RETHINKING THE FUNCTIONS OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES: WHY AFRICAN SMALL STATES JOIN AND REMAIN IN SUB-REGIONAL ENTITIES

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS by Cliff Ubba Kodero 2021
To: Dean John F. Stack, Jr.
   Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs

This dissertation, written by Cliff Ubba Kodero, and entitled, Rethinking the Functions of Regional Economic Communities: Why African Small States Join and Remain in Sub-Regional Entities, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

_______________________________________
Hilary Jones

_______________________________________
Jin Zeng

_______________________________________
John Oates

_______________________________________
John F. Clark, Major Professor

Date of Defense: June 7, 2021

The dissertation of Cliff Ubba Kodero is approved.

_______________________________________
Dean John F. Stack, Jr.
   Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs

_______________________________________
Andrés G. Gil
   Vice President for Research and Economic Development
   and Dean of the University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2021
DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my loving dad, Augustine Kodero, who passed away on November 07, 2020. I also dedicate this to my loving wife, Alice Nikuzwe, to whom I owe every bit for her support. I cannot forget my kids, Sabina and Samara – both were born while I was pursuing this degree. And lastly, to my mother and siblings, especially Jared Kodero, whose technical support made sure I did not lose any unsaved work. I am grateful to everyone who was a part of this journey, directly or indirectly, mentioned or unmentioned.
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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

RETHINKING THE FUNCTIONS OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES: WHY AFRICAN SMALL STATES JOIN AND REMAIN IN SUB-REGIONAL ENTITIES

by
Cliff Ubba Kodero
Florida International University, 2021
Miami, Florida
Professor John F. Clark, Major Professor

This dissertation advances new arguments about regional integration in Africa. It sheds light on the roles of regional economic communities (RECs) for small-economy states in Africa through an examination of the benefits and drawbacks of participating in such regional groups for both the small states themselves as well as for their ruling regimes. The study argues that RECs, rather than being agents of economic development, facilitate regime-boosting agendas of neopatrimonial regimes, promote a sense of (false) sovereignty, and entrench the political elite’s capture of the states.

The significance of this study is threefold. First, it suggests that RECs provide an extension of neopatrimonial networks, which expand state-capture by specific political elites at regional levels. Neopatrimonialism refers to the lack of distinction between private and public interests in the state apparatus. In Africa’s neopatrimonial
states, for instance, the political and economic interests of the elites largely determine state interests. Although the state appears to exist as a standalone neutral legal entity, private interest groups, who use their positions of power to amass wealth and influence, often engulf it. The political elites’ commercial and political interests in the region become the drivers of their states’ official foreign policies. Second, my study contextualizes regionalism. It emphasizes that RECs are constructions of new identities of a state. RECs offer opportunities to orient national identities, construct solidarity narratives, and to pursue diplomatic efforts that entrench the governing regimes’ ideological legitimacy to rule. Lastly, my research challenges the assumption that RECs will solve the small states’ development problems.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This study explores the participation of small-economy states in Africa’s regional economic communities (RECs). Despite Africa’s unsuccessful record of regional and sub-regional integration, this topic has been salient in African political discourse for the better part of the post-independence era.\(^1\) Small-economy states refer to countries with smaller Gross Domestic Product (GDP) size relative to their neighbors. The definition captures the economic consequences of small size.\(^2\) Small-economy states in Africa have joined and remained in different RECs across the continent since African states’ independence in the 1960s. This study examines regional integration in Africa from the perspective of small-economy states, exploring the hidden functions of Africa’s RECs. Many of Africa’s small-economy states consider regional economic integration an essential part of their foreign policy and developmental agenda; sub-regional integrational groups enable states to exploit economies of scale, entrench free trade, and ensure democracy and peace. These economic explanations do not fully capture RECs’ roles in Africa, especially in smaller economies. Accordingly, this study will attempt to shed light on RECs’ roles in African small-economy states by examining the benefits and drawbacks for both the small states and their ruling regimes of participating in such groups. This study asks the central question: What are the roles of RECs for small-economy states in Africa?

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\(^2\) Michal S. Gal, *Competition Policy for Small Market Economies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 1. See the Theoretical and Research Design chapter
Africa’s political and economic geography makes the continent a challenging environment for regional integration. The continent is enormous and has states of varying geographic size, development level, GDP, and population size. Sub-Saharan Africa has more large states with lower population densities than any other region of the world. Countries such as Niger, Mali, Botswana, and Chad have large landmasses but small populations. However, countries like Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda, Malawi, and Lesotho are geographically small but have much denser populations. These latter countries are also landlocked, creating a fundamental challenge to trade and development.

Similarly, there are coastal states such as Sierra Leone, Mozambique, Djibouti, and Eritrea with small economies and low market sizes. There are also landlocked mega states like Ethiopia and Mali. Finally, Africa has relatively large, resource-rich, coastal, populated, and relatively stable states, such as South Africa, which is semi-industrialized, and Ghana and Kenya, which have great potential for industrialization.

Regional integration is a principal aim for postcolonial African states and a strategy used to combat the pressures of African economies’ small size and underdevelopment. RECs are vessels within which small countries can benefit from

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prosperous neighbors, even as larger states share fixed costs and expand their markets. As British economist Peter Robson has discussed, pan-African ideals and a drive for rapid development in the early post-independence era have driven the first wave of regionalization.\textsuperscript{6} African leaders confronted a regionalism crisis that stemmed from the tensions between continental regionalism and sub-regionalism during the independence era. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) settled on political partnership and cooperation at regional levels.\textsuperscript{7} The idea was not to speed up the dissolution of the newly independent states. OAU aspired to more substantive regionalism, but the bulk of continental unity was delegated to the subregions.\textsuperscript{8} Today, under the new name African Union (AU), the argument for forming a political federation is still debatable as it was in 1963 at the Addis Ababa Conference. As late as 2008, leaders like Muhammad Gaddafi were still agitating for a “Federation of African States.”\textsuperscript{9} Subregional entities were established as economic development organs. Subregional integration, based on reciprocity, exploited the economies of scale and took advantage of differences in comparative advantages in manufacturing and production. Wider markets attract foreign capital to increase employment.\textsuperscript{10}

\textsuperscript{6} Robson, \textit{Economic Integration in Africa}, p.12


\textsuperscript{10} Robson, \textit{Economic Integration in Africa}, p.12
The regionalism debate continued through the Lagos Plan of Action of 1980, the 1991 Abuja Treaty, and the 2001 New Partnership for Africa’s Development (hereafter called NEPAD). Nonetheless, this far, as vehicles for economic development in Africa, regionalism and sub-regionalism have failed. Poor national implementation of regional agreements, economic and political intra-regional rivalries, and subsequent emphases on relative gains have constrained progress. Additionally, personality conflicts among leaders, state collapse, and the economic challenges of the 1980s reduced the salience of regional integration in national discourses on development.

Perhaps the problem is even more fundamental than the implementation of agreed treaties or other structural constraints. Maybe it lies in the concept of sub-regional organizations at the same level of economic development that do not have enough to offer one another economically. The concept of regional integration in Africa has fallen into a “fallacy of transposition,” which assumes that the experience of regional integration among industrialized countries could be replicated in far less

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developed ones. Sub-Saharan Africa has a poor record of economic growth from RECs, but this does not mean that the RECs have no function. A major part of this dissertation focuses on the raison d’être of African RECs for small-economy states and their regimes.

Today, both small and large African states are asked to surrender parts of their sovereignty in the interest of free trade in their regions. Regionalist advocates cite potential economic benefits such as preferential trade access to each other’s markets, creation of common regulation frameworks, asymmetric information through rules and consumer protection, and policies on negative externalities such as environmental issues for joining integrational groupings like the East Africa Community (EAC), Southern African Development Community (SADC), and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Others have pointed to bigger trade markets, standardized regulations, easier transport, facilitation of infrastructural development, and security for trade purposes. Some champions of regionalism also point to RECs’ securitization roles. Small-economy states face existential threats such as rampant insecurity, excessively contagious diseases, extremist movements, and climate challenges. RECs offer opportunities for protection and assistance in the face of these threats.

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of such threats.$^{18}$ However, is it possible that there are other hidden roles for these organizations?

**Problem Statement**

It makes economic sense that states with larger economies, such as Nigeria or South Africa, would clamor for regional integration groupings; their poorer, smaller neighbors serve as markets for their industrial products. This thinking follows a mercantilist logic. A powerful nation maintains a trade surplus with neighbors. With an increased surplus, prosperity from trade increases regional power.$^{19}$ However, this logic does not apply to smaller economies such as Liberia, South Sudan, and other small, profoundly underdeveloped African countries.

The logic is not transferable to small-economy states without the ability to dominate trade with neighboring countries. Thus, this study aims to identify RECs’ less visible roles for small-economy states. The African continent has two sets of states with varying levels of potential to industrialize. There are high potential states like South Africa, Botswana, Gabon, Nigeria, Kenya, and Ghana, and these countries have reached at least low middle-income status in economic indexes.$^{20}$ Middle-income countries have a minimum per capita GDP of $1,040.$^{21}$ These middle-income

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countries still suffer from high poverty levels and continue to register poor human development indicators even though their relatively high GDP can enhance rapid development.\textsuperscript{22} Most of the small-economy states are underdeveloped and have a low potential to industrialize or develop niche economic roles to secure a competitive advantage. For example, Rwanda is attempting to use information and technology as a pathway out of poverty by situating itself as an information and technology hub.

Another example is Ethiopia, which has managed steady economic growth for the last two decades but has not reached a lower-middle-income status. Although landlocked, it is also the continent’s second-largest country in terms of population and a relatively large economy, even if it’s per capita income ($866 in 2019) and Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.485 in 2019 are low.\textsuperscript{23} These are generalized descriptions and do not apply to every case. In general, small-economy states in the region are prone to underdevelopment because of their economies and, in many cases, their landlocked status.

However, sub-regional integration organizations such as the East African Community (EAC) often group higher potential countries like Kenya and Tanzania with lower potential countries like Burundi and South Sudan because of geographical proximity.\textsuperscript{24} In this case, higher potential countries have economic justifications for


EACs—a larger market for surplus produce, opportunities for expanding their companies through foreign direct investments (FDI), and potentially lower labor costs. What is the EAC’s role for South Sudan? Does the EAC play an obvious economic role for low potential states like South Sudan? If that is not the case and security is not the reason, why do these countries join and remain in the EAC?

There are many economic reasons why small-economy countries could potentially impair their fiscal prospects by joining regional economic communities, but I will focus on two. First, the uneven distribution of gains indicates that more developed member states are likely to benefit at the expense of less developed economies. Industrialized countries generally have trade surpluses with smaller economy states.\(^\text{25}\) Nigeria, for example, championed the establishment of ECOWAS in 1975 due to its economic interests. Despite competition from the French-speaking countries aligned to the Monetary Union of West Africa (UMOA),\(^\text{26}\) Nigeria continued to support the organization’s objectives, including peacekeeping and trade creation. Nigeria benefits from trading with smaller countries in the region. In 2012, Nigeria exported goods and services worth $4.4 million to Niger.\(^\text{27}\) The value of those exports increased to $62 million in 2014. Nigeria’s exports to Niger included cement, iron sheets, canned soups, maize flour, cigarettes, and leather products.


\(^{26}\) UMOA stands for the French acronym which is Union Monetaire Quest Africaine. The region is called the Franc Zone – and the use of CFA franc is an important legacy of French colonial rule and a source of contentious debate on the demerits and merits of its use and association with Paris.

\(^{27}\) This dissertation uses $ to refer to U.S. dollars. When foreign currency is used, I will qualify it by adding prefixes. For example, NS for Namibian dollars or LD$ for Liberia.
In comparison, Niger exported commodities valued at $3.6 million in 2012, which decreased to $0.8 million in 2014. The products that Nigeria imported from Niger included hides and skins, dates, and livestock. According to the Central Bank of Nigeria, the aggregate exports to the ECOWAS sub-region stood at $251 million in 2011. The Niger Republic was second to Ghana in trade volume. Nigeria exported $46 million worth of processed goods to the Republic of Niger in 2011. Nigeria has both a favorable trade balance against Niger and a favorable trade structure that accommodates Nigerian processed goods.

Second, accumulated gains, which refers to an advanced economy’s augmented benefits, are re-invested and multiplied over time and tend to favor the relatively industrialized countries within the REC. Once trade barriers are removed, industries are likely to leave the smaller, poorer neighbors in more advanced markets, thereby entrenching income inequality. Asymmetric gains may lead to tension and even conflict within the trade bloc; in some cases, they create fissures that lead to the REC’s collapse. For example, the first iteration of the East African Cooperation collapsed partly because of Kenya’s manufacturing capacity over Uganda and Tanzania. States may attempt to control the asymmetric balance of trade resulting from compensatory trade mechanisms by compelling states in advantageous positions

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to subsidize poorer states. Still, such efforts may be futile as integration deepens and losses compound.\textsuperscript{31}

\textit{Research Significance}

Regional integration in Africa has provoked scholarly curiosity from economists and political scientists. Still, few African regionalism scholars have explicitly researched the connection between a state’s size (development level and economic size) and the motivations for joining RECs in Africa. Thus, studies of regional integration from small-economy states’ perspectives are rare. This study’s first objective is to enrich the analytical literature on regional integration by focusing on RECs’ roles in small economies in a developing region of the world.

This study strengthens regionalism scholarship by spotlighting the RECs’ non-economic roles. The reasons that small economy states adhere to RECs do not follow an economic logic; rather, they influence states to join and remain in RECs.\textsuperscript{32} For African RECs, the connection between the adherence to one or more RECs and economic growth, especially for small states, has been dismal so far. Nevertheless, states have continued to join and remain in these regional groups. This study offers an expanded definition of these rationales, which requires stepping away from the universalistic and economically rational model of regionalism. The study uncovers some hidden uses of RECs for Africa’s economically smaller states.

\textsuperscript{31} Schiff, \textit{Regional Integration and Development in Small States}, p.8.

Additionally, this study challenges the rational and state-interest based explanations of RECs’ benefits for small economies, adding to the literature that questions the dominance of economic logic in the calculus of national interest. More specifically, the study generates dialogue on how best to theorize regionalism in postcolonial spaces and challenges the assumption of many African leaders that RECs will solve their states’ development problems. Many constructivist scholars have researched RECs’ legitimizing roles.\(^\text{33}\) However, this research expounds on RECs’ socio-political roles in African continental small-economy states by viewing RECs as potential catalysts of state capture, regime entrenchment, and extenders of neopatrimonial clientage across borders.

For policy purposes, this research attempts to challenge conventional views of RECs as vessels for development. Though small-economy states comprise most of the African nation-states, few have made demonstrable economic and developmental progress.\(^\text{34}\) This raises questions whether the development focus should not be on RECs but rather on opening the continent for manufacturing. In addition to other factors, Africa’s failure to industrialize comes from poor economic policies due to a lack of inclusive governance structures.\(^\text{35}\) African leaders may need to revamp


policies and enact a developmental platform that follows export-oriented industries and increased government capacities. Such policies can work with minimal integration through infrastructure but may still enhance competition between firms and foster innovation and skill improvement.\textsuperscript{36}

Ultimately, this study makes three key contributions to the regionalism literature. First, it suggests that RECs provide an extension of neopatrimonial networks that expand by coalescing with political elites at regional levels. Neopatrimonialism refers to the lack of distinction between private and public interests in the state apparatus. In Africa’s neopatrimonial states, the elites’ political and economic interests largely determine state interests. Consequently, although the state appears to exist as a standalone neutral and legal entity, private interest groups, which use their positions of power to amass wealth and influence, often engulf it. Political elites’ regional interests become the drivers of their states’ official foreign policies. Second, this study contextualizes regionalism, emphasizing that RECs are the constructions of a state’s identities. The new identities, often creations of the governing regimes, define how the states orient their perceptions of regionalism. RECs offer opportunities to orient national identities, construct solidarity narratives and pursue diplomatic efforts that entrench the governing regimes’ ideological legitimacy to rule. Lastly, this research challenges the assumption that RECs meaningfully address small states’ development problems.

Research Methodology

The study examines three different hypotheses and confirming each one requires a different methodology. As I will show in the research design section, the study offers an interpretive framework to examine each of the plausible hypotheses identified here. I also utilize discourse analysis, a method that actors use involving systematic mapping of language to support interpretive analysis and uncover shared meanings between speakers and listeners. Together, these methods are useful in analyzing RECs’ social functions for small-economy states by delving deeper into their socio-diplomatic uses.

This study also relies on relational analysis. A relational analysis is a specific type of content analysis where concepts in texts are further analyzed to relate to one another. It goes beyond the frequency of individual concepts and allows for inferences to be made about overall meaning. Specifically, the study traces how different processes (i.e., small-economy states’ participation in a REC and the various legitimation practices this entails) intersect to produce the desired outcome: enhanced regime legitimacy. To do this, the study proposes three research methods: interpretive, discourse analysis, and relational analysis. This study maps out how these states’ political leaders articulate their reasons in public forums such as published in national speeches, newspaper reports, and REC conference records for joining and remaining in these RECs.

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Often, leaders highlight organizations’ economic incentives for their states. Next, I seek economic data from states’ economic indices from reputable sources such as government economic publications. These publications include government budgets, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the African Development Bank. I then examine the evidence to see if there was economic growth based on increased trade volumes since the accession of that stated country to a specific REC. Finally, I base my argument on prevailing political and diplomatic cultures. These methods offer a holistic analysis and nuanced tracing of these entities’ logic. This study will trace the analysis from speeches (what they say RECs do) to economic data (what RECs do not do), and finally, to the political culture, as an explanation (why RECs make sense to small-economy states’ political actors).

The study uses a deductive methodology that emanates from a sequential interrogative reasoning process between explanans (small-economy states and regionalism) and explanandum (purposes and roles of these organizations for the states).38 Thus, this study employs an explanatory narrative or complex but structured storytelling. The goal is to transcend the empirical question of what is observable in RECs’ operations by clarifying the underlying ideational and material motives that drive these states and their reigning governments to make these choices.39 This study reconstructs how the politics of legitimacy and regime-boosting motives affect regionalism. Regime-boosting regionalism argues that RECs’ main function is to

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raise domestic legitimacy, appease international democracy promoters, and boost repressive capacities of authoritarian regimes.\textsuperscript{40} The weak states, whose regimes are often insecure and without a viable social contract, need the RECs to amplify their position as legitimate rulers.\textsuperscript{41} Regime boosting works alongside “sovereignty-boosting” or “sovereignty signaling.” In sovereignty-boosting, RECs serve the purpose of “reproducing, consolidating, and legitimizing the state itself” and not the regime.\textsuperscript{42} Regional diplomacy and institutions occur only as a formal representation of the state and with as little incentive as possible to reduce sovereignty. Thus, a regime-boosting regime may also require RECs for sovereignty-signaling.

To make a deductive argument on regime-boosting and sovereignty-enhancing regionalism, I rely on primary research for data collection, using government reports and economic datasets such as International Monetary Fund’s (IMF) country data. Published economic data illustrate whether RECs are indeed economically beneficial. I have accessed a range of sources, including books on African integration, African political culture, regime legitimization, peer-reviewed articles, data, statistics from non-governmental organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), historical monographs, articles from local newspapers, magazines, government documents, and videos addressing Africa and RECs.

\textsuperscript{40} Maria J. Debre, “The Dark Side of Regionalism: How Regional Organizations Help Authoritarian Regimes to Boost Survival,” \textit{Democratization} 28, no. 2 (February 2020), p.400. Also see Figure 1 “process of regime boosting regionalism.”

\textsuperscript{41} Söderbaum, “Modes of Regional Governance in Africa,” 423.

Interested readers, researchers, and observers may ask how this study has arrived at these conclusions about RECs’ roles for small African states. The answer lies in the chosen research methods, including a rich and detailed historical analysis together with an array of scholarly work already conducted on these subjects. Further, this study places several working assumptions on the table and scrutinizes them through a rigorous analysis of RECs’ stated roles in the selected case studies.

*Historical Background*

This section provides background on Africa’s history of regionalism. Although it does not directly elaborate on the RECs’ roles in small-economy states, it provides a backdrop for analyzing sub-regionalism around the continent. The section examines why RECs have persisted despite their poor record of stimulating economic development through these stages.

One of the critical factors to consider is that regionalism in Africa is not entirely a consequence of European interest in Africa. Historically, African regional awareness came before European colonialism and preceded European integration. Evidence shows that regional trade and long-distance trade were common in the continent during the era of Middle Age empire formations, such as the Mali Empire, Songhai Empire, Great Zimbabwe, the Swahili city-states, and others. Islamization was a vital feature of this form of regionalism.

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Senegambian historian Boubacar Barry argued that West African contact with Europe generated sophisticated trade links from the land routes to the maritime trade, then dominated by the Atlantic slave trade and extraction. The new trade system negated the rich diversity and linkages in the greater Senegambia. It yielded a trade structure that served international rather than regional trade. Barry suggests that a larger Senegambia would be an economically rational entity. The diversity of the region had developed a recognizable regional identity before the advent of the European imperial system. It included relatively free trade systems and proto-democratic, tolerant government. His notion of Senegambia includes Senegal and Gambia, the basins of the rivers Senegal and Gambia, and the mountains of Futa Jallon in Guinea. Barry disputes the parochialism that assumes that Africa’s history of regional formation started with the European attempts at state formation from the late 19th century. Instead, the “scramble for Africa” ended patterns of regional integration that Africans are now trying to regain but are prevented by the legacy of colonialism that engineered the fulcrum of trade towards colonial powers instead of African traditional trade patterns.

The usual assertion among scholars that Western empires successfully enacted their visions of state formation and completely butchered earlier notions of political organization in Africa is inaccurate. Historian Gregory Mann argues that Western empires left fissures that enabled new alliances and political organizations, including

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continuing the Trans-Saharan trade networks across the Sahel. The French empire, especially in the Sahel, was not overbearing because of the geography and history of the place.\textsuperscript{47} Thus, this lack of complete transformation of societal outlook allowed new forms of governments to appear and entrenched historical mobility of people.

