

# INSTITUTION-BUILDING FOR AFRICAN REGIONALISM

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## 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 been engaged in the construction of continental and sub-regional 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 sub-regional 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 sub-regional 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 the United Nations Economic Commission of Africa (UNECA) and sub-regional institutions- the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Common Market of Southern and Eastern African States (COMESA), the Community of Sahelian and Saharan States (CEN-SAD), and the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU). Since they constitute some of the anchors of African regionalism, it is important to understand their evolution, institutional design, and performance. Framed from a historical perspective since the 1960s, the analysis probes the main actors, events, and processes that have animated the African integration process and also highlights the roles of key external actors in promoting regionalism in Africa. The conclusion reflects on what the African integration experiences integration in Asia.

## A. 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 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.<sup>1</sup> 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: preferential trade area; a free trade area; a customs union; a common market; and an economic union.<sup>2</sup> 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 Mshonda 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."<sup>3</sup>

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.<sup>4</sup> Initial regional economic integration schemes were

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<sup>1</sup>For seminal discussions of these distinctions see E. B. Haas, "The Study of Regional Integration: Reflections on the Joy and Anguish of Pre-theorizing," *International Organizations* 24(1970), pp. 607-46; S. B. Asante, *Regionalization and Africa's Development: Expectations, Reality, and Challenges* (London: Macmillan, 1997);

<sup>2</sup> Jacob Viner, *The Customs Union Issue* (New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1950); Roger D. Hansen, "Regional Integration: Reflections on a Decade of Theoretical Efforts," *World Politics* 21(January 1969).

<sup>3</sup> Richard E. Mshomba, *Africa in the Global Economy* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2000), p. 175. See also Percy Mistry, "Africa's Record of Regional Cooperation and Integration," *African Affairs*, 99(2000), p. 554 where he remarks 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."

<sup>4</sup> For excellent studies on the colonial origins of integration see Reginald H. Green and Ann Seidman, *Unity or Poverty? The Economics of African integration* (London: Penguin, 1968); Arthur Hazelwood, ed., *African Integration and Disintegration: Case Studies in Economic and Political Union* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967).

crafted by colonial powers seeking to create large unions among the 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 thirteen territories into two federations—the French West Africa (Afrique Occidentale Française, AOF, made up of Cote d'Ivoire, Dahomey, French Guinea, French Soudan, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, and Upper Volta) and French Equatorial African Federation (Afrique Equatoriale Française, made up of 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.<sup>5</sup>

On the eve of decolonization in the late 1950s, the process of integration unleashed in Europe through the Treaty of Rome in 1957 had decisive influence on determining the trajectory of Africa's regionalism. While spearheading the formation of the European Economic Community, 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 Douanière de L'Afrique de l'Ouest, UDEAO (the West African Customs Union) and the Union Africaine et Malgache de Coopération Economique (OCAM).<sup>6</sup> But the most significant outcome of the Yaounde agreements was that they 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 promotion of economic development. Ranged against this vision was the gradualist approach articulated notably by most of the Francophone countries, but also by Tanzania and Nigeria who suggested basing Africa's integration schemes on sub-regional organizations. This perspective envisaged economic integration beginning at the sub-regional levels and proceeding in stages

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<sup>5</sup> For studies of these institutions see Agrippah T. Mugomba, "Regional Organizations and African Underdevelopment: The Collapse of the East African Community," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 16(1978); Peter Robson, "Regional Integration and the Crisis in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 23(1985); and Omutunde Johnson, "Economic Integration in Africa: Enhancing Prospects for Success," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 29(1991).

<sup>6</sup> Julienne Roland, "The Experience of Integration in French-Speaking Africa," in A. Hazelwood, *African integration and Disintegration*, pp. 339-53.

beginning with functional cooperation and coordination and eventually leading towards a common market.<sup>7</sup>

### **1. From the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to the African Union (AU)**

The contest between continentalism and sub-regionalism 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 sub-regional 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, 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.<sup>8</sup>

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 sub-regions. 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.<sup>9</sup> 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 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 sub-regional organizations.

By the 1980s, continental institutions had produced remarkable stability of 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

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<sup>7</sup> The debates between the continentalists and regionalists are captured in Colin Legum, *Pan-Africanism: A Short Political Guide* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1967) and Albert Tevoedjre, *Pan-Africanism in Action* (Cambridge: Harvard Center for International Affairs, Occasional Papers in International Affairs, no. 11, 1965).

