2004; Franke 2007; Bach 1983). Bridging the divide between ‘Anglophones’ and ‘Francophones’ constitutes one of the major challenges to regional integration in West Africa.

Adding to this complexity is the role of the AU. While in principle coherence is ensured by the fact that the AU is supposed to act through its Regional Economic Communities (RECs), both in the economic and peace and security domains, the reality is not as straightforward. Several recent examples, such as the management of the Ivorian post-election crisis or the launch of mission AFISMA, have highlighted confusion between the AU and ECOWAS about each one’s role and even rivalries.

3.2 Sectors of regional integration

3.2.1 Free circulation of goods and people

The promotion of regional trade has been since their inception a core preoccupation of West African regional organizations. The extent to which the region is integrated from a trade perspective and the outcome of institutional efforts aiming at enhancing trade remain however controversial.

The formal economies of most countries of the West African region continue to be oriented towards the production of primary goods and natural resources. This type of economic structure limits the potential for intra-regional trade, as these commodities are primarily exported towards industrialized countries. Other factors impede trade within the region. The road and transport network is generally underdeveloped (Goretti and Weisfeld 2008). Corruption at border posts often imposes significant costs to traders that are not captured by official tariff levels. Moreover, intra-West African formal trade is asymmetric, dominated by the strongest economies of the region, such as Nigeria and Côte d’Ivoire (UNECA 2010). The weakest countries contribute minimally to intra-regional official trade flows.

Several efforts have been made by ECOWAS and UEMOA to lower or eliminate intra-regional custom tariffs and other trade barriers. At present, UEMOA, which could build over the preferential trade scheme launched at the end of the ‘70s by its predecessor CEAO, is at the most advanced stage. Since 2000, UEMOA’s Custom Union, entailing free circulation of goods within the UEMOA zone and a Common External Tariff (CET), is operational.

ECOWAS trade liberalization policies have known a slowest start, in spite of this being one of the key goals set by the 1975 treaty. The ECOWAS Free Trade Area, entailing the liberalization of the movement of goods and persons, was launched in 2010. ECOWAS is well on track for the

launch of a Custom Union, which is scheduled for 2015. The organization is also trying to address the difficulties related to the lack of infrastructures through the establishment of a Regional Transport Facilitation Programme.

Within ECOWAS plans, the free movement of goods has always had to be accompanied by measures favouring the free movement of people, which are detailed in the 1979 Protocol relating to the Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment (ECOWAS 1979). The abolition of the visa for ECOWAS citizens at entry points has taken effect in mid-April 2000 (Adepoju 2002: 14). The majority of ECOWAS members have also started issuing ECOWAS passports, which shall gradually replace national passports. Nevertheless, many West Africans find their right to freely cross border compromised by corruption at border posts. Moreover, the second part of the ECOWAS free movement agenda – freedom of residence and establishment – is still contradicted by nationalist internal policies and xenophobia.

Official trade and migration flows in West Africa constitute only part of the picture. Much trade within the region is informal and escape official statistics. Similarly, many West Africans avoid border posts and cross borders every day undisturbed. There are no reliable figures on the volume of informal transborder trade, but there is a general consensus around the fact that it is very high (Meagher 2003: 59). It is tempting to see informal transborder trade as a form of “regionalism from below”, challenging the artificiality of colonial border and the corruption of the state. (Meagher 2003). However, most informal traders in fact do not challenge the existence of borders but profit from the opportunities offered by policy disparities and protectionist barriers (Igue and Soule 1992; Meagher 2003: 65). Thus, the contribution of informal integration is controversial and some authors have even argued that informal trade constitutes a form of regionalization that is incompatible and opposed to formal free-market driven integration (Bach 1999; Bach 2003).

3.2.2 Monetary integration and macroeconomic convergence

Monetary cooperation constitutes one of the oldest form of regional integration in West Africa, but its scope has remained limited to the current UEMOA members, which share a common currency, the CFA Franc. The so-called Franc Zone (FZ) also includes the former French colonies of Central Africa, under a separate arrangement.

The CFA Franc was created in 1945 as the currency of the Federation of French West Africa, at the time under colonial rule. The CFA Franc is a very special arrangement because of its pegging to the French Franc, and later the Euro (Bach 1983; Van de Walle 1991; Claeys and Sindzingre 2003). The West African CFA is managed by the French Treasury and by the Banque Centrale des Etats de l’Afrique de l’Ouest (BCEAO).

The FZ experienced a major crisis in the '80s, when the economic situation of its member countries started to deteriorate (Van de Walle 1991: 392). The creation of UEMOA has been at least in part a response to this crisis (Grimm 1999). UEMOA has set strict criteria of convergence in economic and monetary policy and a system of multilateral surveillance to enforce them. Moreover, UEMOA works to harmonize fiscal and economic legislation across the region.

Since the creation of ECOWAS there have been discussions over the possible establishment of a single West African common currency. In 2001, in an attempt to push the process forward, the majority of non-FZ countries of West Africa have established the West African Monetary Zone (WAMZ). The aim of the WAMZ is the establishment of a common currency, which is expected to be eventually merged with the CFA Franc as a last stage of the monetary integration process. However, the WAMZ agenda has met a lot of challenges. At the current stage, it seems thus unlikely that the deadline of 2020 set by ECOWAS for the launch of a West African currency could be met.

3.2.3 Political integration and regional norm diffusion

Regional organizations have been regarded as carriers of norms, especially when it comes to democratization. While UEMOA has focused exclusively on the economic domain and has not expressed a set of political principles, few organizations have experienced an impressive evolution in their normative framework such as ECOWAS. At its onset, ECOWAS was perceived as a booster for the non-democratic regimes that ruled most of the country of the region. Since the '90s, however, ECOWAS has gradually embraced democracy, a move that has also altered its understanding of peace and security, which is now interpreted in a human security perspective.

The new vision of ECOWAS has been enshrined in a series of official documents. The ECOWAS revised 1993 Treaty mentions the “recognition promotion and protection of human and peoples' rights” (Aning, Birikorang and Jaye 2010: 18, art. 4g) and the “promotion and consolidation of a democratic system of governance” (Aning, Birikorang and Jaye 2010: 19, art. 4j) as “fundamental principles” of the organization.