Thus, arguing that regionalism in Africa is only a result of European imperialism is an oversimplification. Regionalism in Africa is not limited to the European construct of the state system. It goes back to the African kingdoms of the Middle Ages that shaped cultural similarities permeating regions such as West Africa. Other parts of the continent, including the East African Great Lakes region and Southern Africa, also experienced historical social interaction that crystallized into sub-regional identities before colonialism. The Mfecane wars under Shaka Zulu were examples of militarized regionalism that spread Nguni speakers all over Southern and Eastern Africa. The Ngoni tribe – descendants or adaptors of Nguni people – is found in Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.\textsuperscript{48} Part of this dissertation’s task is to incorporate the complexity of regionalism as a critical and transcendental ideology in Africa while situating it in the more recent history of Africa, which is the product of European imperialism. The colonial partitioning of Africa created some small states and economic boundaries following the definitions used in this dissertation. In this respect, the scramble for Africa is the starting point

\textsuperscript{47} Gregory Mann, \textit{From Empires to NGOs in the West African Sahel: The Road to Nongovernmentality} (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2015), 265

for the dissertation’s analysis of sub-regionalism in the continent. However, it is not
the point at which Africa got to know regionalism as a phenomenon.

Starting from the scramble, Africa has experienced at least three attempts at
regional integration. The first attempt occurred at the turn of the twentieth century
when European colonial rulers attempted to maximize the economic advantages from
the territories and states they had acquired.49 The Berlin Conference of 1884–1885
and the subsequent “partition of Africa” determined which European metropole
controlled which specific region. The General Act that resulted from the Berlin
Conference also allowed free trade in some areas of Africa and set the rules for the
partition of Africa into more than 50 entities. The subsequent partition of the
continent took place over the two decades following the conference and created most
of Africa’s small economies.50 Britain, France, Portugal, Italy, and Germany,
however, wanted to unite their territories through infrastructure to maximize
mercantilist trade policies.51 In addition, Berlin and Brussels signed the Congo Basin
Treaty to reduce trade conflicts in the Great Lakes region, since both Germany and
Belgium wanted access to the Great Lakes. 52 Germany pushed inland from the Indian
Ocean, while Belgium planned its entry from the Congo territory. The Berlin

49 Richard E. Mshomba, *Economic Integration in Africa the East African Community in
Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 37.

50 Adekeye Adebajo, *The Curse of Berlin: Africa after the Cold War* (Oxford University

51 Richard E. Mshomba, *Economic Integration in Africa: the East African Community in
Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 37.

Conference and Brussels Congo Basin Treaty united the small economies of Rwanda and Burundi and the larger colonies of Tanganyika and Congo.\textsuperscript{53}

The critical distinction between Congo and other colonial possessions was that an individual, rather than a state, controlled and ruled Congo. King Leopold II established the Congo Free State, the forerunner of the present-day DRC, as private property held in the name of the king of Belgium and not in the state's name from 1895-1908. Belgian companies such as Abir Congo Company (1892), The Société Anversoise de Commerce au Congo (1892), and the Compagnie du Kasai had exclusive concessions to exploit rubber, copper, and ivory in the vast Congo area for the benefit of shareholders based in Antwerp and Brussels.\textsuperscript{54} Leopold II used these proceeds to showcase Belgium as a prosperous country in the Brussels International Exposition of 1897. Belgium later annexed Congo Free State as a colony after outcries of human rights abuses, including slavery and amputation of the limbs of workers who failed to meet rubber production quotas.\textsuperscript{55}

As Belgians consolidated their hold on the vast Congo territory and the kingdoms of Ruanda-Urundi under the League of Nations mandate, British colonial administrators attempted to integrate their colonial outposts in East Africa. From the 1890s to the 1920s, Uganda and Kenya were both British protectorates administered together. For example, the British used the same postage stamp for Kenya and


\textsuperscript{55} Leigh Gardner, “Fiscal Policy in the Belgian Congo in Comparative Perspective,” 134.
Uganda for efficiency purposes. Also, the British administrators issued the shilling, produced by the East African Currency Board, in the British-controlled areas of East Africa in 1921.\(^{56}\) British East Africa consisted of Uganda, the Zanzibar protectorates, and the Kenya and Tanganyika colonies. Following World War I, Britain initially planned to combine the entire region as a federation beginning in 1927. However, by 1920, the status of British East Africa changed. The Kenya colony was created and administered in Nairobi by colonial officials and representatives of British settlers in the settlement.\(^{57}\) Uganda and Zanzibar remained British protectorates, but in 1922, Tanganyika was assigned the status of “League of Nations mandated territory,” subject to the administrative decrees outlined by the League. Later, in 1946, Tanganyika was administered by the British as a UN Trust territory.\(^{58}\) The UN mandate required that the administration respect the rights of “natives” different from Kenya, a British settler colony.\(^{59}\)

The idea of a “federation” was complicated because of the different legal regimes, even though it was in the British industrial interests and the interest of


\(^{58}\) Peter A. Dumbuya, *Tanganyika under International Mandate, 1919-1946* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1995), XIV.

London to have an integrated monetary system.\textsuperscript{60} During the Second World War, the shilling was the currency of Somalia, Ethiopia, and Eritrea under British occupation.\textsuperscript{61} In 1946, the British East African governments established East African Airways, followed by the East African Railways and Harbours Corporation.\textsuperscript{62} These arrangements constituted a statement of intent for putting in place a potential East African federal system. British administrators formed the East African High Commission in East Africa in 1948, but only for its colonies and Tanzania.

For the German colonies, the 1894–1895 Berlin Conference formalized Germany’s possession of a swathe of territory stretching from the Indian Ocean coast to the continent’s hinterland in Rwanda and Burundi. Tanganyika, Rwanda, and Burundi became part of the German East African Protectorate and were governed mainly by Dar-es-Salaam. After the 1919 Treaty of Versailles, Rwanda and Burundi became Belgian colonies under the mandate system. The League of Nations granted victorious nations power to govern territories previously held by Germany.\textsuperscript{63} Because of Belgium’s control of Congo, Rwanda and Burundi were integrated into the central African economic complex. Tanganyika was given to Britain, which was then joined with Kenya and Uganda to comprise British East Africa. In the south of the continent, the white-ruled Union of South Africa maintained a customs union and a de facto economic border with its neighbors.


\textsuperscript{61} Flora Mndeme Musonda, \textit{Regional Integration in Africa a Closer Look at the East African Community} (Bâle, Switzerland: Helbing und Lichtenhahn, 2004), 71.

\textsuperscript{62} Mshombha, \textit{Economic Integration in Africa}, 41.

currency union between South Africa and the High Commission Territories of Bechuanaland (Botswana), Basutoland (Lesotho), and Eswatini (formerly Swaziland). These entities remained in force until the independence of South Africa’s neighbors in the 1960s.\(^{64}\)

The colonial-era regional integration was carried out for as a matter of administrative pragmatism and in the colonial powers’ national interests. In the “scramble era,” between 1881-1914, mercantilism structured European interests through private companies. The British government left territorial administration to for-profit companies, notably the Imperial British East African Company (IBEAC) and the British South African Company (BSAC). Colonists wanted to maximize payoffs from the colonies by integrating the smaller colonies with the larger ones. According to the prevailing mercantilist logic of the time, the colonies served as sources of raw materials and as markets for finished products manufactured in the metropoles. The colonial subjects were coerced into forced or low-wage labor to benefit private companies such as IBEAC and BSAC.\(^{65}\) Integration often ensured that the colonial enterprise was profitable, as illustrated by the construction of the East African Railway integrating Kenya and Uganda.\(^{66}\)

The French colonies in Sub-Saharan Africa also exemplified regional integration, which involved various countries of different economic sizes. The French-speaking countries had a long history of a common currency in the form of

\[^{64}\text{Robson, Economic Integration in Africa, 295.}\]


\[^{66}\text{Mshombi, Economic Integration in Africa, 37.}\]
the CFA Franc. Before 1945, the currency that circulated in the French colonial Africa was the French franc. In 1945, with the end of World War II and the establishment of the Fourth French Republic, the CFA was created as a separate currency with two iterations. One was used in French West Africa and another in French Equatorial Africa. The latter consisted of Benin, Ivory Coast, Mauritania, Senegal, Togo, Niger, and Mali. The Equatorial Customs Union, comprising French Cameroon, Congo, Gabon, Chad, and the Central African Republic, was established in the same year. These two unions shared a central bank that used CFA as a common currency and protected the colonies against inflation by pegging this currency to the French franc.

Each CFA currency was distinct, but both were tied to the French franc. CFA aimed to counteract the devaluation of the French Franc after the war after World War II. It attempted to control the negative effect devaluation would have had on the French African colonies. CFA illustrates how even within the structure of the colonial system, a form of economic integration through monetary policy was necessary. Integration through the customs union established in 1959 was within the federation of French West Africa and the federation of French Equatorial Africa, but not throughout all French colonies in Africa. Monetary union in the colonial era was not a fait accompli. The outcome of World War II created conditions in which a monetary union was beneficial for France’s economy. With independence, customs unions ran into problems over import duties, barriers at the border, and indirect taxes.
Eventually, these unions collapsed. However, almost all the CFA countries except Guinea have preserved their common currency.\(^67\)

Colonial attempts at regional integration created structures that the postcolonial state inherited. Those structures favored integration between countries that spoke the same official language and inherited similar colonial bureaucratic systems, legal regimes, and physical infrastructures. These features made cooperation within regional groups with a shared colonial history more feasible than regional integration that cut across linguistic differences and neo-colonial patterns. One challenge to these integration attempts pointed out by scholars has to do with the difficulty of identifying an actual “colonial state” in Africa. The reason is that the colonial state was weak.\(^68\) Unlike in India, North America, or Australia, the colonial administration did not have a coherent, unified policy on African regions and economic cooperation. Instead, it sought the most effective and efficient way to meet its goal of maximizing its economic extractivism. Sometimes, this goal was effected through “cooperation regionally” but sometimes through thwarting cooperation when it meant crossing colonial borders.

The colonial experiments sought to create shared identities and orient states toward their colonial powers. Often, these norms would tie small economies to their larger neighbors. In southern Africa, Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa, for example, have solid cultural bonds owing to their colonial experience as members of

\(^{67}\) Robson, *Economic Integration in Africa*, 61.

a customs union. Scholars like Boubacar Barry and Ali Mazrui argue that the cultural bond arose not from colonial experience but from pre-colonial trade networks and the work of intermediary traders that tied long-distance trade networks together.\textsuperscript{69} The cultural bond could also be attributed to the fabric of pre-colonial chiefdoms and kingdoms, which relied on marriage between regional power holders. Such practices created avenues for common bureaucratic norms, shared goals, and cooperation. Still, the colonial authorities attempted to build opportunity paths for future integrative agendas.

For example, the French language unifies the ex-French colonies. At African Union sessions, Francophone countries have a history of sometimes bonding together and voting in favor of their agendas. It is not the French language per se that unifies these countries but the neo-colonial ties to France that make for a shared agenda between French-speaking countries even if they are as disparate as Mali and Gabon, for instance. Swahili, a language that Arab-Swahili traders and later German and British colonial administrators promoted, has created a shared identity and became a \textit{lingua franca} in Africa’s Great Lakes region and an official language Tanzania, Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda. It is also a national language in DRC and a recognized minority language in Burundi, Mozambique, Somalia, and Malawi. The Comoro Islands population also speaks a dialect of Kiswahili.\textsuperscript{70}

\textsuperscript{69} Ali Al'Amin Mazrui, \textit{The Africans: a Triple Heritage} (Boston: Little, Brown, 1986).

The decolonization process began in the late 1950s, shaping the second major attempt at regional integration.\footnote{Samuel K. B. Asante, \textit{Regionalism and Africa’s Development: Expectations, Reality and Challenges} (London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 32.} The first independent countries pushed for regionalism to thwart future infringements from the existing colonial powers; small-economy states, such as Guinea, were instrumental in this agenda. Guinea became the first French-controlled Sub-Saharan African country to reject the French Community, making it subservient to the French Union in 1958. Once Guinea left the French community in 1958, it was independent, not subservient. Its “natural” partner for economic cooperation was Ghana (not a former French colony) which had gained independence before Guinea. Guinea also allied with other African nationalist movements, especially the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa, to end white minority rule in southern Africa, even as their economies weakened.\footnote{Elizabeth Schmidt, \textit{Cold War and Decolonization in Guinea, 1946–1958} (Ohio University Press, 2007), 125.} The ideology of Pan-Africanism as espoused by Nkrumah and Sékou Touré provided an avenue for cooperation outside of the colonial systems, which included supporting the anti-apartheid struggle. These attempts, which built upon previous colonial era models, highlight their identity and awareness of their status small-economy states. Perhaps the most critical regional initiative is the OAU, launched in 1963 in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa, where African heads of states and governments met at a founding conference. The OAU charter pledged to complete Africa’s decolonization and forge a united stand for Africa’s engagement with the rest of the
world. Initially, there was an attempt to form a supra-national body encompassing the entire African continent, but that effort failed.\(^{73}\)

Despite unanimous agreement that Africa needed continental integration, there were disagreements on the way forward. Having gained political independence in the 1960s, African small-economy states strived for increased cooperation.\(^{74}\) European colonialism had created “the idea of Africa” arising from the shared experience of imperialism.\(^{75}\) The idea of the Africa mantra fueled the clamor for African unity.\(^{76}\) In East Africa, political independence had stalled the progress of the East African High Commission. Soon after liberation, the countries were caught between balancing sovereignty and regional development plans. More importantly, the heads of newly independent states did not want to cede any of their sovereignty.\(^{77}\)

In the 1960s, member countries in East Africa signed deals to share industrial development plans and create a single currency, but conflicts and nationalism

\(^{73}\) According to South African scholars Barbra Schalk et al., the OAU’s weakness emanates from the fact that OAU was established as a confederacy rather than as a federation. Under a confederate arrangement, states aim for cooperation without giving up sovereignty. The weakness of this formula is that decisions are not enforceable. The OAU, formed as a confederate system, wanted to retain independence and maximize cooperation. Because of this fundamental challenge and many others, the OAU failed in several regards. However, the failures of the OAU should be examined contextually. Klaas Van Walraven argues in *Dreams of Power* that the OAU was an elitists’ club with elitists aspirations. Therefore, it did not speak for the masses of Africans that felt detached from the happenings in Addis Ababa. Similar arguments can be made about subregional entities).; Diedre L. Badejo, *The African Union* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2008), 26–31.


\(^{77}\) Mshomba, *Economic Integration in Africa*, 42.
upended this project. Then, precipitously, Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania formed the East African Cooperation (EAC) in 1967. These countries signed the EAC treaty based on the economic ties that had developed over the years and the prevailing integration discourse propagated by the 1957 Treaty of Rome that formed the European Economic Community. The EAC operated for ten years before it collapsed in 1977. Ongoing ideological differences, Kenya’s relative gains over other members, and Tanzania’s rebuttal of Ugandan aggression in 1979 generated tensions that resulted in the demise of the EAC.78

The third wave of regionalism, which Fredrick Söderbaum described as “project market integration,” unfolded in the 1990s.79 It was led by a “new breed” of leaders who took power in the late 1980s and 1990s.80 The ideology that unified this new breed of leaders focused on rapid development anchored in free enterprise, ushering in an era that scholars referred to as the “good governance era.” For this new breed of African leaders, good governance and economic reforms were the centerpieces of their development plan. They directed what scholars would later refer to as “developmental regimes” with varying success.81 In developmental regimes, the state achieves development when it has a centralized authority over significant rents


and a long horizon for investment in productive areas such as value addition and
industry.\textsuperscript{82} Though it is neo-patrimonial with a working relationship between the state
and the business class, the state is development-orientated.\textsuperscript{83} In the process, these
leaders reignited the commitment to regional integration. Some of them, such as
Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, Paul Kagame of Rwanda, and Botswana’s Festus
Mogae, led small-economy states.

One of the most vital signals of change was the new leaders’ push for the
reformation of the OAU. Because the OAU had failed to stop the raging civil wars in
the late 1990s and the Rwandan genocide, continental African leaders, Thabo Mbeki
of South Africa and Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, engineered a reformation of the
OAU, eventually creating the African Union (AU) in 2002. The AU’s Constitutive
Act (2000) highlights the need for rapid economic development, security, and peace.
In addition to promoting human rights, the Act also emphasized human rights
protections, the respect for constitutional transitions, good governance, and the rule of
law.

Even with formal documents and press releases supporting integration, there
is little evidence that the AU’s goal of promoting intra-regional trade has succeeded.
The share of intra-African exports remains about 17 percent compared to Europe at

\textsuperscript{82} Tim Kelsall, “Rethinking the Relationship between Neo-Patrimonialism and Economic

\textsuperscript{83} David Booth and Fredrick Golooaba-Mutebi, "Developmental Patrimonialism? The Case of
Rwanda," in \textit{The African Affairs Reader: Key Texts in Politics, Development, and International
69 percent in 2017. The value of intra-African trade remains insignificant; many countries continue to trade with their ex-colonial powers. They also elect to trade with China, India, and other emerging economies in West Asia, particularly the Gulf States. The challenges of border controls, long delays at border stations, and high tariffs deter trade.

Although market integration is ambitious and well-intentioned, state interests and developmental shortfalls often hinder progress. NEPAD is an example of project integration, which intended to integrate African economies into global markets by improving market conditions through better governance, democratic ideals, and improved infrastructure. NEPAD was a pro-trade agreement couched in neoliberal terms that pro-market leaders such as Thabo Mbeki of South Africa promoted. Ironically, NEPAD faced pushback from small-economy countries on the continent, especially from Senegal under President Abdoulaye Wade, who feared potential domination by South Africa. By 2011, excitement for NEPAD had waned as members of the G-8, who were courted for investment and trade, were busy combating the 2008 financial crisis.

The 2015 AU meeting on continental trade did not yield a standard agreement on continental trade. Instead, leaders devised a vague action plan that promoted Pan-African Free Trade and encouraged states to reduce tariffs and taxes. By April 2019,

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the Pan-African Free Trade Agreement had morphed into the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). AfCFTA became operational after 22 member states signed the treaty. Remarkably, Africa’s largest economy, Nigeria, alongside other continental powerhouses such as Angola, Tanzania, Sudan, Algeria, and the DRC, failed to sign the treaty in the first round. The absence of small states such as Eritrea, Burundi, and Benin, among others, was also noticeable. These countries cited internal labor union pressures as reasons for not signing.86 The AfCFTA went into effect on January 1, 2021, with an expansive market of 1.3 billion people and a combined GDP of $3.4 trillion. It intended to promote industrialization and job creation and improve Africa’s global competitiveness by boosting intra-African trade; however, the road to full implementation is long.87 Challenges to AfCFTA include homogeneity of products, trade structure, infrastructure deficits, existing binding agreements, and questionable political will among some countries.88

For the most part, failed experiences of regionalism have led to the stagnation of African economic integration efforts, hindering the goals of many landlocked and other small-economy states. The institutional operations of the organized regional blocs hamper their functionality because of the inadequate implementation of

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agreements by member states. Limited personnel and over-ambitious projects, coupled with financial hurdles, inhibit regionalism’s achievements. Likewise, overlapping regional bodies are costly for member states who are already financially constrained and cash strapped. Their vast numbers also make it hard for them to operate in a conflict-free environment. For example, some Common Market members for East and Southern Africa (COMESA) are also members of SADC. Both institutions campaign for free trade areas and reduced customs charges. The scarcity of resources necessary to run these organizations has meant that states prioritize national projects through bilateral trade agreements. These countries are also torn between pursuing continent-wide free trade and sub-regional free trade areas. While the AfCFTA aspires to balance sub-regional and continental integration, it is far too early to measure its success.

Without specific and goal-oriented regional blocs, achieving development via RECs will be elusive for all African states, especially small-economy states. For example, the EAC aims to make East Africa a composite economic region. Still, it faces mistrust and a heightened sense of nationalism such as border closures, diplomatic spats, and conflicting policies on the labor movement. The future of the community remains unclear even as they propagate the idea of a regional federation.


In March 2019, enormous tensions between Rwanda and Uganda, verging on war, almost imploded the bloc. This episode followed from previous low-grade conflict between the pair of states. In 2015, a bitter diplomatic spat developed between Tanzania and Rwanda over the personal differences between Presidents Jakaya Kikwete and Paul Kagame over Rwanda’s foreign policy in the Great Lakes region. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exposed fissures in the EAC’s workings. While there have been gestures of cooperation, overall responses have diverged. The pandemic again exacerbated tensions between Rwanda and Uganda over border closures. Although border restrictions eventually eased, lackluster COVID response mechanisms, primarily from Burundi, Tanzania, and South Sudan, did not help with cooperation.

As stated above, regionalism is not a new phenomenon in Africa. Mostly outside interests in the colonial era and norms of pan-Africanism for the early postcolonial period drove the pushes for regionalism. For small-economy states, such attempts have failed to achieve the objectives of sub-regionalism. Regionalist ideas have never waned, and states—even small ones—have often campaigned for new integrationist projects. Conceivably, this history of regionalism in Africa points to other non-stated roles for RECs that may be driving small states to join and remain in 

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them. If correct, this finding underscores the importance of the question that this research set out to answer: *what is the role of RECs in Africa’s small-economy states integrating with their larger, more developed neighbors?*

**Chapter overview**

This study examines RECs’ roles for African small-economy states. It suggests that RECs facilitate neopatrimonial regime-boosting agendas, reinforce sovereign control or regime security, and entrench the political elite’s state captures rather than being economic development and security agents. In the second chapter, a survey of the literature suggests that RECs’ roles include political elites’ regime-boosting agendas in small-economy states whose legitimacy may be questioned in electoral disputes, internal rebellions, and secession threats. Additionally, RECs may aid in alleviating national security concerns in cases of existential threat such as contagious diseases, climate change, or extremist movements. Most importantly, by allowing existing regimes in small state economies to expand their influence regionally, RECs intensify state capture. The first chapter also provides an overview of the project’s research design.

The third chapter focuses on the fortunes of South Sudan as the newest member of a REC. South Sudan’s choice to join a REC elicits multiple questions: What reasons drove South Sudan to seek EAC membership? South Sudan chose to join the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGADD), which is a REC that includes countries from the Horn of Africa, Nile Valley, and Great Lakes region but chose the EAC. South Sudan has a longstanding relationship with the Republic of Sudan and Ethiopia. It would make economic sense to build upon the existing
functional economic infrastructure and commercial interests, so why opt for membership in another REC? The chapter will first review South Sudan’s economic rationale using the indices stated above. An analysis of the security argument and the social constructivist analysis will follow. Is it possible that South Sudan was pressured to join the EAC after relations with Sudan deteriorated? Are there other economic factors that might have influenced the state to choose a different foreign policy path?