<sup>8</sup> For a good analysis of this phase of continental integration see C.O. C. Amate, *Inside the OAU: Pan-Africanism in Practice* (London: Macmillan 1986)

<sup>9</sup> B. Bukarambe, "The Role and Impact of the OAU in the Management of African Conflicts," *Survival* 25(1983); I. William Zartman, "Africa as a Subordinate State System in International Relations," *International Organization* 21(1967).

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 to territory, but not internal convulsions in 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 Africa 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 securing 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 centre of these efforts was the African Leadership Forum (ALF), organized under the direction of former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo to reform the 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.<sup>10</sup> The escalation of civil wars in Liberia, Somalia, and Sierra Leone strengthened the momentum for institutional reforms for boosting 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 of weak and collapsing states. Although reflecting the spirit of the CSSDCA, the new mechanisms were inadequate in saving the OAU from obsolescence, particularly since sub-regional institutions were also beginning to take greater roles in the security arena.<sup>11</sup>

Libya under Muammar Gaddafi provided the 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 favourable 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

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<sup>10</sup> On the evolution of the CSSDCA see I. William Zartman and Francis M. Deng, *A Strategic Vision for Africa: The Kampala Movement* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 2002).

<sup>11</sup> Omar A. Touray, "The Common African Defense and Security Policy," *African Affairs* 104(2005).

leaders finally adopted the Sirte declaration, which approved the transformation of the Organization of African Unity into an African Union.<sup>12</sup>

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 sub-regionalists, pitting Libya and its allies who pushed for a union with more elaborate powers vis-à-vis Nigeria and South Africa who were more cautious about a stronger continental body. Following three years of deliberations, African leaders approved the Constitutive Act of the AU in Durban, South Africa, in July 2002.

The creation of the AU marked a critical phase in Africa's regionalism at the turn of the new millennium. As part of the efforts to reignite the spirit of African problem-solving, the AU was restructured to address the many challenges that Africa has confronted since the early 1990s. Although the AU Constitutive Act was a diplomatic compromise between the continentalists and sub-regionalists, it reflects a more vigorous commitment to pursue peace, security, good governance, and respect for human rights. Central to meeting these objectives is the creation of new and more robust continental institutions such as the AU Peace and Security Council (AU PSC), modelled on the UN Security Council. In a departure from the sovereignty-fixation of the OAU PSC, has been endowed with the mandate to intervene in cases of massive human rights violation, war crimes, and genocide.

Apart from the PSC, the AU has created a myriad of 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 the AU PSC decisions. Guiding the peace and security agenda of the AU commission is the Common African Defense and Security Policy (CADSP) that embraces traditional focus on state security and the 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) that is 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 is projected to be operational by June 2010.<sup>13</sup>

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

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<sup>12</sup> Kassim Mohammed Khamis, *Promoting the African Union* (Washington DC: Lilian Barber Press, 2008).

<sup>13</sup> For perspectives on the new AU institutions and their performance see Wafula Okumu, "The African Union: Pitfalls and Prospects for Uniting Africa," *Journal of International Affairs*, 62(2009); Benedikt Franke, "Africa's Evolving Security Architecture and the Concept of Multilayered Security Communities," *Cooperation and Conflict* 43 (2008) and Ben Kioko, The Right of Intervention Under the African Union's Constitutive Act: From Non-Interference to Non-Intervention, *IRRC* 85(2003).

Constitutive Act pledged to build on the previous Abuja Treaty to use sub-regional 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 sub-regional organizations the fundamental building blocks to achieve its multifaceted objectives.

Since its formation in 2002, the AU has focused on managing various conflicts, including Burundi, the Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Comoros, Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Madagascar, Mauritania, Somali, Sudan, and Togo. By sending peacekeeping missions in 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 United Nations, the Europe Union (EU), and bilateral donors.<sup>14</sup>

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 will not come into force until the fifty-three member states ratify an amendment to the AU Constitutive Act. It is envisaged that member states would have six years to consult their domestic constituencies in reaching decisions on ratification. Coming barely seven years since the formation of the AU, the hasty process of creating new structures has polarized Africa and caused considerable consternation among African allies abroad about the seriousness of some of the leadership on a consistent path to institution-building. As Botswana's Vice-President remarked after the July 2009 decision: "The Chair [Libyan leader, 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."<sup>15</sup>

## **2. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)**

Established by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 1958, the 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

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<sup>14</sup> Ben Kioko, "The Right of Intervention," and Wafula Okumu, "The African Union."