The 2001 Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (PDGG), which has entered into force in 2005, sets a series of Constitutional Convergence Principles that are supposed to be shared by all ECOWAS member states. Although the PDGG has a broader scope, its provisions that have found a more immediate application regard accession to power by free elections only and zero tolerance for power obtained or maintained through unconstitutional means (ECOWAS 2001: 98-99, art. 1). The PDGG also confers to the AHSG the right to suspend a member state from all ECOWAS decision-making bodies in case of violations of democracy and human rights (ECOWAS 2001: 110, art. 45.1).

ECOWAS new stance on democracy has been evident in the way the organization has handled political crises across the region. Although the organization has been criticized for its ambiguities on certain occasions, such as not condemning Togo 2005 flawed elections, most recent attempts by incumbent presidents to cling to power and military putsches have met a strong opposition, as evidenced by the cases of Guinea Conakry (2009), Niger (2010), Côte d'Ivoire (2010) and Mali (2012).

ECOWAS considers the promotion of democracy not only as an end in itself, but a contribution to peace and stability. The subsequent paragraph summarizes the origin and evolution of ECOWAS conflict management architecture and efforts of ECOWAS to integrate its normative framework into its security-related activities.

3.3 The involvement of West African regional organizations in the prevention and management of regional conflicts

Although West Africa has today one of the most sophisticated conflict prevention and management mechanisms developed by a regional body, conflict management was initially not a focus of regional cooperation. The first West African regional conflict management instruments were the ANAD (Accord de Non-Agression et d'Assistance en Matière de Défense) pact, concluded by the French speaking members of CEAO in 1977, and the two ECOWAS Protocols on Non-Aggression and on Mutual Assistance on Defence (PMAD), dated 1978 and 1981. These instruments displayed a rather traditional understanding of security threats, emphasizing inter-state in contrast with intra-state security.

The key event for understanding the birth and evolution of West African current conflict management architecture was the bloody Liberian civil war of 1989. For the first time, ECOWAS launched a peace support operation, the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in order to stop the conflict (Adebajo 2002; Adeleke 1995; Olonisakin & Aning 1999). The Liberian operation was highly controversial, both because the option to intervene in an ongoing internal conflict was not contemplated by the PMAD (Adebajo 2002) and because of opposition by UMOA countries, which saw ECOMOG as a product of Nigeria's hegemonic aspirations (Adeleke 1995).

In spite of its limitations, ECOMOG has represented the start of a process of rethinking of regional security by ECOWAS. ECOWAS today is routinely engaged in preventive diplomacy, when a situation that could escalate to conflict arises, and has been involved in many attempts at mediating violent conflicts. New ECOWAS peace operations have been moreover undertaken in Sierra Leone (1997), Guinea Bissau (1998), Côte d'Ivoire (2002), Liberia again (2003). While this has not been officially an ECOWAS operation, ECOWAS has also been involved in the 2013 AFISMA mission in Mali. Moreover, ECOWAS conflict prevention and management activities

have been institutionalized and a new vision of security has found expression in ECOWAS legal and programmatic document.

The 1999 Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security (PRMCR) is significantly different from the previous regional security mechanisms, as it emphasizes the importance of democracy and human rights (ECOWAS 1999: 72, art.2) as a condition for peace and stability. Its provisions are applicable to a broad spectrum of situations, including internal conflicts, “serious and massive violation of human rights and the rule of law” and “overthrow or attempted overthrow of a democratically elected government” (ECOWAS 1999: 81: art.25). The Protocol creates a series of new institutions, including a Mediation and Security Council (ECOWAS 1999: 76-77, art. 8-14) with supranational powers, a multidimensional stand by force, a Council of Elders, whose members should play “the role of mediators, conciliators and facilitators” (ECOWAS 1999: 80, art. 20) and an ECOWAS Early Warning System (ECOWAS 1999: 81-83, art. 23-24). The stand by force and Early Warning System are now supposed to be integrated into the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), launched by the AU in 2002, but it is important to observe that ECOWAS anticipated the creation of continental mechanisms.

The 2008 ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) builds over the PRMCR, the PDGG and other ECOWAS key documents to design a regional agenda for conflict transformation. The ECPF openly espouses the notion of human security (ECOWAS 2008: 116, art. 6) and advocates both operational and structural actions to prevent conflicts. The ECPF addresses fourteen different dimensions of conflict prevention.¹ It aims to encourage cooperation and synergies, both between ECOWAS’ different departments and between ECOWAS and its member states, civil society organizations and the private sector. It represents probably the most comprehensive example of conflict prevention doctrine produced by an African regional organization, although making an assessment of its effective impact on the ground at six years of its adoption appears difficult.

4. The role of the EU in the region

The aim of this section is to map the EU contribution to regional integration in West Africa, particularly its conflict prevention and management dimension.

¹ These are early warning, preventive diplomacy, democracy and political governance, human rights and the rule of law, media, natural resource governance, cross-border initiatives, security governance, practical disarmament, women, peace and security, youth empowerment, ECOWAS standby force, humanitarian assistance and peace education (ECOWAS 2008).

Much EU cooperation with West Africa falls under the framework of EU-Africa Caribbean Pacific (ACP) cooperation, regulated by the five Lomé Conventions between 1975 and 1999 and today by the 2000 Cotonou Agreement. EU-ACP cooperation encompasses three types of activities:

- Regional development aid, provided to the region through the European Development Fund (EDF) and regulated by Regional Indicative Programmes (RIPs) negotiated on a five-year basis.
- Trade cooperation. This is supposed to be regulated by a regional Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), which has however experienced delays in its negotiation process.
- Political dialogue between the EU and West African regional organizations.

Given the limitations of RIP aid, contributions to certain conflict prevention and management activities undertaken by ECOWAS and other West African actors are provided by the EU through other channels, such as the African Peace Facility (APF) and the Instrument for Stability (IFS). The EU and its member states are also directly involved in addressing conflict in the region. This engagement sometimes reinforces and sometimes contradicts the EU support for regional solutions.

