

ADB Working Paper Series on Regional Economic Integration



Institution Building for African Regionalism

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Contents	Abstract	iv
	1. Introduction	1
	2. Continentalism and Sub-Regionalism in African Regionalism	1
	2.1 From the Organization of African Unity to the African Union	3
	2.2 The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa	7
	3. Regional Economic Communities: Comparative Experiences	9
	3.1 The Economic Community of Central African States	10
	3.2 The Economic Community of West African States	13
	3.3 The Community of Sahel-Saharan States	17
	3.4 The Common Market for Eastern and Southern African States	19
	3.5 The Arab Maghreb Union	22
	References	26
	ADB Working Paper Series on Regional Economic Integration	31

Abstract

Since the 1960s, African states have embraced regional integration as a vital mechanism for political cooperation and for pooling resources to overcome problems of small and fragmented economies. In building meaningful institutions for regionalism, however, Africans have faced the challenges of reconciling the diversities of culture, geography, and politics. As a result, African regional institutions are characterized by multiple and competing mandates and weak institutionalization. This study illustrates these themes by comparing two continental institutions—the African Union and its predecessor, the Organization of African Unity, and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and subregional institutions—the Economic Commission of Central African States, the Economic Community of West African States, the Common Market for East and Southern African States, the Community of the Sahel-Saharan States, and the Arab Maghreb Union. By focusing on the institutional structures, mandates, and contributions of these organizations in their geographical domains, the study probes the links between policy articulation and outcomes. The conclusion focuses on lessons that African regionalism can inform Asian integration experiences.

Keywords: African Regionalism, Regional Integration, Africa, African Union, United Nation's Economic Commission for Africa

JEL Classification: F15, F55, N55, O19, O55, R11, and R55

1. Introduction

Regional integration has been a dominant process in African efforts to build multilateral institutions for development and security through economic cooperation and political coordination. In a system of multiple states that have adhered to territorial boundaries and national sovereignty, integration has been perceived as a compromise between nationalism and supra-nationalism. Since the 1960s, African countries have invoked the importance of forging close economic cooperation to enhance growth and development, overcome the impediments of political fragmentation, and increase Africa's competitiveness with the rest of the world. In trying to attain these objectives, African states have engaged in the construction of continental and subregional mechanisms for integration. Most of these efforts have entailed reconciling national and regional priorities against the backdrop of competing demands and expectations. Despite the broad consensus on the benefits of integration, there has been a mixed record of national commitment to regional institutions. Myriad developmental challenges accompanying state- and nation-building processes have stymied regional initiatives, saddling most of Africa with weak integration arrangements. Equally significant, attempts to build regional integration schemes in Africa have oscillated between subregional and continental domains, raising profound questions about the geographical reach of regionalism. Often regarded as the differences between minimalist and maximalist approaches to integration, these contrasting visions have framed the tenor and debates about integration schemes. Over the years, nonetheless, there has emerged a tenuous compromise to deepen integration at both the subregional and continental levels.

This study seeks to contribute toward understanding the evolution and performance of regionalism in Africa through an analysis of core continental institutions—the African Union (AU) and United Nations Economic Commission of Africa (UNECA)—and subregional institutions—the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Common Market of Southern and Eastern African States (COMESA), Community of Sahelian and Saharan States (CEN–SAD), and Arab Maghreb Union (AMU). Since these institutions constitute some of the anchors of African regionalism, it is important to understand their evolution, institutional design, and performance. Framed within a historical perspective dating back to the 1960s, the analysis probes the main actors, events, and processes that have animated African integration and also highlights the roles of key external actors in promoting regionalism in Africa. The conclusion reflects on what the African integration experience might portend for integration in Asia.

2. Continentalism and Sub-Regionalism in African Regionalism

Most studies of regionalism make a distinction between regional cooperation and integration to differentiate between process and outcomes. Regional cooperation is a more flexible form of regionalism, denoting the coordination and coalescence of policies around common objectives. Regional integration, on the other hand, is perceived as a more weighty process of ceding sovereignty to new structures that acquire substantive

roles beyond cooperation (Haas 1970; Asante 1997). From this perspective, cooperation may be a process of attaining the ends of integration, a terminal stage where states cede some of the factual attributes of sovereignty. Economic analyses of the progressive stages of integration also mirror the dynamic evolution from limited cooperation arrangements in the trade arena to substantive forms of economic integration. The classical characterization of integration identifies five stages: (i) preferential trade area (PTA), (ii) free trade area (FTA), (iii) customs union, (iv) common market, and (v) economic union (Viner 1950; Hansen 1969). Throughout these stages, increased trade and market cooperation builds the foundations for substantive integration. In the penultimate stage of economic union, states may lose autonomy and sovereignty over economic policy.

African attempts at integration have operated within the overarching framework of incrementally accelerating the capacity for shared sovereignties and problem-solving in the economic and political realms. But attaining these objectives has been difficult, primarily because of the problems of translating lofty ideals into realities and the array of challenges associated with managing Africa's economic, political, and geographical diversities. As Mshomba has succinctly noted: "Part of what makes economic integration in Africa an interesting subject for research...is the wide gap between the rhetorical support of politicians and the real state of economic integration" (Mshomba 2000, 175). Another critic also states that: "African integration ideals have been based on lofty transcontinental ambitions, evocative political slogans, a plethora of treaties and regional institutions, high-minded principles, and protectionist proclivities" (Mistry 2000, 554).

Since colonial times, authors of integration schemes in Africa have attempted to overcome the deficiencies of fragile and fragmented economies and polities, redoing the territorial and political tapestry established in the partition of Africa. Questions of economies of scale and political viability have always dominated integration arrangements, reflecting a yearning for political and economic communities that transcend existing structures (Green and Seidman 1968; Hazelwood 1967). Initial regional economic integration schemes were crafted by colonial powers seeking to create large unions among geographically diverse entities. Some of these efforts involved the economic rationalization of colonial territories to foster trade and infrastructural cooperation. One of the largest colonial initiative was the French bid to group 13 territories into two federations: (i) French West Africa (Afrique Occidentale Francaise [AOF]) comprising made up of Cote d'Ivoire, Dahomey, French Guinea, French Soudan, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, and Upper Volta; and (ii) French Equatorial African Federation (Afrique Equatoriale Francaise [AEF]) comprising Chad, Central African Republic, Congo, Gabon, and Cameroon. Although each federation had its own currency and possessed the potential for political and economic development, France abandoned this scheme in 1958. Similarly, the East African Common Market Organization (EACMO) and the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) were colonial bids to exploit geographical proximities to lay the foundations of trade, monetary, industrial, and infrastructural cooperation (Mugomba 1978; Robson 1985; Johnson 1991).

On the eve of decolonization in the late 1950s, the process of integration unleashed in Europe through the Treaty of Rome in 1957 influenced the trajectory of Africa's

regionalism. While spearheading the formation of the European Economic Community (EEC), France also induced its European partners to provide aid, technical assistance, and trade preferences to its former colonies under the rubric of the Yaounde Agreements of 1963 and 1969. Alongside these agreements, France galvanized initiatives among its former colonies for the formation of new regional blocs such as the Union Douaniere de L'Afrique de l'Quest (UDEAO) and the Union Africaine et Malgache de Cooperation Economique (OCAM) (Roland 1967). But the most significant outcome of the Yaounde agreements was that they were broadened to form the basis for much larger Europe–Africa relations, whose core objective was to help deepen integration in Africa through strengthening trade and aid relationships under the Lomé Conventions of the 1970s.

Equally vital, French-led regionalism in the post-independence period gave rise to a countervailing movement led primarily by Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah and Guinea's Sekou Toure for indigenous approaches to African integration. Invoking Pan-Africanist ideals, Nkrumah opposed the association of African countries with the EEC on the grounds that it would impede continental integration. Instead Nkrumah proposed a grand Continental Union Government that would reduce colonial fragmentation, promote political union by diminishing sovereignty, and facilitate economic development. Ranged against this vision was the gradualist approach articulated notably by most of the Francophone countries, but also by Tanzania and Nigeria, which suggested basing Africa's integration schemes on subregional organizations. This perspective envisaged economic integration beginning at the subregional levels and proceeding in stages, beginning with functional cooperation and coordination, and eventually leading toward a common market (Legum 1967; Tevoedjre 1965).