<sup>15</sup> "Botswana's Vice President Slams Libya, Says Summit Failed Africa," *AllAfrica News*, 7 July 2009.

agency with the responsibility to “operate at the regional and sub-regional levels to harness resources and bring them to bear on Africa’s priorities.”<sup>16</sup> Its strategic location in Addis Ababa, 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 sub-regional offices in Africa that have contributed to its other mandates of analysis and advocacy; enhancing partnerships; technical assistance; and communication and knowledge sharing.<sup>17</sup>

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 labour 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.<sup>18</sup>

Although pointing to “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

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.uneca.org/>. For historical analysis of UNECA see Domenico Mazzeo, *African Regional Organizations* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1984)

<sup>17</sup> United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)

<sup>18</sup> The UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), “Approaches to African Economic Integration.” *Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 1, no. 3, September 1963, pp. 397-98. See also “Fifth Session of the UN Economic Commission for Africa,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* vol. 1, no. 3, September 1963, pp. 388-90.



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.<sup>19</sup>

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

But amidst disappointing economic performance throughout Africa, the UNECA alongside the OAU came up with a blueprint for Africa's self-reliance and industrialization geared toward the domestic market. The Lagos Plan of Action passed by the OAU in 1980 made the creation of regional organizations the centrepiece 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 investments.<sup>20</sup> 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, free movement of peoples and goods, and the coordination of macro-economic policies to ensure mutual consistency of 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).<sup>21</sup>

Although the UNECA had since the mid-1960s advised the OAU on modalities for establishing the AEC, the Lagos Plan of Action was the most comprehensive treatment on this subject.<sup>22</sup> 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

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<sup>19</sup> ECA, "Approaches to African Economic Integration," p. 398.

<sup>20</sup> The Organization of African Unity, *The Lagos Plan of Action* (Addis Ababa: OAU, 1980).

<sup>21</sup> For wide-ranging analyses of the UNECA's position and the Lagos Plan see UNECA, *Proposals for Strengthening Economic Integration in West Africa* (Addis Ababa: ECA, 1984) and R. I. Onwuka and A. Sesay, *The future of Regionalism in Africa* (London: MacMillan, 1985).

<sup>22</sup> For a discussion of the ECA's role in previous efforts at the creation of the African Economic Community see Kassim Mohammed Khamis, *Promoting the African Union*, pp.29-40.

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 sub-regions 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.”<sup>23</sup> 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 strengthening of the relations between the AEC Secretariat and sub-regional institutions. But as Khamis reveals, all 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. 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.<sup>24</sup>

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, Common Market, and Monetary Union over a ten 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 policy 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,

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<sup>23</sup>The Organization of African Unity, *The Abuja Treaty Toward the Establishment of the African Economic Community* (Addis Ababa: OAU, July 1991).

<sup>24</sup> Khamis, *Promoting the African Union*, pp. 64-65.

RECs, and other stakeholders with relevant information on current progress, challenges and issues on regional integration in Africa.<sup>25</sup>

## **B. Regional Economic Communities (RECS): Comparative Experiences**

African sub-regions have been the cockpits for diverse experiments in integration that proceed from geographical contiguities, cultural similarities, and shared interests. Early proponents of sub-regional arrangements such as Tanzania and Nigeria saw the sub-regions as the logical framework for integration because the grandiose continentalist vision failed to capture Africa's historical and cultural distinctiveness that would always stand in the way of meaningful integration. Instead, they advocated for constructing regional institutions from the sub-regions 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 sub-regionalism perceived it as furnishing the larger umbrella for the advancement of broad ideals of unity, self-determination, and security while the sub-regional institutions became the critical locus for economic cooperation, including free trade areas, customs union, and common markets. Over the years, however, RECs broadened their mandates to 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 sub-regional organization would form the preliminary, albeit primary institutions in the realization of the goal of the AEC.

This section reviews the experiences of some African RECs towards 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.

### **1. The Economic Community for Central African States (ECCAS)**

#### **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 (AEF, *Afrique Equatoriale Française*) to ease the administration of the region. Comprised of the Republic of Congo, Gabon, the Central African Republic and Chad, the AEF tried to harmonize their financial, economic and transport policies, as well as coordinating their interaction with the French metropolis. The AEF was dissolved in 1959 on the eve of independence, leading to the establishment of the Equatorial Customs Union (UDE, *Union douanière équatoriale*). In 1964, UDE was transformed into UDEAC and its membership incorporated Cameroon and subsequently, Equatorial Guinea in 1985. 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

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<sup>25</sup> .....

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 composed of Burundi, Rwanda, and Zaire (now the DRC). Efforts to merge the CEPGL and UDEAC failed. In the early 1980s, with 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 ECCAS. Its members were made up of CEMAC and CEPGL 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.<sup>26</sup> Currently, ECCAS has 11 members, including: Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, the DRC, the Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe.