Since the conclusion of the Yaoundé Convention with the former French African colonies in 1969, development aid represents the oldest form of EU engagement with regional integration in Sub-Saharan Africa. West Africa rapidly became one of the regions that profited more of the European Economic Community (EEC) regional aid, but under the Lomé I - Lomé IV Conventions (1975-1995) EEC policies showed some incoherence with the expressed aim to support regional integration (Coste and Egg 1998). The EEC was very much conditioned by France and, while it actively supported the creation of CEAO, to the point that EEC officials were involved in the drafting of the CEAO treaty (Asante 1985: 83), it paid little attention to the newly created ECOWAS. Moreover, for the whole period, about 20% of the aid labelled as 'regional aid' went neither to ECOWAS nor to CEAO/UEMOA, but to the Comité Inter-Etat de Lutte contre la Sécheresse au Sahel (CILSS) (Coste and Egg 1998), which is a technical organization dealing with humanitarian and environmental issues. By contrast, ECOWAS received only 6% of regional funding. The pattern of active involvement of the EU in promoting integration between the French speaking countries of West Africa, rather than across the whole region, continued through the '90s. General Secretary of the European Commission Émile Noël is believed to have inspired the drafting of the UEMOA treaty (Grimm 1999: 1) and most of EU support for regional integration under the 7th (1990-1995) and 8th (1995-2000) EDF went to supporting the establishment of UEMOA and its custom union (Grimm 1999: 16). The importance of ECOWAS new conflict management activities was acknowledged by the European Council (Nivet 2006) but the European Commission still lacked a policy of supporting security activity through development aid.

The adoption of the Cotonou agreement in 2000 (EU 2006) has significantly impacted on EU-West Africa cooperation. The 9th (2000-2007) and 10th (2007-2013) EDF have represented a qualitative and quantitative leap in the EU ambition to support regional integration in West Africa (Interview UEMOA Commission 2013a). First, the EU declared target has not been UEMOA anymore, but West Africa as a whole, including all ECOWAS countries and Mauritania. One of the EU aims has been to encourage ECOWAS and UEMOA to work together and harmonize their policies, in order to set up a coherent regional integration agenda for West Africa. Second, following the new trend of granting ownership to the beneficiary in development aid, the EU has aimed to support not a specific project or programme but ECOWAS and UEMOA's regional integration agenda. From being neglected, ECOWAS has gradually become a major recipient of EU aid, and this aid has been increasingly targeted towards supporting ECOWAS conflict management activities.

The 2002-2007 RIP (European Union 2002), financed by the 9th EDF, envisaged a contribution of EUR 235 million for regional integration in West Africa, which was focused on two concentration sectors: "economic integration and support to trade" (50%) and "transports" (35%). For the first time, "support to a regional policy of conflict prevention and good governance" was included in the RIP, but not considered a focal sector. Following the conclusion of the RIP, ECOWAS and UEMOA were allocated EUR 44.8 and 31.6 million euro of EU aid respectively (EU 2009). UEMOA was also mandated to manage, on behalf of both organizations, a Financing Agreement of EUR 28.6 million euro, with a focus on improving the competitiveness of the private sector and capacity building for non-state actors.

The 2007-2013 RIP (EU 2007), under which ongoing regional integration programmes are financed, has presented other significant innovations. There is no distinct financial allocation for ECOWAS and UEMOA. For the first time "Consolidation of good governance and regional stability" becomes one of the focal sectors of EU-West Africa cooperation. 20% of EDF aid, representing EUR 119 million, is allocated to this sector. More in detail, the RIP aims to address the following priorities when it comes to peace and good governance: building ECOWAS capacity to ensure regional stability and prevent conflicts, in a context of promotion of democratic values; supporting the civilian component of the ECOWAS Standby Force; supporting the formulation and implementation of a regional policy on migration; combating the proliferation of SALW; supporting ECOWAS in the field of electoral observation and assistance; supporting ECOWAS/AU joint initiatives. The RIP also directs 70% of EU aid to the focal sector "deepening regional integration, improving competitiveness and European Partnership Agreements (EPA)" (ECOWAS 2007: 49). The objective of the RIP in this focal sector are to pave the way for the achievement of the common market, particularly by supporting the creation of the ECOWAS custom union, and the

consolidation of macroeconomic stability; to make the region more competitive and improve the regional infrastructure network.

Ideally, this component of the RIP should have also accompanied the second pillar of EU-West African cooperation: the reform of the EU-Africa trade regime and the conclusion of an EPA. The EPA was negotiated by ECOWAS, with UEMOA participating as an observer to the negotiations. However, as in the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa, EPA negotiations in West Africa have largely missed the 2007 deadline set by the World Trade Organization. At the end of January 2014, negotiations have eventually been closed and it has been announced that a deal has been reached (EU 2014). The agreement is now waiting to be officially endorsed by the next ECOWAS Heads of States summit, to be held around the end of February 2014, then ratified and implemented. The conclusion of the EPA is accompanied by an innovative major programme, the EPA Development Programme (EPADP), whose potential financial envelope is currently fixed at EUR 6.5 billion.

As a consequence of the delay in EPA negotiations, West African countries currently fall under three different regimes as it comes to their trade with the EU. Most countries of the region are LDCs and benefit of the Everything But Arms initiative, under which they can export to Europe almost the totality of their products duty free. Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, which are both non-LDCs and big exporters of agricultural goods towards the EU, have negotiated before 2007 an interim EPA with the EU, in order not to lose their access to the European market. However, Ghana's EPA has never been signed and neither of the two agreements has been ratified (EU 2014). Nigeria, whose exports mostly consist in crude oil, has refused to initiate an interim EPA and its exports are submitted to the Generalized System of Preferences. Thus, up to now, the fragmentation of EU-West Africa trade relations has run counter EU expectations that the EPAs could also foster regional integration. The recent conclusion of the EPA, however, has been closely linked to ECOWAS progresses towards the launch of its custom union and it has arguably stimulated such progresses.

Political dialogue constitutes the third pillar of EU-West Africa cooperation. In the case of ECOWAS, dialogue was already established in 1998 as a consequence of the EU acknowledgement of ECOWAS role in managing the conflict in Sierra Leone (EU 2000; Nivet 2006). Since 2000, the EU and ECOWAS have held ministerial-level meetings once or twice a year. These meetings are complemented by EU-ECOWAS meetings at the delegation level and by trilateral dialogue involving the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA) (Nivet 2006: 20). This constant communication between the two organizations allows addressing common peace and security concerns.

