

## **ECONOMIC REGIONALISM AND DEPENDENCY IN AFRICA: A STUDY OF AFRICAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY (AEC)**

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### **Abstract**

The primary concern of African Economic Community (AEC) as an arm of African Union (AU) is to coordinate the activities of various regional economic groups in Africa, and ultimately guides them to a single market and possibly continent-wide economic and monetary union. But under AEC watch the regional economic organizations have proliferated and steadily fractionalized or decimated into several strands of subgroups, thus, leading to overlapping or multiple memberships of African states in the regional economic communities (RECs). The principal findings of this study, therefore, are that the regional economic integration in Africa has been seriously undermined by (i) overlapping memberships (ii) numerous subgroupings, and (iii) proliferation of regional economic blocs. Thus, raising doubt on the ability of AEC realizing its stated goals.

### **Introduction**

Economic regionalism is an aspect of regionalism or regional integration, others being socio-political regionalism and regional security bloc. According to Aniche (2009:404) “regionalization is a process by which states from the same region voluntarily decide to come together to cooperate in certain areas like economy, culture, politics, law, security, etc, giving rise or leading to the formation of regional international organization”.

However, our focal point in this study will be on the role of African Economic Community (AEC) towards coordinating other regional economic communities (RECs) in Africa with the hope of achieving ultimately continent-wide single market and possibly a continent-wide economic and monetary union. These major regional economic blocs in Africa constituting RECs include ECOWAS, SADC, COMESA, EAC, ECCAS, CENSAD, IGAD and AMU. At this juncture, it is pertinent to define economic regionalization. Economic regionalization for Aniche (2009:405) arise as “a result of the need for integrating states to enjoy the benefit of common market and custom union in which they erect uniform common tariff walls against non-member states, while enjoying duty-free trade relations between/among themselves”.

For instance, Nwanegbo (2005:61-79) states that the principal forms of economic integration are free trade, customs union, common market, economic union and total unification, depending on the extent of surrender of national sovereignty by member states. Similarly, Goldstein & Pevehouse (2008:293) note that beyond free-trade areas, states may decide to embrace customs union by reducing trade barriers and adopting a common tariff toward states that are not members of the agreement. If members of customs union decide to coordinate other policies such as monetary union or exchange, the customs union becomes a common market.

Economic regionalization therefore, is the voluntarily coming together of states from the same region with the purpose of integrating their economies arising from the need or desire to cooperate in the areas of trade, monetary policies (i.e. common currency), market, etc, leading to the formation of regional economic organization. Economic regionalism is the interface between neo-mercantilism and neo-functionalism representing a shift from economic nationalism to economic regionalism or from nation-state to region-state (Aniche, 2006; 2009). Nweke (2000:25-49) puts it aptly:

Another, noticeable trend in the post-cold war functionalist ferment has been the resurgence of new forms of mercantilist policies, the most prominent features of which include various forms of restrictions to trade, otherwise known as protectionism, not only in the European Union, but also in the dominant regions, especially North America and Pacific.

Nweke (2000:25-49) further states that this pervasive trend has led to the emergence of a multipolar global economy and formation of regional economic blocs. However, as Ake (1981:168) noted the idea of regional integration as a means or strategies of collective self-reliance for promoting economic integration and cooperation has been around in Africa for a long time like the pre-independence East African Community (EAC). In fact, Igwe (2002:292) and Echezona (1998:41) note that Kwame Nkrumah was the first African leader to advocate for regional integration in Africa in the form of African Continental Government or United States of Africa, and as well laid the philosophical foundation to the current regional economic blocs in Africa. Africa regionalism, thus, flows from the Afro-centric philosophical foundations of Kwame Nkrumah, Nnamdi Azikiwe and others culminating to the formation of Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 now African Union (AU) since 2001 and Abuja Treaty of 1991 that gave birth to African Economic Community (AEC). African regionalism is, thus, rooted in pan-Africanism.

However, despite decades of regional economic integration in Africa, scholars have noted that numerous obstacles remain, making it difficult for Africa to achieve successful economic integration. These obstacles and difficulties include neo-colonial ties, politico-ideological differences, export-oriented primary products of African states, disparity in size and development of African states, fear of domination or monopolization of benefits, adverse activities of multinational corporations (MNCs) operating in Africa, historical/vertical linkage of African economies to Western economies, intractable civil strife and the attendant refugee crises and internal displacements (see; Ake, 1991: 169; Echezona, 1998: 48; Kennes, 1999:29; Ojo, 1999:121-123; Nweke, 2000: 25-49; Aniche, 2009: 406).

Ezeanyika (2006:138) points out that the proliferation of regional economic integration or cooperation in Africa that share similar or overlapping objectives and functions duplicate their activities leading to uneconomical use of available scarce financial and human capital (see also, Kennes, 1999:40). But no systematic inquiry has been undertaken or investigation made to ascertain the level of damage caused by incidence of proliferation, fractionalization or decimation of regional economic integration in Africa into numerous strands of subgroups and the resulting overlapping or multiple memberships of African states in the regional economic communities (RECs) and other transregional organizations or crossregional groups.