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 and harmonization of integration.<sup>27</sup> More critical, even though ECCAS is the largest regional institution Central Africa, CEMAC with only six member countries, is more advanced in regional integration because it has established more effective institutions such as the coordinated and preferential trade reforms, a common currency zone (the Communauté Financière de l'Afrique (CFA), a regional Central Bank, and a regional Development Bank.<sup>28</sup> 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 four priorities:

- The development of the capacities to maintain peace, security and stability as the prerequisite for economic and social development;
- The development of physical, economic and monetary integration;
- The development of a culture of human integration; and
- The establishment of an autonomous financing mechanism for the region.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Côme Damien Georges Awoumou. "ECCAS or CEMAC: Which Regional Economic Community for Central Africa? Pretoria, Institute for Security Studies, Monograph no. 155, November 2008, pp. 112- 113.

<sup>27</sup> Gankou Jean Marie and Ntah Marcellin Ndong, "Is Regional Integration in Central Africa in Question?" p. 7 ; UNESCO, Executive Board, 174<sup>th</sup> Session Item 38 of Provisional Agenda, "Relations with the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and Draft Cooperation Agreement between UNESCO and ECCAS. 2006:Annex 1, p. 2.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> ECCAS Treaty Preamble. Paragraph 4.

To realize these objectives, ECCAS has promoted policy reforms, including the removal of restrictive trade practices, streamlining customs procedures, increasing the surveillance of macro-economic policy and engendering greater fiscal discipline. In addition, one of the key ECCAS mandates is to promote harmonious cooperation and self-sustained development; and to gradually eliminate obstacles between member states for the free movement of persons, goods and 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 free trade areas, common markets, and economic union.

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### **ECCAS Institutions**

ECCAS has placed emphasis on intergovernmental cooperation framework, with national interests taking prominence over regional concerns.<sup>31</sup> The significance accorded to state sovereignty is reflected in the institutional arrangements that privilege the importance of executive institutions of members. The core institutions of ECCAS are: the Authority of Heads of State and Government, a Council of Ministers, a Court of Justice, a General Secretariat, a 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.<sup>32</sup> Given that the Authority is vested with the powers 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 eight years of its existence, ECCAS adopted a trade liberalization program that was to be implemented gradually starting with tariff reductions and elimination of non-tariff barriers to intra-ECCAS trade. Not much progress has, however, 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 by members.<sup>33</sup> 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 a free trade area. At a summit in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, in 1999 ECCAS adopted a 'recovery and

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<sup>30</sup> ECCAS Treaty, Article 6, Paragraphs 1&2.

<sup>31</sup> ECCAS Treaty

<sup>32</sup> See ECCAS Treaty, Articles 13, s.2e and 14, s.2, respectively.

<sup>33</sup> Côme Damien and Georges Awoumou, "ECCAS or CEMAC: Which Regional Economic Community for Central Africa?"

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.<sup>34</sup> This objective has not 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 in force in January 2004 and aims 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.<sup>35</sup>

### **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 to build its institutional capacity. The EU is also an important donor in ECCAS programs on peace and security. For instance, 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, check the illicit proliferation of small arms, cross border crime, and the illegal exploitation of the region's natural resources.<sup>36</sup>

The EU has exerted considerable leverage in Central Africa through the negotiations for the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) since October 2003. Some members of ECCAS alongside 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.<sup>37</sup> As part of the pressure for merging CEMAC and ECCAS, 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

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> See Côme Damien Georges Awoumou, "ECCAS or CEMAC: Which Regional Economic Community for Central Africa?"

<sup>36</sup> Awoumou, "ECCAS or CEMAC, P. 132.

<sup>37</sup> DBSA Paper pp. 115- 117

cooperation agreement in April 2005, they have continued to operate as parallel communities.<sup>38</sup>

## **2. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)**

### **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 the leadership in 1975 to forge a consensus on the establishment of 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 integration and establishment of an economic and monetary union through the removal of customs duties for intra-ECOWAS trade and taxes having equivalent effect; the establishment of a common external tariff; the harmonization of economic and financial policies; and the creation of a single monetary zone. Unlike the past where member states clung to their sovereignty, the revised treaty sought to postulate a measure of supranationalism for ECOWAS. 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 fifteen countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.<sup>39</sup>

### **Objectives and Mandates**

Since its establishment, ECOWAS has tried to establish a common market through trade liberalization, uniform economic policies, 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 communication, energy and infrastructural development.<sup>40</sup> To support investment and promote financial cooperation ECOWAS has established several institutions such as the ECOWAS Fund for Cooperation, Compensation and Development (EFCCD), that finances 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), 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 twelve countries across West and Central Africa.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> UNECA, *Assessing Regional Integration in Africa II: Rationalizing Regional Economic Communities* (Addis Ababa: UNECA, 2002), p. 8.