Further support of the EU to conflict prevention, management and resolution activities undertaken at the regional level has come from aid disbursed outside the RIPs. In 2003, the

MICECI operation in Côte d'Ivoire was supported by the EU with a special contribution of EUR 12.5 million (Mackie, Bah, Frederiksen and Sabiiti 2006). During the same period, the second ECOWAS mission in Liberia, ECOMIL, received EUR 10 million from the 8th EDF reserve (UK 2005). EU funding for ECOWAS peace operations has been channelled since 2004 through the APF. This is a special envelope of EDF aid managed by the AU, which aims to support the establishment of the APSA. The APF main focus is supporting Africa-led peace operations, but since 2007 it also provides funding for capacity building and other conflict management activities. Up to date, the only West African operation that has substantially benefited from the APF is the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA), which has been allocated EUR 50 million (EU 2013a). The APF has also financed ECOWAS mediation efforts in a number of countries, such as Guinea and Niger (Lucia 2012: 18). The Rapid Reaction Mechanism (RRM), now replaced by the IFS, which targets urgent, short-term actions that cannot be financed through other instruments, has also been employed in West Africa, notably to support ECOWAS mediation efforts in Côte d'Ivoire in 2002 (Lucia 2012: 19).

The EU's direct engagement with regional conflicts in West Africa has not been on the same scale as its engagement in other regions of Africa, particularly the Great Lakes (Youngs 2006). The EU has not launched any major European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) operation in West Africa and, until the recent appointment of a Special Representative for the Sahel (EU 2013b), it did not have a regional envoy. Such a reluctance on the part of the EU is partly explained by the strength of post-colonial ties of individual member states with the countries of the region. In the cases of Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire, military operations and other conflict management activities have been undertaken by the UK and France, on a mostly bilateral basis (Youngs 2006). The EU's commitment seems to have scaled up with respect to the security situation in Mali, as the EU is worried about the impact of the crisis on the spread of terrorism and the security of European citizens. Besides supporting AFISMA, the EU has recently set up two ESDP missions with the task of strengthening local capacities in the fight against terrorism in Mali and Niger. The EU can also build over the European strategy for Sahel, which has been the first regional strategy adopted by the EU in Africa (EU 2011).

In conclusion, the EU has developed a broad range of instruments for supporting both regional integration and regional conflict prevention and management in West Africa. The next section discusses the impact of regional integration on conflict transformation and the extent to which success can be attributed to the EU engagement.

5. Assessing the impact of regionalism and the EU on regional conflicts

The aim of this section is to assess the direct and indirect impact of regionalism on regional conflict dynamics in West Africa. The section begins by assessing the overall impact of regionalism and then questions the extent to which success or failure can be attributed to the influence and actual policies of the EU on the region.

5.1 Regionalism and conflict transformation in West Africa

The overview of regional integration in West Africa has showed how the region has been home to many sophisticated regional integration initiatives. If one considers West Africa's political and economic conditions and the performance of other African organizations, ECOWAS and UEMOA can be seen as successful examples. However, can the two organizations also be seen as conflict transformation agents?

As the reduction in the level of violence in West Africa in the last two decades has temporally coincided with the re-launch of institutionalized regionalism, it is tempting to link both and conclude that regional organizations in West Africa have been successful in containing (although not eliminating) violent conflicts. Fully appreciating ECOWAS and UEMOA's impact on peace and security is however difficult, as their existence has been only one of the multiple factors in determining the stability or instability of the sub-region, together with trends at the global and national level.

A first positive effect of regional integration in West Africa has been the improvement of inter-state relations. ECOWAS in particular has been effective in creating a pattern of day-to-day interaction among state authorities, which has eased inter-state tensions. If one compares the way West African leaders were divided about Liberia and Sierra Leone with the way they addressed the most recent turmoil in Côte d'Ivoire and Mali, it is clear that the region has gone a long way forward. Today, state authorities in the West African region see security problems as a common concern that has to be addressed, rather than as opportunities from which they aim to profit at the expenses of their neighbours (Interview, ISS 2013). This is important as transnational support for insurgencies and lack of coordinated reaction were one of the main causes of the failure of ECOWAS to tackle effectively past crises, while recent crisis in Côte d'Ivoire and Mali have met a common regional response.

Specific policies of regional organizations have also had an impact on peace and stability. While disentangling regionalism's impact on conflicts in this respect, one should distinguish between regional policies that aim at having a direct and deliberate impact on security and conflict resolution, such as preventive diplomacy and regional peacekeeping, and other regional policies which have a broader scope but that are likely to impact on peace and security. Notably, economic integration and the creation of a single market have been among the major goals of ECOWAS and

UEMOA and their indirect impact on transforming regional conflicts in the long term has to be assessed.

ECOWAS has been the main regional security actor and, at first sight, it has been successful in developing a sophisticated conflict management framework. There remains however a gap between ECOWAS legal and institutional framework and its actual work on the ground. Most of its peace support operations have been under-resourced and their effective impact has been mixed. The creation of a regional stand-by force is meeting a lot of challenges, and, given its technical shortcomings, it appears unlikely that it will be able to overcome the problems faced by previous ECOMOG missions (Interview ECOWAS Commission 2013a; Interview ECOWAS Commission 2013b). Because of its region-specific knowledge, ECOWAS seems better placed when it comes to early warning and preventive diplomacy (Interview ISS 2013). Its action has been effective in quelling or ensuring the peaceful resolution of several political crises, although due to the preventive and confidential character of these activities, ECOWAS is often unable to claim credit in front of the wider public (Interview ECOWAS Commission 2013c).

State sovereignty and political will at the national level, however, still pose limits on how much ECOWAS is able to achieve. As long as conflicts remain ‘frozen’ or low-scale, member states may refuse ECOWAS interference and insist on solving themselves ‘their’ security issues. This was particularly highlighted by the Malian crisis, which the ECOWAS Early Warning system detected on time. ECOWAS was diplomatically involved already prior to the coup d’état, but its scope for action was limited.