Our task therefore, is to fill this lacuna in the literature by posing the following questions

- ❖ Has overlapping or multiple memberships of regional economic groups weakened regional economic integration in Africa?
- ❖ Has proliferation of regional economic groups and subgroups undermined or loosened regional economic ties in Africa?

In order to answer these posers, we divide this study into seven segments, viz, introduction, theoretical discourses, about African Economic Community (AEC), regional economic communities (RECs) in Africa, subgroupings and regional economic integration in Africa, overlapping memberships and regional economic integration in Africa; and conclusions.

### **Theoretical Discourses**

There is this tendency for scholars, especially from the West, to anchor studies on regional (economic) integration on neo-functionalism. Functionalism, neo-functionalism, intergovernmentalism and complex interdependence theory are all variants of liberal institutionalism or theories of integration which generally hold that in the midst of anarchy or absence of overarching/supranational institutions, there is cooperation in international system and order is facilitated through international institutions, norms and regimes. The result of this would be shifting upward of sovereignty from state to regional or global level facilitated by merger of several states into single state or ultimately a single world government or a process by which supranational institutions replace national ones in the long-run (Burchill & Linklater, 2005; Goldstein & Pevehouse, 2008: 352-353).

Neo-functionalism of Ernst B. Haas unlike functionalism of David Mitrany is non-normative and describes or explains the process of regional integration base on empirical data. Aside being empirical, neo-functionalism unlike functional theory does not focus primarily on global integration rather its primary concern is on regional integration. In other words, functionalism and neo-functionalism are both theories of supranationalism, but while the former emphasizes global supranationalism, the latter reifies regional supranationalism (Echezona, 1998; Burchill & Linklater, 2005).

Neo-functionalism is a theory of regional integration in which integration is considered to be inevitable process, rather than a desirable state of affairs that could be introduced by the political or technocratic elites of the involved states. There are three main principles of neo-functionalism; (i) the principle of positive spillover effects states that integration between states in one sector, that is, economic sector will eventually ramify into integration or co-operation in other sectors such as political, socio-cultural, security, etc. (ii) the mechanism of a transfer in domestic allegiance which assumes that as the process of integration gathers momentum in an increasingly pluralistic domestic society of each state; interest groups and other associations will transfer their allegiance or loyalty away from national institutions towards the supranational institution(s) when they begin to realize that their material interests or well being can be better pursued through supranational institution(s) than the pre-existing national institutions; and (iii) principle of technocratic automaticity which states that as integration hastens the supranational institution(s) will take the lead in fostering further integration as they become more powerful and more autonomous of the member states (Echezona, 1998; Haas, 1970).

These three main principles of neo-functionalism embody John Galtung's Staircase Hypothesis/Strategy which involves the process of beginning with limited domain (or memberships) and limited scope (or sectors or area of cooperation) and gradually deepening the scope before extending the domain. Deepening the scope means moving

from the initial areas of cooperation to other areas of cooperation or bringing in new sectors, whereas, extending the domain means admitting new memberships.

But neo-functionalism has many defects and one of its major defects is that while assuming that regional integration is a gradual process its conception of integration as a linear process makes explanation of setbacks or shortcomings impossible. Another of its defects is that functionalism assumes that integration of states is an integration of interdependence, and therefore, not adequate for explaining the incidence of dependence of African economies to Western economies or integration of dependence of one African state to another. A related theory is the theory of complex interdependence of Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye which believes that the states and their fortunes or interests are inextricably tied together through various complex transnational connections and interdependencies and while these various complex transnational connections increase, the use of military force and power balancing are decreasing (Keohane & Nye, 1997:122-132).

Keohane & Nye (1997:122-132) state that through complex interdependence bureaucratic contacts and informal communication, trans governmental elite networks are created, linking officials in various governments to one another by ties of common interest, professional orientation and personal friendship. Beyond the formation of transnational elites is coalition or alliance between elites. These contacts, networks and coalitions usually take place below the apex of the organizational hierarchy (Echezona, 1998). There are three major elements of theory of complex interdependence which are (i) the use of multiple channels of action between societies in inter-state, trans-governmental and transnational relations (ii) the absence of a hierarchy of issues with changing agenda and linkages between issues prioritized; and (iii) decline in the use of military force, that is, military force is not exercised when complex interdependence prevails (Keohane, 1984; 2002, Keohane & Lisa, 1995; Echezona, 1998:75-76).

However, the theory of complex interdependence suffers the same defects as neo-functionalism by assuming that integration of states is an integration of interdependence as such, it does not offer us useful explanation on vertical integration of African economies to Western economies or to other African economies. But a more related theory is the theory of inter-governmentalism. The theory of inter-governmentalism, therefore, emphasizes integration of state institutions or agencies like the government; and sees integration as intergovernmental relations, while neo-functionalism emphasizes supranational and transnational or crossnational relations of associations or technocrats other than the state.