<sup>39</sup> Daniel Bach, "The Dilemmas of Regionalisation," in Adekeye Adebajo and Ismail Rashid (eds.) *West Africa's Security Challenges: Building Peace in a Troubled Region* (London and Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), p. 75

<sup>40</sup> The Treaty Establishing the Economic Community of West African states. At [http://www.iss.co.za/AF/RegOrg/unity\\_to\\_union/pdfs/eccas/eccastreaty.pdf](http://www.iss.co.za/AF/RegOrg/unity_to_union/pdfs/eccas/eccastreaty.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

## **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 the Community. The Authority can adopt policies it regards as necessary and appropriate and can suspend a member state. The other institutions include the Council of Ministers, the Community Parliament, the Economic and Social Council, the Community Court of Justice, the Executive Secretariat, the Fund for Co-operation, Compensation and Development, and the 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."<sup>42</sup> 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, 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 was always confronted by 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.<sup>43</sup>

## **Assessing Performance**

### ***Trade liberalization***

The diversity of the economies in ECOWAS is critical to the assessment of progress in economic cooperation. Intra-regional trade among ECOWAS members accounts for less than 10 percent, with the bulk conducted with extra-African partners. This is also because most members are protective of their domestic industries.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, ECOWAS members are dependent on the export of primary agricultural commodities: with the exception of Nigeria and Sierra Leone which export oil and diamond respectively as their leading sources of foreign exchange, the remaining countries depend on the production of agricultural primary commodities. Countries, including, Benin, Togo, Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire all depend on the export of cocoa as their main source of foreign exchange.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Akinjide Osuntokun, "Gulliver and Lilliputians: Nigeria and Its Neighbors," in Adekeye Adebajo and Abdul Rauf Mustapha, (eds.), *Gulliver's Troubles: Nigeria's Foreign Policy after the Cold War* (Durban: University of Kwazulu-Natal Press, 2008), pp. 141-57

<sup>44</sup> David Francis, *The Politics of Economic Regionalism: Sierra Leone in ECOWAS* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2001), p. 10.



This homogeneity in production creates limited opportunities for intra-regional 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 in the efforts to establish a functional sub-regional common market. In 1979 ECOWAS adopted a protocol on free movement of people that conferred on community citizens the right to enter and reside in the territory of any member state provided they possessed a valid travel documents. The protocol, however, also allowed member states the right to refuse admission to any community citizens who were inadmissible under the member state's own domestic law. The supplementary protocols adopted between 1985 and 1990 committed member states to among other things: grant community citizens the right of residence for the purpose of seeking and carrying out income-earning employment; not to expel community citizens en masse; and 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 respective 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.<sup>45</sup>

### ***Conflict Management, Governance, and Post-Conflict Reconstruction***

ECOWAS took the first steps in sub-regional conflict management with the adoption of the Protocol on Non-Aggression in 1978 and the Protocol relating to 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.<sup>46</sup> 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 who intervene 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.<sup>47</sup> The community has also established the ECOWAS Parliament and the ECOWAS Court of Justice in Abuja, Nigeria.

<sup>45</sup> Alistair Bolton. 'Local integration in West Africa'. *Protracted Displacement FMR* 33.

<sup>46</sup> Adekeye Adebajo, "Hegemony on a Shoestring: Nigeria's Post-Cold War Diplomacy," in Adebajo and Mustapha, *Gulliver's Troubles*, pp. 1-37.

<sup>47</sup> John Akokpari "Introduction: Human Rights Actors and Institutions in Africa" in John Akokpari and Daniel Zimble (eds.) *Africa's Human Rights Architecture* Cape Town: Fanele Publishers p. 7.

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, ECOWAS assistance towards 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 and the provision of funds to support governments' institutional capacities.<sup>48</sup>

### **Continuing Obstacles to ECOWAS Integration**

Asante made a trenchant critique of ECOWAS integration process in 2000, 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."<sup>49</sup> 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 would 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 has 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.<sup>50</sup>

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.<sup>51</sup> 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

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<sup>48</sup> David Francis, *The Politics of Economic Regionalism*, p. 8.

<sup>49</sup> S.K.B. Asante, *ECOWAS and West Africa's Development in the Globalising World of the Twenty First Century: The Agenda for Action*, (Niamey, Niger: ECA Sub-Regional Development Centre for West Africa, 2000, p.6.