The fourth chapter will focus on Liberia in the ECOWAS region. Liberia is a resource-endowed ECOWAS member geographically and economically small and faces challenges such as endemic poverty, insecurity, and underdevelopment due to previous conflicts. I will explore what Liberia has gained from the ECOWAS, even as regional hegemons like Nigeria, Ghana, Cote d’Ivoire and Senegal have dominated it. I will examine the economic data of Liberia to see how joining the REC affected the country’s economy. For example, is there evidence that Liberia benefited economically by joining ECOWAS? What does the data show about Liberia’s economic performance before and after joining ECOWAS? I will also focus on the dominant political/security concerns such as regime security and the cost of not joining ECOWAS that might have driven a specific state or regime to choose which of the existing RECs to join.

The fifth chapter discusses Namibia, a relatively wealthy compared to other cases but the small-state economy in the SADC region. Though Namibia is a coastal and mineral-rich country, it has struggled with high-income inequality and overreliance on commodity prices. Namibia is a smaller country relative to the other
economies in the SADC region. Namibia provides a good barometer for studying why a small-economy state will join a REC. What does Namibia gain by joining with the likes of South Africa and Botswana in SADC? Why is Namibia in SADC, even though it is not landlocked and seems to be doing well exporting its natural resources to other non-SADC countries?

The sixth chapter provides an integrated, comprehensive summary that summarizes the key findings of the dissertation. It states deeper reasons why the small-economy states, South Sudan, Liberia, and Namibia, despite their unique circumstances, opted to join and remain in each of their respective RECs. This analysis combines strands from the theories section and the literature review to create a composite, overarching account of RECs’ roles in small states. The major building blocks for this harken back to the concept and practice of state capture. The key players’ interests become a determining force in guiding the state’s economic development policy to make regime interest subservient to the national interest, thereby manifesting in the regional and international arenas.
CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH DESIGN

The overall purpose of this study is to explore the often understudied and unstated roles of regional economic communities (RECs) in Africa. This chapter surveys the theoretical perspectives through which the RECs will be examined relative to small-economy states. The research is focused on one main question: What roles do RECs play in African small-economy states? This chapter contains three sections. The first section reviews the rationalist approaches of regionalism, focusing on the immediate economic and security gains that countries accrue from REC membership for small-state economies. In this section, I examine economic rationales and security imperatives for small-economy states in RECs. The second section explores constructivist approaches, highlighting the role of norms and ideas in international politics. In addition to expounding on the theoretical framework, the third section of the chapter explains concepts that justify the term small-state economy.

This chapter reviews the literature that motivates the study of African regionalism, particularly south of the Sahara. Sebastian Kraphol defines regional integration as “the process of iterated cooperation that leads to an ever-increasing web of substantive and procedural institutions.”95 In this way, economic interdependence drives regional integration through the delegation of sovereignty. Unlike international

regimes that are established to confront one specific issue, RECs are non-issue-specific and region-specific. Usually, RECs’ aim is market integration, but they may also focus on regional infrastructure, regional security, tariff reduction, harmonization of trade regulations, and stabilization of exchange rates.  

Although there are more than eight RECs in Africa, AU recognizes eight: Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA), East African Community (EAC), Intergovernmental Authority of Development (IGAD), ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) and Southern African Development Community (SADC). Some of the stated roles include helping the member states implement regional agendas such as economic growth and other arising political issues. These RECs also function as custodians of pre-colonial and early independence era histories, political norm shapers, and regional development promoters.

RECs roles, especially for small-economy states, vary as a function of which conceptualization of regionalism is referenced. Whereas regional integration refers to a political project aimed at entrenching cooperation among any states, regionalism takes on different forms with political cooperation such as the AU at one end and economic and security collaborations exemplified by the various RECs on the other. This research focuses on examining RECs and small economies in Africa. In doing so, it investigates the roles of these organizations that may not be readily discernible.

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96 Kraphol, Regional Integration in the Global South, 5.

Because the research emphasis is on small-economy states, the concept of small states must be first defined.

Despite numerous attempts at defining small states, no uniform definition is available. Two strands of definitions have emerged: The first one sees small states as defined by absolute and quantifiable criteria, primarily population size, GDP size, and military capacity measures in size of the army and military arsenal. The second measure is often through relative weakness and insignificance in the international society.98 This dissertation assumes that small states are the category comprising nation-states that do not qualify as large-or mid-sized but are also not micro-states or city-states.99 Small states are defined by their lack of power and its effect and the inability to secure their boundaries in the presence of a threatening neighbor.100

More specifically, a state is small because of its size relative to the other states in its vicinity regarding territorial space, population size, and economic output. The number of votes in an international institution like the World Bank may qualify this state as either a small or large state.101 Smallness is relational within specific RECs’ power dynamics.102 This study emphasizes the size of the economy as a critical variable. It adds the suffix ‘economy’ after the word small to emphasize on

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99 Christine Ingebrigtsen et al., *Small States in International Relations* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012), 12

100 Matthias Maass, “Small States as ‘Small Countries’ and ‘Little States’, 2


the economy. The reference to small states is synonymous with Least Developed Countries (LDC), or small-state economy, small states, or small economies; these terms are used interchangeably.

In Europe, size has not impeded states’ economic development. Most small states’ security depends on their continued involvement with the EU’s institutional framework.\textsuperscript{103} In Africa, however, small states have limited human capital, are remote, and occasionally are landlocked.\textsuperscript{104} Comparatively, small African states tend to have a larger population and a more substantial land area than small European states but very low nominal GDP.

In defining small-state economies, I have used a systematic way of arriving at my case studies. While what I describe as a “small-state economy” might appear arbitrary, there is a method to each of these cases. Most of Africa constitutes economically small states. The total GDP size of the sub-Saharan African economy as of 2019 was $1.8 trillion for a population size of 1.1 billion. It is marginally smaller than that of the Russian Federation, which had a GDP of $1.7 trillion for a population size of 144 million in 2019.\textsuperscript{105} Based on the small size of the continental economy, most countries, with very few exceptions, would be small-economy states in global terms. I focus on the size of mainland African countries’ GDPs. My method includes

\textsuperscript{103} Haugevik and Rieker, “Autonomy or Integration?” 219

\textsuperscript{104} Paul Collier, \textit{The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done about It} (New York City, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007), 54.

the 25 smallest economies in the continent. These countries fall below $11 billion in GDP sizes as of 2019. Considerable variations occur in terms of GDP per capita, but the economy’s overall size can give or deny any room for the state to pursue an independent economic pathway. The World Bank defines small states based on population and economic size. I focus on economic size because it is a practical way of eliminating outliers. My classification of small-economy states include Chad, Rwanda, Namibia, Equatorial Guinea, Republic of Congo, Malawi, Mauritania, Togo, Somalia, South Sudan, Sierra Leone, Eswatini, Djibouti, Burundi, Liberia, Central Africa Republic, Eritrea, Lesotho, The Gambia, and Guinea Bissau.

While the lists of small-economy African countries include São Tomé and Príncipe, Cape Verde, Comoros, Mauritius, and Seychelles, this study excludes these island nations. Conceptually, these small island states fall under the category of micro-states, placing them outside the context of small states in the African context. As opposed to many African states, micro-states can be self-sustaining without enduring an industrial and manufacturing base. These states can exploit their comparative advantages as tourist hubs and financial centers. Seychelles provides an example of an island nation that has fared well without industrialization.

Additionally, these African micro-states are amalgams of various world cultures,
religions, histories, and civilizations. These features constitute sufficient grounds for excluding them from the study.

In one of my case studies, South Sudan is landlocked. It is chosen because it is one of the most impoverished countries in the EAC. For some context, a third of African countries (16) have no access to the sea, and this geography contributes to their economies’ smallness. Fourteen landlocked countries have low rankings on the human development index (HDI), which measures life expectancy, education, and income per capita, among other factors. Nevertheless, being landlocked does not automatically make a state small nor underdeveloped. Development depends upon the availability of natural resources and how those resources are used for the people’s benefit. In 2017, Botswana, a landlocked but resource-rich country, registered a respectable HDI index of 0.717. By comparison, Guinea Bissau is a small, resource-scarce coastal state with an HDI index as low as 0.455 as of 2017, ranking 41 out of 56.

When the economic output is the defining criterion for smallness, most of Africa’s Least Developed Countries (LDCs) become small states. The region’s share

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109 Veenendaal, Politics and Democracy in Microstates, 136.

110 HDI index captures the quality of life in each country measured through life expectancy, access to education, healthcare, and GDP as variables of a good living conditions. The highest score is 1 and the lowest is zero. A low HDI is below 0.5.


is 2 percent of global exports. South Africa, Nigeria, and Angola dominate African trade with two-thirds of that African share. Their small size directly correlates with the small size of African economies and their minimal manufacturing bases.\textsuperscript{113} This research’s analysis of small states focuses on the inconsequential players—in economic terms—within an already economically marginalized continent. My second case study, Liberia—a small-economy state in West Africa—qualifies because it is a coastal and resource-rich country with a history of rapacious conflicts even as it is Africa’s oldest republic. Liberia’s participation in ECOWAS as a small-state economy in a region where Nigeria, Ghana, Cote d’Ivoire, and Senegal dominate regional trade.

This study contextualizes small states in the RECs. For example, while South Sudan does not fit the criterion of a small state based on its territory and population, it is nonetheless small within the East African Community in economic terms. A state may be small on the global scale but a REC leader on a regional scale. Rwanda, for example, is a landlocked country with a population of 12 million people over 10,169 square miles. Still, it has a demonstrable impact on the REC compared to Burundi, which has approximately the same territorial size and population. Smallness, therefore, does not directly correlate with power but instead provides strong justification to examine why small states join RECs and how RECs benefit them. Based on this logic, Namibia is a small-economy state only because of its neighborhood; the World Bank considers Namibia an upper-middle-income country

because of its relatively high per capita income, but the size of its economy pales in comparison to even landlocked Zambia and sparsely populated Botswana. Its economy is also twenty-seven times smaller than that of South Africa.\footnote{114}  

The dominant approach to explaining RECs’ roles in Africa focuses on an economically rational argument. It proposes that governments join and remain in RECs to increase market efficiency, trade value, economies of scale, and vital access to seaports for the landlocked states.\footnote{115} Other scholars have documented such organizations’ security roles, pointing to an increased urge for RECs to partake in improving their regions’ security.\footnote{116} These perspectives, which view RECs as catalysts for development and security, offer only a narrow analysis of these organizations for the small-state economies that become members in RECs. The economic and security logic reflects a functional and rationalist perspective that neglects the states’ symbolic and regime legitimization roles. Aspects of performative regionalism include unratified trade treaties and uncoordinated integrationist agendas at the sub-regional level. Thus, regional integration reinforces the ruling regime’s

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\footnote{114} IMF indicates that the GDP for Namibia was $14,368\,\text{billion}$, South Africa on the other hand, had a GDP of $385\,\text{billion}$ for 2019 figures.


control of territory domestically while increasing the regime’s international visibility.117

This literature review emphasizes the constructivist analysis of regionalism. Here, the focus is on these organizations’ stated goals and roles and how they operate.118 Based on historical analysis, these organizations play several roles. African RECs have privileged the politics of legitimacy and sovereignty signaling. Membership in RECs thus enhances the public image of a weak state’s regime: validating states’ boundaries, re-affirming a policy of non-intervention, and solidifying relationships among regional elites.119 RECs also emphasize the creating regions’ solidarity narratives, enhancing state capture by ruling political elites. These concepts are elaborated on later in this chapter. This study exposes African RECs’ hidden roles for states and the ruling regimes of selected states. The crux of this chapter’s argument is not to deny that these RECs have economic or security roles. Instead, the goal is to extend it by stating that these organizations play more extensive and substantive roles than previous accounts have stipulated.

In the study of regionalism, constructivism concerns the diplomatic culture, politics of legitimacy, sovereignty signaling, solidarity narratives for ruling political regimes, and peer pressure.120 An integral part of this literature review considers state

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117 Maria J. Debre, “The Dark Side of Regionalism,” p. 3

118 Fredrik Soderbaum, “What’s Wrong with regional integration: The Problem of Eurocentrism?” (European University Institute, May 2014), p. 8


120 Söderbaum, “Modes of Regional Governance in Africa,” 423.
capture as another role of RECs. State capture stems from the notion that solidarity and legitimacy to rule can create oligarchical perceptions about a specific social class’s propensity for ruling a state. It can also extend state monopolies to like-minded political elites in neighboring states. The implication is that the RECs become social clubs for which regional elites meet to socialize. A good example here is Equatorial Guinea under President Obiang. The Obiang government lavishly spent on diplomatic accommodations. He built a multimillion deluxe city for African leaders and their entourages. The city consisted of 52 luxury presidential villas, a conference hall, an artificial beach, a luxury hotel, and an 18-hole golf course, all for a summit that lasted for one week. 65 percent of Equatoguineans lived on $1 per day, while the AU leaders had access to a jacuzzi heated pool, saunas, and a fitness centre. President Obiang wanted to impress, having been elected chair six months earlier unopposed. He hosted another AU summit in June 2014.

This study aims to offer the first comprehensive and systematic comparative work on the RECs’ roles for African small-economy states. There are numerous published case studies sponsored by the European Union, the African Development Bank, and specific European countries such as Norway and Germany. Fredrick Söderbaum, Daniel Bach, Michael Bratton, Peter Penar, and Richard Gibb have published extensively on what they label as new regionalism. However, there is little focus both on small-states and how RECs entrench state capture. Another significant contribution is to analyze three competing rationales for RECs focused on economic

justifications, security logic, and social constructivist logic. I examine these rationales because of their value for making sense of and situating African RECs. Presenting them will explore and delineate the contours of a slightly modified understanding of regionalism.

Conceptual Framework

It is not practical for this literature review to exhaust all available approaches to regional integration. Instead, this study attempts to traverse what is visible and focus on the intersections between ideas, regime types, and political culture and compare with the theory of economic rationalism. As Christopher Clapham has observed, it is noteworthy that in Africa’s neopatrimonial states, state interest is often blurred and convoluted by the calculated political and economic interests of the existing elites.122 The same logic can be extended to the RECs created by states that operate in similar circumstances. Consequently, sub-regional groupings partially function as opportunity structures for political elites to empower themselves, increase survival chances, pursue foreign policy agendas, and appease the international community.123

Thus, the thrust of this study is to explore RECs’ economic and political rationales and test them against conventional but critical social roles. Since this study focuses on RECs’ roles in African small-economy states, this literature review will only emphasize this aspect of regionalism. Although the regionalism literature is vast,124


123 Maria J. Debre, “The Dark Side of Regionalism” 3

124 Samuel K. B. Asante, Regionalism and Africa’s Development: Expectations, Reality, and Challenges (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Daniel Bach, Regionalism in Africa:
there is little research on small-economy states and RECs in Africa. This study starts with a review of the rationalist literature.

**Rationalist approaches**

The rationalist approach focuses on the immediate gains states make in the economic or political spheres. Rationalists focus on material factors as opposed to the ideational factors that their constructionist counterparts have championed.¹²⁵ Rationalists focus on RECs as vessels for economic development and possible agents of security provision. In their view, small-economy states tend to favor regional integration primarily in pursuit of economic gains. According to Tanja Börzel, globalization drives RECs in the same way global markets enhance cross-border mobility and economic linkages.¹²⁶ Like other economic development and international relations approaches, rationalism is a broad philosophy and not a homogeneous body of thought. Still, one class of rationalists includes two strands: the economic rationalists and the realists. Following a review of the rationalist literature, constructivist approaches will be examined that highlight the role of norms and ideas in international politics.

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Putative Economic Reasons for Small-Economy States' Adherence to RECs

Economic rationalists view regional integrations as how states delegate some aspects of their sovereignty to supranational entities at regional levels.\textsuperscript{127} This form of regional integration is top-down, linear, and one-dimensional, starting from a free trade area, followed by a customs union, and culminating in a common market. RECs’ blueprints come from Balassa’s 1961 controversial essay that described RECs’ development stages from a Free Trade Area (FTA), a Customs Union (CU), and an Economic Union (EU), ultimately resulting in complete economic integration.\textsuperscript{128} In classical regional integration, regionalism’s main drivers are the material gains that states expect to reap from membership. These material gains may include transaction cost reduction, policy externalities, economies of scale, technological innovation, and heavier political weight in the international arena.\textsuperscript{129} Thus, small-economy states integrate because of a genuine expectation of material benefits.

David Mitrany’s concept of functionalism offers a textbook illustration of how integration can enhance trade between neighbors. Mitrany advocated for transnational cooperation rather than planned integration, which morphs into interdependence and solutions for mutual problems.\textsuperscript{130} Functionalists identify human welfare needs, which


\textsuperscript{128} Bela A. Balassa, \textit{The Theory of Economic Integration} (London, UK: Routledge, 2012), 12


present the technical, non-controversial aspects of government actions that are not subject to political football on national or international levels. As integration increases, there are spillover effects from less political to explicitly political arenas, allowing small-economy states to grow economically and solve geographical smallness and international competition.¹³¹

Present-day African RECs focus outwardly on economic integration to remove trade obstacles such as transport costs. Some scholars have labeled this “open regionalism” or “market integration.”¹³² Free-market regionalism has external backing, mostly from the United States, the European Union, and donor agencies who actively support and encourage small-states to integrate into the interest of trade promotion.¹³³ Small-economy states stand to benefit from access to larger markets. Open borders signify that larger markets and harmonized regulations reduce government restrictions on capital control. Free markets are efficient because they lead to lower resource allocation costs, permit individual choice, and enhance market efficiency. The next paragraphs examine if small-state economies in Africa have benefited from RECs formed from economic rationales.

It is widely acknowledged that Africa’s integration efforts have been futile, at least economically. Political motives, geography, uneven distribution of gains have triumphed the expected economic gains for RECs’ small-state economies. Africa has


¹³² Söderbaum, “Modes of Regional Governance in Africa,” 423.

34 of the 50 least developed countries globally (LDCs), emerging countries that are economically too small to stand alone populate many of the continent’s RECs. A review of the post-independence era of integration observed that the gross national product of Sub-Saharan Africa was about the same as that of Belgium in 1992. In 1998, 36 of 54 African countries had fewer than 12 million people—hardly a conducive environment for industrialization, especially given their low purchasing power levels. The average GDP per capita stood at $500 in 1992. In landlocked countries, transport costs often accounted for an increase of 30–50 percent for the final price of a retail consumer good.

GDP growth is inching up, but it is inadequate to meet the developmental needs in the region. It is the same as the Russian Federation as of 2019 at $1.8 trillion. The GDP per capita has witnessed an almost stagnant growth for the last decade. GDP’s growth is a worrying situation because population experts believe that Africa’s population will double by 2050 and account for one-quarter of the world’s


population. There is, therefore, a need for integration to safeguard countries from geographic and underdevelopment limitations.

While Africa has a rising trend in intra-regional trade, the trade structure has not changed. African small-state economies still had very little success with regional integration in development and economic growth. UN trade records from 2019 show that the share of exports from Africa to the world ranged from 80 to 90 percent from 2000–2017. The only other region with such high dependence on external trade is Oceania. Extractive trade patterns highly susceptible to global boosts and bursts continue to dominate continental trade. Highly developed regions and countries on the continent had the highest level of intra-regional trade. In 2016, SADC had a trading volume of $34.7 billion compared to only $.8 billion for the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). SADC’s relative success arises from South Africa’s highly sophisticated economy compared to its northern neighbors.

African RECs have several economic features. They have a linear integration model, a stepwise integration of goods, labor, capital markets, and eventual monetary union. The EAC, ECOWAS, SADC, and ECCAS share the goals of linear integration

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141 Morten Jerven, Poor Numbers: How We Are Misled by African Development Statistics and What to Do about It (Rochester, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), 8

142 Jerven, Poor Numbers, 11
on paper. However, states have often not completed the steps for a linear integration that leads to industrialization. RECs have a long way to go to achieve the objectives of free-trade and customs unions. Various protocols, including those concerning trade, customs, dispute settlement mechanisms, infrastructure, and sector development, have not been ratified.

During the first two decades of independence, central planners argued that faster industrialization would occur if Africa’s small-economy states integrated at regional levels. There would be free trade among members and high tariffs applied to non-members. It was an inward-looking plan that reflected a desire to develop separately from the influence of ex-colonial rulers. The outcome was disastrous for small states’ economies. Larger and more advanced economies in the region benefited at the expense of the smaller ones. In the EAC, Tanzania, and Uganda left, partly because Kenya gained more from the community. Trade was mainly inter rather than intra; there were more exports from the constituent members to other areas outside the continent than within. The absence of central funding would mitigate fiscal challenges, followed by political disputes. Except for the Economic and Monetary Community for Central Africa (CEMAC) and Monetary Union of West Africa (UMOA), many centrally planned and linearly-modeled RECs failed to reach the FTA stage.

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144 De Melo and Tsikata, Regional Integration in Africa, 7.
The Abuja Treaty of 1991 created the African Economic Community (AEC). The AEC was a regionalist initiative that laid the groundwork for mutual economic development among African states. It transformed the inward-looking RECs into outward-looking regionalist initiatives and supported a continental economic and monetary union by 2025. The AEC responded to the Lagos Plan of Action’s failures, which had championed self-sufficiency and economic interdependence. RECs remain as the Lagos Plan of Action legacy, cast similarly as the EU project throughout the 1980s. The plan was rigid; RECs were to function as continental integration agents for the whole continent. There was no way to know whether small-state economies or larger states would work towards collective objectives. Africa’s share of the global Gross National Product (GNP) dropped from 1.9 percent to 1.2 percent from 1960–1989. The percentage of Africa’s trade volume fell from three percent in 1960 to one percent in 1989. The decline in commodity prices cost the continent $50 billion between 1986–1990. AEC had failed in its objectives.

According to the World Bank, Africa currently accounts for 17 percent of the World’s population but only three percent of the global GDP. The GDP growth in Africa has averaged five percent over the last two decades, leading to a reduction in poverty rates from 54 percent in 1990 to 41 percent in 2015, accounting for 400 million people. Some small-economy states such as Rwanda and Uganda were leading these changes, but it is unclear if these changes resulted from REC accession.

145 Anna Collins, “A Solution for Africa,” *Cornell International Affairs Review* 2, no. 2 (2009), 1


147 Qobo, “The Challenges of Regional Integration in Africa,” 9
The trade pattern shows that these benefits mainly accrued from external trade. The linear model did not benefit African small-state economies. Therefore, the existence of these sub-regional schemes does not ensure economic reform that translates into economic advancement; states can make these changes without them. World Bank economists Belinda Archibong, Brahima Coulibaly, and Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala reported that a review of Washington consensus policies after three decades indicated that the countries that implemented pro-poor policies alongside market-led reforms succeeded.\textsuperscript{148} Their findings suggest that internal reforms tailored towards inclusive economic practices generated growth over time. The study implies that states do not need to integrate formally to realize the returns of an open market society.