The development of ECOWAS conflict prevention, management and resolution framework has been intertwined with the development of new regional norms on democracy and good governance. The concept of ‘human security’ has provided an umbrella under which linking democratic norms and security. Although the peace-democracy link has been contested in the academic literature (Paris 2004; Mansfield and Snyder 1997), it is plausible to argue that, in the case of West Africa, ECOWAS new stance on governance and security has played a deterrent role in defusing political tensions. *Coups d’état* are becoming rarer due to the political isolation that today’s putschists have to confront as a result ECOWAS new stance. Favouring constitutional and peaceful power transition has been an effective way to contain potential sources of conflict.

In other regions, most notably Europe, conflict transformation through regional integration is believed to have been also the product of increasing day-to-day interaction between the states and the people, brought upon by the creation of a common market. The latter would have fostered regional peace by ensuring free circulation of people and increasing economic interdependence. This model of conflict transformation seems however to have little relevance to West Africa.

Differently from the EEC, economic integration has never been seen as a contribution to conflict prevention within ECOWAS official doctrine. The recent ECPF (ECOWAS 2008) does not even mention it, despite its broad reach. There is a certain tension between ECOWAS officials dealing with security and ECOWAS officials dealing with economic integration, with the latter contending that the focus on conflict management has diverted attention from development issues (Interview ECOWAS Commission 2013d). It is also difficult to evaluate the impact of ECOWAS economic integration agenda on peace and security, as many of its schemes in this field have experienced delays and its Free Trade Area has had little impact in increasing official trade across the region. ECOWAS policy on free movement is better established, but is more often perceived in the region as a potential security challenge, rather than a conflict transformation instrument (Interview ISS 2013). However, it shall be noticed that, given the fact that West African borders have always been porous, ECOWAS and UEMOA free movement policies are unlikely to pose additional security challenges (Interview ISS 2013; Interview KAIPTC 2013a). To a large extent, these policies are trying to institutionalizing and regularize something that is already happening across the region.

Economic integration among French speaking West African countries has been more effective. It has been calculated that UEMOA countries trade among themselves three times more than what their economic structure would have predicted in the past decades (Carrère 2004). The fact that until the beginning of the new millennium the FZ looked remarkably stable compared to the rest of West Africa (Fearon and Laitin 2003: 86; Collier and Hoeffler 2006: 14) may point to a positive effect of economic integration. In the last few years, however, the trend has reverted and major recent crises – the Ivorian civil war and the Mali crisis – have happened in UEMOA countries. These temporal patterns suggest that the lower incidence of civil wars in French-speaking Africa up to the year 2000 was to a large extent attributable to military arrangements between France and its former colonies, particularly during the Cold War. Monetary and economic integration also fitted into Franco-African post-colonial arrangements, and were meant to contribute to the stability of the area – in the economic rather than military domain. As the economic crisis of the '80s and the end of the Cold War have translated into the crisis of the Franco-African post-colonial system, the existence of the FZ could have contributed to the postponement of necessary political and economic reforms (Van de Walle 1991). Thus, while CEAO/UMOA may have contributed to short-term stability, their existence has in the end encouraged the perpetuation of an unsustainable politico-economic system. Some have argued that UEMOA has continued to play a role in stabilizing the economies of the FZ and avoiding major political crises (FERGI 2013:11). Yet, UEMOA's modest results in tackling the root causes of conflicts by re-launching economic growth and alleviating poverty in its member states casts doubts about its long-term potential in the

field of conflict transformation. UEMOA has tried to promote a social model of regionalism, but with little organizational and financial means. Its macroeconomic policies are strongly oriented towards promoting stability, for instance by setting a 3% inflation rate as convergence criterion, but it is still lacking a clear developmental trajectory for the region. This further limits its chances to act as a catalyst of conflict transformation.

In short, the structure of West African economies and the challenges experienced by regional organizations in advancing economic integration seem to have limited the potential for economic interdependence and, as result, its impact on conflict transformation. Regional integration in West Africa was initially economy-driven as in Europe, but the outbreak of the Liberian and Sierra Leone civil wars in the '90s have triggered a rethinking of its approach by ECOWAS. Today, regional integration in West Africa, at least at the ECOWAS level, is led by “a very different approach, far more explicitly political, and dominated by the issue of regional security – both in the limited sense of maintaining a basic level of peace, and in the much broader and more ambitious sense of creating the structural conditions required for development within a globalised world economy” (Clapham 2001: 60). Thus, in West Africa, the relation between peace and economic integration tends to be reverted with respect to Europe, with peace and stability seen as a necessary precondition for economic integration. The following paragraph will discuss the impact of the EU and its model on West Africa and will try to assess its contribution to conflict transformation through regional integration.

5.2 The EU's impact on regionalism and its implications for conflict transformation.

Are ECOWAS and UEMOA's successes and failures in transforming regional conflicts attributable to the EU's direct actions or to the EU indirect influence on the region? And, if so, to what extent?

There are in fact two issues to consider when attempting to respond to these questions. The first pertains to the EU's capacity to shape ECOWAS and UEMOA's regional integration agendas by influencing integration in West Africa both through its example and its policies. The second issue regards the impact of the EU financial aid and technical support on helping ECOWAS and UEMOA to overcome the technical, financial and political constraints that they face in their work to promote peace and security.

As a long time partner of West Africa and staunch promoter of regional integration, the EU has exercised a notable influence on ECOWAS and UEMOA and the influence of the EU model has been palpable across the West African region. The diffusion of the EU model has been favoured in West Africa by social learning through day to day interaction with the EEC/EU, but also by “regional epistemic communities attached to international organizations” (Lenz 2013: 217), such as the AFDB and UNECA (UNECA 2010).

If one looks at their founding treaties, ECOWAS, UEMOA and UEMOA's predecessor, CEAO, have to a large extent mimicked the EEC/EU in their institutional structures and visions for regional integration. In some instances, the EEC/EU has directly shaped West African regional organizations, as in the case of the creation of CEAO that, unlike ECOWAS, was to a large extent an EEC engineered creature (Asante 1985: 83). On the other hand, the influence of the EEC on ECOWAS at the time of its establishment was indirect and manifested mainly through ECOWAS' recognition of the relevance of the EU model and experience, explicitly acknowledged by the founders of the new organization (Asante 1986: 55-56). In particular, the conclusion of the first Lomé Convention stimulated a process of social learning culminating in the establishment of ECOWAS in 1975.