2.1 From the Organization of African Unity to the African Union

The contest between continentalism and subregionalism was resolved by the formation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 when African states opted for both continental institutions for security and political integration based on respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity coexisting alongside subregional economic institutions and arrangements. The key founders of the OAU were all inspired by the Pan-Africanist ideals of promoting cooperation through unity and political coordination. In the 1960s and 1970s, the emphasis placed on unity allowed the evolution of norms and principles that were to underpin a collective security system in Africa. Central to these principles were the notions of sovereign equality and territorial integrity, the fight for the decolonization of Africa, and common African voices and positions in the international arena. These principles helped to lend a measure of stability to Africa and galvanized continental efforts for self-determination and independence (Amate 1986).

The idea of continentalism that was captured in the OAU pervaded the first decades of the post-colonial era because most of the security threats to African states emanated from neighbouring countries and subregions. At this time, African countries defined security primarily in terms of the absence of threats to the principles of sovereignty, physical components of territory, and the consolidation of statehood. Although border wars and subversive activities occurred in the Horn of Africa and some parts of North and West Africa, the OAU's system of interstate norms and practices laid the solid

foundation that permitted most African states to consolidate their independence and strengthen internal dimensions of statehood and nationhood (Zartman 1967). In addition, through international and regional bodies, the OAU also played a significant role in mobilizing against minority regimes in Southern Africa, a process that was concluded in the 1990s. In the economic realm, as will be discussed below, the OAU in collaboration with the UNECA made some efforts, through the Lagos Plan of Action of 1980 and the Abuja Treaty of 1991, to start dialogue on continental economic integration using subregional organizations.

By the 1980s, continental institutions had produced remarkable stability among the African state system, defying those who had conjured up images of the disintegration of colonially-created states. Despite the OAU's record in forging a collective security system for Africa, the assumptions underlying continental institution-building faced challenges from internal pressures within African states. The OAU had evolved mechanisms for dealing with external sources of threats to territory, but not internal convulsions within its member states. Thus, the centrifugal forces of ethnicity and regionalism wrought the civil wars, political instability, and state collapse that were to characterize the African security landscape starting in the late 1980s. Internal strains also coincided with the global forces that propelled democracy, participation, accountability, and good governance to the forefront of African politics and security.

The coalescence of internal and external pressures forced a re-evaluation of the continental institutions tasked with managing the new strains and challenges. Given the increasing dissatisfaction with the OAU's role in responding to Africa's emerging threats, there were new initiatives by African leaders in civil society organization to evolve novel institutions that would balance the problems of democracy, security, stability, and economic development. At the center of these efforts was the African Leadership Forum (ALF) organized under the direction of former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo to reform OAU principles to reflect changing needs and priorities. In the early 1990s, the ALF articulated ambitious proposals under the rubric of the Conference on Security, Stability, and Development Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA) that would guide future continental institution-building (Zartman and Deng 2002). The escalation of civil wars in Liberia, Somalia, and Sierra Leone strengthened the momentum for institutional reforms to boost African capacity for intervention in internal conflicts. Initial attempts at reforms culminated in the 1993 OAU Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution that were adopted in Cairo to give the Secretariat more power to manage problems related to weak and collapsing states. Although reflecting the spirit of the CSSDCA, the new mechanisms were inadequate in saving the OAU from obsolescence, particularly since subregional institutions were also beginning to take greater roles in the security arena (Touray 2005).

Libya under Muammar Gaddafi provided leadership in the transformation of the OAU into the AU. In a September 1999 summit of African leaders in Sirte, Libya, Gaddafi suggested the establishment of the United States of Africa—with executive, judicial, and legislative powers—to replace the OAU by January 2000. But this bold move caught his colleagues off guard and ignited a renewed determination to find a compromise position. As Khamis notes:

After long and arduous discussion among African leaders, consensus emerged that conditions might not be favorable right away for the establishment of the United States of Africa owing to the prevailing situation in which the continent found itself. However, since the OAU had also not been very effective in achieving intended objectives, it was high time that Africa embarked on a transformation towards stronger unity. It was on such grounds that African leaders finally adopted the Sirte declaration, which approved the transformation of the Organization of African Unity into an African Union (Khamis 2008, 94).

The Sirte declaration was the precursor to long-drawn negotiations among African leaders about the institutions that would undergird the AU. These negotiations were reminiscent of the debate between the continentalists and subregionalists, pitting Libya and its allies, who pushed for a union with more elaborate powers, against Nigeria and South Africa, who were more cautious about a stronger continental body. Following 3 years of deliberations, African leaders approved the Constitutive Act of the AU in Durban, South Africa in July 2002.

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Apart from the PSC, the AU has created myriad institutions to strengthen its institutional capacity and boost its reach across Africa. The AU Commission is the main administrative organ of the AU that designs, implements, and executes its peace-building and preventive activities. The Commission is composed of a chairperson, a deputy chairperson, and eight commissioners. The Commissioner for Peace and Security is responsible for the implementation of PSC decisions. Guiding the peace and security agenda of the AU Commission is the Common African Defense and Security Policy (CADSP) that embraces the traditional focus on state security as well as new human security dimensions such as poverty, human rights, and gender equality. An equally innovative component of the peace and security architecture is the African Standby Force (ASF), which has been conceived to intervene to stem conflicts and provide an indigenous peacekeeping structure in Africa. The ASF is comprised of regionally-based stand-by brigades and was projected to be operational by June 2010 (Okumu 2009; Franke 2007; Powell and Tieku 2005; Kioko 2003; Williams 2007).

To lend a participatory flavor to the AU, its framers came up with new institutions such as the Pan-African Parliament (PAP); the Economic, Social, and Cultural Council (ECOSSC); the African Court of Justice; and the Panel of the Wise. Consistent with the long-term objective of helping to foster African economic integration, the AU Constitutive Act pledged to build on the previous Abuja Treaty to use subregional organizations for the creation of an African Economic Community (AEC). Also underscoring Africa's determination for development and integration, the continental strategic framework and vision for Africa's renewal, the New Partnership for African Economic Development

(NEPAD), sees subregional organizations as the fundamental building blocks needed to achieve its multifaceted objectives.

Since its formation in 2002, the AU has focused on managing various conflicts in Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Madagascar, Mauritania, Somali, Sudan, and Togo. By sending peacekeeping missions to Burundi and Darfur, and intervening to restore constitutional legality in Comoros, the AU gradually began to learn the difficult roles of conflict prevention, management, and resolution. With its intervention capacity limited by resources, the AU has had to depend throughout these engagements on supportive international actors, particularly the UN, the European Union (EU), and bilateral donors (Powell and Tieku 2005; Kioko 2003).

As it has tried to refurbish its conflict management capacity and increase its visibility throughout Africa, the AU has also confronted enormous pressures from Libyan leader Gaddafi, who has never relented in his grandiose scheme for a United States of Africa. Since 2005, Gaddafi has mobilized key African allies for a renewed push to form a Union Government in Africa that would replace the existing AU structures. After several painstaking attempts by Gaddafi to fast-track the Union Government, the AU Summit in July 2009 compromised on transforming the current AU Commission into an AU Authority led by a President with the enhanced powers of coordinating foreign, trade, and defence policies. The Authority would not come into force until the 53 member states ratify an amendment to the AU Constitutive Act. It is envisaged that member states would have 6 years to consult their domestic constituencies in reaching decisions on ratification. Coming barely 7 years since the formation of the AU, the hasty process of creating new structures has polarized Africa and caused considerable consternation among African allies about the seriousness of some leaders in developing a consistent path to institution-building. As Botswana's Vice President remarked after the July 2009 decision: "The Chair [Libyan leader, Muammar Gaddafi] has no respect for established procedures and processes of the African Union because he is motivated by his burning desire to coerce everyone into the premature establishment of an African Union Government. The AU needs to get its priorities right if the hope of functional unity among African countries is to be kept alive" (Allafrica News 2009b).