Scholars such as Jaime De Melo, Jeffrey Herbst, Kathryn Lavelle have argued that integration in Africa should be outward-looking to produce developmental outcomes. Africa should be focused on “developmental regionalism” as opposed to “integration-focused regionalism.” Developmental regionalism emphasizes trade creation and liberalization, removing supply chain constraints and coordinating infrastructural development. Regionalism becomes an opportunity to increase market size and create niches in a highly globalized economy. As Herbst has indicated, it would be best to fully integrate with the EU and reap the benefits of a global


The second feature is that small-economy states in Africa typically trade with globally connected economies instead of fellow REC members. In general, African countries do not trade with each other as much as they do with external actors. Trade data shows that trade with China and India has skyrocketed since 2000. China and India have significantly increased their trade in goods in African countries. China’s bilateral trade has increased 21 times while India’s has increased 13 times. China is Africa’s leading trading partner; in 2018, the value of China’s trade in Africa was $185 billion.\footnote{Kwasi Gyamfi Asiedu, “Trade between China and Africa Dropped 14% in the First Quarter and Could Get Worse,” Quartz (Quartz, April 23, 2020), https://qz.com/africa/1844049/trade-between-china-and-africa-dropped-14-percent-in-the-first-quarter/.} India accounts for 6.4 percent of African trade volume for a total value of $62.6 billion in 2017–2018.\footnote{Christian Kurzydlowski, “What Can India Offer Africa?” \textit{The Diplomat}, June 27, 2020, https://thediplomat.com/2020/06/what-can-india-offer-africa/.} The fact is that the impressive economic growth arose in the continent after the ending of the civil wars of the 1990s, institutional reforms, and primarily, increased trade with China and India. This growth is due, in large part, to Chinese ventures, especially the purchase of commodity goods, mainly oil and natural gas.\footnote{Kopiński Dominik, Andrzej Polus, and Ian Taylor, \textit{China’s Rise in Africa: Perspectives on a Developing Connection} (London: Routledge, 2014), 1}

The limited trade within the continent hampers the ability to diversify economies. For example, while 45 percent of Uganda’s exports were to the East
African Community (EAC) and the Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA), most imports were overseas. Uganda imports mainly from China, India, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This lack of reciprocity means that Uganda benefited from its membership in these RECs as export markets but not when it turned to overseas markets for imports. Intra-African exports were 16.6 percent of total exports in 2017 compared to 68 percent in Europe and 59 percent in Asia. Intra-African trade—the sum of exports and imports—was around 2 percent in 2015–2017 compared to 47 percent for the Americas and 61 percent for Asia.

When a powerful country dominates a REC among smaller economies, the incentive to integrate with the more powerful country disappears. Low-income countries have little to gain from one another even with increased trade, as they tend to produce the same things. Perhaps it would be more efficient to trade with the rest of the world since RECs may cause trade diversion. ECOWAS, for example, has remained economically unsuccessful REC because it consists of Nigeria among a group of economically smaller countries.

The Security Rationale for REC Adherence

The second most popular explanation for why small states join and remain in RECs is for security reasons. Realists emphasize national interest, security, and power politics as reasons for joining RECs. Realist theorists are primarily exclusivist and

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emphasize power relations among developed and underdeveloped states. Realists in international political economy scholarship identify the state as the focal point of international engagement while affirming that states manipulate the market to capture relative gains.\textsuperscript{156} For realists, international politics is an ongoing and persistent struggle for survival, advantage, and dominance.\textsuperscript{157}

Political Scientist Daniel Bach’s work on regionalization illustrates the realist logic. He views regionalization as a set of micro-strategies that capitalize on globalization resources and, in turn, erode the state’s “territorial and government legitimacy.”\textsuperscript{158} Regionalization permits cooperation against existential threats like Islamic terrorism, famine, HIV/AIDS, genocide, and natural disasters.\textsuperscript{159} The West African regionalized conflicts of the 1990s and early 2000s typify this phenomenon; the 1990s civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone shifted ECOWAS’ focus from economic development to securing the region’s states after Nigeria led interventions in these countries.\textsuperscript{160} Realists argue that small-economy African states have


\textsuperscript{160} John M. Kobia, Humanitarian Intervention and Conflict Resolution in West Africa: From ECOMOG to ECOMIL (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 59.
participated in RECs to control and perhaps halt regionalized conflicts, deal with non-traditional security threats, or consolidate national security interests.¹⁶¹

Part of regionalism’s security logic arises from global powers’ post-Cold War efforts to achieve a new world order. These efforts included attempts to subcontract African countries’ security to African players to encourage “cooperative security arrangements” and economic development.¹⁶² The result of these agendas is that RECs could mitigate ethnic and communal conflicts by shifting the understanding of sovereignty and self-determination through broadened regional identities. These regionalized identities would undermine the nationalistic impetus for wars and conflicts and create balance for communities that find themselves marginalized in one country even if they are a majority in another.¹⁶³

Barry Buzan highlighted regionalism as a security tool using the “regional security complex.” Regional security complexes arose as a result of the Cold War, when global superpowers had little incentive to interfere with the security of the world’s various regions, giving those regions autonomy in determining the nature of their security.¹⁶⁴ Regionalized states’ national security cannot be realistically considered separate from their interdependence. Buzan explained that security


interdependence sets states apart from the rest of the world by referencing their challenges’ commonalities. However, regional actors’ approach to regional cooperation did not do what the superpowers expected. One example is the International Authority on Development (IGAD).

IGAD is an eight-country trade bloc including states in the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region. Members include Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, South Sudan, Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda. IGAD superseded the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD) that was founded in 1986. IGAD’s goal was to provide coordinated efforts for managing drought and development across the Horn of Africa. The new iteration—IGAD—focuses on a much broader mandate that includes cooperation in all socioeconomic and environmental fields. IGAD has been a successful arbitrator in several conflicts in Sudan, Ethiopia-Eritrea, and some member states such as Ethiopia and Kenya have intervened in Somalia for security reasons.

However, IGAD contends with patterns of mutual interference that have been prevalent in the Horn of Africa both during and after the Cold War. These interferences have undermined IGAD’s peacemaking efforts. Both Somalia and Sudan provided support to rebels fighting the Ethiopian regime under Mengistu.

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167 Stephen Gatkak Chan, “The Development of IGAD as a Distinctively African Regional Security Community for the Horn of Africa with Case Studies of South Sudan and Somalia” (MA thesis, University of Adelaide, 2019), 12
Ethiopia reciprocated by offering equally intense support for Somali and Sudanese rebels, and Kenya and Uganda supported South Sudanese rebels. Kenya invaded Somalia in 2011 and still maintains troops there amid an ongoing diplomatic dispute. Ethiopia sent troops to Somalia in 2006. IGAD, therefore, has not had much success with peacemaking.

The idea of an “African solution for Africa’s problems” became a motto for African leaders in the years following the catastrophic Rwandan genocide of 1994. The impetus behind this motto was that African RECs would be most responsive to regional security issues. In addition to supporting the African Union’s African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), RECs such as ECOWAS, SADC, and IGAD would intervene as peacekeepers and peacemakers. Yet, the “African solutions for Africa’s problems” approach brushes over some fundamental issues.

Comfort Ero, Program Director for International Crisis Group in Africa (ICG), argued that “Africa’s solutions are often as problematic and riddled with hidden agendas as traditional interventions.” For example, Ethiopia’s and Kenya’s 2006 and 2011 interventions in Somalia were perhaps not about defending against security threats emerging from Somalia but rather about the countries’ domestic agendas.

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Errol Henderson has suggested that traditional realist practices inform Africa’s international conflicts. Realism focuses on the balance of power practices on foreign policy. Henderson argues that perhaps a state’s domestic characteristics are better predictors of its foreign policy behavior.\(^{173}\) Moreover, RECs’ interventions usually suffer from underfunding, lack of long-term commitment, inadequate capacity, and more concern with reinforcing the hegemony of the major states in the bloc.

The 1990 Nigerian intervention in Liberia through ECOWAS, which was conducted in peacekeeping, attracted similar criticism. Instead of working toward reconciliation, ECOWAS’s military arm, the ECOMOG (the Economic Community Cease-Fire Monitoring Group), aligned with two warring factions against others. It was accused of severe human rights violations, thereby losing its ability to act as a neutral arbiter.\(^ {174}\) The Nigerian intervention did not elevate security to Liberia, at least in the short term. It acted to help organize the negotiations and elections. In 1997, Liberians elected Charles Taylor, which was not the expected outcome.

Burundi in the EAC is another example. One of Africa’s poorest countries, Burundi, has suffered ethnic tensions that pit the dominant Tutsi ethnic minority against the Hutu majority.\(^ {175}\) These tensions existed before Burundi joined the East


\(^{175}\) The Rwandan civil war, and then genocide, sparked one of the most intractable conflicts in the great lakes’ region of Africa. The Burundian Civil War ended in 2005 after the country’s first democratic elections in its history. The election was a result of high-level diplomatic negotiations led by African leaders called the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement of 2001. One of its hallmarks was a negotiated power sharing plan between minority Tutsis and majority Hutu, which paved the way for the election of Hutu leader Pierre Nkurunziza as president.
African Community (EAC) and are ongoing. Unilateral Rwandan interference occurred before and after the two states joined the EAC but under different circumstances. Joining the EAC did not prevent unilateral intervention by the neighbors. If RECs' economic and security arguments do not fulfill their functions for small-economy states, one would suggest other roles for these communities. Attempting to circumscribe these roles is the purpose of this study.

States Join RECs for Identity and Legitimacy Purposes

Constructivist scholars focus on shared ideas and norms and see institutions as vehicles for transforming the international system. Small economies join RECs because they are socialized into the norms, ideas, and culture of a specific REC. Like states, sub-regions are highly subjective and primarily an imagined and constructed phenomenon. Sub-regions are constructed and reproduced through identities, culture, and prevailing norms. Constructivism is premised on the following arguments: First, the political world is socially constructed, and sovereignty is a social fact, not a brute fact. Second, constructivists emphasize that international institutions are “norm entrepreneurs” for international relations. Further, international organizations only matter if they secure the legitimacy of the states. Finally, constructivists understand that international organizations operate through persuasion, imitation, and

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internalization of norms. Political control comes from a composite of power and the social legitimacy of that power.\textsuperscript{179}

Constructivist scholars are interested in regime awareness, mutual responsiveness, loyalty, and strong community sense. They also focus on shared social values for neighborliness. The key to constructivist thinking on regional integration is the idea of the mutual constitution (or “co-constitution”) of agency and structure.\textsuperscript{180} Human agents do not exist independently from their social environment and culture; instead, they construct social realities through social expectations from daily practice.\textsuperscript{181} Unlike rationalists, constructivists argue that their interests are constructed through an agent/structure dialectical process. National and supranational identities evolve as the nature of state interactions within supranational institutions changes. The change encourages new forms of cooperation, and collaboration continues to form new identities.

In contrast to the state-centric approaches of neoliberal and realist logic, enhanced regime legitimacy underlies RECs’ constructivist justification. Appreciating RECs’ benefits for small economies requires grappling with state capture. Johannes Leaner and Hannes Meissner define state capture as a political system in which private interests influence state decision-making processes for personal gain.\textsuperscript{182} While

\textsuperscript{179} Ruggie, \textit{Multilateralism}, 382.


\textsuperscript{182} Johaness Leitner and Hannes Meissner, eds., \textit{State Capture, Political Risks and International Business: Cases from Black Sea Region Countries} (New York: Routledge, 2017), 3
New Regionalism school constructivists view RECs as tools for preserving identity, reinforcing norms, and enhancing legitimacy, few have connected the notions of regime legitimacy and state capture.

Regime-boosting regionalism focuses on strengthening existing political leaders’ standing and legitimacy rather than improving the state’s autonomy. It is anchored in neopatrimonialism, which refers to the lack of distinction between private and public interests in the state apparatus.\textsuperscript{183} It is the extension of personalized rule in pre-colonial Africa to the postcolonial era, hence the prefix neo. In contrast to rational-legal relationships, an officeholder ascribes authority as opposed to the office. The social and political order anchors the individual’s authority in contrast to the sanctity of the law or office. In this order, individuals are vassals whose authority depends on their allegiance to the immediate patron. The immediate patron’s authority also depends on another higher patron. These linkages are often based on ethnicity, kinship ties (fictitious or real), loyalty, and other constructs.\textsuperscript{184} As an analytical framework, neopatrimonialism is not exhaustive, but it does call into question whether RECs are extensions of these practices in Africa.\textsuperscript{185}

Regime boosting also bolsters state capture by a specific group of elites within the small-state economy. But RECs’ roles for small-state economies may also be examined through state capture or a private interest’s domination of policymaking, often corporations or businesses. In postcolonial spaces such as small-economy states

\textsuperscript{184} Christopher Clapham, \textit{Third World Politics}, 48.
in Africa, state capture means political elites favoring nepotist circles to which they belong rather than the state. Weak institutional capacity limits the state from deterring these elites from their actions. Members of an ethnic group, political party, faction, or client of a respected elder statesman may be the perpetrators.

Arguably, states may decide to join a REC because of these specific groups’ decisions based on a rational cost-benefit analysis rather than state. Thus, leaders engage in regionalism mainly to attain the benefits of controlling a sovereign state. Other scholars have labeled it “symbolic regionalism.” REC membership enhances the public image of a weak state’s regime: validating states’ boundaries, re-affirming a policy of non-intervention, and solidifying relationships among regional elites. Economically rational and the realist logic promote state security and the public good, regime-boosting regionalism instead serves a narrow ruling elite’s interests.

In addition to neopatrimonialism, the “politics of legitimacy” focuses on how political actors justify their rule. Understanding the relationship between the ruled and the ruler is a prerequisite for a detailed investigation of how legitimacy transcends domestic politics into foreign policy. Political legitimacy forms the basis of power and the social contract that partially functions in Africa’s small-economy states’

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foreign policies.\textsuperscript{190} Such social contracts are hardly respected in authoritarian regimes as they are, albeit minimally, in electoral democracies or hybrid states, as Cheeseman and Fisher have observed.\textsuperscript{191} Legitimacy functions in two ways: internal and external. Internal legitimacy arises from an election or the public’s perception that the populace accepts and respects the ruling regime. Legitimacy may also come from foreign states. External actors could bestow legitimacy on a reigning regime. Often, regional bodies sanctify election results or acknowledge the election or office of a newly appointed president by inviting them to regional meetings, sending congratulatory messages, or inviting them for state visits. These actions are gestures of legitimacy or granting “political credit” from normative expectations.\textsuperscript{192} They signal the acceptance of the new leaders as bona fide.

Despite weak state capacities, regimes are durable and benefit from seemingly unchanged balkanized boundaries inherited from the colonial period. A paradox exists between weak states that are robust regimes, influencing the regimes to seek their control continuously.\textsuperscript{193} Overlapping membership in RECs exemplifies the regime-boosting argument. Although a country can be a member of several free trade areas concurrently, a member country cannot be in two or more custom union regimes. As an example, Zambia is a member of both SADC and COMESA. Under

\textsuperscript{190} J. Michael Williams, \textit{Chieftaincy, the State, and Democracy: Political Legitimacy in Post-Apartheid South Africa} (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010), 19.

\textsuperscript{191} Cheeseman and Fisher, \textit{Authoritarian Africa}, 21.

\textsuperscript{192} Donald Rothchild, \textit{Managing Ethnic Conflict in Africa Pressures, and Incentives for Cooperation} (Washington, DC: Brookings Institute, 1997), 262.

SADC rules, Zambia was obliged to eliminate tariffs on South African imports by 2012. Similarly, COMESA also requires Zambia to create a common external tariff for all members, but South Africa is not a COMESA member. The Zambian case illustrates that other factors drive Zambia’s enlistment in these RECs.

Identity is crucial in RECs’ formation. Social identity often arises from a shared experience that leads to a psychological bond labeled “solidarity narratives.” Solidarity narratives emerge from empathizing with others’ suffering. The suffering may be simultaneous and from a specific group of actors, often Europe or extensions of Europe, for example. In southern Africa, solidarity narratives sprang from apartheid in South Africa and Namibia, white minority rule in Zimbabwe, and extended Portuguese colonial rule in Mozambique and Angola. In East Africa, besides European colonialism, a solidarity narrative emerged from the shared experience of Arab rule and the coastal slave trade in Zanzibar, Mombasa, Tanga, and distant places such as southern Sudan.

Alex Wendt explains how diplomatic culture works in international relations. Wendt elaborates on constructivism as an analytical framework for international relations. Wendt’s work is relevant in defining what this study refers to as “peer pressure.”

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196 Alexander Wendt, Social Theory and International Politics (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 259
when many of his peers get married. Sometimes, it might be very expensive for the young man to afford marriage, but he does it to fit in and to satisfy social expectations, at least partially. Peer pressure comes into play in joining RECs because, for small-economy states, there is a big gulf between material gains and RECs’ ideational powers. In stressing peer pressure as a constructivist phenomenon, I suggest that RECs are functions of diplomatic expectations formed from established diplomatic cultures. Most small-state economies must grapple with the question, “how will we be seen if we don’t sign up and stay on.”

Lastly, new regionalism elicits scholarship through shadow regionalization, an informal mode of regionalism. In shadow regionalism, public office holders utilize their positions to join business actors to engage in informal cross-border trade. For example, the East African Community was re-established in 2001 and began operating as a customs union in 2010. Nevertheless, export bans on products like maize still exist among the members, hindering trade and providing basic utilities. Peter Little wrote that “there is ambiguity in the trade especially informal trade, as what is informal or even illegal on one side of a border can be legally acknowledged, counted, and taxed on the other side depending on administrative practices and political will.” Kate Meagher concludes that informal trade does not lead to development but instead creates new networks that are as complex and corrupt as the African states. Meagher argues that despite its vibrant characteristics, the informal

sector challenges the relationship between the state and its citizens by creating a parallel system of order.\textsuperscript{199}

This section has explored how different conceptual frameworks make sense of RECs’ general roles. Rationalist theories focus on economic interests and societal security. Constructivists of the New Regionalism school consider RECs as tools to maintain identity, consolidate norms, and boost legitimacy. Although the frameworks discussed concentrate on different drivers of regionalism in both theoretical and practical aspects, there is no specific study of RECs’ roles in small-economy states. This study fills this lacuna in the literature on regionalism and draws upon several working hypotheses derived from both observation and the literature review. After generalizability, I present these assumptions in this research.

Generalizability

The cases selected are representative of the three major sub-regional integration projects in the continent. This study focuses on the EAC, ECOWAS, and SADC because they are the most prominent RECs in the continent. They are also large and have varying goals. The EAC, for example, aspires to a regional federation.\textsuperscript{200} ECOWAS does not aim for a political union but a region of seamless trade in West Africa to improve living standards for its citizens.\textsuperscript{201} SADC has a history of cooperation arising from opposition to white minority rule and apartheid

\textsuperscript{199} Kate Meagher, \textit{Identity Economics: Social Networks and The Informal Economy in Nigeria} (Rochester, NY: James Currey, 2010), 28


\textsuperscript{201} ECOWAS, Fundamental Principles & Achievements, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), 2016, https://www.ecowas.int/about-ecowas/fundamental-principles/.
but has transformed into a development-oriented organization with the goals of increasing trade while modernizing the region. South Sudan is unique in that it offers a window through which we can examine why RECs such as the EAC are attractive for newly-independent small-economy states.

I selected specific countries within the RECs mentioned earlier because of their small economic status and particular features, as illustrated in the case studies. South Sudan was chosen over Rwanda or Burundi, other landlocked small-state economies for the following reasons: First, unlike Rwanda and Burundi, South Sudan is English speaking. Accessing government documents and other published economic data was easy for me since I do not speak French. All the non-selected cases are countries whose official language is French. Second, South Sudan is a new republic and presents a critical perspective on why newer states with foreknowledge on the existence or non-existence of economic gains still choose to join. Like South Sudan, Liberia is English speaking and is the oldest republic on the continent. It is also well-studied because of its recent security challenges. ECOWAS has had the most aggressive impact on its security since 1990. It is for this reason that Liberia is an anchor for studying ECOWAS’ security rationale. Namibia is the case study in SADC and provides a slightly wealthier country’s perspective on RECs. Namibia is also one of the few countries in Africa which were colonized by another African country. I am

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interested in how this history shaped Namibia’s foreign policy and why it needs SADC even as it seems to be on the right trajectory economically.

The small states selected are representative of diverse states that constitute the African continent. Namibia is an extensive country, and coastal, but is sparsely populated. It is also mineral-rich and has been politically stable since it gained independence in 1990. Liberia, also coastal, is relatively small and densely populated. It is rich in natural resources but has had a tragic past marred with violence and political conflict. It falls under the category of states Paul Collier has described as trapped in war and poverty. Thus, Liberia is representative of small-economy countries that are also post-conflict societies. South Sudan is an oil state in the Horn of Africa. It also borders the Great Lakes countries and has close historical ties with the East African powerhouses such as Ethiopia and Kenya. In short, while all English speaking, the cases selected represent the diversity of states in Africa. The choice of two coastal states helps control for the argument that small economy states only join RECs to gain geographic access to ports. They offer an essential contribution to why small-economy states enlist in and join RECs.

Hypotheses

This research seeks to answer the main research question: what roles do RECs play in small-economy states in Africa? It is not easy to develop a clear-cut understanding of the logic that underlies economic rationales, security, and constructivism. These theories constitute the different lenses of how states, small and

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large, interact. However, they overlap on commonalities. These commonalities assist in formulating assumptions upon which this research is based on developing answers to this research question.