Intergovernmentalism of Stanley Hoffman and Andrew Moravesik, therefore, is an alternative theory of political integration where power in international institutions is possessed by member states and decisions are made by unanimity or consensus. It suggests that member states or their national governments control the level and speed of regional integration as dictated by the domestic political and economic issues of the day. The theory of inter-governmentalism believes that states or governments are the driving forces of integration and not associations or technocrats. The independent appointees of the government or elected representatives have solely advisory or implementation roles (Echezona, 1998).

It is in the light above that Kennes (1999:32) distinguishes inter-governmentalism from supranationalism of functionalism and neofunctionalism. According to him, under inter-governmentalism there is no regional legislation and member states retain their sovereignty, because regional organization only coordinates and harmonizes national policies. While under supranationalism, regional legislation prevails over national

legislation. Member states exercise their sovereignty jointly. Supranationalism is, therefore, a new form of confederation.

Although, theory of inter-governmental relations is silent upon the issue of interdependence, it is still not adequate for explaining regional integration in Africa for it says almost nothing about dependency or unequal relations. Generally speaking, therefore, all the theories of integration discussed above are not adequate for explaining the incidence of proliferation of regional economic groups and subgroups in Africa and the resulting overlapping or multiple memberships of African states in these subgroupings or blocs.

At this juncture, it is imperative to adopt a theory, which will be suitable for explaining the incidence of proliferation of regional economic blocs as well as multiple memberships of regional economic integration in Africa. In other words, to explicate the phenomena of proliferation of regional economic groups, subgroupings and multiple memberships in Africa, we need to adopt a theory that will be adequate in analyzing these historical and neo-colonial ties between Africa states and their erstwhile colonial masters. The point being made is that proponents and exponents of the theories of integration have Europe in mind.

The theories did not provide adequate explanation on why regional economic blocs proliferate in Africa. Regional economic organization proliferates in Africa not because it did not follow religiously stages of integration as laid down by neo-functionalism or complex interdependence. It proliferates because African economies are historically and vertically integrated to the economies of developed countries of the West or as a result of the strong neo-colonial ties between the economies of African states and their former colonial masters.

This study is, therefore essentially predicated on structural theory of Raoul Prebish and Hans Singer. Structuralism is a version of neo-Marxism, and is strongly related to centre-periphery model of dependency theory of Andre Gunder Frank and Samir Amin. Structuralism, however, divides the world into two along the line of international division of labour in which (i) the industrialized developed countries of the North (mainly former colonial masters) are at the core and (ii) the less industrialized or developing countries of the South (mainly former colonies) are at the periphery. While the industrialized countries of the North produce and export manufactured goods to the less industrialized countries of the South, the less industrialized countries of the South in turn produce and export primary goods to the industrialized countries of the North. These vertical trade relations or neo-colonial ties were facilitated or fostered by long history of colonialism and imperialism in Africa.

Furthermore, the structuralists observe that there is an unequal or asymmetrical exchange relation between these two sets of countries. For instance, while the less industrialized countries export this primary product (i.e. raw materials) at a very cheap or low price to the industrialized countries; the industries in these industrialized countries transform it to manufactured product, and export it at a very high price to less industrialized countries. The difference between these two products constitutes a surplus and this surplus is appropriated and accumulated by the industrialized developed countries (Echezona, 1998).

The relationship is, thus, asymmetrical, skewed, unequal and dependent not just in terms of exchange relations, but also in terms of trade volumes. The implication of this international division of labour is that less industrialized countries of Africa trade more with the industrialized countries of the North (particularly their former colonial masters) than with their African counterparts even in spite of decades of regional integration in

Africa. The import of the above is that Africa economies are vertically integrated or historically dependent on and neo-colonially tied to the Western economies.

Thus, in order to sustain this state of affairs, the developed countries (mainly the former colonial masters) frustrate any meaningful or serious regional economic integration in Africa. The strategy is to undermine serious commitment of African states (mainly their former colonies) towards regional economic integration in Africa through neo-colonial organizations like Commonwealth of Nations and French Community. The impact is that these African states with the same colonial ruler are forming blocs or subgroups within the regional economic communities thereby undermining the efforts of African Economic Community (AEC) as well as weakening the regional economic communities in Africa.

#### **About African Economic Community (AEC)**

The treaty establishing the African Economic Community (AEC) was adopted by the Organization of African unity (OAU) at the meeting of Heads of State Government in Abuja, Nigeria on June 3, 1991. This treaty of African Economic Community (AEC) also known as Abuja Treaty came into force after the requisite ratification of members in May 1994. It provided for the African Economic Community (AEC) to be set up through gradual process which would be achieved by coordination, harmonization and progressive integration of the activities of existing and future regional economic communities (RECs) in Africa.

However, the African Economic Community (AEC) is today, an organization of African Union (AU) establish to facilitate mutual economic development among the majority of African States with the following objectives as provided in the Article 4 of the treaty: (a) To promote economic, social and cultural development and the integration of African economies in order to increase economic self-reliance and an indigenous and self sustained development; (b) To establish on a continental scale a formwork for the development, mobilization and utilization of the human and material resources of Africa in order to achieve a self-reliant development (c) To promote cooperation in all field of human endeavour in order to raise the standard of living of African peoples and maintain and enhance economic stability, foster close and peaceful relations among member states and contribute to the progress, development and economic integration of the continent; and (d) To coordinate and harmonize policies among existing economic communities in order to foster gradual establishment of the Community.