West African organizations initially followed the blueprint of the EU in viewing political integration as a by-product of trade and economic integration. It shall be stressed, however, that some critical aspects of the EU model, such as the selective membership criteria and the importance attributed to democratic principles, were at the time disregarded by ECOWAS and CEAO. The EEC/EU itself did little prior to the end of the Cold War to promote the democratic characters of the EU model, as only the 1989 Lomé IV convention introduced democracy and human rights among the fundamental principles of EU-ACP cooperation. Moreover, in spite of the apparent 'mirroring' of the EU by the West African institutions, the initial architecture of ECOWAS and CEAO was strictly inter-governmental, with little autonomy for regional bodies and no supranational governance authority.

It has been argued that, during the first phase of regional cooperation in Africa, the influence of the EU model, with its over-emphasis on trade and economic issues, had negative implications, leading African sub-regional organizations to set unrealistic economic goals and neglect key governance and security issues (Clapham 2001: 59). While the refocus of West African regionalism on security has been driven by global historical changes and local concerns, the EU does not appear to have played any significant role in inspiring it. The EU has acknowledged the importance of security-driven regionalism only with its 1995 and 1996 Communications (EU 1995; EU 1996) and its active support for the APSA (and for conflict prevention and management activities carried out by ECOWAS and other RECs) only began in the new millennium.

Where the EU 'normative power' appears to have had more notable effects is in inspiring the normative underpinning of ECOWAS's new policies on peace, security and governance. Today ECOWAS frames security within a broader democratic context and several ECOWAS policy documents, such as the 2008 ECPF, endorse notions that have been popularized by the EU and other Western actors, such as human security (Franke and Esmenejaud 2008; Lucia 2012). The influence of the EU has also been visible in ECOWAS' growing attention to non-conventional

threats, such as terrorism and maritime piracy (Interview National Defence College 2013). Both a logic of consequentialism and a logic of appropriateness seem to have been at play in respect to the diffusion of EU norms. The introduction of political conditionality in the Lomé IV Bis (1995) and Cotonou (2000) has targeted primarily ECOWAS and UEMOA's member states, but has indirectly impacted ECOWAS' embracement of democracy and good governance. The EU normative thinking on security is nowadays mainstreamed in its regional aid, for instance through the funding of training programmes focusing on democracy and human rights for ECOWAS staff and West African security personnel (Interview EU delegation to Nigeria and ECOWAS, 2013; EU 2013c). Adopting a normative framework compatible with the EU thinking on security and governance could also be seen by ECOWAS as a strategy to attract EU aid. Furthermore, a number of ECOWAS policy documents are drafted by external consultants, sometimes hired with EU financial support, who generally endorse the EU normative thinking. However, a process of social learning, stimulated by both institutionalized political dialogue and by informal exchanges, seems also to have been at play. Many ECOWAS officials also profess a strong commitment to democracy and human security and appear to have interiorized these norms.

Although some authors have made a very strong case that the EU is exporting its political values and security norms in its relationship with ECOWAS (Lucia 2012), our research is much less conclusive in this regard. The EU appears to be one of several actors behind the promotion of democracy and human security in the region, alongside with other donors, international organizations and epistemic communities. A good example is provided by ECOWAS thinking on conflict prevention. Although it has been noticed that the ECPF bears similarities to the European Commission doctrine on conflict prevention (Lucia 2012), our field research suggests that the document has been very much internally engineered (Interview 2013; Interview KAIPTC 2013b). It is likely that similarities between the EU and ECOWAS understandings of conflict prevention stem from the existence of a shared normative and epistemic culture among peacebuilding practitioners, rather than from any direct EU influence on ECOWAS. This explanation is all the more likely as key ECOWAS staff involved in the drafting of the ECPF and in other ECOWAS conflict prevention documents have significant experience as practitioners, but have not necessarily worked for the EU (Musah 2009). Similar considerations can be made for the ECOWAS Early Warning System, which ECOWAS staffs describe as a "hybrid model" (Interview ECOWAS Commission 2013c). At the same time, however, this does not mean that the EU, through its actions and programmes, may have contributed to shaping the behaviour and expectations of these local actors indirectly.

By contrast, ECOWAS and UEMOA's economic integration agenda still remains deeply shaped by the EU. In the case of UEMOA, the deep involvement of the EU in its establishment has led to a close mirroring of the EU model (Grimm 1999; Claeys and Sindzingre 2003). In the case of

ECOWAS, the influence of the EU has manifested to a large extent through the ‘normalization’ of the EU model (Lenz 2013). This has led the organization to develop an understanding of economic integration as a linear process modelled along the EU experience. More recently, the EU has taken a more active role in pressuring ECOWAS into advancing with its economic integration agenda, both through the provision of EDF aid and the EPA negotiations, where the threat to withdraw market access and the offer of economic incentives have been used to push ECOWAS into implementing its planned custom union (Interview ECOWAS Commission 2013e). However, there is a gap between ECOWAS aspiration to mimic the EU integration process and its actual possibilities. This is particularly evident in the domain of monetary integration, where ECOWAS continues to set deadlines for a common currency in spite of the absence of a real commitment from the part of member states.

In spite of the notion of human security embracing socio-economic concerns, the EU has not encouraged African regional organizations to establishing synergies between their economic integration and security agendas. For instance, a request of UEMOA officials to include some regional development programmes within the activities financed by the peace and security envelop of the 10th EDF was ruled out (Interview UEMOA Commission 2013b). The EU approach to the promotion of economic integration continues to follow to a large extent a mainstream neo-liberal model, which often drives wedges among African countries rather than uniting them (Fioramonti 2013). This has been evident in the case of the EPA negotiations, where the EU has appeared to prioritize the promotion of free trade over all other concerns (Farrell 2005; Stevens 2008). It has also been evident in the EU’s relations with UEMOA, whose CFA Franc is pegged to the Euro. The EU has shaped UEMOA’s monetary and macroeconomic policy, encouraging the reproduction of the Maastricht criteria of convergence, with little attention for the specific needs of its members that are all, with the exception of Côte d’Ivoire, LDCs (Grimm 1999: 17).