The first hypothesis is that small-economy states use RECs to pursue economic gains because they are landlocked or economically disadvantaged. RECs offer opportunities for better economic prospects through market access, harmonized regulations, and better infrastructure. The second hypothesis is that small-economy states face existential threats, including rampant insecurity, border-crossing epidemics, extremists’ movements, and climate challenges. RECs offer opportunities for protection and assistance in the face of such threats. The third hypothesis is that small-economy states are less concerned with economic development or greater security than their regimes’ extension of power. By signaling states’ cooperative intentions to their neighbors, RECs improve regime security, thereby bolstering regime legitimacy.
CHAPTER THREE: THE CASE OF SOUTH SUDAN AND THE EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY (EAC)

Introduction

Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in Africa have recently become ubiquitous, with most African states joining one or more RECs after obtaining independence. RECs are not only about trade, but they also hold putative recognizable benefits. This study will show that they likely serve less obvious but rather more fundamental purposes for small-economy states. This study attempts to identify RECs’ roles in African small-economy states by asking the following questions: *What do these countries gain from membership in African RECs? What economic and political opportunities are available for RECs’ small-economy states?*

In this chapter, I use South Sudan’s EAC membership to explore RECs’ role in a newly independent, land-locked, small-economy state (see figure 3.1 for a map of South Sudan). As the research design chapter has shown, South Sudan was selected as a case study due to its relevance and importance as a small state in an EAC. Like other African states, the new East African country of South Sudan has joined several regional economic bodies including the African Union (AU) and International Authority on Development (IGAD) and has gained observer status in the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). While South Sudan does not fit the criteria of smallness based on its territory size and population, it is nonetheless a small state in economic terms within the EAC.\(^{205}\)

\(^{205}\) Smallness is relational within the dynamics of the power of specific RECs; it does not only refer to the geographical and population. See definition of terms in the introductory chapter.
I begin by providing a brief context of the EAC and then address the economic and security logics of South Sudan’s adherence to the EAC. First, RECs offer opportunities for regime identity changes that can drive foreign policy. According to this logic, South Sudan’s rejection of Islamic identity mainly inspires its pursuit of EAC membership. This identity issue pushes South Sudan towards the EAC for reasons that are not entirely economic but instead are driven mainly by identity, values, and the construction of South Sudanese history. Second, I consider whether South Sudan’s ruling regimes use the EAC for the enrichment of the members of the ruling party, the Sudanese People’s Liberation Movement’s (hereafter SPLM) elites rather than the country’s enrichment.

This study also investigates the extent to which EAC membership aids in South Sudan’s crony-capitalist network’s entrenchment that its historical ties with Uganda and Kenya have facilitated. It is possible that South Sudanese ruling elites need regional recognition of their rule and greater security for their economic interests. The EAC advances those goals, further entrenching SPLM elites’ state-capture. It is therefore worth considering whether South Sudan uses the EAC only partially to reinforce trading ties since the country does not have the requisite conditions for free trade such as a good infrastructure, law and order, security, and a sizeable middle class to stimulate consumption. Similarly, the evidence shows that South Sudan relies minimally on the EAC for security purposes. Instead, IGAD, a regional bloc that has been active in peace creation in the region, chiefly performs this role. See chapter 2, John Young, *The Fate of Sudan the Origins and Consequences of a Flawed Peace Process* (London: Zed Books, 2013), 17.
Figure 3.2 a Map of the greater Sudan showing oil fields

History of South Sudan

South Sudan’s population is predominantly Black, and the country’s African heritage has shaped its citizens’ identity. Whereas a majority in Sudan are Muslims and are either Arabs or “Arabized,” many South Sudanese are Christians, a factor that has historically created cultural tensions within the country and ultimately led to South Sudanese succession in 2011. Thus, South Sudan’s history requires three readings: as a demographically Christian space; as a contested area with a public perception of the region as predominantly Muslim, particularly among Khartoum’s elites; and as a quest for ultimate freedom and self-determinism among the Nilotic Africans dwelling in what is now the Republic of South Sudan and subsequently, the confirmation of this African identity through the EAC. Most importantly, the economic marginalization of the southern Blacks by a predominantly Arab north, triggered by the quest for the control of oil resources.

The elite’s perception of Sudan as a Muslim society was not a dog-whistle narrative but rather a clear indication of how political elites wanted the country to identify internationally. However, did this projected identity exclude the predominantly Christian South, leaving the region no choice but to seek solace among EAC members after independence? In a 1987 speech to the Sudanese national assembly, Sudan Prime Minister Sadiq al Mahdi explained: “The dominant feature of our nation is an Islamic one, and its overpowering expression is Arab, and this nation

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will not have its entity identified and its prestige and pride preserved except under Islamic revival.”210 The Prime Minister’s speech was the summation of Sudan’s indifference toward the Southern Sudanese people’s identity.211 Southern Sudan had never existed as a sovereign state, although it was ruled as a somewhat distinctive territory during the colonial period. Abandonment and the pursuit of human rights have shaped its post-independence identity. Is it possible that the desire for belonging has pointed South Sudan toward the EAC? Is it accurate that the EAC for South Sudan is a regional grouping which, more than anything else, provides companionship and an extended history of Black self-determinism and freedom from Arab control?

British explorer Samuel Baker, who established the colony of Equatoria in the 1870s, also delineated Southern Sudan.212 The Egyptians later ruled Sudan on the Britain’s behalf and faced international pressure to stop the slave trade in their territory. The British sent Samuel Baker to annex Southern Sudan and then abolish the slave trade in the region.213 In 1899, Southern Sudan was made a state under Anglo-Egyptian rule. British officers diminished slave trading but carved out an


211 As John Young has indicated, the distinction between North and South in Sudan is not only one of geography but also identity. I refer to the region in the south as Southern Sudan pre-2011 and after independence, I use South Sudan. A large part of this study focuses on South Sudan as a republic; if Southern Sudan is used, read it as the Republic of South Sudan.


apartheid system that separated the north from the south. They restricted southerners’ movement into the north and vice versa.

The British had hoped that “behind such a barrier, the Southern peoples would develop until they were able to stand on their own two feet and meet Northerners on equal terms.”\(^\text{214}\) In truth, it was separate but unequal and the north thrived while the south stagnated. Slavery continued as the Northern economy’s backbone under bonded labor.\(^\text{215}\) The territory was never effectively developed or administered, mostly because of the area’s remoteness and colonial rulers’ lack of interest.\(^\text{216}\) Christian missionaries spread Christianity and taught English at the region’s missionary schools to a small, mostly male segment of the population. These men enrolled in two years of reading, writing, and basic arithmetic classes in local languages.\(^\text{217}\)

As its history makes clear, South Sudanese identity springs partially from colonial domination and the country’s struggle against it.\(^\text{218}\) The British ruled South Sudan separately from the Arab or Arabized north until 1947, when the two regions merged. This occurred at the same time as a roundtable conference that led to federalism’s acceptance for all of Sudan, including South Sudan. Upon Sudan’s independence in 1956, the South Sudanese did not obtain federalism as they had hoped. When military figures led by General Ibrahim Abboud assumed power in

\(^{214}\) Martell, *First Raise a Flag*, 40.

\(^{215}\) Martell, *First Raise a Flag*, 39.


1958, the hope for self-determinism through a federal structure vanished for the southerners, leaving military rebellion as the only option. A military mutiny led by southerners in the Sudanese army triggered a prolonged conflict from 1955 to 1972, which would later be called the First Sudanese Civil War. This war was the first time in Southern Sudan’s history that its leaders were unified under one command structure to form an independent state. It is also worth noting that the East African countries of Uganda and Kenya were in solidarity with the South Sudanese in their quest for independence.

An intricate Cold War dynamic led to complex alliances with and against South Sudanese secessionists; rivalries involving Cuba, Congo, Israel, Kenya, Ethiopia, Libya, Egypt, USSR, Eritrea, and Uganda. Each player came with their specific interest, which sometimes switched. For example, Muammar Gaddafi shifted from backing the Southern secessionists to fighting them in less than a decade. Ethiopia’s Haile Selassie adopted a neutral position but upon his ouster, Mengistu Hailemariam fully supported the secessionists. As regional nations joined, it was a “tit for tat chaos” realpolitik of “the enemy of my enemy is my friend.”.

However, the 1972 Addis Ababa Peace Agreement that Haile Selassie had negotiated heralded the period between 1972–1983 as one of stability. The Addis Ababa Peace Agreement awarded self-government to Southern Sudan, but

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220 This is when the Sudanese Government and the Anyanya rebels of Southern Sudan signed the Addis Ababa peace agreement.

221 Martell, *First Raise a Flag*, 89.

222 Martell, *First Raise a Flag*, 91.
Khartoum’s elites dishonored the treaty. In 1983, Khartoum attempted to introduce Sharia law in Southern Sudan and an army mutiny called the Torit Mutiny ensued, starting the Second Civil War. American-educated economist Dr. John Garang abandoned his post as an economics professor at the University of Khartoum to fight in the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA). Garang wanted an SPLA that aimed to change Sudan into what he called “New Sudan.” He had said, “our objectives are very clear: we are fighting for a united Sudan within a democratic context.” Yet, not everyone in the SPLA accepted the idea of “New Sudan.” The war turned fratricidal, pitting various factions and different ethnic groups against one another. The most threatening person of all was Riek Machar, who earned a doctorate in strategic planning at Bradford in Britain. Machar made deals with Khartoum that split the rebels and established a new faction that divided Southern Sudanese along ethnic lines, the Nuer versus Dinkas. The SPLM/A guerilla conflict raged until 2005, when the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed. The consequent Civil War led to the deaths of approximately 2.5 million people, mostly due to starvation and disease.

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226 Peter Martell, *First Raise a Flag*, 113.
227 Martell, *First Raise a Flag*, 113.
Ultimately, several peace agreements materialized into the 2005 CPA in Naivasha, Kenya, paving the way for an independence referendum after six years.\textsuperscript{229} The CPA was a combination of multi-pronged efforts. Beginning in 2000, the United States led campaigns to end the war in Sudan. It was a curious case of an alliance involving Christian evangelicals, democratic proponents, African American anti-slavery groups, and celebrities who all mounted pressure on Khartoum.\textsuperscript{230} President Bush wanted to find lasting peace in Sudan. Bashir was already in a compromising situation with the U.S; his government had been tagged as state sponsors of Islamic terrorism in the wake of the 9/11 attacks.\textsuperscript{231}

In 2002, negotiations for the CPA began in Machakos, Kenya. Kenyan diplomat and ex-security officer, General Lazaro Sumbeiywo—a Maasai by tribe who understood the Nilotic groups’ pastoralist lifestyles —was tasked with negotiations.\textsuperscript{232} In the same year, Machar returned to the SPLA.\textsuperscript{233} In 2004, Bashir signed the Sudan Peace Act, which paved the way for ending the war in Southern Sudan.\textsuperscript{234} Piecemeal deals were signed and a general agreement was made, devoid of specific details except for ending the war, granting autonomy to Southern Sudan, and paving the path for an independence referendum.\textsuperscript{235} The CPA ended Khartoum’s predation of

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\textsuperscript{229} Martell, \textit{First Raise a Flag}, 188.  
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\textsuperscript{230} Martell, \textit{First Raise a Flag}, 142.  
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\textsuperscript{231} Stephanie Beswick, \textit{Sudan’s Blood Memory: The Legacy of War, Ethnicity, and Slavery in Early South Sudan} (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2006), 197.  
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\textsuperscript{233} Johnson, \textit{The Root Causes of Sudan’s Civil Wars}, 207.  
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\textsuperscript{234} Johnson, \textit{The Root Causes of Sudan’s Civil Wars}, 221.  
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\textsuperscript{235} Martell, \textit{First Raise a Flag}, 328.  
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Southern Sudan but it did not change the system that led to it or develop an effective plan for capacity building. Shortly after, in July 2005, Garang died in a helicopter crash, leaving Salva Kiir as his successor.

In the 2011 independence referendum, 98 percent of South Sudanese citizens voted to secede from Sudan. Another of Africa’s RECs, IGAD, includes members of countries from the Nile Valley (Sudan and South Sudan), Horn of Africa (Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Eritrea), and the Great Lakes region (Uganda and Kenya), encouraged the CPA. Since its independence in July 2011, South Sudan has struggled to achieve the necessary peace and security for nation-building and good governance. Insecurity is rampant and the country has experienced three conflicts in nine years: a 2011 conflict with the Army of Sudan and power struggles between President Kiir and (former VP) Machar in 2013 and 2016. These conflicts have precluded the launch of an economic development plan. Additionally, millions of South Sudanese people are still displaced and in 2018, more than half of the population suffered from food insecurity.

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236 See chapter 4, Young, *The Fate of Sudan*.

237 IGAD is a much more amorphous REC given that it transcends both the Nilotic/Bantu Language divides and the Christian/Muslim divides. IGAD’s case demonstrates that not all RECs are primarily about identity. Tellingly, IGAD’s focus is narrow since it is mostly involved in the Horn of Africa’s securitization.


The SPLM’s warring factions signed a peace agreement in August 2015 that established a government of national unity in April 2016. Unfortunately for the population, the national unity government did not last more than three months. Fighting erupted between army officers loyal to Machar and Kiir, plunging the country back into civil war. In September 2018, a new peace agreement was signed.\textsuperscript{240} In February 2020, South Sudan formed a unity government that included rebels. Machar was appointed Deputy President and Kiir retained the presidency. The deal was a result of pressure from international actors including the United Nations, The United States, and regional leaders such as the AU, EAC, and IGAD.\textsuperscript{241}

Immediately following independence, there was a virtual war between South Sudan and Sudan over the Abyei region. When South Sudan signed the CPA in 2005, the two parties did not specify a boundary with Sudan on Abyei, a failure that has reignited conflicts in the region ever since. The Abyei region is oil-rich and shared by Misseriya Arab nomads and Ngok Dinka cattle-herders. Abyei has a population of about 165,000, many of whom have found themselves fighting over grazing land, alongside two armies that are fighting over oil reserves.\textsuperscript{242} In 2008, the ethnic conflict killed over 90 people and displaced thousands. The Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague ruled for boundary adjustments that favored the Ngok Dinkas. The Misseriya Arabs protested this ruling, leading to further clashes. In 2011, South


Sudan deployed forces to Abyei. President Bashir of Sudan responded by stating that Sudan would not recognize South Sudan’s independence while the South Sudanese Army still occupied Abyei. Later in 2011, the Sudanese army took full control of Abyei before the African Union established a common border zone between the two countries that Ethiopian forces enforced. As of 2018, humanitarian and international aid workers stated that the Abyei region’s security situation was still fragile, even as the whole country was engulfed in a precarious post-conflict recovery.

As discussed above, South Sudan’s history is rather longue durée, impossible to reduce to a few pages. The antagonistic relationship between Khartoum and Juba, which provides an important context for the identity debates and security imperatives underlying the country’s pivot to the EAC, has defined this history. Emergent South Sudan political elites began to fashion a coherent nationalist ideology rooted not only in Blackness but also in opposition to northern Sudan’s construction of national identity and extended through Pan-Arabism and Islamism. Racial discrimination and suffering united the southerners against the Arabs. Yet their oppositional identity was not salient enough to create a nation. When the war for independence was at its cusp, fissures in ethnic identities emerged and the political class began to scramble for power.

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244 Mednick, “Conflict in Abyei Could Reignite South Sudan’s Civil War.”

245 See the introduction to Johnson, *South Sudan*, 30
Tensions arose in 2005 as self-rule approached. Cattle rustling, sponsored and aided by enemies and local elites, became commonplace. The guns that had won the war on freedom now turned on the people they had helped: the “bond was based more on what South Sudan was not—its enemies—than what it was, its people. Not Arab was useful for recruitment in the liberation war, but it was a thin and dangerous bond to unite a new nation.”

The next section will discuss a brief history of the REC that the South Sudanese have chosen as a partner.

South Sudan and the EAC

The EAC is a regional intergovernmental organization composed of Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda, and South Sudan. Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania have a long history of cooperation with each other. The organization has its earliest roots in the customs union between Kenya and Uganda that the British founded in 1917. Tanganyika was later included in 1927 and the East African High Commission (1948–1961), East African Common Services Organization (1961–1967), East African Community (1967–1977), and East African Cooperation (1993–2000) followed. These organizations survived and evolved into different forms before eventually collapsing due to economic, political, and ideological disagreements.

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246 Martell, First Raise a Flag, 162.


In its current form, the EAC is one of the leading Sub-Saharan African RECs to achieve the integration of regional economies. The EAC now boasts a free-trade area (2000), customs union (2005), and common market (2010), headquartered in Arusha, Tanzania. The EAC treaty was signed on November 30, 1999 and ratified on July 7, 2000. The EAC’s original members—Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya, Rwanda, and Burundi—signed the treaty on June 18, 2007, became members in July 2007, and South Sudan joined in April 2016.

A prosperous, competitive, stable, and politically united East Africa has been one of the EAC’s fundamental goals. The group’s greater mission is the widening of economic, social, and cultural integration. In principle, it also aims to improve East African citizens’ quality of life through development, adding value to East African exports, and enhancing trade and investments. The EAC is a potential precursor to the East African Federation, a long-term proposal to merge the six-member states into a single union.

With a 2019 population of 177 million people spread across the six countries, the EAC aims to integrate and develop the region’s national economies. It encompasses 1.82 million square kilometers of territory with a collective 2020 GDP


251 “East African Community One People One Destiny.”

of $194 billion. Four members—Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and South Sudan—are landlocked. With a population of 47 million in 2019, Kenya produces almost half of the East African community’s economic output, with a total GDP output of $74.94 billion in 2017 and a GDP per capita of $1710 in 2018. In contrast, South Sudan is the smallest economy in the REC with a GDP per capita of $283 in 2016, total GDP of $3.071 billion, and a population of approximately 12 million in 2016.

South Sudan’s Motives for Joining the East African Community

South Sudan applied to join the EAC even before its official independence. Since signing the CPA in 2005, the nascent state had been considering EAC membership. Weeks before the 2011 independence referendum, Juba sent a delegation of government officers to Arusha to register the country’s willingness to join the EAC. Soon after, the EAC secretariat sent a team of 15 people to South Sudan in a referendum observer mission. The *Daily Nation* (Nairobi) quoted the then-Secretary General of the EAC and Rwandan national, Dr. Richard Sezibera, as saying, “there is no question on whether South Sudan will become an EAC member state. The issue is only when it will assume full membership of [sic] the regional bloc.” However, EAC members rejected Juba’s membership application in 2012, citing its lack of democratic values and conflict with Khartoum. The Republic of

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254 EAC, “Overview of EAC.”

255 EAC, “Overview of EAC.”

Sudan’s application was also rejected in 2011. The EAC member states felt that Sudan lacked a democratic culture, its women did not enjoy full human rights, and its government mixed religion with politics, at least according to Uganda’s East African Affairs Minister, Eriya Kategaya.  

A team of experts sent to Juba to verify South Sudan’s readiness for the EAC wrote a report claiming that the country needed to reduce its xenophobic tendencies towards foreign nationals. Foreigners were often accused of grabbing jobs, being involved in criminal activities, and engaging in local politics. The experts postulated that this attitude would greatly hinder the free movement of persons and services, which are key community tenets. Kenya, Uganda, Burundi, and Rwanda found the report on South Sudan’s readiness tepidly convincing and recommended deliberations on Juba’s admissibility. Tanzania was reluctant to admit South Sudan and considered granting the country observer status rather than full membership. Member countries held different positions on whether to grant the country immediate entry or instead offer bilateral arrangements with member states. Some evidence suggests that countries not directly connected to South Sudan feared bearing the costs of (in)security arising from the Sudanese and South Sudanese conflicts. Tanzania and Burundi were the

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partner states reluctant for South Sudan to join the EAC, based on their protective market policies. Uganda and Rwanda wanted South Sudan to join as soon as possible, while Kenya called for systematic accession processes that would allow Juba to join and meet the requirements over three years.260

Even as EAC diplomats and technocrats discussed modalities for admitting South Sudan, some of the candidate country’s political elites felt that the decision to join the community was rushed. James Lual Deng, South Sudan chairperson of the parliamentary committee of foreign affairs and international relations, reasoned that Kenya and Uganda would flood South Sudan’s economy with cheaply manufactured goods. Deng stated, “Our economy is still weak, and for the time being, we do not have products for export. […] As people of Africa—and we consider the people of EAC as our brothers—I believe any decision our government is going to take will put [the] priority on our people getting benefits.”261 These statements suggest that South Sudan’s EAC membership was not entirely economic; rather, it sought security and community with other countries with similar identities.

In 2013, East African heads of states met to discuss South Sudan’s membership, even as fighting erupted between loyalists to Kiir and Machar. Kenya and Uganda stood to benefit from South Sudan’s membership due to their expanding


261 Machel Amos, “South Sudan Delays Membership in Regional Bloc,” The Daily Nation, September 17, 2011, https://www.nation.co.ke/News/africa/South Sudan delays membership in regional bloc /-/1066/1238078/-/s3w8wbz/-/
trade links with the new nation.\textsuperscript{262} Members who seemed to buy into the need to expand EAC overlooked these actions as Rwanda pursued a boundary-revising foreign policy that made it loathsome to its neighbors through its interventions in the Democratic Republic of Congo and its alleged misconduct there.

In February 2015, the heads of states summit in Nairobi continued the discussion of South Sudan’s membership. EAC technocrats felt that Juba was neither economically nor politically ready for admission. South Sudan’s Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Minister, Dr. Barnaba Marial Benjamin, stated that it would be prudent to admit Juba to the bloc. At the same time, the country worked to meet the requirements from within.\textsuperscript{263}

South Sudanese officials expressed fears that membership would open the floodgates for skilled labor from all partner states.\textsuperscript{264} Despite these objections, in March 2016 at the seventeenth ordinary Heads of State summit in Arusha, Tanzania, they resolved to admit South Sudan as the sixth member of the EAC, ignoring both technocrats’ concerns and dissenting views of South Sudanese economic nationalists.\textsuperscript{265} South Sudanese Vice President, James Wani Igga, said that “South Sudan’s membership of EAC was not strictly on economic benefits but historical

\textsuperscript{262} Muthoki Mumo, “Talks on South Sudan’s Entry to EAC Start November,” \textit{The East African}, October 26, 2013, \url{https://www.theafrican.co.ke/news/Talks-on-South-Sudan-entry-to-EAC-start-November/-25582048126/}.

\textsuperscript{263} Fred Oluch, “Civil Unrest Dims Chances of South Sudan Joining the EAC,” \textit{The East African}, February 14, 2015, \url{https://www.theafrican.co.ke/news/ea/Civil-unrest-dims-chances-of-South-Sudan-joining-the-EAC/-4552908-2623714-73vqkf/}.

\textsuperscript{264} Oluch, “Civil Unrest Dims Chances of South Sudan Joining the EAC.”

\textsuperscript{265} “South Sudan Admitted into EAC,” \textit{The Daily Nation}, March 2016, \url{https://www.nation.co.ke/business/South-Sudan-admitted-into-EAC/996-3100314-acaobi/}.
significance. EAC is where we belong.” South Sudan’s Finance Minister, Kosti Manibe Ngai, stated that “there is a possibility of depreciation of the South Sudan pound, leading to expensive imports and spilling to high levels of domestic inflation.” The next section considers the economic, security, and group-political interests of South Sudan and the EAC.