To achieve these objectives the African Economic Community (AEC) has several organs, which include, (a) the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, (b) the Council of Ministers, (c) the Pan-African Parliament, (d) the Economic and Social Commission, (e) the Court of Justice, (f) the General Secretariat, and (g) the Specialized Technical Committees comprising (i) the Committee on Rural Economy and Agricultural Matters, (ii) the Committee on Monetary and Financial Affairs, (iii) the Committee on Trade Customs and Immigration Matters, (iv) the Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, Energy, Natural Resources and Environment, (v) the Committee on Transport, Communication and Tourism, (vi) the Committee on Health, Labour and Social Affairs, (vii) the Committee on Education, Culture and Human Resources. The stated goals of AEC include the creation of free trade areas, customs union, a single market, a central bank, and a common currency, thus, establishing an economic and monetary union ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African\\_Economic\\_Community](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Economic_Community), retrieved on 11/1/2004).

These goals are to be achieved in six stages, which are (i) creation of regional blocs in regions where such do not yet exist to be completed in 1999, (ii) strengthening of intra-REC integration and inter-REC harmonization to be completed in 2007, (iii) establishing of a free trade area and customs union in each regional blocs to be completed in 2017, (iv) establishing of a continent-wide customs union and also a free trade area to

be completed in 2019, (v) establishing of a continent-wide African Common Market (ACM) to be completed in 2023, (vi) establishing of a continent-wide economic and monetary union and also a currency union and parliament to be completed in 2028. The end of all transition periods is 2034 at the latest ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African\\_Economic\\_Community](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Economic_Community), retrieve on /11/1/2004).

<b>Regional Blocs</b>	<b>Free Trade Area</b>	<b>Customs Union</b>	<b>Single Market</b>	<b>Currency Union</b>	<b>Visa Free</b>	<b>Borderless</b>	<b>Political Pact</b>	<b>Defence Pact</b>
AEC	proposed for 2019	proposed for 2019	proposed for 2023	proposed for 2028			Proposed for 2028	?
CEN-SAD	proposed for 2010							
COMESA	in force <sup>1</sup>	proposed for 2008	?	proposed for 2018				

The first stage is almost completed with exception of Arab Maghreb Union members and Sahrawi Republic that are not participating while the second stage is said to be in steady progress but no fact to support this. In third, fourth, fifth and sixth stages, there is no progress yet ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African\\_Economic\\_Community](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Economic_Community), retrieved on 11/1/2004). See table 1 for overall progress of the regional economic communities.

**Table 1: Overall Progress of RECs**

EAC		in force	in force	proposed for 2009	proposed for 2009	proposed	?	proposed for 2010	
ECCAS	CEMAC	in force	in force	?	In force				
	Common	proposed for 2007	proposed for 2011	proposed	Proposed	proposed	?		in force
ECOWAS	UEMOA	in force	in force	?	In force				
	WAMZ			?	proposed for 2009				
	Common	Proposed <sup>2</sup>	proposed for 2007	?	proposed	in force	proposed		in force <sup>1</sup>
IGAD									
SADC	SACU	in force	in force		de-facto in force <sup>1</sup>				
	Common <sup>3</sup>	proposed for 2008 <sup>3</sup>	proposed for 2010	proposed for 2015	proposed for 2016				
UMA									

<sup>1</sup>not all members participating yet.

<sup>2</sup>telecommunications, transport and energy proposed.

<sup>3</sup>sensitive goods to be covered from 2012.

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African\\_Economic\\_Community/11/1/2004](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Economic_Community/11/1/2004).

### Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in Africa

There are multiple regional blocs in Africa known as Regional Economic Communities (RECs), many of which have overlapping memberships. The RECs consist primarily of trade blocs and, in some cases, political and military cooperation. Most of these RECs form the ‘pillars’ of AEC and several of these pillars also contain subgroups with tighter customs and/or monetary unions. It is often hoped that due to high proportion of overlap in memberships of these pillars of AEC that it is likely that some states with several memberships will eventually drop out of one or more of RECS ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African\\_Economic\\_Community](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Economic_Community), retrieved on /11/1/2004). These pillars and their corresponding subgroups are as follows in table 2.

**Table 2: Regional Economic Groups and Subgroups in Africa**

	Groups		Subgroups
1.	Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD)		
2.	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)		
3.	East African Community (EAC)		
4.	Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS/CEEAC)	a.	Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC)
5.	Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)	a.	West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA)
		b.	West African Monetary Zone (WAMZ)
6.	Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)		
7.	Southern African Development Community (SADC)	a.	Southern African Custom Union (SACU)

8.	Arab Maghreb Union (AMU/UMA)		
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Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African\\_Economic\\_Community](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Economic_Community), retrieved on/11/1/2004.

Other regional blocs like Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA), Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL), Indian Ocean Commission (COI), Liptako-Gourma Authority (LGA), Mano River Union (MRU), etc, are not included in the RECs or pillars of AEC, because (i) they do not participate in AEC and (ii) they are mainly transregional or crossregional in that their memberships extend beyond Africa or include other non-African states. For example, GAFTA includes mostly Middle Eastern states.