Elements of human security emerge in ECOWAS’s and particularly UEMOA’s efforts to add a ‘social dimension’ to their regional integration agenda. The influence of the EU model has been evident in the design of certain programmes, particularly UEMOA’s activities targeting transborder local communities, which mirrors the EU Interreg programme. These initiatives have initially received support from the EU (Interview UEMOA Commission 2013b) but a growing concern is now emerging among donors that the organization is overburdening itself and that it should rather concentrate on its original key missions (Interview 2013b; Interview 2013c).

Much of the difficulties that ECOWAS and UEMOA face, however, do not steam from the lack of an agenda appropriate to the promotion of peace and human security but in its day to day implementation. Some of these constraints are of technical and practical nature, such as the understaffing of ECOWAS and UEMOA’s Commissions and the difficulty to find troops and

funding for ECOWAS peace operations. Here, the positive role that the EU could play is not so much that of a model or a carrier of norm, but rather of a mentor (Haastrup 2013). Have EU aid and technical support contributed to alleviating these constraints?

Although at face value the EU support for ECOWAS and UEMOA, and particularly the 10th EDF support for ECOWAS peace and security agenda, is very generous, the evidence for its impact is mixed. Since the EU has stepped up its support for West African regional institutions, ECOWAS and UEMOA's difficulties in absorbing and managing EU aid have emerged as a major issue (European Union 2009). In early 2009, the implementation rate of the 9th EDF contribution agreements with ECOWAS and UEMOA was 4%. In January 2009, the deadline by which all contracts under the 9th EDF had to be signed, more than EUR 5 million had not been committed. The doubling of funds allocated to regional cooperation under the 10th EDF further aggravated the problem (European Union 2009: 28). In November 2013, the ECOWAS and UEMOA Commissions were still to receive 10th EDF aid, partly due to their own internal bureaucratic problems in signing a contribution agreement with the EU. Only 5% of the 10th EDF funding was committed to projects with a regional dimension but managed by national governments or international agencies. A number of projects have subsequently been signed on the rush in order to meet the 10th EDF commitment deadline of 31st December 2013. An EU Support to ECOWAS Regional Peace, Security and Stability Mandate project has been financed with EUR 27 million, out of EUR 119 million initially allocated by the 2008-2013 RIP to the peace and security envelop (EU 2013c). Thus, the amount of EU EDF funding that directly benefit ECOWAS and UEMOA, especially in the peace and security domain, is much lower than what may appear from the EU programmatic documents.

Difficulties in accessing EU funding have also arisen with respect to EU aid disbursed outside the EDF. APF aid is normally channelled through the AU. In the case of AFISMA, the EU has facilitated ECOWAS access to APF aid by setting an AFISMA cell, composed by France, ECOWAS and the EU, which has managed financial support to AFISMA at the place of the AU and ensured that the mission received rapidly the EU and other donors' contributions.

EU delegations and West African officials have contrasting opinions about the causes of insufficient absorption of EU funding. EU representatives emphasize the lack of capacity and organizational skills of ECOWAS and UEMOA, while ECOWAS and UEMOA officials insist on the complexity and inadequacy of EU procedures (Interview EU Delegation to Burkina Faso and UEMOA 2013; Interview UEMOA Commission 2013a; Interview EU Delegation to Nigeria and UEMOA 2013; Interview ECOWAS Commission 2013d). Other factors delay the absorption of funding. Much of ECOWAS and UEMOA activities fall into the domain of policy formulation and harmonization. They often require a cumbersome process of policy making and are costly in terms

of the time that they drain and the engagement that they require by the part of ECOWAS and UEMOA staff and of their partners, but they do not allow to consume rapidly a huge amount of funding in the same way as, for instance, a major infrastructural project would do (Interview UEMOA Commission 2013a).

The EU has reacted to ECOWAS and UEMOA’s difficulties in managing external aid by trying to build the capacities of the two organizations. Particularly in the peace and security domain, EU aid has been increasingly targeted at capacity building, through activities such as trainings and seminars (Interview EU Delegation to Nigeria and ECOWAS 2013). However, it is not evident that ECOWAS and UEMOA’s lack of capacities would stem from the staff’s insufficient preparation or training. One major problem of ECOWAS and UEMOA is the shortage of permanent staff, which cannot be addressed through development aid. Some West African officers fear that EU capacity building aid may reinforce the “per diem mentality” prevalent in some African bureaucracy (Interview UEMOA Commission 2013b). Others argue that, instead of spending EU aid purportedly destined at reinforcing ECOWAS security mandate in capacity building activities that have little impact, the EU should rather put more money in the financing of major infrastructural projects (Interview ECOWAS Commission 2013d).

In sum, although the EU is an actor engaged in conflict transformation through regional integration, it has been mixed. To the extent that regional integration has contributed to conflict transformation in West Africa, this process has been driven mainly by West Africans themselves. The EU has provided support, although with mixed results and effectiveness, and its model has played an important inspirational role. However, the practical implementations of some of its policies, from its trade arrangements with the region (and the rest of Africa) to the technical and development cooperation, has revealed profound inconsistencies, potentially undermining the overall impacts of its ‘model’ on regional conflict transformation.