*Examining the Economic Roles of the EAC for South Sudan*

This section assesses whether South Sudan economically benefits from EAC membership. Such an analysis demands that we consider the economic logic behind a country’s decision to join RECs, a logic that highlights the putative economic advantages of small economies like South Sudan’s that participate in such groups. This calls into question what role the EAC play in South Sudan’s economy. This section answers this question using economic datasets available through the World Bank, East African Community, African Development Bank, South Sudanese government, and other related sources. The economic indices will reveal if EAC membership has truly been economically beneficial to Juba.

South Sudan’s economy is one of the world’s weakest and most underdeveloped. It also suffers from multiple curses including a resource curse, which is a paradox that countries with abundant natural resources face, having less economic growth and more corruption, violence, and authoritarianism.

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overreliance on oil hampers its ability to benefit from the EAC. The World Bank has acknowledged South Sudan’s overreliance on oil, which accounts for almost all its exports. South Sudan’s GDP per capita was close to $1100 in 2011, but by 2017, it was approximately $200 due to an inability to export oil and the ongoing civil war hampering its economic activities.\textsuperscript{269} The African Development Bank (AFDB) has projected that the South Sudanese economy would shrink by another 4.6 percent in 2019 and a possible 7 percent in 2020.\textsuperscript{270} Since the resumption of war in July 2016, the country has faced a deep economic crisis (See Figure 3.3 showing economic growth in percentages in South Sudan). The South Sudanese pound depreciated due to a shortage of foreign exchange, which opened a parallel market of the dollar.\textsuperscript{271}

Years of civil war and difficult relations with Khartoum have resulted in shrinking oil output and desperate attempts to seek salvation from the EAC’s regional allies. As of April 2018, the World Food Program (WFP) reported that the South Sudanese Pound (SSP) continued to depreciate, trading for an average rate of SSP 274 per $1 in the parallel market and SSP 136 per $1 in the official rate.\textsuperscript{272} The country also faces a debt crisis; debt averaged about 48 percent of its 2018 GDP with a 104 percent inflation rate.\textsuperscript{273} The IMF reported in 2019 that 4 million South


\textsuperscript{270} Yobou George Koffi and Flavio Soares Da Gama, \textit{South Sudan 2018 African Economic Outlook} (AFDB, 2018), 1.

\textsuperscript{271} Amadou Sy, “The Implications of South Sudan’s Decision to Float Its Currency,” \textit{Brookings (Africa in Focus)}, December 15, 2015, \url{https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2015/12/18/the-implications-of-south-sudans-decision-to-flot-its-currency/}.


Sudanese were displaced. The country has adult literacy levels of only roughly 28 percent, making it one of the world’s most illiterate societies. According to the IMF, external development partners provide humanitarian assistance to South Sudan at about $1.5 billion annually. The country has experienced a downturn of its economy from a high total GDP of $15 billion in 2011 to a meager $4.6 billion in 2021.

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275 Vilkas, “IMF Staff Completes Visit to South Sudan.”

This section examines the economic logic of South Sudan’s EAC accession. As the previous section discussed, South Sudan joined the EAC in 2016 and the implication is that if other factors are assumed to be constant, then the country’s membership in the community has had only a negative impact on its economy. However, EAC accession could have long-term benefits for the country’s oil industry.

I will focus on the possible economic advantages for South Sudan as an EAC member, including outlets for its oil to the sea besides Sudan, possible investment opportunities, import markets for cheaper products and export markets for its meager agricultural products, and the effect of technology and knowledge transfer on

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tourism. These advantages contribute to some economic arguments for South Sudan’s EAC accession. However, they do not entirely “sway the tide” from the other logical state-centric decisions that Juba may have taken. Thus, there must be other explanations for South Sudan’s entry into EAC membership.

Oil and Alternative Sea Outlets

Oil is fundamental to the calculus of South Sudan’s foreign policy and a good indicator of why the nation would choose to join the EAC. The distrust between Juba and Khartoum is the most probable cause of South Sudan’s southern pivot. Specifically, Juba is looking for an alternative oil transportation network to diversify its economy (See Figure 3.4 showing South Sudan’s existing and proposed oil outlets). In 2012, 98 percent of South Sudan’s budget revenues came from oil. The oil resource depends upon a good relationship with Khartoum. South Sudan has considered an alternative route through Kenya to the Indian Ocean port of Lamu. Perhaps the EAC’s first role for South Sudan is to minimize transit fees, or payments per barrel for using the northern pipelines that constitute a high cost for the already financially-stressed state. South Sudan’s succession cost Khartoum more than 70 percent of its oil revenue. Sudan accordingly negotiated a deal under which they would charge Juba $24.1 per barrel exported using Sudanese pipelines. The $24 accounts for roughly 50 percent of total South Sudan’s revenue since 2011.

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279 Anne W. Kamau, South Sudan’s Quest for Regional Integration (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2016), 23.

280 Kuol, Navigating the Competing Interests of Regional Actors in South Sudan, 55.
Uganda’s President Yoweri Museveni and Tanzania’s new leader Samia Suluhu Hassan attended the signing of three accords that included Uganda and Tanzania agreeing to a pipeline, a tariff and transportation agreement, and a shareholding agreement. When completed, the planned East African Crude Pipeline (EACOP) will be 900 miles long, running from the shores of Lake Albert in Uganda to the port city of Tanga in Tanzania and could benefit Juba since Uganda is South Sudan’s leading trade partner.281

Through the two Indian Ocean pipelines, South Sudan likely regards the EAC as an alternative path to prosperity and a deal superior to the one with Khartoum. The economic distrust between Juba and Khartoum is obvious and oil transport diversification is expected to be a core aspect of South Sudan’s national interest.

While South Sudan has vast oil reserves, crude oil has been entirely exported through the Port of Sudan. Oil production levels fell sharply shortly after independence due to both the conflict with Sudan over Abyei in 2011 and the Civil War, which began in 2013. In early 2016, South Sudan’s President Kiir wanted to renegotiate the terms of the 2012 oil transfer agreements. He argued that a new deal should reflect the global fluctuation of oil prices and the Civil War’s realities. Kiir was pressured to negotiate because international donors have been reluctant to financially bail out South Sudan. South Sudan’s lack of transparency in financial dealings forced it to work with Sudan. Historically, South Sudan has been reluctant to cooperate with Khartoum because of its contentious past relations.

As an EAC member, South Sudan will reap the benefits of ongoing and future regional infrastructure projects. These projects include an array of massive investments such as the Lamu Port (Kenya). In 2012, alongside Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, Presidents Mwai Kibaki and Salva Kiir launched the Lamu Port Project, which is part of the broader Ethiopia Transport Corridor (LAPPSET). Various construction stages have begun but there are delays in port, railway, pipeline, and refinery construction stemming from several issues: insecurity in South Sudan, Kenya’s ballooning debt crisis, difficulty in securing finances, and environmental concerns that the residents of the city have expressed.\footnote{Martin Mwita, “Terrorism Fears, Late Payment Delay Lamu Port Construction,” \textit{The Star}, January 17, 2020, \url{https://www.the-star.co.ke/business/kenya/2020-01-17-terrorism-fears-late-payment-delay-lamu-port-construction/}}

Another alternative was a pipeline through Ethiopia and Djibouti to the port of Djibouti. Although the feasibility study indicated the viability of the Red Sea option, South Sudanese officials preferred the Kenyan option. As was the case during the Cold War, African states are enmeshed in global interests of complex regional and international relationships, which sometimes are economical but other times not. SPLM, South Sudan’s ruling party, has always been allied with the West and aligned with countries friendly with Western powers and who have a majority Christian population seems like a natural extension of this logic.\footnote{Lauren Hutton, “From Fragility at Independence to a Crisis of Sovereignty,” Clingendael Institute Report, 2014, \url{https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep05542.9}. Yet Chinese banks have financed this new pipeline and railway and their feasibility is already in question.
Figure 3.4: A map of Eastern Africa showing existing and proposed pipelines[^284]

The EAC as an Opportunity to Expand South Sudanese Investment

South Sudan may certainly intend to use its EAC neighbors’ sea access for imports and exports. Cooperation alongside the northern corridor, using Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda’s road links, will directly lead to transport cost reductions. At present, South Sudan’s tariff costs are more than double those of other EAC partner states and nine times the worldwide average. Its imports cost $9200 per container compared to Uganda’s cost of $3,220. South Sudanese transportation costs inflate the prices of goods to over 100 percent of their value.

To mitigate these expenses, the EAC allows South Sudan to benefit from the Single Custom Territory (SCT), which waives the rules of origins and grants access to the simplified trade regime. The SCT is a step towards a full customs union, which removes restrictive regulations and reduces internal border control on goods moving to partner states. The SCT began in July 2014 and is intended to lead to free circulation of goods. Under the SCT, assessment and payment of duties are completed at the destination partner state when goods arrive at the first point of entry.

However, the SCT cannot operate without the requisite infrastructure. The EAC Treaty of Establishment states that the development of necessary infrastructure will be one of the community’s foundational membership principles. Labeled “Operational Principles of the Community,” these requirements outline the need for

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285 Nicholas Aris Charalambides, “A Legal and Economic Assessment of South Sudan’s Possible Accession to the East African Community” (Stellenbosch, SA: Tralac, 2017), 10.

286 Nicholas Aris Charalambides, “A Legal and Economic Assessment of South Sudan’s Possible Accession to the EAC” (Stellenbosch, South Africa: Tralac, 2017), 9.

cooperation leading to the region’s infrastructural development. The SCT is a significant hallmark of the community’s role, intended to advance both the “harmonization of regularity laws, rules, and practices, construction, and maintenance of infrastructure in partner states, and [the] review and re-design of intermodal transport system.” In this arena, EAC countries’ interests have coalesced around new large-scale regional infrastructure financed with Chinese loans.

Nevertheless, much of this large-scale infrastructural spending happens outside the EAC’s formal structure. The EAC loosely commits to harmonizing transport links without following through with funding, so states often invest in these projects. For instance, policy coordination or concessions for standard gauge railways is routinely lacking. South Sudan does not have an extensive railway system; rather, it has a total railway network of 154 miles, a narrow-gauge single-track railway that connects Babonosa in Sudan with Wau in South Sudan. Plans to integrate the South Sudanese railway system with either Uganda or Kenya have failed partly because Uganda uses the 1000-millimeter railway gauge with South Sudan that has a 1067-millimeter railway gauge. Since John Pombe Magufuli attained power in 2015, Tanzania flexed its muscles and forged good relations with Uganda and Rwanda. In April 2016, Uganda changed its earlier plan to build a pipeline through Kenya and instead sourced $4 billion for one through Tanzania. In June 2019, Uganda opted out of the Kenya-standard gauge railway plan and focused on restoring the old Kenya-Uganda railway for $206 million. There is no effective coordination of EAC

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infrastructure. The decision to invest in the SGR was made in the absence of any transition plans from existing railways systems.  

While essential for countries’ internal economic well-being, the transport system in Tanzania and Kenya, both coastal states, also acts as a vital link for landlocked countries. For South Sudan, the need for access roads and infrastructural links to the global economy going through EAC member states is one of the most important EAC uses. South Sudan only has only 200 kilometers of paved roads. In 2016, the South Sudan government paved the Juba-Nimule road at the Kenyan border but plans to extend this road have stalled due to insecurity and economic crisis. The United States Agency for International Development ultimately funded the road, which cost $225 million.

Although the rest of East Africa calculates profits from South Sudanese resources and markets, the country is seeking necessary coastal access to mitigate Khartoum’s influence. There is a lack of substantial economic evidence that South Sudan needs the EAC to access cheaper coastal states since the country could also

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partner with other states in the region, including Ethiopia and Djibouti. An alternative was to build another pipeline through Ethiopia via the Red Sea. A feasibility study indicated that the Red Sea route would be cheaper but South Sudan preferred to build a new pipeline through Kenya. So why did Juba favor the more expensive Indian Ocean route through Kenya rather than the cheaper option? Furthermore, why did South Sudan join the EAC if it had the option to warm up to Sudan or Ethiopia? Most crucially, question does South Sudan refuse to cooperate closely with Khartoum? If we define interests in rationalist terms, Sudan and South Sudan would benefit from working together. However, when we consider identity and cultural affinity, we can better understand why South Sudan keeps Sudan, and to a lesser extent Ethiopia, at arm’s length whenever possible.

_The EAC as an Export and Import Market for South Sudan_

South Sudan joined the EAC not as an equal of its more prosperous neighbors but as the weakest economy in the region. However, it is also a significant external trade player in the region. South Sudan largely exports crude oil while importing a substantial amount of food and consumer products from its regional neighbors. While South Sudan could potentially build upon exports of products such as cereals, timber, live animals, fish, gold, silver, zinc, copper, uranium, and iron ore, the country has not yet been able to do so. From 2006–2010, South Sudan mainly re-exported commodities to Uganda, its southern neighbor, and fellow EAC members. This was

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294 South Sudan has been keeping separate trade records since the 2005 CPA signing since it was an autonomous region. The 2011 trade records are from the Government of South Sudan (GoSS).
achieved through semi-formal and informal trade networks. Re-exports included self-propelled bulldozers, stainless steel scraps, warm clothing, motorsport machinery, and printed books. Locally produced and exported commodities included virola mahogany, which accounted for a total of $60,000 to the total trade for 2007 exports; coniferous wood, which contributed $26,000 to the 2006 exports; and meranti wood totaling $250,000 to the 2010 exports.295

Though South Sudan has been trading with EAC members, the trade has been favorable for its wealthier and relatively industrialized neighbors. In 2008, Uganda’s exports to South Sudan increased from $60 million in 2005 to $635 million. In sharp contrast, export numbers from South Sudan to Uganda were much lower over the same period, accounting for less than 10 percent of the value of the Ugandan exports to South Sudan. From 2006–2011, Uganda exported the following products to South Sudan: coffee, cement, vehicles, iron and steel products, palm oil, mineral water, aerated water, soaps, beer, vegetable oil, sweet biscuits, wheat flour, broken rice, sugar for industrial use, and motorcycles, among other commodities.296 Industrial products account for the largest share of informal exports to Uganda, representing over 30 percent of total trade value. South Sudan’s trade with Kenya, another EAC member, follows the same pattern.


296 Kayiira, “South Sudan,” 51.
The trade value with Kenya increased from $57.6 million in 2005 to $144.5 in 2008.\textsuperscript{297} In 2009, the value had increased to $207 million. However, trade between the two countries was uneven, with Kenya exporting tea, cigars, furniture fittings, medical drugs, petroleum oil, cement, teabags, and others. The export of beer increased exponentially from $700,000 in 2006 to $14 million in 2016.\textsuperscript{298} The trade imbalance shows that Juba’s EAC benefits as a market are only marginal. There is a substantial amount of trade between South Sudan and Sudan. The trade originates from the Juba Dry Port along the river Nile and is processed at Kosti border post. Agricultural goods dominate trade; from January 2011 to December 2011, South Sudan imported 28,000 tons of wheat flour, 26,000 tons of maize flour, 52,000 tons of maize grain, 28,000 tons of sugar, and 38,000 tons of groundnuts from Sudan. Since January 2012, tensions over the pipeline disagreement between Khartoum and Juba escalated. Khartoum declared a state of emergency along its border, imposing trade embargos with South Sudan. South Sudan retaliated by shutting down oil output.\textsuperscript{299} Economic immigrants hoping to take advantage of the country moved into South Sudan. In 2017, South Sudan was hosting about 845,000 migrants, mostly from the East and the Horn of Africa.\textsuperscript{300}

The 2005 signing of the CPA agreement changed international trading patterns in Southern Sudan, exposing its latent economic potential. Hadi Diab of the

\textsuperscript{297} Kayiira, “South Sudan,” 51
\textsuperscript{298} Kayiira, “South Sudan,” 53.
\textsuperscript{299} Kayiira, “South Sudan,” 18.
SPLM’s investment committee stated the plans of extending networks so that South Sudan does not need to depend on Khartoum or boost tourism.\(^\text{301}\) The CPA signing also helped Kenyans to make significant inroads in South Sudan’s economy. South Sudan had become an important export destination for Kenyan products, establishing itself as the fourth largest export destination for Kenyan exports within the COMESA region. South Sudan’s entry into the EAC only deepens its pre-existing economic ties to Kenya.\(^\text{302}\) Kenya’s economic interests in South Sudan lie largely in the banking sector but also in transport, insurance, aviation, construction, hospitality, information and technology, and wholesale and retail trade.\(^\text{303}\) As of 2019, Kenya was one of the largest African investors in South Sudan.\(^\text{304}\)

The capacity-building needs extend to other sectors such as tourism. Although South Sudan has six national parks, thirteen game reserves, magnificent biodiversity, and abundant natural resources, tourism remains extremely undeveloped. *The Guardian* reported that less than 6 percent of the South Sudanese national budget is allocated to the wildlife ministry. In 2018, no money was allocated towards tourism development, even as the country hosted a three-day EAC marketing workshop to

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\(^{301}\) Martell, *First Raise a Flag*. 168.


learn from more established tourism industries in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. As of January 2019, the South Sudan Minister of Tourism of Trade and East African Affairs, Paul Mayom Akech, said that he was working with his counterparts in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, and Burundi to waive visa fees to travel to their countries.

South Sudan has begun to integrate into the EAC by joining the East African Business Council, issuing the EAC digital passport, and establishing the One-Stop Border posts to eliminate obstacles for travel and trade. Since the escalation of conflict in 2013 and the resurgence of the South Sudanese Civil War, several Kenyan businesses have closed or scaled down operations. Many Kenyans working in South Sudan have returned home following a spate of killings targeting foreigners. Jetlink Express, one of Kenya’s three airlines in South Sudan, folded due to an inability to recover debts accrued in Juba.

Analysis of the Trade Impact on South Sudan from Joining the EAC

In the previous section, we have explored the EAC’s economic role in Juba and the economic interests that compelled Juba to join with its EAC partners. The main finding is that while South Sudan does enjoy some benefits from joining the EAC as a land-locked country, it could have sought other economic partnerships.

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either with Sudan or Ethiopia. South Sudan could have obtained sea access through Ethiopia and Djibouti but it felt more comfortable working with Kenya. South Sudan has a large trade deficit with other EAC states and that drains its foreign reserve holdings. Second, since infrastructure is expensive, South Sudan requires collaborative frameworks to offset costs and ensure projects’ feasibility. Improved connectivity can lower transport costs, which in turn lowers the prices of commodities. Curiously, the EAC does not fund infrastructural development projects but instead encourages member states’ bilateral partnerships to execute such projects.

South Sudan has not experienced significant GDP growth from joining the EAC and financial and economic analyst Christopher Zambakari has contended that South Sudan will be the weakest EAC economy and suffer because of its hurried EAC accession. This conclusion lead Zambakari to wonder who will protect the weak.308 He notes that South Sudan will only reap benefits if it has the additional time to develop its infant industries, government institutions, economic sectors, and labor.309 Craig Mathieson of the London School of Economics also reported that South Sudan’s EAC accession has had no immediate economic impact, given that the country’s elites do not have full rent control. Except for Rwanda and Tanzania, where the natural gas reserves are subject to national security discussions, EAC political elites have no control over rents or power to coordinate reforms, particularly those related to integration, for which there is a limited domestic constituency.310


309 Zambakari, “South Sudan’s Entry into the East African Community,” 27

Accordingly, we must consider other explanations for South Sudan’s decision to join the EAC. To this end, the next section examines security imperatives. There is a lingering influence of the role of identity and regional political elites on South Sudan’s foreign, even in the security realm. As discussed below, national and regime security involves not only their neighboring states’ power but also their populations and national leaders’ identities.

*Regional Security Considerations for South Sudan’s Membership in the EAC*

Regionalization encourages cooperation to assist members in weathering existential threats. For South Sudan, EAC membership is perhaps more important because the country is small and less able to face its security challenges alone. One could argue that South Sudan joined the EAC to seek assistance from allies like Uganda and Kenya as it continues to face threats from Arab-dominated Sudan. South Sudan also faces cross-border challenges that it cannot solve alone. While the cross-border challenges alone are legitimate reasons for South Sudan to join the EAC, they do not explain why the country is also an IGAD member. It is crucial to consider the security benefits that the EAC provides South Sudan obtains. This section considers the argument that South Sudan joined the East African Community (EAC) primarily to protect or enhance its security from possible attacks or even take over from the Republic of Sudan.

Within the region, the territory of South Sudan has been a space of complicated interactions and proxy conflicts involving many players, usually linking nationalist rebels with the aid of regional powers. South Sudanese political scientist
Luka Kuol argues that regional considerations have always shaped South Sudan’s foreign policy. First, the country is a product of a break from the Arabized north. As a result, the schism of regionalism and identity has affected the country’s foreign policy. Second, the contestants for influence in South Sudan have state-centric explanations from some of the key players involved.

During the 1990s, Uganda was suspicious of Sudan’s influence in the region, citing the country’s attempt to extend the Arab and Islamic influences southwards. According to Historian Gérard Prunier, Sudan backed the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) militia group that has operated along Uganda’s border in North Kivu, DRC. In 2011, South Sudan gained independence, paving the way for the scramble over the influence in the country’s domestic politics and foreign policy. Kampala and Khartoum have had competing interests in the lucrative South Sudanese oil that would only be accessible if the country were stable under former SPLM leader President Kiir. Given this history, we must begin by considering the influence of both Uganda under Yoweri Museveni and Khartoum under Bashir to assess South Sudan’s EAC membership.

South Sudan has been engaged in war since its independence. There is a low-scale war with Sudan over the oil-rich Abyei territory. In December 2013, South Sudanese government forces were locked in a full-blown political and military crisis. The Civil War erupted because of disputes between factions of the ruling SPLM who were loyal to President Kiir and his Vice President, Machar. The dispute took an

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311 Kuol, “Navigating the Competing Interests of Regional Actors in South Sudan,” 60.

ethnic turn in sections of the country, exposing the divide between the majority
Dinka, to which Kiir belongs, the second-largest ethnic group, the Nuer, Machar’s
community, and their affiliates.\textsuperscript{313} South Sudan’s Civil War has drawn in neighboring
states such as the Republic of Sudan, Uganda, and Kenya as both sides continue to
develop their military capabilities.