The transformations occasioned by popular uprisings in North Africa that started in January 2011 are bound to have a significant impact on the future of the AU. Long immune to the pressures for democratization and pluralism, Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia have witnessed the overthrow of leaders who dominated politics for decades. These changes have also sparked protests and riots in Sub-Saharan African states where opposition groups feel marginalized from power. More critical, with the raging civil war and external military engagement against Libya's Gaddafi, it is unlikely that Libya will continue to occupy the dominant role in the AU as envisioned by Gaddafi. In fact, Gaddafi's demise may force the AU to return to the incremental process of building continental institutions along the modest lines established by the Constitutive Act. Uncertainties, however, abound about whether African countries will be able to replace the 50% contributions from North African countries to the AU budget, particularly if the new generation of North African leaders becomes less committed to Pan-Africanist ideals (O'Neil 2011).

2.2 The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

Established by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 1958, the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) has been a critical institution in the articulation of ideas on regionalism and the implementation of the mandates of regional institutions. Its comparative advantage arises from the fact that it is the only UN agency with the responsibility to “operate at the regional and subregional levels to harness resources and bring them to bear on Africa's priorities” (UNECA 1958). Its strategic location in Addis Ababa, which is the OAU and AU headquarters, also afforded it a unique opportunity to influence thinking on the trajectories of Africa regional integration schemes. The UNECA also has five subregional offices in Africa that have contributed to its other mandates of analysis and advocacy, enhancing partnerships, technical assistance, and communication and knowledge sharing (UNECA 1958).

In the early 1960s, at the height of the formative debates about the structure of regional institutions, the UNECA was at the forefront of generating knowledge that was useful for African integration. At the OAU Heads of States conference in 1963, the UNECA suggested a programmatic and realistic approach to integration in Africa:

There are two main forms which an integration scheme can take. It may either be intended to solve certain specific problems and perhaps lead to increasingly intense and intimate cooperation. Or else it may aim from the beginning at the creation of an economic union, where labor and capital will be free to move as well as goods, and where the economic and social policies of member governments will be harmonized to a high degree. Integration of the first kind starts by building up habits of cooperation; integration of the second kind starts by creating the forms of highly intense cooperation. Under African conditions, an integration scheme of the first type would seem especially important. Certainly it seems that the economic background is not yet ripe for a full economic union, quite apart from the political obstacles. An economic union presupposes a high degree of economic interdependence among the countries concerned, which can be conveniently measured by the ratio of their mutual trade to their total trade. The main purpose of an integration scheme in Africa at this stage would be to pave the way for fuller economic union later, that is, to create conditions which would lead to a growing interdependence of African countries and lessen their dependence on those outside the region, in the context of accelerated development (UNECA 1963a, 397–98).

Although proposing “large-scale import substitution based on larger, sub-regional markets,” the UNECA pointed to the major obstacles to integration in Africa:

For obvious reasons, the desire for national planning in countries that have only recently acceded to independence tends to be very strong; besides, due to the poor state of intra-Africa communications in the past, African countries have had little opportunity to learn about each other. Moreover, while markets have to be widened, it must not be forgotten that at the same time the national markets of African countries are also in need of internal integration; in many cases, a true national market has still to be created (UNECA 1963a, 398).

The gradualist vision articulated by the UNECA shaped the course of African integration in the 1970s and 1980s, leading to the proliferation of subregional institutions such as the East African Community (EAC), Economic Commission of West African States (ECOWAS), Economic Community of West Africa (Communité Economique de l'Afrique de l'Ouest [CEAO]), Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Preferential Trade Area (PTA), Mano River Union (MRU), Economic Community of the Great Lakes Region (Communité Economique des Pays des Grand Lacs [CEPGL]), and the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC). Thus, by the mid-1980s, Africa had realized the UNECA's gradualist vision of subregional entities as the bedrock of integration.

But amidst disappointing economic performance throughout Africa, the UNECA and the OAU came up with a blueprint for Africa's self-reliance and industrialization geared toward domestic markets. The Lagos Plan of Action passed by the OAU in 1980 made the creation of regional organizations the centerpiece of the grand strategy for self-reliant development. The Plan acknowledged that, given the small size of African domestic markets, regional organizations would enlarge market size via the protection of infant industries and the attraction of foreign direct investment (OAU 1980).

Consistent with the idea expressed since the early 1960s, the UNECA continued to advocate for economic collaboration among states that essentially adhered to their sovereignty. Such integration would entail a common external tariff; the free movement of peoples and goods; and the coordination of macro-economic policies to ensure mutual consistency among fiscal, monetary, external payments, and exchange rate policies of member states. As part of the Lagos Plan of Action, the ECA envisioned broadening the then existing regional institutions to create the foundational blocks for the African Economic Community (AEC) (UNECA 1984; Onwuka and Sesay 1985).

Although since the mid-1960s the UNECA had advised the OAU on modalities for establishing the AEC, the Lagos Plan of Action was the most comprehensive treatment on this subject (Khamis 2008). While critics questioned the effectiveness of regional integration in Africa, the UNECA and OAU moved quickly from the mid-1980s toward reinvigoration of the idea of an AEC. Drawing from the Lagos Plan of Action, the UNECA and OAU convened a series of exploratory meetings toward the formation of a continental economic community. These initiatives culminated in the Abuja Treaty of 1991 that gave further elaboration to the gradual establishment of an AEC as an integral part of the OAU. According to its framers, the AEC would be established over a 34-year period through coordination, harmonization, and progressive integration of the activities of the existing regional economic communities. The Abuja Treaty also envisaged the creation of regional institutions in subregions that did not have them, particularly in North Africa. Article 8(3) of the Treaty conferred on the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, the supreme organ of the AEC, the power to "give directives, coordinate, and harmonize the economic, scientific, technical, cultural, and social policies of member states" (OAU 1991,5). Throughout the 1990s, there were efforts to implement the initial stages of the AEC, including the creation of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) as the organ to implement the AEC, the establishment of an AEC Secretariat,

and the strengthening of relations between the AEC Secretariat and subregional institutions. But as Khamis reveals, these efforts were impeded by numerous obstacles:

Member states failed to strictly adhere to the agreed treaties, protocols, and rules, including meeting their financial obligations in their respective groupings and, as a result, the groupings too were affected. Out of the five regional economic groupings identified to be pillars of the community, only three—ECOWAS, COMESA, and SADC—were relatively active. ECCAS was inoperative due both to financial and administrative problems. Its policy organs were not meeting regularly and member states were not making their financial contributions. Union du Maghreb arabe (UMA) was not interested in taking part in the community activities because one of its members, Morocco, was no longer a member of the Organization of African Unity. . . Under such circumstances, there came to be recognized not only the difficulty to realize the African Economic Community but all other fundamental objectives as well. Consequently, the African leaders came to see merit in a proposal to establish an African Union (AU) and supported it as an alternative option that might review the whole strategy of implementing the community to advance the integration and unity of the African continent (Khamis 2008, 64–65).

With the transformation of the OAU into the AU, the ideas embedded in the Abuja Treaty for the AEC have remained constant. The AU Constitutive Act has committed itself to establish mechanisms for the coordination and harmonization of policies and activities among the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) that would accelerate the establishment of the African Common Market as a prelude to the AEC. A protocol signed between the AU and RECs in Addis Ababa in June 2004 establishes sectoral benchmarks for the gradual formation of the African Free Trade Area (FTA), Common Market, and Monetary Union over a 10-year period. While the role of the UNECA in the formation of the AU institutions was not as visible as in previous years, it continues to play a significant role in working closely with the major RECs to harmonize membership, strengthen policies, and build technical capacity to pursue regional integration. In a recent innovative program, the UNECA in collaboration with NEPAD set up an Observatory on Regional Integration in Africa, a primary source of information to assist policy makers, RECs, and other stakeholders with relevant information on current progress, challenges, and issues related to regional integration in Africa (UNECA 2008).