<sup>50</sup> A. Y. Yansane. "West African Economic Integration: Is ECOWAS the Answer?" *Africa Today*, 24 (1977), pp. 51-52; and Real Lavergne, ed., *Regional Integration and Cooperation in West Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>51</sup> John Akokpari, "The Dilemmas of Regional Integration and Development in Africa," In John Akokpari, Angela Ndinga-Muvumba and Tim Murithi (eds.) *The African Union and Its Institutions* (Cape Town: Fanele, 2008).

area in ECOWAS, Nigerian is a dominant member of ECOWAS, a role that oftentimes creates resentments.<sup>52</sup>

### **The Role of External Actors in ECOWAS**

ECOWAS has maintained diverse relationships 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 United Nations, the EU, United Kingdom, and United States 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 Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with ECOWAS. The relationships with external partners such as the EU have made positive contributions to ECOWAS objectives, particularly on security related matters, the fight against terrorism, organized trans-border, and trans-regional criminal activities.

## **3. The Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD)**

### **Background**

CEN-SAD was established in Tripoli, Libya in February 1998 through the initiative of Libyan leader Gaddafi.<sup>53</sup> One of the major contributing factor 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.<sup>54</sup> Gaddafi took advantage of this vacuum to launch his own institution by inviting Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Chad, Eritrea, Mali, Niger, Chad, and Sudan into CEN-SAD.<sup>55</sup> 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 to Libya which has contributed substantially to projects in member countries.<sup>56</sup> 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 achieve global economic and social development.<sup>57</sup> As a framework for "integration and complementarity," CEN-SAD has emphasized the attainment of economic unity in CE-SAD region through the implementation of the free movement of people and goods in order to eventually

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<sup>52</sup> For the vast differences between Nigeria and other ECOWAS states see Adebajo and Mustapha, *Gulliver's Troubles*.

<sup>53</sup> CEN- SAD. The Community of Sahel States. At <http://knowledge.uneca.org/member-states/observatory-on-regional-integration/regional-economic-commissions-in-africa/cen-sad/cen-sad-the-community-of-sahel-saharan-states>

<sup>54</sup> Kathryn Sturman, "The Rise of Libya as a Regional Player," *African Security Review*, 12 (2003).

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Available at <http://www.cen-sad.org/new/?lang=english>

establish a Free Trade Area. In addition, CEN-SAD has proposed strengthening integration by implementing common development plans in various sectors to complement the national development plans. In seeking the attainment of common objectives, CEN-SAD seeks:

- The removal of all restrictions hampering integration of member countries;
- Free movement of persons, capital and interests of nationals of member states;
- Right of establishment, ownership and exercise of economic activity;
- Free trade, movement of goods, commodities and services originating from the signatory countries;
- Promotion of external trade through an investment policy in member states;
- Expand transport and communications among member states through the implementation of common projects.

### **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), where 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 Secretariat that is responsible for the management of the daily operations, monitoring the functioning of its institutions and the 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 ten members designated by each member country that is mandated to assist the organs of CEN-SAD in the design and preparation of development programs.<sup>58</sup>

In the peace and security arena, CEN-SAD has created the Sahel-Saharan Council for Peace and Security of the Community and 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 contemplates forming the Sahel-Saharan Council for Peace and Security which

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<sup>58</sup> <http://www.africa-union.org/Recs/CEN%20SAD.pdf>

will be concerned with decisions on the Sahel-Saharan Intervention and Peacekeeping Force.<sup>59</sup>

### **Assessing Performance**

As one of the newest RECs in Africa, CEN-SAD has not significantly achieved the 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 has contended that their 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.<sup>60</sup>

CEN-SAD is also a relative newcomer in the African political and security landscape. In December 2001, three years after it was established, the organization sent a small peacekeeping force to the Central African Republic (CAR) 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, limited. In other areas, CEN-SAD has worked with the AU to mediate between Ethiopia and Eritrea 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.<sup>61</sup>

### **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 WHO, UNESCO, 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, for instance, 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

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<sup>59</sup> Meeting the Challenges of Conflict Prevention in Africa: Towards the Operationalisation of the Early warning system. p.10 At <http://www.africa-union.org/root/AU/AUC/Departments/PSC/PSC/CD/Meeting%20the%20Challenge%20of%20Conflict%20prevention%20in%20Africa.pdf>

<sup>60</sup> UNECA *Assessing Regional Integration in Africa (Aria) II. Rationalizing Regional Economic Communities* (Addis Ababa, UNECA, 2002), pp. 73-74

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

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.”<sup>62</sup> 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.”<sup>63</sup>

#### **4. The Common Market for Eastern and Southern African States (COMESA)**

##### **Background**

The collapse of the East African Community (EAC) in 1977 created a vacuum in 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 in Eastern and Southern Africa. The membership of the PTA included: Angola, Burundi, Comoros, the DRC, 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.

