

## **A Reassessment of ECOWAS' Security Architecture: Challenges and Limitations**

Helene Gandois<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Long Island City, United States

helene.gandois@hotmail.com

Within the broader framework outlined by the conveners of the panel, this paper is a case study on the West African security architecture as set up by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). It takes a closer look at the actors, mechanisms and outcomes of the security architecture set up by the West African States.

This article takes stock of the current security dynamics in West Africa and examines the evolution of the West African Standby Force. Taking a historical perspective and assessing the several interventions by ECOWAS throughout the 1990s, this article is both an overview of the current trends in the fields of peace and security in West Africa, but also puts the West African initiative within the broader problematic of African ownership of its own peace and security and burden-sharing – often very close to burden-shifting – that establishes partnerships between the United Nations, Western countries and African states in order to maintain peace and security on the African continent.

In order to contribute to the comparative perspective privileged by this panel, this article will attempt to answer the following questions:

- To what can be attributed the relative success of ECOWAS as a security regional organization?
- To what extent does the dependence on external support and partnership go against the principle of African ownership?
- What limits and weaknesses the ECOWAS security architecture still has to overcome?
- How will ECOWAS fit within the broader African Peace and Security Architecture?

From a broader theoretical perspective, this article is a realistic reassessment of who – be it the regional hegemon or other regional or outside actors – has an interest in West African peace and security and who is willing to pay the price for it.