3. Regional Economic Communities: Comparative Experiences

African subregions have been the incubators for diverse experiments in integration that proceeded from geographical contiguities, cultural similarities, and shared interests. Early proponents of subregional arrangements such as Tanzania and Nigeria saw subregions as the logical framework for integration because the grandiose continentalist vision failed to capture Africa's historical and cultural distinctiveness, which would always stand in the way of meaningful integration. Instead, they advocated for constructing regional institutions from the subregions where there was more policy

convergence around the objectives of integration and where, for the most part, colonial regimes had created the semblance of integration infrastructure. When the OAU was formed, proponents of subregionalism perceived it as furnishing the larger umbrella for the advancement of broad ideals of unity, self-determination, and security, while the subregional institutions became the critical locus for economic cooperation, including FTAs, customs unions, and common markets. Over the years, however, RECs broadened their mandates to include security, conflict resolution, and peacekeeping—roles that were previously the domain of continental institutions. Similarly, starting in the 1980s, the OAU and AU, through their mandates, expected that subregional organizations would form the preliminary, albeit primary, institutions toward the realization of the goal of the AEC.

This section reviews the experiences of some African RECs toward the goals of integration, highlighting the key opportunities and challenges. In examining their historical backgrounds, institutional mandates, and performance, the analysis provides a comparison of the distinctive patterns and processes that characterize various regions.

3.1 The Economic Community of Central African States

Background

The history of regional integration in Central Africa can be traced back to the colonial era when the French government established the Union of French Equatorial Africa (Afrique Equatoriale Française [AEF]) to ease the administration of the region. Comprising the Republic of Congo, Gabon, Central African Republic, and Chad, the AEF sought to harmonize financial, economic, and transport policies, as well as to coordinate interactions with the French metropolis. The AEF was dissolved in 1959 on the eve of independence, leading to the establishment of the Equatorial Customs Union (Union Douanière Equatoriale [UDE]). In 1964, UDE was transformed into the Customs and Economic Union of Central Africa (Union Douanière et Économique de l'Afrique Centrale, UDEAC) and its membership incorporated Cameroon. In 1985, Equatorial Guinea joined UDEAC. Designed to promote intra-regional trade among Central African countries, UDEAC is the oldest of all integration bodies in Africa. It was initially conceived to be a customs union through the adoption of a common external tariff (CET). In 1994, UDEAC was restructured and renamed CEMAC to address the challenges emanating from excessive protection, low customs revenue, intra-regional distortions in production, and the low levels of trade with the rest of the world. The CEMAC treaty entered into force in June 1999.

Apart from UDEAC, the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL) was established in Central Africa in the mid-1970s comprising Burundi, Rwanda, and Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo). Efforts to merge the CEPGL and UDEAC failed. In the early 1980s, building on the momentum generated by the Lagos Plan of Action for continental integration, Gabon led initiatives to establish a more comprehensive regional institution that became the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). Its members were made up of CEMAC and CEPGL participants plus Angola, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Equatorial Guinea. In October 1983, as part of the implementation of continental initiatives, ECCAS members signed a treaty to establish the institution in Libreville, Gabon (Awoumou 2008). Currently,

ECCAS has 11 members, including Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda, and São Tomé and Príncipe.

From the outset, ECCAS faced problems typical of most African regional institutions, notably the competitive and duplicative nature of regional integration. The multiplicity of regional integration institutions is seen in the fact that most of the members of ECCAS are also members of CEMAC and CEPGL: Angola and the DRC are members of ECCAS and SADC; Burundi and Rwanda are members of ECCAS, CEPGL, and the EAC. These institutional overlaps have limited the capacity of established institutions to foster collective efforts toward effective harmonization and integration (Gankou and Ntah 2008). More critically, even though ECCAS is the largest regional institution in Central Africa, CEMAC with only six member countries, has advanced further toward regional integration because it has established more effective institutions such as coordinated and preferential trade reforms; a common currency zone known as the Communauté Financier de l'Afrique (CFA); a regional central bank; and a regional development bank (Gankou and Ntah 2008). Paradoxically, the AU has recognized ECCAS, rather than CEMAC, as the foundation for the AEC in Central Africa.

Objectives and Mandates

The overriding mandate of ECCAS is to promote regional economic cooperation and to ultimately establish a Central African Common Market. ECCAS has set out the following priorities:

- (i) development of the capacities to maintain peace, security, and stability as the prerequisite for economic and social development;
- (ii) development of physical, economic, and monetary integration;
- (iii) development of a culture of human integration; and
- (iv) establishment of an autonomous financing mechanism for the region (ECCAS 1983, 3).

To realize these objectives, ECCAS has promoted policy reforms, including the removal of restrictive trade practices, streamlining of customs procedures, increased surveillance of macroeconomic policies, and greater fiscal discipline. In addition, several of the key ECCAS mandates include promoting harmonious cooperation and self-sustained development, and gradually eliminating obstacles between member states to the free movement of persons, goods, services, and capital. In recognition of the many landlocked states in the region, the ECCAS treaty gives prominence to the rapid development of landlocked states, island states, and semi-landlocked states. Over the years as conflicts have proliferated in Central Africa, ECCAS has added the mandate of promotion of peace and security. Like most African regional organizations, the ECCAS treaty puts more emphasis on economic cooperation than mainstream integration. This approach is consistent with the traditional linear pattern of integration that proceeds from FTAs, common markets, and economic unions (ECCAS 1983).

ECCAS Institutions

ECCAS has placed emphasis on an intergovernmental cooperation framework, with national interests taking prominence over regional concerns (Gankou and Ntah 2008).

The significance accorded to state sovereignty is reflected in the institutional arrangements that give prominence to heads of state of member countries. The core institutions of ECCAS are the Authority of Heads of State and Government, Council of Ministers, Court of Justice, General Secretariat, Consultative Committee, and Specialized Technical Committees. As the main decision-making body, the Authority has extensive powers that include the final approval of all policy matters recommended by the Council (ECCAS 1983). Given that the Authority is vested with the power to overturn or reject policy proposals, the decisions of the Council and other institutions are severely curtailed. Operationally, there are infrequent meetings of the Authority and the Council, engendering institutional inertia that has greatly impeded the implementation of decisions.

Assessing Performance

During the first 8 years of its existence, ECCAS adopted a trade liberalization program that was to be implemented gradually, starting with tariff reductions and the elimination of non-tariff barriers to intra-ECCAS trade. However, not much progress has been made in implementing any element of this trade liberalization program. Throughout the 1990s, ECCAS suffered from a period of inactivity because of armed conflicts in most member states, the absence of a regional mechanism for conflict prevention and management, and the low level of commitment among members (Awoumou 2008). To reverse this trend, the UNECA took the lead in 1998 to revive ECCAS by providing technical assistance to establish an autonomous financing mechanism and an FTA. At a summit in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea in 1999, ECCAS adopted a recovery and revitalization program based on the development of physical, economic, and monetary integration.

As part of the revitalization process, ECCAS launched a number of initiatives, including the Central African Energy Pool (PEAC) to coordinate energy issues; a plan to coordinate transport infrastructure; and the launching of a free trade area that would be established over 4 years (2004–07), leading to a single regional market in 2008 (Awoumou 2008). (However, this last objective has not yet been accomplished.) Another significant component of the revival was the establishment of mechanisms to manage regional conflicts. In 2002, ECCAS members signed the protocol relating to the establishment of two new institutions: a network of parliamentarians in Central Africa and the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX). COPAX entered into force in January 2004 to promote peace and security through two mechanisms: the Multinational Peace Keeping Force in Central Africa (FOMAC), and the Early Warning Observation and Monitoring System for Central Africa (MARAC). Despite their formation, these mechanisms have not contributed to the reduction of the many conflicts in the ECCAS region. As a result, ECCAS has achieved little in the areas of its core mandate of regional economic integration and peace and security. Nonetheless, ECCAS has continued to receive international backing as the principal integration body in Central Africa (UNESCO 2006; Ikome 2009).

The Role of External Actors in ECCAS

Critics of ECCAS have charged that it exists largely because of donor funding rather than from internal legitimacy or efficacy. Donors such as the African Development Bank (AfDB) have supported the ECCAS Secretariat in building its institutional capacity. The EU is also an important donor to ECCAS programs on peace and security. In 2006, a

joint EU and ECCAS project was initiated to support the organization's Department of Human Integration, Peace, Stability, and Security to fulfill its role of detection, prevention, and management of conflicts. The project supports MARAC with an early warning system to respond to regional crises. The other goal is to capacitate ECCAS to mediate conflicts and check the illicit proliferation of small arms, cross-border crime, and the illegal exploitation of the region's natural resources (Awoumou 2008).