At this juncture, there is need to examine the origin and membership of each Regional Economic Communities (RECs). For example, Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CENSAD) was established in February 1998 by six countries, namely, Burkina Faso, Chad, Libya, Mali, Niger and Sudan, but its membership has grown to 28, namely, Central African Republic (1999) Eritrea (1999) Djibouti (2000), Morocco (2001), Nigeria (2001), Somalia (2001), Tunisia (2001), Benin (2002), Togo (2002), Cote d'Ivoire (2004), Guinea-Bissau (2004), Liberia (2004), Ghana (2005), Sierra Leone (2005), Comoros (2007), Guinea (2007), Kenya (2008), Mauritania (2008), Sao Tome and principle (2008).

Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) was formed in December 1994 replacing a Preferential Trade Area, which had existed since 1981. Currently, COMESA has 19 member states which include Burundi (21st December, 1981) Comoros (21st December, 1981) Democratic Republic of Congo (21st December, 1981), Djibouti (21st December, 1981), Egypt (6th January, 1999), Eritrea (1994), Ethiopia (December 21, 1981) Kenya (December 21, 1981), Libya (June 3, 2005), Madagascar (December 21, 1981), Malawi (December 21, 1981), Mauritius (December 21, 1981) Rwanda (December 21, 1981) Seychelles (2001), Sudan (December 21, 1981) Swaziland (December 21, 1981), Uganda (December 21, 1981) and Zimbabwe (December 21, 1981).

The Treaty establishing the East African Community (EAC) was signed on November 30, 1999 and entered into force on July 7, 2000 following its ratification by the three original partner states, which are Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. Rwanda and Burundi acceded to the EAC Treaty on June 18, 2007 and became full members of the Community with effect from July 1, 2007. The EAC was originally set up in 1967, however; disagreements between the original-founding members, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania led to its collapse in 1977.

Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) was established in 1985 by ten founding states, namely, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda, Sao Tome and principle, while Angola joined in 1999. Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a regional group of fifteen West African states founded on May 28, 1975 with the signing of the treaty of Lagos. In 1976, Cape Verde joined ECOWAS and in December 2000, Mauritania withdrew having announced its intention to do so in December 1999. Currently, the member states of ECOWAS are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo, while Guinea was suspended after 2008 coup *d'etat*.

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) was founded in 1986 by the following founding states; Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia Sudan and Uganda, while Eritrea joined in 1993. Southern African Development Community (SADC) was formed in Lusaka, Zambia on April 1, 1980 as Southern African Development

Coordination Conference (SADCC) following the adoption of the Lusaka Declaration by the following founding states, Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe while Madagascar and Namibia joined (March 31, 1990). When SADCC was transformed into SADC on August 17, 1992 in Windhoek, Namibia four other states, namely, South Africa (August 30, 1994), Mauritius (August 28, 1995), Democratic Republic of Congo (September 8, 1997) and Seychelles (September 8, 1997) joined, however, Madagascar was suspended after the coup *d'etat*. The Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) was formed in 1989 by five founding states, namely, Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. For a comparison of these regional economic communities (RECs) in Africa see table 3 below:

**Table 3: Comparison of AEC with other Regional Blocs**

Pillars regional blocs (REC)	Area (Km <sup>2</sup> )	Population	GDP (PPP) In million	(\$US) per capita	Member states
AEC	29,910,442	853,520,010	2,053,706	2,406	53
ECOWAS	5,112,903	251,646,263	342,519	1,361	15
ECCAS	6,667,421	121,245,958	175,928	1,451	11
SADC	9,882,959	233,944,179	737,335	3,152	15
EAC	1,817,945	124,858,568	104,239	1,065	5
COMESA	12,873,957	406,102,471	735,599	1,811	20
IGAD	5,233,604	187,969,775	225,049	1,197	7
Western Sahara <sup>1</sup>	266,000	273,008	?	?	N/A <sup>2</sup>
Other African blocs	Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Population	GDP (PPP) In million	(\$ US) per capita	Member states
CEMAC <sup>3</sup>	3,020,142	34,970,529	85,136	2,435	6
SACU <sup>3</sup>	2,693,418	51,055,878	541,433	10,605	5
UEMOA <sup>3</sup>	3,505,375	80,865,222	101,640	1,257	8
UMA <sup>4</sup>	5,782,140	84,185,073	491,276	5,836	5
GAFTA <sup>5</sup>	5,876,960	166,259,603	635,450	3,822	5

<sup>1</sup>The Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) is a signatory to the AEC, but not participating in any bloc yet.

<sup>2</sup>Majority under military occupation by Morocco; some territory administered by the SADR.

<sup>3</sup>Economic bloc inside a pillar REC.

<sup>4</sup>Proposed for pillar REC, but objecting participation.

<sup>5</sup>Non-African members of GAFTA are excluded from figures.

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African\\_Economic\\_Community/11/1/2004](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Economic_Community/11/1/2004).