In November 1993, PTA members ratified the treaty culminating in the birth of COMESA with the mandate to deepen integration from a free trade area to a customs union. In 1995, 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 members. 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 the 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 ready to merge into an African Economic Community.”<sup>64</sup> The principal

<sup>62</sup> See European Commission Technical Mission to Libya: Exporting Fortress Europe.

<sup>63</sup> Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European. At <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52009DC0550:EN:HTML>

<sup>64</sup> COMESA *Secretariat, Treaty Establishing the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa*. Lusaka: COMESA, 1993.

route for realizing this goal is developing integration through development of trade and investment. The primary mandates are:

- Promote free movement of goods and services produced within COMESA and removal of all trade barriers and tariffs;
- Establish a Customs Union under which goods and services imported from non-COMESA countries will attract an agreed single tariff in all COMESA countries; Free movement of capital and investment supported by adoption of a common investment area so as to create a more favourable investment climate for COMESA region;
- Facilitate the gradual establishment of a payment union based on COMESA clearing house and the eventual establishment of a common Monetary Union with a common currency; and
- Adoption of common visa arrangements, including the right of establishment leading to the free movement of *bona fide* persons.<sup>65</sup>

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 the member states that would 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 (FTA) in October 2000. This was followed by the establishment of a customs union in 2009; COMESA plans to have a monetary union by 2015 and a COMESA community by 2025.

### **COMESA Institutions**

The institutional framework consists of the following core organs: the Authority; the Council of Ministers; the Court of Justice; the Secretariat; and the Commission, plus specialized organs and committees. Consisting of the 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, and independent system of rules embodied in the COMESA treaty which is separate from and superior to national law.<sup>66</sup>

COMESA retained all the major economic institutions of the PTA--the Clearing House, the Trade and Development Bank, the Regional Investment Agency--and also created new ones such as the COMESA Fund that 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. Since it was formed, the committee has worked to develop a peace and security structure for COMESA.

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<sup>65</sup> COMESA Secretariat, *Treaty Establishing COMESA*.

<sup>66</sup> <http://www.comesa.int/institutions/Folder.2005>.

## Assessing Performance

Like its predecessor, the PTA, COMESA has achieved modest successes in the objectives of promotion and diversification of intra-regional trade.<sup>67</sup> Although the COMESA FTA in 2000 with a membership of 12 countries led to some increase in intra-COMESA trade, the main challenge to the FTA is the resurgence and proliferation of non-tariff barriers which still hamper trade among member states. COMESA has made some progress in implementing transport programmes that remove barriers to trade in the region; these programmes have reduced transport costs and led to some increase in the volume of trade.<sup>68</sup> In a COMESA Strategic Plan (2007-2010), the members identified the obstacles to integration to include: poverty, corruption, brain drain, dependence on the 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.<sup>69</sup>

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 harmonising 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 percent and 25 percent, respectively. Seen as an important step in economic integration, the customs union may potentially lead to more economic activities between COMESA members and speed up the trade competitiveness of the private sector in the bloc. To complement the customs union, COMESA established a Payment and Settlement System (PSS) that will facilitate cross-border payments among Central Banks in the region. With these new mechanisms, COMESA estimates intra-regional trade to reach US \$20 billion by 2010.<sup>70</sup>

Prior to the customs union, another milestone was reached in the region when the EAC-SADC-COMESA Heads of State met in Kampala, Uganda, in October 2008 to explore measures to integrate the three sub-regions within the AU's overall objective of establishing an AEC. With a combined population of 257 and GDP of US 625 billion, the three sub-regions have committed to confront the perennial problems of overlapping and duplicative memberships that characterize 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 inter-regional infrastructure programs, and interim institutional arrangements that will spearhead the process of cooperation. With respect to trade arrangements, the summit agreed on measures to expedite a Free Trade Area encompassing the three blocs with the ultimate objective of establishing a single customs union. Pending the signing of a memorandum of

<sup>67</sup> Percy S. Mistry, *Africa's Record of Regional Cooperation and Integration*, pp. 562-63.

<sup>68</sup> UNECA, *Assessing Regional Integration in Africa II: Rationalizing Regional Economic Communities* (Addis Ababa: UNECA, 2002).

<sup>69</sup> COMESA Secretariat, *COMESA Strategic Plan 2007-2010* (Lusaka: COMESA, 2007).