The EU has exerted considerable leverage in Central Africa through the negotiations for economic partnership agreements (EPAs) since October 2003. Some members of ECCAS, as well as all CEMAC members, have been negotiating an EPA with the EU. The latter has also used these negotiations to press for the merger of CEMAC and ECCAS, with the prospect of transforming the Central Africa region into a free trade area in the future. The EU and other external actors have suggested a division of labor in which ECCAS would take more responsibility for peace and security, while CEMAC manages issues of trade and monetary integration. But even though ECCAS and CEMAC signed a cooperation agreement in April 2005, they have continued to operate as parallel entities (UNECA 2002).

3.2 The Economic Community of West African States

Background

West Africa is characterized by a multiplicity of regional institutions that were established during colonial rule and mirror the Anglophone–Francophone divide. Despite these divisions, Nigeria took a leadership role in 1975 to forge a consensus on the establishment of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to bridge the cultural and historical gaps in the region, while also establishing a comprehensive integration institution. In 1993, ECOWAS revised its treaty to accelerate (i) integration and establishment of an economic and monetary union through the removal of customs duties for intra-ECOWAS trade and taxes having equivalent effect, (ii) the establishment of a common external tariff, (iii) the harmonization of economic and financial policies, and (iv) the creation of a single monetary zone. Unlike in the past when member states clung to their sovereignty, the revised treaty sought to postulate a measure of supranationalism for ECOWAS (ECOWAS 1993). The revised treaty also had a strong focus on issues of peace and security, expanding the mandate beyond economics and trade issues. With the withdrawal of Mauritania in 1999, ECOWAS became a regional grouping of 15 countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.

Objectives and Mandates

Since its establishment, ECOWAS has tried to establish a common market through trade liberalization; uniform economic policies; the removal of trade barriers; and the free movement of people, goods, and services. In addition, ECOWAS has undertaken sectoral development programs in areas such as transport and communications, energy, and infrastructure development (ECOWAS 1993; Bach 2004). To support investment and promote financial cooperation, ECOWAS has established several institutions such as the ECOWAS Fund for Cooperation, Compensation, and Development (EFCCD) to finance the compensation of revenue losses accompanying regional trade liberalization.

In recent years, EFCCD has been reconstituted as the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID) along with two subsidiaries: the ECOWAS Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the ECOWAS Regional Investment Bank (ERIB), which focus on public and private sector financing, respectively. The ECOWAS Bank Group (Ecobank) was also established to strengthen regional financial cooperation, with subsidiaries in 12 countries across West and Central Africa (ECOWAS 1993).

ECOWAS Institutions

The institutional design of ECOWAS is loosely modeled on the EU. Although not as elaborate, ECOWAS institutions are intended to play an important role in the implementation of joint cooperation programs. The highest decision-making body of the community is the Authority of Heads of State and Government that is charged with directing and controlling the performance of the executive functions of ECOWAS. The Authority can adopt policies it regards as necessary and appropriate, and it can suspend a member state. The other institutions include the Council of Ministers; Community Parliament; Economic and Social Council; Community Court of Justice; Executive Secretariat; Fund for Co-operation, Compensation, and Development; and Specialized Technical Commissions. The ECOWAS treaty also makes provision for an Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), with an advisory role, to be composed of representatives of the “various categories of economic and social activity” (ECOWAS 1993). To deal with questions of peace and security, the ECOWAS Summit in December 1999 agreed on a Protocol for the Establishment of a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution, and Peace and Security.

Typical of any organization with a heterogeneous membership, one of the initial challenges in ECOWAS was the slow pace of decision-making attributed to different national and economic outlooks. Moreover, the supreme organ has always been confronted with slow and cumbersome decision-making processes. It was largely as a result of the institutional paralysis that had bedeviled ECOWAS that member states decided in 2005 to strengthen the capacity of the ECOWAS Secretariat. In transforming the Secretariat into an ECOWAS Commission headed by a President, ECOWAS hoped to create a more efficient institution to discharge its core functions. As part of these reforms, the members also established an ECOWAS Project Development and Implementation Unit (PDIU) to accelerate the realization of regional infrastructural projects in sectors such as energy, telecommunications, and transport (Osuntokun 2004).

Assessing Performance

Trade liberalization

The diversity of the economies in ECOWAS is critical to the assessment of progress in economic cooperation. Intraregional trade among ECOWAS members accounts for less than 10% of members’ total trade, with the bulk conducted with extra-African partners. This is also because most members are protective of their domestic industries (Francis 2001). Moreover, ECOWAS members are dependent on the export of primary agricultural commodities, with the exception of Nigeria and Sierra Leone, which export oil and diamonds, respectively, as their leading sources of foreign exchange. The remaining ECOWAS countries depend on the production of primary agricultural

commodities. Furthermore, Benin, Togo, Ghana, and Cote d'Ivoire, all depend on the export of cocoa as their main source of foreign exchange. This homogeneity in production creates limited opportunities for intraregional trade, given the absence of a diversity of goods.

Free Movement of People

The ECOWAS treaty makes provisions for the free movement of goods, capital, and people toward the establishment of a functional subregional common market. In 1979, ECOWAS adopted a protocol on the free movement of people that conferred upon ECOWAS members' citizens the right to enter and reside in the territory of any member state provided they possessed valid travel documents. The protocol, however, also allowed member states the right to refuse admission to any ECOWAS citizens who were inadmissible under the member state's own domestic laws. The supplementary protocols adopted between 1985 and 1990 committed member states to, among other things, (i) grant ECOWAS members' citizens the right of residence for the purpose of seeking and carrying out income-earning employment; (ii) not expel ECOWAS citizens en masse; and (iii) limit the grounds for individual expulsion to reasons of national security, public order or morality, public health, or non-fulfillment of an essential condition of residence. These provisions have not been fully implemented by member countries. Thus, although the free movement of people is supposed to be enshrined in regional law, in reality, there are many impediments to mobility, including under-resourced immigration ministries and border control departments, the absence of systematic entry and exit recording systems, and the widespread seeking of bribes by border officials (Boulton 2009).

Conflict Management, Governance, and Post-Conflict Reconstruction

ECOWAS took the first steps in subregional conflict management with the adoption of the Protocol on Non-Aggression in 1978 and the Protocol on Mutual Assistance on Defense in 1981. Although ECOWAS did not initially have a provision for regional cooperation in political and defense matters, the escalation of conflicts and state collapse in the region forced it to make elaborate provisions for managing conflicts that were impeding regional integration programs. Despite the shortage of resources and capacity, ECOWAS made some positive contributions to restoring stability through its interventions in Liberia (1990), Sierra Leone (1997), and Guinea Bissau (1999). In all these conflicts, Nigeria took a major leadership role (Adebajo 2008). Since December 1999, ECOWAS has adopted the comprehensive Mechanism for Conflict Prevention Management and Resolution Peacekeeping and Security as a permanent framework for managing security. A core part of this mechanism is the creation of the Council of the Wise, which intervenes in conflicts before they escalate. In addition, ECOWAS adopted the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance in 2001 and the ECOWAS Protocol on Governance and Human Rights, which seek to enhance human security and tackle issues of peace and security, democracy, good governance, and the rule of law. The community has also established the ECOWAS Parliament and the ECOWAS Court of Justice in Abuja, Nigeria (Akokpari 2009a).

ECOWAS has made some attempts to contribute to the post-conflict reconstruction of the war ravaged states of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, and, to some extent, Cote d'Ivoire. Because of the poverty pervading most ECOWAS members,

assistance toward post-conflict reconstruction has been largely limited to the promotion of post-conflict peace—for example, supporting the consolidation of electoral processes—rather than the rebuilding of infrastructure or the provision of funds to support governments’ institutional capacities (Francis 2009).