### **Subgroupings and Regional Economic Integration in Africa**

There is, indeed, high incidence of proliferation of regional economic groups and subgroupings, or even transregional or crossregional and subglobal groupings in Africa. As such some member states in these economic blocs are not geographically contiguous, coupled with absence of historical ties among the members of these economic groups. In order to move closer or sustain closer ties with historically linked countries member states resort to forming several subgroups among themselves which is evident in ECCAS, ECOWAS and SADC (see table 2 above). A cursory look at the memberships of some of these subgroups shows that most of them share similar colonial experience in terms of past colonial rulers.

**Table 4: Member States and Past Colonial Rulers of Regional Economic Communities in Africa**

ECCAS Subgroup	Member States	Past Colonial Rulers
CEMAC	Cameroon Central African Republic Chad Republic of the Congo Equatorial Guinea Gabon	France France France France Spain France
ECOWAS Subgroups	Member States	Past Colonial Rulers
UEMOA	Benin Burkina Faso Cote d' Ivoire Guinea-Bissau Mali Niger Senegal Togo	France France France Portugal France France France France
WAMZ	Gambia Ghana Guinea Nigeria Sierra Leone	Britain Britain France Britain Britain
SADC Subgroup	Member States	Past Colonial Rulers
SACU	South Africa <sup>1</sup> Botswana Lesotho Namibia Swaziland <sup>2</sup>	Britain Britain Britain South Africa Britain and South Africa

<sup>1</sup>Initially colonized by Netherlands and later by Britain.

<sup>2</sup>Jointly colonized by Britain and South Africa.

The table above shows that in the subgroups, most of the memberships are drawn from states that have the same past colonial ruler, and thus, the same linguistic appellation. For example, in the case of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) a subgroup of ECCAS; it is only Equatorial Guinea that was colonized by Spain others were colonized by France and are Francophone countries. As regard to the memberships of West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) a subgroup of ECOWAS, with exception of Guinea-Bissau which was colonized by Portugal and a Lusophone country, the less were colonized by France and therefore are Francophone countries. For example, UEMOA's common currency, CFA Franc, is guaranteed by the French treasury.

Whereas, West African Monetary Zone (WAMZ) another subgroup of ECOWAS draws its memberships from English speaking or Anglophone countries that were colonized by Britain except Guinea that is Francophone country as she was colonized by

France. Guinea has historically been recalcitrant towards France. For instance, Ojo (1999:122) notes that Cote d’ivoire along with UEMOA members has been resisting phasing the Francophone Community into the larger ECOWAS which has resulted to a deadlock. South African Customs Union (SACU), a subgroup of Southern African Development Community (SADC) draws all its memberships from Britain and South Africa.

In all of these subgroups discussed above colonial legacy engendered from many years of historical ties both in economic and political spheres is responsible for forming these subgroups. Even in the case of European Union (i.e. from ECSC and EEC) age long historical ties was responsible in bringing these continental European countries together before it spread to other parts of Europe. This is what Ejiofor (1981:121) meant when he points out that most of the regional organizations were sponsored, guided and promoted from outside Africa for purpose of perpetuating the presence of neo-colonialism in Africa, rather than serving as integrating factor in African politics. These regional groups constituted rival and divergent blocs which worked implicitly for destruction of African unity.

However, one major problem of subgroupings in the African regional economic communities is that it undermines the commitment and allegiance of those African states towards the regional bodies. For example, in the case of ECCAS countries tables 5 and 6 show that there are more economic ties between CEMAC countries in terms of trade relations than with non-CEMAC countries. For details see tables 5 and 6 below.

**Table 5: Trade Profile of Cameroon**

	Exports Main Destination	%	Imports Main Origin	%
1.	European Union (27)	74.3	1. European Union (27)	35.0
2.	United States	6.4	2. Nigeria	23.3
3.	China	3.4	3. China	6.3
4.	Congo, Dem. Rep. Of	2.8	4. Equatorial Guinea	3.5
5.	Chad	0.8	5. United States	2.9
	Unspecified Destinations	2.8	Unspecified Origins	29

Source: <http://stat.wto.org/CountryProfile/WSDBCountry=CM/9/10/2009>.

Table 5 shows that one CEMAC country Chad and one non-CEMAC country, Dem. Rep. of Congo is among the top five countries Cameroon a CEMAC country exports to; while Equatorial Guinea another CEMAC country is the only ECCAS Country in top five countries Cameroon imports from.

**Table 6: Trade Profile of Central African Republic**

	Exports Main Destination	%	Imports Main Origin	%
1.	European Union (27)	55.9	1. European Union (27)	20.8
2.	Switzerland	13.7	2. Cameroon	15.7
3.	Cameroon	11.9	3. Congo Dem. Rep. Of	6.1
4.	Israel	5.0	4. Japan	3.9
5.	Hong Kong, China	2.6	5. Congo Rep. Of	3.6
	Unspecified Destinations	5.9	Unspecified Origins	41.0

Source: <http://stat.wto.org/CountryProfile/WSDBCountry=CF/9/10/2009>.