Since the Civil War erupted in December 2013, between 50,000 to 380,000
people have lost their lives because of famine, disease, or war.\textsuperscript{314} Armed groups have
targeted civilians, committed sexual violence, destroyed property, pillaged villages,
and forced children into their units as fighters. Nearly four million people have been
displaced, fleeing to neighboring countries such as Uganda, Ethiopia, and Kenya. In
June 2018, a peace agreement that would have established a political settlement was
considered but never realized and former Vice President Machar was forced to flee
South Sudan. In the first episode of the 2013 post-independence Civil War, when Kiir
attacked the Nuer soldiers, Uganda’s army rapidly descended on South Sudan. At
first, Uganda army’s mission was to evacuate at-risk Ugandan nationals, but this
undertaking was soon expanded to include protecting vital infrastructure. Ultimately,
the Ugandans directly engaged rebels on behalf of the South Sudanese government.

\textsuperscript{313} South Sudan is extremely multi-ethnic. The country has over 60 different ethnic groups.
The majority of South Sudanese are defined as Nilotic, which means that they trace their origins to the
Nile basin. Other groups include Bantu, Central Sudanic, and Arab speaking peoples. Each of these
groups have distinct histories. The Dinka are the largest group comprising 39 percent of the
population, although they are further divided into sub-groups sometimes classed as tribes such as “Bor
Dinka.” See Johnson, \textit{South Sudan}; Stephanie Beswick, \textit{Sudan’s Blood Memory: The Legacy of War,
Ethnicity, and Slavery in Early South Sudan} (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2006).

\textsuperscript{314} Megan Specia, “383,000: Estimated Death Toll in South Sudan's War,” \textit{The New York
The legal framework for this protection was an ambiguous mutual defense treaty between Uganda and South Sudan, which only called for a status of forces deal, not mutual defense.315

The EAC’s dominant response to the region’s security issues has been through individual states’ militarized methods. Scholars such as Botswana’s political scientist Ian Taylor have described African RECs’ security regime as a “liberal peace” focused on peacebuilding. Liberal peace is part of a global attempt to promote pro-market restructuring in post-conflict societies. However, a lack of hegemonies willing to pay the cost of maintaining such security often curtail it.316 Juba’s SPLM government has attempted to strengthen its alliance with East African countries over the past six years, integrating its economy with Kenya and Uganda while still allowing Uganda to maintain a military in South Sudan.317 Lauren Hutton of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) concluded that economically powerless states such as South Sudan are not only affected by external power dynamics but are also aggressive participants and alliance seekers looking to amplify their legitimacy, extend their range of influence, and pacify warring ethnic factions.318


317 Young, The Fate of Sudan, 45.

318 Lauren Hutton, “From Fragility at Independence to a Crisis of Sovereignty,” in From Fragility at Independence to a Crisis of Sovereignty (Hague: Netherlands: Clingendael Institute Report, 2014), 39
East Africa has had its fair share of insecurity and states have responded to enhanced security in different ways. Still, South Sudan’s EAC accession does not seem to be motivated by enhanced security efforts. Africa’s regional security regimes are financially and logistically weak, founded primarily for state-centric stabilization purposes rather than the region’s holistic securitization. State cooperation on the security front is challenged because of divergent security interests among members and national and regional security calculations. Indeed, international security scholars Barry Buzan and Ole Waever contend that security alliances in Africa are problematic and very thin at the interregional level. Based on Buzan and Weaver’s logic, we deduce that Juba did not need EAC for security. Indeed, Uganda would have helped Kiir whether or not Juba was in the EAC.

Hutton has reported that South Sudan remains embroiled in a series of complex and regional relationships because the SPLM has always required international support. Hutton further states that although data is scarce, South Sudan’s regional trade and security alliances are visible through the arms trade. There are symbiotic relationships between countries in East Africa and militia groups in other countries that operate as political proxies, with networks often pursuing fuzzy economic, political, and ideological goals. These proxies do not fully represent the

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321 Hutton, “From Fragility at Independence to a Crisis of Sovereignty,” 41

322 Hutton, “From Fragility at Independence to a Crisis of Sovereignty,” 43
South Sudanese state’s interests and cannot, therefore, account for the logic of South Sudan’s EAC accession.

While there has been substantial work on integration pathways and pertinent policies to facilitate Juba’s pivot to the east, the EAC’s influence on security is marginal. Stefan Reith and Moritz Boltz have found that the EAC faces a significant gap between aspirations and reality. Reith and Boltz quote the former German president Horst Kohler who warned that the EAC risks disappointing the region’s people since it has ambitious plans but has shown little results. The EAC has a security plan in Article 124 of its treaty that emphasizes the importance of security and peace in the region for successful integration but lacks mechanisms to enforce such peace. Nevertheless, during Kenya’s election crisis of 2007–2008, the EAC played an insignificant role in bringing peace. Instead, the African Union’s Panel of Eminent Personalities under Kofi Annan’s leadership played the leading role in peace negotiations.

Although the EAC took the lead role in mediation, it became clear in Burundi that the body lacked the requisite experience, expertise, or resources to handle the problem. The absence of political will, historical rifts founded on ethnic tensions, and its many members’ diverse economic interests have derailed the EAC’s effort to enhance regional security. Burundi remains in crisis, with 350,000 refugees outside the country and an unknown number of people dead.

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If the EAC hardly salvaged Kenya from a contested election and failed to mediate the slightly smaller conflict in Burundi, then how can it solve a security problem spanning over 35 years in South Sudan? Although regional coordination of security bodies and rapid responses to escalating conflicts would be useful, the community’s influence in peace and security is marginal and conflict management has been left for national figures, not institutions, to address.\textsuperscript{325} The East African Standby Force (EASF), one of five regional African Standby Forces, has been active as a peace enforcer in Somalia under the banner of the African Union Mission (AMISOM). However, the EAC does not have such proficiency for an active peace enforcement military presence. \textit{The East African} reported that the African EASF lacks the capability of rapid deployment of troops in conflict zones.\textsuperscript{326} While the EASF exists to monitor peace support operations in the region, the African Union and not the EAC often coordinated them.

This section has explored the possible security logic for South Sudan’s EAC accession. This study argues that while South Sudan has serious security needs, there is limited evidence to show that the EAC could help with them. The evidence shows that Juba’s key allies—Kenya and Uganda—would support it as they have historically done, whether they are in the EAC or not. Unlike IGAD, the EAC has no competence in forceful diplomacy. The EASF is an amorphous entity that is not exclusive to the EAC, which means South Sudan does not need the EAC to benefit

\textsuperscript{325} Stefan Reith and Moritz Boltz, \textit{The East African Community Regional Integration Between Aspiration and Reality} (Berlin: KAS International Reports, 2011), 95–6.

from the EASF. Hence, Juba’s accession and stay in the EAC concerns intangible factors such as identity and the political elite’s interests as driving factors as opposed to material aspects of trade and security.

The Social Construction of “National Interests” in South Sudan

The previous section demonstrated that South Sudan has significant security needs. In essence, South Sudan needs allies against Sudan, and more importantly, support to shore up internal security forces against internal rebels. However, South Sudan does not meet these needs through EAC membership. Instead, it depends upon Uganda and Kenya as bilateral allies. Unlike ECOWAS, the EAC has no history of intervening in member states’ affairs to support their security. To understand why South Sudan has joined and remained in the EAC, we must question the origins of South Sudan’s national interest.

In Africa, the debate over putative national interest and RECs is often murky. Africanist scholars such as Landy Signe have postulated that national interest focusing on international trade promotion through continental integration is still relevant.327 Other scholars, like Rwandan development economist Kato Kimbugwe, however, have been skeptical about the idea of national interest, arguing that it refers to the “interests of the big men and their supportive cronies.”328 In response to these critiques, Fredrick Söderbaum proposed the abandonment of state-centrism for a far

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more in-depth study of “state-society complex.”

John F. Clark concluded that it is “hardly an objective good that any rational and well-meaning observer can readily identify.” Clark viewed states as “amorphous, conflicted, and subjective social entities” with actions shaped by “spiritual and instinctual drives.” Clark is skeptical of an objective national interest. National interest, therefore, is socially constructed. Regime elites have interests related to remaining in power that have little or nothing to do with the population’s welfare or interests. The EAC’s benefits to South Sudan require an examination, not a discourse of national interest, which is often complicated in international relations scholarship, but rather of the ruling elites’ interests.

To uncover how the EAC serves South Sudan’s elite, we must bring the country’s political culture and its ruling regime to light. There is no evidence that this elite’s interests coincide or overlap with the welfare of the population it rules. We must explore the social forces that explain why small-economy states may join RECs. Accordingly, it is essential to show how the national political elites who refer to a conflated concept of national identity construct, interpret, and construe national interests.

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331 Clark, “Realism, Neo-Realism, and Africa’s International Relations,” 91.


333 Söderbaum, “Modes of Regional Governance in Africa,” 426.
Identity in South Sudan and the EAC

South Sudan’s accession requires an examination of other, less apparent roles, focusing instead on identity and the regime-boosting rationale for South Sudan’s engagement with the EAC’s founding members such as Uganda and Kenya. For the South Sudanese people, independence was not achieved in 1956 when the Republic of Sudan was founded after the exit of Anglo-Egyptian rulers. The struggle against Arab slavery, British rule, and Khartoumese Arab control through the pursuit of a united federation and the country’s subsequent secession have all collectively shaped its national identity and pursuit of African self-determinism in greater Sudan. Meanwhile, conflicts between the Dinka and Nuer have done something else: internally affirm tribal identities’ fluid constructs while fueling internal conflict over power. With its Pan-African rhetoric, the EAC understandably provides a safe space for sharing the pain of racial discrimination and colonial rule and the embracing of Christian values.

Ole Fram has reasoned that one of the few—indeed, almost universally accepted—ideas in South Sudan is that the new nation should construct its identity based on the memory of decades of struggle against the north. However, there is a lack of universal agreement on the role that SPLM and John Garang played. There are debates as to whether Garang should be credited as the gambit of South Sudanese liberation. South Sudan’s disassociation with the Sudanese republic is further entrenched by the rejection of Arabic as an official language. Although a vast majority of South Sudanese went to schools where Arabic was the language of

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instruction, a substantial number of people emigrated from Khartoum and other important Sudanese cities. A dialect of Sudanese Arabic, Juba-Arabic is the primary language of Juba business. The South Sudanese government did not designate either Arabic or Juba-Arabic as official languages since many South Sudanese view Arabic as the language of northern oppression.\textsuperscript{335} The move to deny official status to Juba-Arabic was nonetheless surprising since the language has been “central to the long-term process of state formation in South Sudan,” which is vital for communication between local actors and state officials.\textsuperscript{336}

The rejection of Arabic’s official status contrasts with the embracing of English and Kiswahili. South Sudan uses English as its official language and the language of instruction. However, in March 2019, South Sudan signed a five-year deal with Tanzania to send Kiswahili instructors to South Sudan. The EAC has adopted Kiswahili as its official language. South Sudan, its sixth member, has requested assistance in teaching the language. According to South Sudan’s Minister of Education, Deng Hoc, “since South Sudan is now part of East Africa, there is a need to teach Kiswahili in the country for easy communication with member states.”\textsuperscript{337} The considerable effort needed to teach Kiswahili compared to the ease with which Arabic—a more internationally recognized language—can be adopted

\textsuperscript{335} Frahm, “Defining the Nation,” 25.

\textsuperscript{336} Cherry Leonardi, “South Sudanese Arabic and the Negotiation of The Local State, c. 1840–2011,” \textit{The Journal of African History} 54, no. 3 (2013), 351


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illustrates how the state constructs its identity.\textsuperscript{338} Kiswahili is the lingua franca in East Africa and has economic currency there; but Arabic would provide much better economic prospects for South Sudan than can Kiswahili. When we consider the language question, we can see that Juba uses the EAC as an identity reference point, as opposed to an economic one. The point here is not just about language; by joining the EAC, South Sudan imposes a burden upon by using a relatively underused language in its school system and society. Still, by connecting to East Africa’s lingua franca, South Sudan is willing to bear that burden to reinforce its non-Arab identity.

\textit{Regime Loyalty to Pre-Independence Allies}

South Sudan made it clear upon independence that it would join the EAC. The driving force for this choice was because South Sudan’s relations were critically important to the SPLM. Several regional powers, such as Ethiopia and Kenya, were helpful in the CPA process. Uganda’s military support was instrumental to the SPLM, especially after it lost ground from the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) in 1991–1994.\textsuperscript{339} Uganda’s support enabled the SPLA to recover from a possible SAF defeat. After the stalemate, Kenya predominantly led negotiations by hosting talks and providing senior mediators who helped to finalize the deal. Kenya was chosen as a mediator because both Khartoum and Juba viewed it as neutral. Its capital, Nairobi, served as the logistical hub for humanitarian aid flowing into then Southern Sudan. The role of the Kenyan frontier town of Lokichogio, which lies 30 kilometers from the South


Sudan border was of crucial importance. Lokichogio served as the site of NGO operations in Sudan at the height of the war. Food aid and other supplies were flown from Lokichogio Airport with activities intensifying during Operation Lifeline Sudan.340

Uganda was an outright one-sided actor in southern Sudan long before its independence.341 During the Anya-Nya Insurgency, or the First Sudanese Civil War, Uganda was also home to many southern Sudanese refugees, just as South Sudan hosted Ugandan, mainly Acholi, refugees during the Ugandan civil conflicts in the 1980s.342 In 1991, during the Second Sudanese Civil War, Ethiopia expelled SPLM fighters and Uganda became SPLM’s main sponsor and supporter.343 It not only aided these fighters militarily but also offered safe havens for the fighters and their comrades. President of Uganda Yoweri Museveni was a close ally of John Garang.344 The OUA/AU imbued the underlying ideologies of Africans’ self-determination and strengthened Museveni and Garang’s relationship. In response to Kampala’s backing of SPLM, Khartoum supported the Lord Resistance Army (LRA), an Acholi rebel group led by Joseph Kony.345

340 LeRiche and Arnold, South Sudan, 203.

341 The Anya Nya was a rebel group concentrated in the northern areas of then-Southern Sudan. It began as a coalition of Southern Sudanese people unhappy with Sharia law during the first civil war (1955–72). During the Second Civil War, a second iteration of the group called Anya Nya II was formed. Anya Nya refers to “snake venom” in the Nilotic Madi language. See David Anderson and Øystein H. Rolandson, Politics and Violence in Eastern Africa the Struggles of Emerging States (London, UK: Routledge, 2017), 45.


343 LeRiche and Arnold, South Sudan, 77.

344 LeRiche and Arnold, South Sudan, 203.

345 LeRiche and Arnold, South Sudan, 203.
After signing the CPA, South Sudan allowed Uganda’s army, the Uganda People’s Defense Force (UPDF), to conduct counterinsurgency against the LRA inside South Sudan. Machar and Kiir were also involved in the mediation between LRA and the Ugandan government, partly leading to the end of the Ugandan Bush War in 1986.\footnote{Finnström, \textit{Living with Bad Surroundings}, 227.} As of 2020, Uganda was still hosting close to one million South Sudanese refugees.\footnote{Halima Athumani, “South Sudan Refugees in Uganda Hope to Return Home,” \textit{Voice of America}, June 11, 2019, \url{https://www.voanews.com/africa/south-sudan-refugees-uganda-hope-return-home}.} It is, therefore, reasonable to demonstrate that South Sudan joined the EAC because its major ally, Uganda, was a founding member. The EAC provides brotherhood, security, and military support that strengthens the SPLM regime. EAC also boosts the SPLM regime’s sovereignty in South Sudan, even as the organization legitimizes the SPLM as the country’s valid government.

\textit{EAC and the State Capture of South Sudan by SPLM Elites}

In July 2011, South Sudan obtained independence with a militarized, corrupt, and neopatrimonial system of governance. But these tendencies toward ethnic bias did not begin in the independence era. Sudanese political elites had governed by balancing the needs of ethnic-figure heads in southern Sudan to prevent them from fighting Khartoum. SPLM has historically been a conglomeration of ethnic alliances dominated by the Dinka. It also has a history of corrupt practices including selling food aid, underpaying soldiers, and claiming to speak for the people while only representing political elites’ interests and desires. Weeks after the signing the CPA
agreement in 2005, SPLM commander Kiir summoned Commander in Chief John Garang de Mabior. Kiir then said:

I would like to say something about rampant corruption in the movement. At the moment some members of the movement have formed private companies, bought houses and have huge bank accounts in foreign countries. I wonder what kind of system are we going to establish in South Sudan considering ourselves indulged (sic) in this respect?\textsuperscript{348}

Corruption, as highlighted by Kiir’s concern, would characterize governance as carried out in South Sudan.

I argue that South Sudan’s neopatrimonial system has been extended to the international organizations that they joined. Instead of promoting well-intentioned regionalist aspects embedded in the pursuit of security and economic development, these organization—including the EAC—expanded spaces for corruption activities that were already endemic in Juba and frontline states such as Uganda, Kenya, and Ethiopia. Therefore, the EAC provides opportunity paths for corruption, state capture, and crony networks that have very little benefit for South Sudanese citizens. This is not to say that infrastructural development plans, ease of movement for the people, educational opportunities, and markets for South Sudanese goods are unhelpful. Such plans have either failed or not been as successful as expected but rather corrupt networks have been successful based on the number of accounts of corrupt practices reported since 2011. Similarly, the corrupt practices would have continued with or without EAC accession. However, the existence of community protocol permits corrupt businesses in the community to take advantage of legal loopholes.

The backdrop is that SPLM leaders’ political calculus was based on two elite factors: resources and interests. Therefore, they felt that they could act without any reference to their citizens’ welfare.\textsuperscript{349} Alex de Waal has stated that South Sudan has a particular strand of kleptocratic neopatrimonialism because leaders use every available opportunity to steal public funds. It is militarized because the elites at all cadres use violence as a bargaining instrument. Government transactions are highly monetized and cash flow to the ruler is the heartbeat of governance. It is dynamic and turbulent where the client-patron relationships are always subject to renegotiation.\textsuperscript{350} South Sudanese political culture’s domestic aspects influence foreign policy and because of these features. Therefore, we can argue that, particularly regionally, the above-stated factors will influence their foreign policy.

South Sudanese politicians acknowledge that since 2005, the theft of state oil revenue has been widespread. South Sudan ranked 179 out of 180 countries in the 2019 Corruption Perception Index from Transparency International. In 2012, President Kiir admitted that an estimated $4 billion is unaccounted for; simply put, stolen by current or former officials with close government ties. Most of these funds were stolen or deposited in foreign accounts.\textsuperscript{351} This is partly a result of Kiir’s ‘big tent’ idea, which involved paying off rebels or incorporating them into a bloated government to maintain peace.\textsuperscript{352} However, the alliance of multiple ethnic groups

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{349} de Waal, “When Kleptocracy Becomes Insolvent,” 364.
\item \textsuperscript{350} de Waal, “When Kleptocracy Becomes Insolvent,” 348.
\item \textsuperscript{352} Martel, \textit{First Raise a Flag}, 187.
\end{itemize}
held firm for close to two years and begun to unravel as the clique associated with Kiir’s Dinka loyalists tightened their control on the government and closed doors for others. The EAC became a haven for keeping stolen funds.

Before its independence, South Sudan’s frontline neighbors—Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, and Uganda—were involved in the development of the world’s newest state in one way or the other. Some of these countries have been key allies while others have been loyal at times but adversaries at others. EAC member countries of Uganda and Kenya have been most loyal to Juba. Ethiopia hosted South Sudanese refugees and supported SPLM, but it is with Kenya and Uganda that South Sudanese have the most cultural and social organic connection. The three countries are all English-speaking countries, the Nilotic groups that populate South Sudan are also in Kenya and Uganda and many SPLM elites have families who have lived in Kenya or Uganda. For this reason, many of the corrupt business dealings are conducted in Kenya and Uganda.

At the height of the oil shutdown negotiations in Addis Ababa in January 2012, SPLM Secretary General Pagan Okiech dismissed the African Union High Level Implementation Panel (AUHLP) as biased. The AUHLP had been tasked with helping Khartoum and Juba find an amicable solution to the oil sharing agreement disagreements that the independence agreement did not repair. Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi foresaw the oil shutdown as dangerous to both countries and anticipated a rational conclusion. Zenawi called an IGAD special

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summit on January 27, 2012. Regional heads of states including Kenya’s president Mwai Kibaki, ex-presidents Thabo Mbeki and Pierre Buyoya and presidents Kiir and Bashir attended this meeting. It was expected that an oil-sharing agreement would be signed. However, Pagan Okiech, who did not attend the meeting, later called a news conference where he said: “We have been forced to shut down oil exploitation until we get (complete) commitment from the GoS [Government of Sudan]. The shutdown will be complete, and we will discuss with Kenya, Ethiopia, and Djibouti for future oil exploitations. It is a huge decision we have to make.”\textsuperscript{355} It was a rushed decision by Pagan Okiech. President Kiir was not informed about this hurried decision; he had asked for more time for consultation. But Okiech later explained that the decision was made to collapse Khartoum by instigating a cash flow problem that would collapse them.

South Sudan had assumed that they had enough cash flow to withstand the oil ban. Later, Zenawi described SPLM negotiators as “better informed than I expected and more reckless than I expected.”\textsuperscript{356} SPLM’s actions “threatened the collapse of both countries [Sudan and South Sudan].”\textsuperscript{357} Zenawi further described SPLM’s method as an “economic doomsday machine.”\textsuperscript{358} A chain of events happened that exposed the folly of this decision. South Sudan faced acute revenue challenges, Kiir’s big tent government ran out of cash for his clients and a civil war was about to start.

\textsuperscript{355} de Waal, “When Kleptocracy Becomes Insolvent,” 363.
\textsuperscript{356} de Waal, “When Kleptocracy Becomes Insolvent,” 363
\textsuperscript{357} de Waal, “When Kleptocracy Becomes Insolvent,” 364
\textsuperscript{358} de Waal, “When Kleptocracy Becomes Insolvent,” 364.
A year later, South Sudan accepted a deal that was worse than the 2012 deal. The point is South Sudanese elites have completely no trust with Sudan that they are willing to do anything to vanquish them. They are not completely trusting of Ethiopia either.

Kenya’s *The Standard* newspaper reported that Juba’s elites work with Kenyan government officials to ensure that their plundered profits are invested and hidden in Kenya. With the help of regional and international actors, based on the regional capitals of Nairobi and Kampala, South Sudanese elites often pillage their country’s export revenues. Included in this list is President Kiir, who owns homes in upmarket leafy neighborhoods in Nairobi, Kampala, and some Ethiopian cities, and he visits Nairobi with “his entourage jets with bags of cash, mostly in dollars and Euros.”