Continuing Obstacles to ECOWAS Integration

Asante made a trenchant critique of the ECOWAS integration process, noting that “the ECOWAS march towards West African economic cooperation and integration has been painfully slow, and no effective integration has taken place in ECOWAS—neither in trade nor production nor in laying foundations for economic transformation” (Asante 2000, 6). The progress realized in the areas mentioned above has demonstrated the persistence of the region to continue with the integration process despite the overwhelming odds, but many obstacles remain in translating declarations into concrete results that could benefit the region. Like the rest of Africa, ECOWAS confronts the problem of overlapping and multiple memberships, in particular the existence of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) that is made up of Francophone countries and has competed with ECOWAS. UEMOA’s existence has been strongly linked to its membership ties with France, which is its main sources of finance; UEMOA members maintain a series of strong military and security ties with France. In the past, France developed the reputation of seeking to check Nigeria’s attempts to forge economic and political cooperation between Francophone and Anglophone states in the region (Yansane 1977; Lavergne 1997).

ECOWAS has similarly contended with the three-member Mano River Union (MRU), comprising Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. Although the MRU does not have the capacity of UEMOA to compete with ECOWAS, its existence as a parallel common market is a hindrance to integration.

In addition to overlapping memberships, studies point to the fact that West African countries remain weakly integrated nationally and regionally. Nationally, most countries in the region suffer from weak transport and communications infrastructure, and other impediments to socioeconomic integration (Akopari 2009b). At the regional level, West African countries continue to be divided by a wide range of institutional, legal, and infrastructural barriers that impede integration. Finally, despite its enormous contribution to providing leadership in peacekeeping, conflict resolution, and economic integration, Nigeria’s role in the region remains contested. With the largest population and land area in ECOWAS, Nigeria is a dominant member of ECOWAS, a role that oftentimes creates resentments (Adebajo and Mustapha 2008; Arthur 2010).

The Role of External Actors in ECOWAS

ECOWAS has maintained diverse relations with multilateral and bilateral donors that provide economic assistance to its member states as well as funding for ECOWAS economic and security objectives. Since it broadened its mandate to include security issues, ECOWAS has benefitted from assistance from the UN, EU, United Kingdom (UK), and the United States (US) in its various intervention efforts in the region. The EU’s relationship goes beyond capacity support to the ECOWAS security machinery. The EU is negotiating EPAs with ECOWAS. Relationships with external partners such as the EU have made positive contributions to ECOWAS objectives, particularly on

security-related matters, the fight against terrorism, and organized trans-border and trans-regional criminal activities.

3.3 The Community of Sahel-Saharan States

Background

The Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) was established in Tripoli, Libya in February 1998 through the initiative of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi (CEN-SAD 1993). One of the major contributing factors to the creation of CEN-SAD was the political tensions between Morocco, its North African neighbors, and the OAU over recognition of Western Sahara in the 1990s. These tensions eventually paralyzed the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), the major regional institution in North Africa. Gaddafi took advantage of this vacuum to launch his own institution by inviting Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Eritrea, Mali, Niger, and Sudan into CEN-SAD (Sturman 2003; Brunel 2008a). In February 2000, Senegal, Gambia, and Djibouti joined CEN-SAD. Libya has extended an open invitation to all African countries to join CEN-SAD in the future. Thus far, the only real common ground that the member countries appear to share is the patronage of Libya that has contributed substantially to projects in member countries. During the OAU summit in 2000, CEN-SAD was recognized as one of the five regional pillars of African integration.

Mandate and Objectives

According to its architects, CEN-SAD seeks to work with other African regional institutions to strengthen peace, security, and stability, and to achieve global economic and social development (CEN-SAD 1993). As a framework for “integration and complementarity,” CEN-SAD has emphasized the attainment of economic unity among members through the implementation of the free movement of people and goods in order to eventually establish an FTA. In addition, CEN-SAD has proposed strengthening integration by implementing common development plans in various sectors to complement members’ national development plans. CEN-SAD’s common objectives include

- (i) the removal of all restrictions hampering integration among member countries;
- (ii) free movement of persons, capital, and interests of nationals of member states;
- (iii) right of establishment, ownership, and exercise of economic activity;
- (iv) free trade, movement of goods, commodities, and services originating from the signatory countries;
- (v) promotion of external trade through an investment policy in member states; and,
- (vi) expand transport and communications among member states through the implementation of common projects (CEN-SAD 1993).

CEN-SAD Institutions

The supreme institution of CEN-SAD is the Conference of Heads of State, which sets community policies. The Conference meets once a year in an ordinary session (rotationally in the different capitals of member states) and the country hosting the summit presides over the Conference. It can also meet in an extraordinary session at the request of one or more member states. Below the Conference is the Executive Council, which is composed of ministers who are responsible for the preparation of programs of

integration and the implementation of the decisions of the Conference. CEN-SAD also has a Secretariat that is responsible for management of daily operations, monitoring the functioning of its institutions, and implementation of objectives.

To enhance economic cooperation, CEN-SAD established the Sahel-Saharan Investment and Trade Bank in April 1999. The Bank was mandated to exercise all banking, financial, and commercial activities, including financing development projects and external trade. Although the Bank's operational priorities are to projects executed in member states, it can, upon the decision of its Board of Directors, open branches or offices within or outside the member countries. Finally, CEN-SAD created the Economic and Social Council (ESCC), an advisory organ composed of 10 members designated by each member country that is mandated to assist the organs of CEN-SAD in the design and preparation of development programs (CEN-SAD 1993).

In the peace and security arena, CEN-SAD has created the Sahel-Saharan Council for Peace and Security of the Community, as well as the Defense and Security Committee, to manage conflicts in the region. These institutions are the key to an incipient collective security within CEN-SAD articulated in the March 2003 Niamey Declaration on Conflict Prevention and Peaceful Settlement of Disputes that established the Mechanism for Prevention, Management, and Resolution of Conflicts. Over the years, CEN-SAD has been unsuccessful in forming the Sahel-Saharan Council for Peace and Security, which was to be concerned with decisions on the Sahel-Saharan Intervention and Peacekeeping Force (AUC 2009).

Assessing Performance

As one of the newest RECs in Africa, CEN-SAD has not achieved its desired levels of economic cooperation. Moreover, since its members straddle several regional economic institutions, CEN-SAD has yet to develop a clear identity as a regional organization. In an accurate assessment of the fledgling RECs, such as CEN-SAD and IGAD, the UNECA contends that the RECs main problem stems from the continual failure of member states to meet their financial obligations. Within CEN-SAD, membership dues are provided by Libya, subjecting the institution to the whims of a single country. More important, the poor performance of CEN-SAD is largely attributable to the fact that member states are spread too thinly among many regional economic communities and may be motivated primarily by political and security, rather than economic, considerations (AUC 2009).

CEN-SAD is also a relative newcomer to the African political and security landscape. In December 2001, 3 years after it was established, the organization sent a small peacekeeping force to the Central African Republic to assist in the restoration and enforcement of peace. However, given its limited experience with intervening in member states, the mission was short-lived and its efficiency was limited. In other areas, CEN-SAD has worked with the AU to mediate between Ethiopia and Eritrea, as well as in Darfur. CEN-SAD is unique among African RECs in not having a charter on human rights, democracy, and good governance. Instead, the secretariat and summit meetings have often issued strident pronouncements against foreign interference in Africa. This posture dovetails with the Libyan dominance in CEN-SAD, which many people in Africa regard as a largely a foreign policy instrument of Gaddafi (Sturman 2003; Brunel 2008a).

The Role of External Actors in CEN-SAD

CEN-SAD obtained observer status at the UN General Assembly in 2001 and concluded cooperation accords with the UNECA and other UN specialized agencies such as the World Health Organization (WHO); UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO); and the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel. It has also concluded partnership agreements with numerous regional and international organizations with the purpose of consolidating collective work in various political, cultural, economic, and social fields. Most of the cooperation arrangements have been assiduously promoted by Libya, the driving force of CEN-SAD. Since the rapprochement between Libya and Western countries in 2003, the EU has expanded political dialogue with Tripoli on issues such as the fight against terrorism, illegal migration across the Mediterranean Sea, energy, and peace and security. Libya's gradual engagement with Europe has entailed incorporating CEN-SAD into the areas of cooperation. For instance, on questions of illegal immigration, the EU has noted that "CEN-SAD members seem to have no real policy in that area" and that the Commission should take part in the organization's meetings to "inform the CEN-SAD countries about its policies and possibly assist them in the definition of their own migration policies" (European Commission 2009). Yet some members of CEN-SAD have complained that increasing collaboration between the EU and Libya on curbing illegal immigration through the establishment of reception camps and repatriation operations amounts to a "Libya First, CEN-SAD Second Policy" (EU Commission 2009). As stated above, political changes in Libya are likely to alter its role in African affairs. More than any other African institutions, CEN-SAD's future hinges on whether Gaddafi will survive the combined onslaught of rebel and international military pressures.