<sup>70</sup> "COMESA Establishes a Customs Union," *AllAfrica.com*, June 19, 2009.



understanding among them, the summit established a Tripartite Council of Ministers which will meet at least once every 2 years; a Tripartite Sectoral Ministerial Committee on Trade, Finance, Customs, Economic Matters and Home Affairs; a Tripartite Sectoral Ministerial Committee on Infrastructure; a Tripartite Sectoral Ministerial Committee on Legal Affairs; a Tripartite Committee of Senior Officials and of Experts which shall meet at least once a year; a Tripartite Task Force of the Secretariats of the three RECs to meet at least twice a year. The Tripartite Task Force was mandated to work towards the road map for a merger into a single REC.<sup>71</sup>

### **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 countries are negotiating separate EPAs such as the Eastern and Southern African EPA (ESA-EPA), the East African Community EPA (EAC-EPA), and the SADC-EPA.<sup>72</sup> Collectively, COMESA has since 2001 maintained a strategic partnership with the United States. Technical support from the US has been useful to member states in the areas of Information Technologies, harmonizing of regional policies on trade, agriculture, gender and environment, and food security. In recent years, COMESA has also engaged China in the support for regional infrastructural projects.

## **5. The Arab Maghreb Union (AMU)**

### **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 formed the *Conseil Permanent Consultatif du Maghreb* (CPCM) between Algeria, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia, to harmonise development plans, forge intra-regional trade, and promote collective positions on relations with Europe.<sup>73</sup> 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.

The formation of the AMU also coincided with efforts by the OAU to form an AEC through the Abuja Treaty. Seen as the pillar of African integration in North Africa, the 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 a REC, the AMU is yet to sign the OAU Protocol on Relations between the AEC and

<sup>71</sup> Paul Kruger, "SADC-EAC-COMESA Tripartite Summit," *Trade Law for Southern Africa*, October 2008.

<sup>72</sup> Wolfe Braude, *SADC, COMESA, and the EAC: Conflicting Regional Trade Agendas*. Midrand: Institute for Global Dialogue, Occasional Paper No. 57, October 2008.

<sup>73</sup> Stephen Zunes, "Algeria, the Maghreb Union, and the Western Sahara Conflict," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, June 1995)

RECs. Because of its dormancy and ineffectiveness, the AMU has increasingly been overshadowed by Libyan-led CEN-SAD.

### **Mandate and Objectives**

At its inception, 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.<sup>74</sup>

### **AMU's 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; 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 paralysed the organization. Below the heads of state is the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs that is supposed to meet regularly to prepare for the sessions of the Heads of State and to examine proposals formulated by four specialized ministerial commissions on the economy and finance, human resources, basic infrastructures, and food security. Although the Council of Ministers holds regular meetings, they have not made a difference because of the paralysis at the presidential level.<sup>75</sup> Similarly, the AMU has a Secretariat based in Rabat, Morocco, but its role is perfunctory. The AMU 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, composed of two judges from each member state. But like all the AMU's institutions, these organs exist in name only.

### **Assessing Performance**

The key to the paralysis of the AMU has been regional differences over the status of Western Sahara that was annexed by Morocco in 1975, but supported by Algeria. Since the conflict started, the land borders between Morocco and Algeria have been closed, even though the relations 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 has created an alternative framework that potentially diminishes the significance of the AMU.

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<sup>74</sup> <http://www.dfa.gov.za/foreign/Multilateral/africa/amu.htm>

<sup>75</sup> "Maghreban officials in Algeria for revival of Arab Maghreb Union," *ArabicNews.com*, May 18, 1999.

## **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 the 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 ability 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 sovereignties, 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, 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 of the African regional institutions have overlapping memberships that defy economic logic. The tendency to join many institutions is driven by the past legacy where heads of state sought to enhance their images and stature through forays in foreign, 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 more economic convergence than political motives. Moreover, the experiment by the EAC, SADC, and COMESA for a potential merger 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 for some African RECs to move in the direction of trade creation, attraction of foreign investment, and collaboration to boost transport and infrastructural development. Institutions such as COMESA have persisted in creating new institutions that may potentially begin to make a difference in promoting intra-regional trade and attracting external investments. In addition, despite its problems, ECOWAS has persisted in creating the institutional foundations, particularly in infrastructure and energy and banking that may be significant for future elaboration of strong regionalism. Most of Africa's regional institutions are starting to make progress in negotiations of trade agreements, including Free Trade Areas and Customs Unions that may, in the long run, contribute to strengthening regional integration.

Unlike ECOWAS and COMESA that have fostered a semblance of functional regional institutions, the AMU and ECCAS symbolize the profound problems 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 sub-regionalism 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 labour between security and economic roles in integration that existed in the first three decades of African independence when the OAU dealt primarily with political and security matters while the sub-regional 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 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. AU leadership, however, hinges on a resolution of the questions around the structure of the AU, the shape and timing of continental political integration, and the future roles of regional institutions in the contemplated AEC.