Table 6 indicates that only one CEMAC country, Cameroon is in the top five countries, that Central African Republic (CAR), a CEMAC country exports to, while Cameroon and Republic of Congo are the two CEMAC countries in top five countries, Central African Republic imports from. In the case of SADC countries, table 7 shows that there is more economic ties between SACU countries in terms of trade relations than with non-SACU countries.

**Table 7: Trade Profile of Botswana**

	Exports Main Destination	%	Imports Main Origin	%
1.	European Union (27)	67.7	1. South Africa	83.5
2.	South Africa	10.2	2. European Union (27)	6.0
3.	Norway	8.1	3. China	1.8
4.	Zimbabwe	7.3	4. Zimbabwe	1.3
5.	China	1.9	5. United States	1.2

Source: <http://stat.wto.org/CountryProfile/WSDBCountry=BW/11/1/2004>.

Therefore, table 7 above shows that a SACU country occupies the second position with 10.2% out of the top five countries Botswana exports to and first position with 83.5% out of the top five countries, Botswana imports from. In the case of ECOWAS countries, common currency, that is, CFA Franc, which even transcends UEMOA, is a factor bringing them closer to themselves than WAMZ countries. The point being made is that subgroupings in African regional economic communities is undermining or loosening regional economic ties among member state by tightening the economic ties between members of subgroups. In others words, as subgroupings move member states of these subgroups into closer ties, or pull them together, the same subgroupings move their members further apart or away from other members of the same regional economic communities but different subgroups.

In search of stronger economic ties and avenues for market, many of them resort to forming or entering other regional economic groups. The result of this is the proliferation of regional economic blocs in Africa leading to unnecessary duplication, overlapping and multiple memberships. The basis for stronger and successful regional economic integration is weakened or loosened. The implication of the above is that AEC has failed to achieve or complete part of the second stage of strengthening the intra-REC integration or subgroups merging two years after the year (2007) it had proposed to do so.

**Overlapping Memberships and Regional Economic Integration in Africa**

One major incidence of proliferation of regional groups and subgroupings or even transregional or crossregional groups is overlapping or multiple memberships of African states in various economic groups. For details of this multiple memberships of African states in various regional economic communities in Africa see table 8 below.

**Table 8: Overlapping Memberships of African States in Regional Economic Communities**

SADC	COMESA	EAC	ECCAS	CENSAD	ECOWAS	AMU	IGAD
Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe						
Zambia	Zambia						
Malawi	Malawi						

**(RECs)**

Angola			Angola				
Swaziland	Swaziland						
Tanzania		Tanzania					
Madagascar	Madagascar						
Mauritius	Mauritius						
Demo. Rep. of Congo	Demo. Rep. of Congo		Demo. Rep. of Congo				
Seychelles	Seychelles						
			Central African Rep.	Central African Rep.			
	Eritrea			Eritrea			Eritrea
	Djibouti			Djibouti			Djibouti
	Burundi	Burundi	Burundi				
	Comoros			Comoros			
	Egypt			Egypt			
	Kenya	Kenya		Kenya			Kenya
	Libya					Libya	
	Rwanda	Rwanda	Rwanda				
	Uganda	Uganda					Uganda
				Gambia	Gambia		
				Senegal	Senegal		
				Morocco		Morocco	
				Nigeria	Nigeria		
				Tunisia		Tunisia	
				Benin Rep.	Benin Rep.		
				Togo	Togo		
				Cote d'Ivoire	Cote d'Ivoire		
				Guinea-Bissau	Guinea-Bissau		
				Liberia	Liberia		
				Ghana	Ghana		
				Sierra Leone	Sierra Leone		
				Guinea	Guinea		
				Mauritania		Mauritania	
			Sao Tome and Principe	Sao Tome and Principe			
	Ethiopia						Ethiopia
Sudan							Sudan
				Somalia			Somalia

From the table 8 above Kenya is the only African state with membership in the four out of the eight regional economic communities (RECs) in Africa, namely COMESA, EAC, CEN-SAD and IGAD. While, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Djibouti Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda belong to three regional economic communities (RECs) in Africa. Thirty one other African states belong to two regional economic groups in Africa

whereas 15 other AEC countries belong to one regional economic blocs although some of them may still belong to other subgroups or transregional or crossregional groups.

The imports of the above are lack of commitment, conflicting obligations and allegiance coupled with problem of fulfilling financial and other obligations. For example, how can poor countries like Eritrea, Burundi, Rwanda and Djibouti be able to meet their obligations in these three regional economic communities (RECs), and at the same time been able to shoulder the financial burden resulting from financing their officials to attend and participate in the meetings. This is exactly what Ezeanyika (2006:138) is pointing at by insisting that proliferation of regional economic groupings in Africa leads to uneconomical use of available scarce financial and human resources.

In other words, there is likely to be poor commitment to some if not all of these regional economic communities (RECs) resulting from multiple memberships of African states in which functions are duplicated and resources wasted. For instance, what is rational behind memberships of many ECOWAS countries in the CEN-SAD when their common aspirations can be better carried out or derived from their membership of ECOWAS where they would rather concentrate their efforts instead of dissipating their collective efforts in the CEN-SAD. Ditto, with many members of COMESA or ECCAS who belong to the same CEN-SAD as well as the case with members of SADC that belong to COMESA.

