The Emergence of Regional Security Organisations in Africa.

A Comparative Study on ECOWAS and SADC.

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- ABSTRACT -

The emergence of regional security organisations during the 1990s in Africa proved to be of great significance for the lives of many Africans, including those living in conflict-torn countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d’Ivoire or the Democratic Republic of Congo, but, at the same time, this phenomenon has been understudied. This dissertation explores why regional security organisations with an agenda of democratic governance emerged in Africa in the 1990s. This question is answered with two in-depth case studies on the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Driven by an empirical puzzle, this study is both hypothesis-testing and hypothesis generating. The study starts by laying out the different possible factors put forward by several bodies of theory in international relations to explain the emergence of ECOWAS and SADC as security organisations. These hypotheses are then tested throughout the history and the evolution of ECOWAS and SADC in order to highlight the circumstances of their creation and their qualified failure as economic communities. This is followed by a comparative analysis of the security and democracy mandates entrusted to ECOWAS and SADC by its member states based on the study of the legal texts that outline the specific objectives of each regional security organisation and the tools they were given to implement their mandates. The study finally analyses the implementation records of ECOWAS and SADC in order to assess the commitment of their member states to their new democracy and security mandate. The research concludes with the two following hypotheses: 1) A security agenda cannot emerge without the involvement of the regional hegemon. 2) What the regional hegemon can do, including affecting the speed of the transformation, is constrained by the acceptance of its leadership by its neighbours (legitimacy) and by state weakness (capability).
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