3.4 The Common Market for Eastern and Southern African States

Background

The collapse of the East African Community (EAC) in 1977 created a vacuum among integration schemes in Eastern Africa. Composed of Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, the EAC had been a key player in regional integration since colonial times, but political differences led to its demise. The ensuing vacuum was filled by a new institution, the Preferential Trade Area for Eastern and Southern Africa (PTA), which was formed in 1981 to boost commercial and economic cooperation. The membership of the PTA included Angola, Burundi, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. With the ultimate objective of forming a common market by 2000, the PTA pledged to gradually reduce and eliminate customs duties and non-tariff barriers. In advancing the objectives of coordinating trade integration, the PTA created a number of institutions, including the Trade and Development Bank for Eastern and Southern Africa, the PTA Clearing House, the PTA Traveler's Checks, and the PTA Federation of Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Gibb 2006).

In November 1993, PTA members ratified the treaty culminating in the birth of COMESA with the mandate to deepen integration from an FTA to a customs union. In 1995, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern African States (COMESA) extended an invitation to South Africa to join the organization, but South Africa rebuffed the offer.

Instead, South Africa was at the forefront of persuading SADC members to withdraw from COMESA to avoid the problem of overlapping membership. As a result, Angola, Tanzania, Lesotho, and Namibia withdrew from COMESA citing duplication of membership with SADC. Despite these withdrawals, COMESA gained new members when Egypt and Libya joined to make it the largest regional institution in Africa with 19 members.

Objectives and Mandates

As outlined in its founding treaty, the vision of COMESA is to “be a fully integrated, internationally competitive regional economic community with high standards of living for all its people [and] ready to merge into an African Economic Community” (COMESA 1993). The principal route for realizing this goal is developing integration through development of trade and investment. The primary mandates of COMESA are to

- (i) promote the free movement of goods and services produced within COMESA, and remove all trade barriers and tariffs;
- (ii) establish a Customs Union under which goods and services imported from non-COMESA countries will attract an agreed single tariff in all COMESA countries;
- (iii) establish the free movement of capital and investment supported by adoption of a common investment area so as to create a more favorable investment climate for the region;
- (iv) facilitate the gradual establishment of a payment union based on a COMESA clearing house and the eventual establishment of a common Monetary Union with a common currency; and
- (v) adoption of common visa arrangements, including the right of establishment leading to the free movement of *bona fide* persons (COMESA 1993).

With a population of about 416 million people (more than half the total population of Africa), COMESA sees itself as having a solid foundation to provide a huge market for member states in order to facilitate competitiveness within the region, increase intra-regional trade, and attract more foreign investments. In advancing regional integration, 12 COMESA member states established a free trade area in October 2000. This was followed by the establishment of a customs union in 2009. In addition, COMESA plans to have a monetary union by 2015 and a COMESA community by 2025.

COMESA Institutions

The institutional framework of COMESA consists of the following core organs: the Authority, Council of Ministers, Court of Justice, Secretariat, and Commission, plus specialized organs and committees. Consisting of heads of state and government, the Authority is the supreme decision-making body responsible for general policy direction, while the Council of Ministers monitors the activities of the regional bloc, approves the budget of the Court and the Secretariat, and recommends policy directions and development of initiatives. Appointed by the Authority, the Secretary-General is in charge of the administrative components of the COMESA Secretariat. The Court of Justice was created to replace the PTA Tribunal, which has the powers to resolve disputes among members. But even more important, the Court is the defender of the

Common Market Law, an independent system of rules embodied in the COMESA treaty that is separate from and superior to national law (COMESA 2007).

COMESA retained all the major economic institutions of the PTA—the Clearing House, Trade and Development Bank, Regional Investment Agency—and also created new ones such as the COMESA Fund, which seeks to cushion countries against the costs associated with trade liberalization, and the COMESA Trade and Documentation Centre. Since 2000, COMESA has been involved in conflict prevention and resolution through the establishment of a Committee on Peace and Security, which has worked to develop a peace and security structure for the organization.

Assessing Performance

Like its predecessor the PTA, COMESA has achieved modest successes in the promotion and diversification of intra-regional trade. Although the formation of the COMESA FTA in 2000 with a membership of 12 countries led to some increases in intra-COMESA trade, the main challenge to the FTA has been the resurgence and proliferation of non-tariff barriers that still hamper trade among member states (Mistry 2000). COMESA has made some progress in implementing transport programs that remove barriers to trade in the region; these programs have reduced transport costs and led to some increases in the volume of trade (UNECA 2002). In the COMESA Strategic Plan 2007–2010, members identified the obstacles to integration as being poverty, corruption, brain drain, dependence on developed countries for aid, high production costs, poor technological development, poor networking within the region, supply constraints, high debt servicing ratio, poor infrastructure development, low foreign direct investment, lack of policy harmonization, overlapping membership, inadequate human capital, and poor mobilization of resources (COMESA 2007).

Despite these obstacles, COMESA reached a milestone in June 2009 when it launched a customs union. Coming about a year behind schedule, the COMESA customs union aims at removing tariff barriers among member states and harmonizing barriers with third parties through the common external tariff (CET), which was adopted in May 2007. The COMESA CET stipulates that raw materials and capital goods should be imported into the customs union duty-free, while intermediate and finished goods should attract tariff rates of 10% and 25%, respectively. Seen as an important step in economic integration, the customs union can potentially lead to more economic interactions among COMESA members and facilitate improved trade competitiveness within the bloc's private sector. To complement the customs union, COMESA established a payment and settlement system that will facilitate cross-border payments among central banks in the region. With these new mechanisms, COMESA estimates intraregional trade will reach US\$20 billion by 2010 (AllAfrica News 2009a).

Prior to the customs union, another milestone was reached in the region when the COMESA-EAC-SADC heads of state met in Kampala, Uganda in October 2008 to explore measures to integrate the three subregions in Grand Free Trade Area stretching from Cape Town to Cairo. With a combined population of nearly 600 million and annual gross domestic product (GDP) of US\$1 trillion, the three subregions have committed to confront the perennial problem of overlapping and duplicative membership that characterizes African integration. The Tripartite Summit agreed on a program of

harmonization of trading arrangements among them, the free movement of business persons, joint implementation of interregional infrastructure programs, and interim institutional arrangements to spearhead the process of cooperation. With respect to trade arrangements, the summit agreed on measures to expedite an FTA encompassing the three blocs with the ultimate objective of establishing a single customs union. Pending the signing of a memorandum of understanding, the summit established a Tripartite Council of Ministers that will meet at least once every 2 years; Tripartite Sectoral Ministerial Committee on Trade, Finance, Customs, Economic Matters, and Home Affairs; Tripartite Sectoral Ministerial Committee on Infrastructure; Tripartite Sectoral Ministerial Committee on Legal Affairs; Tripartite Committee of Senior Officials and of Experts that shall meet at least once a year; and Tripartite Task Force of the Secretariats of the three RECs to meet at least twice a year. The Tripartite Task Force was mandated to develop a road map for merger into a single REC (SADC-EAC-COMESA 2008). During the 2nd Tripartite Summit in Johannesburg, South Africa, in June 2011, the COMESA-EAC-SADC heads of state agreed to launch negotiations for the establishment of Tripartite Free Trade Area for the 26 countries and “adopted a developmental approach to the Tripartite Integration that will be anchored on 3 pillars namely: Market integration based on the Tripartite Free Trade Area (FTA); Infrastructure Development to enhance connectivity and reduce costs of doing business as well as Industrial Development to address the capacity constraints,” (COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite Summit 2011).