For example, despite her memberships of four regional economic groups in Africa, Kenya still maintain a much closer economic ties with members of East African Community (EAC) like Uganda and Tanzania to which she exports most of her products (see, table 9 below).

**Table 9: Trade Profile of Kenya**

	Exports Main Destination	%	Imports Main Origin	%
1.	European Union (27)	26.6	1. European Union (27)	20.2
2.	Uganda	12.2	2. United Arab Emirates	14.8
3.	Tanzania	8.1	3. India	9.4
4.	United States	7.0	4. China	7.6
5.	Pakistan	4.9	5. United States	7.4

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Ditto with Zimbabwe that belongs to SADC and COMESA, but maintain closer economic ties with SADC countries, mainly (see table 10 below).

**Table 10: Trade Profile of Zimbabwe**

	Exports Main Destination	%	Imports Main Origin	%
1.	South Africa	37.4	1. South Africa	42.8
2.	European Union (27)	16.5	2. Botswana	11.4
3.	Mozambique	13.0	3. European Union (27)	8.3
4.	Botswana	6.1	4. China	5.7
5.	Switzerland	4.0	5. Mozambique	4.8

Source: <http://stat.wto.org/CountryProfile/WSDBCountry=ZW/11/1/2004>.

From the table 10 above three SADC countries, namely, South Africa, Mozambique and Botswana make the top five countries Zimbabwe exports to and imports from. While, no COMESA country featured in the top five countries either in the exports or imports of Zimbabwe. One could only imagine what would have been the case if Zimbabwe, Kenya and other African countries had concentrated their collective efforts in one regional economic blocs. Perhaps, in the case of Kenya and Zimbabwe more EAC countries and SADC countries would have featured in the top five countries. Single

membership would therefore make the task of harmonizing inter-RECs policies easier for African Economic Community (AEC).

Take for example, Rwanda that belongs to three regional economic communities (RECs), namely, COMESA, EAC and ECCAS. Rwanda maintains strong economic ties with Kenya which belongs to COMESA, EAC, ECCAS and IGAD; Democratic Republic of Congo that belongs to SADC, COMESA and ECCAS; Uganda which belongs to COMESA, EAC and IGAD; and finally, Tanzania that belongs to SADC and EAC. Kenya, Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda and Tanzania feature in the top five countries, Rwanda either imports from or exports to (see table 11 for details).

**Table 11: Trade Profile of Rwanda**

	Exports Main Destination	%	Imports Main Origin	%
1.	European Union (27)	35.6	1 European Union (27)	21.9
2.	Kenya	18.7	2. Kenya	17.8
3.	Hong Kong, China	12.5	3. Uganda	14.0
4.	Switzerland	7.3	4. United Arab Emirates	7.8
5.	Congo, Dem. Rep. of	5.7	5. Tanzania	6.8

Source: <http://stat.wto.org/CountryProfile/WSDBCountry=RW/9/10/2009>.

The implication of the above study is that overlapping or multiple memberships of regional economic communities (RECs) in Africa has weakened regional economic integration in Africa. But with announcement of the African Free Trade Zone (AFTZ) of the tripartite summit of the heads of EAC-SADC-COMESA on October 22, 2008, there is hope that African Economic Community (AEC) will be able to use the opportunity to galvanize other RECs towards achieving the second stage goal of strengthening of intra-REC integration and inter-REC harmonization.

However, it still remains a hope that is yet to materialize and given the fact that this second stage is two years behind the set out target, one would not, but agree with us that it is an indicator that the less of the set out targets may not be achieved by AEC come 2017, 2019, 2023, 2028 and finally 2034.

**Conclusions**

We have been able, in the course of this study, to conclude that

- ❖ Proliferation of regional economic groups and subgroups has loosened regional economic ties in Africa.
- ❖ Overlapping or multiple memberships of regional economic communities (RECs) has weakened regional economic integration in Africa.

The point being made is that the shadow of Berlin Colonial Conference (1884) that partitioned Africa into specific sphere of influence has continued to hunt Africa many years after colonialism in Africa through neo-colonial ties consolidating the balkanization of Africa economies into several regional blocs, subgroupings transregional or crossregional groups and subglobal groups. France, particularly, has used various strategies to frustrate any meaningful regional economic integration in West Africa and other sub-regions. This is because the erstwhile colonial masters stand to benefit from this balkanization in the form of proliferation of regional groups and subgroups (Ake, 1981).

We, therefore, insist as we argue elsewhere that so long as African states are producing similar primary products which none of them needs from the other, multiple memberships and proliferation of regional economic organizations rather than tightening economic ties among African states will undermine regional economic integration in Africa (Aniche, 2009).

Even when the subgroupings move or pull their member states into closer economic ties and further away from other non-subgroup members of the same regional

economic communities, it is only channeling or linking their collective economies towards vertical economic integration with the industrialized developed countries of the West their erstwhile colonial masters. In the light of this, we presume that base on the facts on the ground, it is very unlikely that AEC would be able to realize its set out targets even with the prospect of African Free Trade Zone (AFTZ).

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