In Table 1, we summarise the most significant paths of EU influence on regional integration in West Africa as they emerge in our analysis

Table 1 – Paths of EU influence on West Africa’s regional integration

	ECOWAS	UEMOA
Institutional setting	Mimicry of the EU model. <i>Logic of appropriateness.</i>	Direct involvement of EU officials in the drafting of the UEMOA treaty. Financial aid and technical assistance aiming at supporting the establishment of the new organization. Mimicry of the EU model. <i>Logic of consequentialism + logic of appropriateness.</i>

Normative framework	Political dialogue (social learning). Conditionality of aid towards member states. Funding of pro-democracy/human security activities. Recognition by ECOWAS officials of the importance of democratic values in regional governance (only partly motivated by the EU example). <i>Logic of consequentialism + logic of appropriateness.</i>	Nothing to remark (the EU regards only ECOWAS as a political actor; UEMOA lacks an articulate normative framework).
Conflict prevention, management and resolution	No role of the EU in the initial conception and establishment of ECOWAS peace and security mandate (no equivalent in the EU model). Funding currently provided to ECOWAS peace and security mandate. Possible introduction of EU concerns (terrorism, migration) in ECOWAS security policies following EU involvement. <i>Logic of consequentialism predominant</i>	Nothing to remark (the organization has currently no mandate on peace and security).
Economic integration	Mimicry of the EU model. EPA negotiations. <i>Logic of consequentialism + logic of appropriateness.</i>	Direct involvement of EU officials in the drafting of the UEMOA treaty. Financial aid and technical assistance aiming at supporting the establishment of the new organization. Pegging of the CFA Franc to the UEMOA. Mimicry of the EU model. <i>Logic of consequentialism + logic of appropriateness (but logic of consequentialism predominant).</i>
Solidarity and human and social development	Emulation of EU model (directly and through emulation of UEMOA). <i>Logic of appropriateness.</i>	Direct involvement of EU officials in the drafting of the UEMOA treaty. Financial aid and technical assistance aiming at supporting the establishment of the new organization. Emulation of EU model. <i>Logic of consequentialism + logic of appropriateness</i>

6. Conclusion: prospects and recommendations

This paper has examined regional integration in West Africa along with its effects on conflict resolution and transformation in the region, through the lens of two leading institutions: ECOWAS and the UEMOA. It has also looked at the role of the EU in the promoting regional integration in the region.

Although still plagued by political tensions and security problems, West Africa is considerably less violent today than it was twenty years ago. It is however difficult to establish a precise casual link between developments in regional integration and violence abatement, as several global, regional and national factors have also been at play. However, a plausible case can be made that ECOWAS diplomatic and military efforts, as well as the stigmatization of *coups d'états* and violations of democracy at a regional level, have been positively linked to the containment of violent conflicts.

On the other hand, the link between economic integration and conflict transformation appears tenuous, also given the structural problems that economic integration faces and the delays in ECOWAS economic integration agenda. Among UEMOA countries, French security guarantees,

rather than integration *per se*, seems to have given the greatest contribution to stability (but not necessarily to long term conflict transformation). UEMOA's economic policies may also have contributed to political stability in the short term, by focusing on macro-economic stability, although possibly at the expense of economic growth and job creation.

With regards to the EU, its contribution to conflict transformation through regional integration in West Africa is visible, but should not be overstated. Historically, the EU has favoured, both through its example and concrete actions, an economy-driven model of integration that has not proven to be fully adapted to the needs of West Africa, particularly in tackling regional conflict. Moreover, EU's relations with West Africa have been for a long time shaped by France's influence, which has resulted in the EU prioritizing support to regional integration among the French-speaking countries over West Africa as a whole. Innovations in regional conflict prevention and management have been driven by ECOWAS and the EU has taken time in understanding their full potential. On a normative level, the EU has contributed to the evolution of ECOWAS vision of security, encouraging the organization to embrace democratic values and human rights, but its individual role in this respect does not have to be exaggerated. Much of ECOWAS normative evolution has been driven by normative changes at a global level and by the emergence of an epistemic community of practitioners of conflict prevention and resolution, with the EU being only one of many contributors. Today, the EU supports conflict transformation through regional integration with important financial means, but the effective impact of this aid on the reinforcement of regional governance appears mixed. Moreover, the EU shows little sensitivity to conflict transformation when it comes to its position on economic integration, which is still driven to a large extent by a preference for neo-liberal policies, ultimately divisive of regional cohesion. Its influence on the model of monetary integration pursued by UEMOA is noteworthy and may, in the long term, prove critical to sustain economic integration. Yet, there is not yet clear evidence of a direct link between monetary regionalism and regional conflict transformation.

Similarly, though promoting regional integration has been a long-standing objective of EU development policy, it is important today that West African politicians regain the full ownership of this important endeavour. It must be a political priority for them not only at the national level, but also at the regional level. While international donors (such as the EU) and stakeholders can show willingness and support regional organisations (for instance by expanding technical cooperation and capacity-building in areas crucial to security capability and regional development), it is the role of these bodies to emphasize their priorities and redirect this support towards them, taking into account their own realities.

Moving forward, it is important that members of ECOWAS and UEMOA show a strong commitment to implementing their respective treaties and protocols, as they both stand to make

greater progress in security regionalism within West Africa. In most cases, West African regional bodies' treaties, texts and protocols are well drafted, but putting them into practice has come as a big challenge (Interview WANEP, 2013; Interview CDD, 2013). It is a general opinion among officials of the two organizations and political analysts that should these treaties happen to be implemented properly, the region would profit from far deeper and meaningful economic and political integration, connectivity and competitiveness (Interview UEMOA, 2013c; Interview ECOWAS, 2013f). The repercussions of these would in turn be observed on a more peaceful West Africa. However, some of the main challenges hindering such process and that must be overcome by West Africans themselves, include among all: (1) a lack of political will and capacities at a national level to translate integration projects into action; (2) a lack of national ownership of regional integration projects and strong resistance to the transfer of sovereignty; and (3) a lack of adequate mandates, given the limited institutional and administrative capacities of regional organizations, as well as a general lack of legal and policy instruments for effective implementation of relevant programs. These are coupled with weak governance at national and regional levels. West African states must understand what is truly meant by regional integration, and come to the realization that as members of a regional grouping, they have bound themselves in agreements, all in order to ensure that the goals of the region supplant national goals.

Lastly, it is also important that equal emphasis be placed on development and economic integration within West Africa (which has received less attention over the years due to numerous conflicts), just like it is on political integration. However, West Africa must be able to design its own model of economic integration, which takes into account the specific development needs of the region, rather than blindly mimicking the EU model. More emphasis should be placed on getting existing decisions implemented and lower non-trade barriers, such as corruption and harassment at border posts, rather than set unrealistic goals with unclear pay-off, like the creation of a common West African currency.

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