The Role of External Actors in COMESA

The long-standing links between COMESA countries and Europe are being renegotiated within the rubric of the EPAs. Given the diversity of the region, various groupings of countries are negotiating separate EPAs with the EU, including the Eastern and Southern African (ESA) EPA, East African Community (EAC) EPA, and SADC EPA (Braude 2008). Since 2001, COMESA has collectively maintained a strategic partnership with the US. Technical support from the US has been useful to member states in the areas of information technologies; harmonizing regional policies on trade, agriculture, gender, and the environment; and food security. In recent years, COMESA has also engaged the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in support of regional infrastructural projects.

3.5 The Arab Maghreb Union

Background

Since the 1950s, the idea of an economic union in the Maghreb has animated North African nationalism. In 1964, the first conference of Maghreb economic ministers was held in Tunis and produced the *Conseil Permanent Consultatif du Maghreb* (CPCM) between Algeria, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia to harmonize development plans, forge intraregional trade, and promote collective positions on relations with Europe (Zunes 1995; Brunel 2008a). But territorial disputes, political rivalries, and ideological differences stymied the realization of these objectives. The idea was revived in 1987 following the rapprochement between Algeria and Morocco. In the first meeting of Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia in June 1988, the five Maghreb states appointed commissions to draft a treaty of cooperation. The treaty creating the AMU was signed in February 1989. Although the treaty also provides for membership by other

African and Arab countries, no new members have joined the organization since its inception.

The formation of the AMU also coincided with efforts by the OAU to form an AEC through the Abuja Treaty. Seen as a pillar of African integration in North Africa, the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) nonetheless has not lived up to these expectations, primarily because of profound political differences and distrust among the five countries. Thus, even though designated as an REC, the AMU is yet to sign the OAU Protocol on Relations between the AEC and RECs. Because of its dormancy and ineffectiveness, the AMU has increasingly been overshadowed by the Libyan-led CEN-SAD. With the civil war that has convulsed Libya since February 2011, it is, however, likely that CEN-SAD will diminish in significance, potentially swinging the pendulum back to the AMU.

Mandate and Objectives

The AMU's treaty pledged to strengthen relations among member states to guarantee regional stability and enhance policy coordination. In addition, the treaty highlighted the importance of developing agriculture, industry, commerce, food security, and the setting up of joint projects and economic cooperation programs. It also pledged to gradually introduce the free circulation of goods, services, and factors of production among the member states as a precursor to the creation of a North African Common Market or the Maghreb Economic Space. The final objective of the AMU was to enable its members to bargain with the EU over a whole range of economic issues (AMU 1988; Brunel 2008b).

AMU Institutions

Like most African RECs, the supreme institutional organ that makes decisions in the AMU is the Council of Heads of State. According to the treaty, the Council was to meet twice a year; however, this was changed to once a year in 1993. Algeria nominally chaired the Council for many years until 2005 when Libya was supposed to take over, but immediately relinquished the position. The AMU has not met at the level of heads of state since April 1994, a fact that has effectively paralyzed the organization. Below the heads of state level is the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, which is supposed to meet regularly to prepare for the sessions of the heads of state and examine proposals formulated by four specialized ministerial commissions on the economy and finance, human resources, basic infrastructure, and food security. Although the Council of Ministers holds regular meetings, it has not had an impact because of the paralysis at the presidential level (Zunes 1995). Similarly, the AMU Secretariat is based in Rabat, Morocco, but its role is perfunctory. The AMU treaty also envisaged a Consultative Assembly, consisting of 30 representatives from each member state that would advise the Council of Heads of State and a Court of Justice comprising two judges from each member state. But like all of the AMU's institutions, these organs exist in name only.

Assessing Performance

At the heart of the AMU's paralysis are regional differences over the status of Western Sahara, which was annexed by Morocco in 1975 but still retains the support of Algeria. Since the conflict started, the land borders between Morocco and Algeria have been closed, even though relations between the two have improved since the formation of the AMU. The broad regional rivalry is compounded by the fact that Morocco withdrew from

the OAU in 1982 and has not made attempts to join the AU. Finally, Libya's engagement with CEN-SAD created an alternative framework that diminished the significance of the AMU, but this may change with the demise of Gaddafi.

Conclusions and Lessons for Asia

Comparing the experiences of African regional institutions reveals sharp differences in efforts to forge meaningful integration. These differences are, in part, shaped by the past legacies, leadership, and motives behind integration. The structural problems of underdevelopment, external orientation of primarily agricultural economies, and inadequate infrastructure for trade and investment remain salient in explaining the inability of these institutions to achieve the objectives of integration. Overall, African regionalism has remained at the level of cooperation and has barely advanced toward supra-nationalism. Even though institutions such as ECOWAS have proposed more coordination of economic and security issues to foster shared sovereignty, the dominant pattern of African regionalism is cooperation in limited areas that can command consensus. The disproportionate power accorded to heads of state underscores Africa's desire to retain a significant measure of sovereignty with regard to questions of integration.

The integrative forces of small economies and markets impel African regionalism, but the disintegrative dynamics of weak states that characterize most African countries have checked the emergence of solid patterns of integration along functional lines. As a result, the dominant pattern since the 1960s has been that most of the regional institutions have played primarily political, rather than economic, roles; this is why most African regional institutions have overlapping memberships that defy economic logic. The tendency to join many institutions is driven by the past legacy in which heads of state sought to enhance their image and stature through forays in foreign affairs, including membership in regional institutions. CEN-SAD partly epitomizes this tendency whereby Libya has tried to erect an institution to promote its foreign policy objectives. The process of rationalizing African regional institutions, however, is beginning to occur with mounting pressures from the EU for EPAs that reflect economic convergence more than political motives. Moreover, the experiment of a potential merger involving the EAC, SADC, and COMESA presents interesting vistas in Africa's collective efforts to build more sound institutions anchored on economic logic. The contemplated merger has the potential of transforming the pattern of regionalism in Africa in the direction that architects of the Pan-Africanist continental economic community have always articulated. Nonetheless, it will take a long time before there is clarity on the seriousness of these efforts.

While political motives prevail in most regional institutions, there is a growing trend within some African RECs to move in the direction of trade creation, foreign investment, and collaboration to boost transport and infrastructure development. Institutions such as COMESA have persisted in creating new institutions that may potentially begin to make a difference in promoting intraregional trade and attracting external investments. In addition, despite its problems, ECOWAS has persisted in creating the institutional foundations—particularly in infrastructure, energy, and banking—that may be significant to the future elaboration of strong regionalism. Most of Africa's regional institutions are starting to make progress in the negotiation of trade agreements, including FTAs and

customs unions, which may in the long run contribute to strengthening regional integration.

Unlike ECOWAS and COMESA, which have both fostered a semblance of being functional regional institutions, the AMU and ECCAS symbolize the profound difficulty of constructing institutions against the backdrop of conflicts and dissensions. Throughout Africa, strong regional institutions have emerged where interstate conflicts have been minimized and addressed, and where the regional institutions have become incipient instruments of collective security. Although the AU remains the most comprehensive institution of African security, the growing roles of regional institutions signifies the priority accorded to regional stability as the prerequisite for economic cooperation.

Africa has succeeded in resolving the tensions between continentalism and subregionalism by delineating the roles between the AU and regional institutions. The new structures and institutions embodied in the AU and regional institutions have attempted to rebuild the division of labor between security and economic roles in integration that existed in the first 3 decades of African independence when the OAU dealt primarily with political and security matters, while the subregional organizations focused on economic concerns. But regional institutions will continue to play central security functions, given their roles in the creation of the ASF and other security initiatives. Similarly, the AU, through the UNECA, has persistently pushed to be recognized as a leader in continental integration through the AEC. In the future, a much stronger AU that provides leadership in economic and security domains may gradually evolve more functional, fruitful, and realistic relationships with regional institutions based on complementarities rather than competitiveness. Its leadership, however, hinges on a resolution of the questions about the structure of the AU, the shape and timing of continental political integration, and the future roles of regional institutions in the contemplated AEC.

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Institution Building for African Regionalism

Regionalism in Africa has entailed the search for collective efforts to overcome political fragmentation and economic weaknesses. This study is a synoptic analysis of how African countries have constructed institutions for security and prosperity. These efforts are captured through actors and events animating African regionalism since independence. The author suggests that while regional integration remains critical in Africa, unresolved tensions between continental and sub-regional institutions have impeded the emergence of stable forms of regionalism.

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