Writing for the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), Mark Anderson and Michael Gibb have reported that business contracts, bank records, and government correspondences indicate that the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) awarded procurement contracts worth $1.4 billion to supply food for the government and national army during the Civil War from 2016–2018. But only four companies received contracts, all of them are connected to individuals with close ties to the president.

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The above accusations have been detailed by other publications. *The Sentry Report*, a “name and shame” global activist group, supported by Hollywood star George Clooney, released a report in 2019 titled “The Taking of South Sudan.” It accused corporations from across the world of taking advantage of the country’s weak rule of law to maximize profit from oil deals and the weapons trade. *The Sentry Report* argues that South Sudan’s state is under siege from the military and political elites. These politicians, with international corporations from China, Malaysia, Britain, and the U.S., all have connections to regional powers in Kenya and Uganda and work together. The report acknowledges that these states’ interests are often “responsive to commercial and political incentives.”

Through its investigation, *The Sentry Report* has divulged that several top South Sudanese generals, including those now under UN sanctions, have purchased luxury properties in Kampala and Nairobi. Of course, the benefits do not trickle down to the ordinary citizens of South Sudan, Kenya, or Uganda. Instead, in the case of South Sudan, the EAC and other organizations such as IGAD, facilitate elite capture and state (mis)use for the gains of the few.

Kenyan banks control South Sudan’s financial sector and South Sudanese elites use their access to the Kenyan economy, partly through the EAC common market framework, to secure their wealth from the insecurity in South Sudan. Recently, the United States government has urged Kenya to seize properties owned by South Sudanese elites that were acquired using proceeds from corruption, money

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laundering, and war but Kenyan authorities have turned a blind eye. A report by Kenya’s Institute of Economic Affairs says Nairobi and Kampala have become illicit hubs for the flow of billions of dollars stolen from South Sudan, fueling inflation and financing civil war. The report further says that well-connected Kenyan and Ugandan businesspeople kept South Sudan’s money-laundering machine alive with a regular supply of U.S. dollars reinvested in properties in prime locations in Uganda and Kenya. These schemes operate based on loyalty and identity. South Sudanese elites certainly feel comfortable making deals with EAC countries because many consider Uganda and Kenya as second home countries. IGAD offer similar opportunity paths, though many IGAD member countries except Ethiopia are impoverished and without security for investments. Sudan, another IGAD member, imploded in 2019 from civil unrest. While elite pilferage is not certainly the main reason why South Sudan acceded to the community, the relative stability in Kenya and Uganda has aided the ease as to which officials from Juba can divert resources from their country and invest them in major cities of these countries. Certainly, the extend of state capture by elite SPLM elites is a proximate explanation why Juba remains in the EAC without tangible economic gains.

The incidences of corruption in South Sudan divulge intricate webs of cross border crony networks in the EAC region. However, they do not reveal a “smoking-

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gun” as the reason for South Sudan’s accession. Implicitly though, the connections between East African businesses and the political elites that own and run them, indicate that there is more beyond the surface. While it is impossible to ascertain SPLM’s elites’ motives in these countries, it is allowable based on how politics operate in the region, to conclude that EAC provisions such as free movement of services and capital enable cross border corrupt networks to function with relative ease.

Another detailed report by South African weekly *Mail & Guardian* revealed further instances of corrupt practices among SPLM political elites. Simon Foltyn’s investigative report unearthed how South Sudan’s elites ruling elites have stolen and squandered the country’s foreign reserves and hidden the money in foreign countries, including Kenya and Uganda. Shortly after the 2012 oil shutdown, South Sudan experienced an acute shortage of hard currency. The Bank of South Sudan earmarked $993 million in future oil extractions between 2012–2015 to import vital goods such as food and medicine. Government ministers allocated hard currency to selected traders at a preferential exchange rate through letters of credit, which facilitate international trade through securing bank payments. Instead of using the hard currency to buy food and medicine, many of the involved parties bought scarce oil dollars at highly discounted rates and sold them on the black market, generating millions of dollars in profit. Many beneficiaries of these letters of credit received
payments without delivering goods intended for public consumption. At the time, millions of South Sudanese people were facing starvation.\textsuperscript{364}

East African Banks, mainly from Uganda and Kenya, enabled this process to continue without question. Qatar National Bank and CFC Stanbic, a subsidiary of South Africa’s Stanbic Bank in Southern Sudan, disbursed these allocations. The monies were transferred mainly to banks in Kenya and Uganda including Kenya Commercial Bank, Equity Bank, and Stanbic Bank of Uganda. Of these funds, 90 percent were transferred to traders in Uganda and Kenya and the rest went to Germany, the UK, and the Arabian Gulf. Only a small number of the letters of credits were used for their intended purpose. The amount that went through Ugandan banks was $498 million and Kenya had $338.4 million through its banks.\textsuperscript{365} Kenyan investigative journalist John-Allan Namu produced an award-winning documentary, \textit{The Profiteers}\textsuperscript{366}, in which he detailed the extent to which Kenya’s businesses’ corrupt practices have aided and abetted pilferage in Southern Sudan.

Endemic corruption is not an exclusively South Sudanese problem. However, it is rampant in conflict-prone countries like South Sudan. It is also a major problem in other East African countries. I have argued that South Sudan’s domestic neopatrimonialist political structure has induced SPLM elites’ state capture. These


\textsuperscript{365} Foltyn, “How South Sudan’s Elite Looted Its Foreign Reserves.”

\textsuperscript{366} John-Allan Namu, \textit{“The Profiteers: A Story of Money, Plunder and War,”} YouTube (YouTube, October 3, 2018), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bvd1q-6ST0E.
elites have then used opportunity structures availed through close connections with friendly East African states to keep their plunder from public scrutiny and launder their monies, which is then useful for extending the existing patronage structure and blinding and binding loyalties to South Sudan’s revolutionary friends of Kenya and Uganda. There is nothing formal about the EAC protocol that advocates for corrupt tendencies among political elites. However, the EAC protocol offers opportunity paths for unscrupulous businesses to entrench and embed state-capture. Political elites use and abuse the protocols provided by the EAC at their convenience.
Figure 3.5: A flowchart showing how South Sudan uses the EAC.
Conclusion

This chapter has examined the EAC’s roles in the small-economy state of South Sudan (See Figure 3.5 which shows how South Sudan uses the EAC). The evidence that South Sudan joined the EAC for economic reasons is, at best, insubstantial. South Sudan’s economy has deteriorated since joining the EAC, with the country running a trade deficit with its key trade partners in the region while its GDP has shrunk. The EAC also does not become involved with infrastructural investments on behalf of states. While it encourages intercountry connections, the EAC allows each state to facilitate these links bilaterally. Additionally, South Sudan’s pursuit of road and railway links with other EAC members, particularly Kenya and Uganda, does not require EAC membership.

South Sudan’s security benefits from EAC membership are also unclear. Uganda and IGAD influence South Sudan’s foreign policy. In the past, the EAC’s attempts at peace negotiations have failed. As a result, the present chapter’s key finding is that while South Sudanese elites or SPLM leadership foreground the economic and cultural benefits of EAC membership, these reasons also seem unconvincing. Indeed, this chapter argued that South Sudan’s identity concerns and re-orientation of the states’ foreign policy towards the EAC are far more important than the material gains they can potentially earn from associating with Sudan.

The EAC reinforces South Sudan’s identity as an African country rather than an Arab/Islamic state. South Sudan is a classical symbol of what Bayart has described as
the “reciprocal assimilation of elites”\textsuperscript{367} or “fusion of elites,”\textsuperscript{368} as Richard Sklar has described it. The difference is that in the case of South Sudan, state elites pursue these connections not within the state but instead with external actors who are often regional allies. SPLM elites feel comfortable and trusting towards other EAC countries and are seeking both protection and legitimacy from their more established regional allies.

In the case of South Sudan, EAC membership perks include solidarity from Kenya and Uganda. Sudan plays a dominant role in IGAD and would still be potentially threatening to South Sudan, as the 2012 oil shutdown politics showed. Lastly, South Sudanese elites use pathways available through the EAC to funnel ill-achieved wealth from South Sudan into laundering havens where the money can then be taken to South Sudan to maintain a neopatrimonial regime. The next case study is Liberia, which is a resource-endowed ECOWAS member that is geographically small but faces challenges arising from previous conflicts. It will be interesting to know why this state chose to join ECOWAS, even though it is likely to be dominated by regional hegemons like Nigeria and Ghana.

\textsuperscript{367} Pierre Englebert, \textit{Africa: Unity, Sovereignty, and Sorrow}, 99

\textsuperscript{368} Richard L. Sklar and Toyin Falola, \textit{African Politics in Postimperial Times: The Essays of Richard L. Sklar} (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2002), 244
CHAPTER FOUR: LIBERIA AND ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES (ECOWAS)

In this chapter, Liberia is used as a case study on the utility of regional economic communities (RECs). ECOWAS has twice intervened in Liberia, in 1990 and 2003. Liberia is also the only sub-Saharan African country in an extended relationship with the United States. As will be demonstrated in this chapter, ECOWAS has not served an economic purpose for Liberia. Instead, ECOWAS in only an outfit with political proclivity whose activities entrench existing regimes, boost their sovereignty, and embed neopatrimonial governments. It is imperative to ask the following questions: What roles, including hidden roles, does ECOWAS play in Liberia? Why did Liberia join ECOWAS? Why has it remained in the organization in the absence of observable economic benefits?

This chapter starts with a relevant summary of Liberia’s political and economic history. (See Figure 4.1 for a map of Liberia as presently constituted.) I attempt to employ historical analysis to identify why ECOWAS was important to Liberian regimes at specific junctures in history. The second section examines the putative economic benefits and drawbacks of Liberia’s participation in ECOWAS as a small-state economy in a region where Nigeria, Ghana, Côte d’Ivoire, and Senegal dominate regional trade. The data shows that Liberia benefits insignificantly from

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trade within ECOWAS. The next section interrogates the security justification for Liberia’s accession to ECOWAS. The regional economic bloc’s intervention only partially aided security efforts, and Liberia’s continued association with ECOWAS after peace was achieved is neither justifiable nor logical. Concerning social roles, I conclude that while they are a source of the impulse to engage in regionalism, they make more sense with the Mano River Union (MRU) than with ECOWAS. I conclude that Liberia’s attempt at regionalism requires an examination of the roles of these entities for the ruling elites. As illustrated later in the chapter, ECOWAS broadcasts the sovereignty of Liberia, legitimate and protect ruling regimes, extend neopatrimonial links in the region, and shore up Liberia’s image as a member of a liberal international system. Similarly, Liberia remains in ECOWAS because it is a symbolic gesture of gratitude and neighborliness.
**The Development of Liberia’s International Political Economy up to 1975**

The history of Liberia as an independent state started in 1822 when the American Colonization Society (ACS) successfully advocated for the repatriation of ex-slaves. The Black American settlers named the new territory “Liberia,” short for
“liberty area.” Although the immigrating Americo-Liberians attempted to fashion their republic after the United States, the love-affair was one-sided. Washington supported Liberia’s republic status, but racialized politics prevented the Americans from establishing a Black colonial outpost or territory in Africa.

The Americo-Liberians declared Liberia to be an independent republic in 1847; setting the pace for Liberia to define its international orientation and economy around America. They named their capital “Monrovia” after American President James Monroe. They also forged an unbalanced economic and diplomatic relationship with America that lasted until 1979. Notwithstanding the unfair, neo-mercantilist nature of this trade relationship, Liberia’s economy was among the fastest growing in Africa prior to 1979. In 1972, Liberia was poor, but less so than many other African countries. Its GDP per capita was more than 80 percent higher than China, Indonesia, Vietnam, and India. In Africa, it had a higher GDP than those of better-performing countries such as Senegal and Nigeria. The World Bank touted Liberia’s world-beating economic growth record in the 1960s as a model for foreign investment-led growth, even though it was primarily “growth without


374 Eric Werker and Lant Pritchett, 39
development,” or growth that did little to improve the lives of ordinary Liberians.\textsuperscript{375} Liberia achieved this high peak of its economic growth prior to the advent of ECOWAS.\textsuperscript{376}

\textit{William Tubman and the Open-Door Policy}

Liberia’s economic plan before the 1970s was the mastermind of former President William Tubman. While in power from 1944 to 1971, he modernized sections of the Liberian economy and society as he spearheaded economic growth by focusing on trade relations with the United States. Tubman realized that he could benefit from America’s war efforts in Europe and mirrored them by declaring war on Germany. Liberia allowed the United States to station thousands of troops at a base to ferry airplanes to the war zones in Europe.\textsuperscript{377} During and after the war, this American friendship paid off; Liberia garnered increased foreign investment in iron ore mining and rubber plantations, among others.

Tubman labeled his plan the “open-door policy.” The idea was to attract and encourage foreign corporations to locate their businesses in Liberia to stimulate economic growth and development, a policy that President Tubman strongly:

\begin{quote}
I stand for free trade and the open-door policy. I believe in protective tariffs and measures in favor of Liberians when they have developed and protected what should and can be protected, and to assist them in developing their trade. But I am not in favor of, and I am not diametrically opposed to, and do not
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{375} Eric Werker and Lant Pritchett, 40


\end{footnotes}
subscribe to pursuing protective measures and tariffs after phantoms or oases of the desert.378

Between 1944 to 1970, the value of foreign investments, mainly from the United States, increased by 200 percent. The expansion of the Liberian economy in the 1950s surpassed that of almost any country in the world.379 Tubman’s open-door policy invited American and European firms to extract iron ore, engage in plantation agriculture, and undertake a variety of other commercial ventures. Concurrently, Liberia sought foreign loans from U.S. and European capital sources, as well as economic and technical assistance.

The economic structure of Tubman’s Liberia supported a complex and targeted patronage system that kept Americo-Liberians at the helm. Tubman’s bills and political maneuvers as a senator paved the way for Firestone Rubber Company of Akron, Ohio to become the first foreign-owned business to operate in Liberia in 1926.380 By 1962, Firestone was employing a quarter of the Liberian workforce in the formal sector.381 The reliance on Firestone led to the company exploiting native Liberians.382 Plainly speaking, these deals cheated the indigenous populations. Liberia Mining Company, the national iron ore company, in which the state of Liberia held


380 Lawrence A. Marinelli, “Liberia's Open-Door Policy,” 92-94


50 percent of the stake, sold 35 percent of its shares on easy loan terms to politically connected Americo-Liberians. They would make a down payment of 20 percent paid in two installments. The rest of the 80 percent would be from the dividends at later dates. 383 Such deals were common, and Liberia’s elite grew prosperous at the expense of native populations.

Still, Tubman’s laissez-faire economic model generated an extraordinary number of rents for the Liberian state. These rents supported business opportunities and government expenditures. 384 Liberian rubber exports, buoyed by Firestone anti-competition practices, maintained rubber exports at $25 million per year for decades. Firestone’s concession had allowed the U.S. company to break the British-Dutch rubber production monopoly in Africa. It also allowed Firestone to treat Liberia like a slave plantation, with the Americo-Liberians serving as forced laborers. However, Tubman’s open-door policy and his trademark unification policy increased the country’s budget from a paltry $750,000 in 1943 to $50 million in 1963. 385

Horror stories characterized the relationship between workers and Firestone management through the end of the Tubman era. 386 Robert Clower’s Growth without Development (1968) argued that Liberia experienced growth without trickle-down development. Its economic stride undermined institutions and strengthened the

383 Lawrence A. Marinelli, 94


385 Lawrence A. Marinelli, 98

reigning regime. For example, increased revenues led to the paving of roads in the countryside. Paving roads normally would catalyze rural economies, but in Liberia, it displaced native rice farmers, moving them further inland away from main markets. The ruling elites then repossessed the lands next to the roads via eminent domain and replaced rice paddies with rubber farms. They then forced the natives to pay taxes on wages earned from working in the rubber plantations but with no representation at the legislature.\footnote{387}{Robert W. Clower, \textit{Growth without Development an Economic Survey of Liberia} (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. 151}

Tubman’s disdain for indigenous Africans also extended across the continent. Except for the preservation of its independence and its alliance with the United States, Liberia acquired its independence when most of Africa was under colonial rule. Unlike other African countries whose development depended entirely upon the whims of European colonizers, Liberia had some scope to chart an autonomous foreign economic policy. The association with the industrialized United States obviated the need for a pan-African outlook.Americo-Liberian elites engaged in forced labor of indigenous Africans in 1930s much like European colonizers did in other African countries at this time.\footnote{388}{Nnamdi Azikiwe, \textit{Liberia in World Politics} (London, UK: Arthur H. Stockwell Ltd, 1934), 191–193} Liberia’s foreign policy then was focused on the United States. A notable exception was Tubman joining Ethiopia to file a case at the International Court of Justice to challenge apartheid South Africa’s continued occupation of South West Africa (Namibia).\footnote{389}{Ernest A. Gross, “The South West Africa Case: What Happened?” \textit{Foreign Affairs} 45, no. 1 (1966), 36.}
However, Tubman saw that Africa was rapidly changing. The anti-colonial “winds of change” were blowing, as British prime minister Harold Macmillan prophesied in his South African speech of 1960. Tubman realized that Liberia could no longer stake its legitimacy as a state on being Africa’s only Black republic. Indeed, Liberian natives were restless for political change. His “unification policy” was like a bandage on a gunshot wound in its approach to Liberia’s settler versus native dichotomy. It had not solved much of the economic inequality, let alone legitimized the Americo-Liberian claim to rule. In 1957, Kwame Nkrumah had led the Gold Coast (now Ghana) out of the British empire. Nkrumah was a socialist, so Tubman detested his convictions as well as his rhetoric of Third World solidarity. Tubman knew that he had to thwart Nkrumah’s idea of a united African polity. Tubman affiliated himself with Félix Houphouët-Boigny and other likeminded capitalists who favored a more incremental integration and reformulation of African regionalism. Scholars labeled them as the Monrovia camp.\textsuperscript{390} He positioned himself as an “elder statesman,” strategically steering a dozen younger statesmen away from Nkrumah’s ideas of continental federation. At home, he quietly stated that the supremacy of “Americo-Liberianism must be forgotten.”\textsuperscript{391}

*William Tolbert’s Pan-Africanism and the Accession to ECOWAS*

When Tubman died in 1971, William Tolbert, his vice president since 1952, replaced him as head of state. Tolbert attempted to revamp Liberia’s economy and


foreign policy. A month after his election on June 9, 1972, he established diplomatic relations with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). He also abandoned Tubman’s pro-Western policy and sought relations with newly independent African countries, Eastern bloc European states, Libya, Cuba, and China.\textsuperscript{392} Tolbert subsequently engaged in the promotion of Pan-Africanism, “rhetorically employed to convey a vague continental consensus of mutual support, often without any specific policy prescriptions.”\textsuperscript{393}

Tolbert’s ideational pull toward Africa catapulted Liberia into joining African REC\textsuperscript{s} such as ECOWAS and the MRU and led to closer engagement with the Organization of African Unity (OAU). In 1972, Tolbert participated in the Silver Jubilee of the Democratic Party of Guinea, during which he praised Guinean President Sékou Touré for rejecting the French community and fighting against “the diehards of colonialism, racial discrimination, oppression, suppression, and neocolonialism.”\textsuperscript{394} He also praised the people of Guinea for being “ideologically educated” and warned them against “accepting foreign domination, enslavement, and exploitation, and …a state of inferiority.”\textsuperscript{395}

Similarly, the economic push-factors of the 1970s required a recalibration of the political economy. The evolving diplomatic culture of the day meant that a deeper...
commitment to Pan-Africanism raised a leader’s standing in the society of African states. Touré invited Tolbert to chair a two-day symposium on Nkrumah, and Tolbert readily accepted. He spoke of Nkrumah as “the most renowned politician of the African continent,” adding that Nkrumah’s philosophies would “live on as long as there is a struggle for freedom, liberty, dignity, and justice for mankind.” At his first OAU meeting, on June 14, 1972, Tolbert argued that “one of the greatest achievements since 1963 is that we now understand ourselves better than we did, which is a great step forward.” In the same speech, he gave a detailed account of his philosophical position on the question of African international relations:

It would be a great error for us to think that the developed nations owe us anything. Indeed, it is not unreasonable to consider that their own national self-interests will dictate and influence their attitudes and actions toward us. Our economic emancipation must be underwritten by ourselves. Political independence, as we have learned by bitter experience, is only the beginning of the struggle, not the end. New forms of imperialism are continuously being formulated with the objective of retarding the progress of our Organization in its prime purpose of achieving the speedy emancipation of all of the remaining pockets of colonialism (Tolbert 1972, 511).

Tolbert’s ideology was “Africa for Africans,” a political mantra that was commonplace during the era of decolonization. Even though he used Marxist language, he was never a socialist. He insisted that “every state should be left free to develop according to its own genius, tradition, and aspirations.” However, he also said, “Liberia will spare no effort to join whichever collective action, we should

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396 Niels Hahn, 81
397 Ibid, 80
398 Ibid, 80
399 Niels Hahn, 81
determine necessary to achieve… freedom, independence, and economic emancipation for Africa and its people." Rhetorically, at least, Tolbert needed to assert his commitment to the African solidarity narrative. In the age of Third World ferment, Tolbert had to confirm that his regime would stick with other African countries against imperialism even if the politico-economic realities had not changed. The Illusory Benefits of Liberia’s Accession to ECOWAS

This section focuses on the initial impetus that facilitated Tolbert’s decision to join ECOWAS. The central yet implicit argument is that the accession to ECOWAS was like the policies adopted by Tolbert, and later, Samuel Doe. In principle, they did not change ordinary Liberians’ miserable economic existence in any tangible way. Yet, they were powerful in giving the appearance of change and the intention of the regime’s attempt to do better. Arguably, ECOWAS was now a tool that Liberian elites could use to appear to be in favor of economic revolution. For Tolbert, Pan-Africanism was personal. In April 1975, Stephen Tolbert—the president’s younger brother—died in a plane crash. The Nigerian press suspected foul play claiming that CIA operatives had tinkered with the plane. Stephen Tolbert was his brother’s chief security officer. Washington was growing increasingly weary of Tolbert. At this time, Liberia hosted the CIA’s main listening post in West Africa and Tolbert’s ideational pivot to the East. Adhesion to ECOWAS was a performance of African diplomatic

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400 Niels Hahn, 81

401 See Pierre Englebert, State Legitimacy and Development in Africa (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002). He makes the argument that “elites chose state policies as a function of their payoffs”

culture and a sign that Liberia was, for the first time, unquestionably African and Black. It was an attempt at transforming the Americo-Liberian elites into native Africans with aspirations like the rest of the continent.

Richard V. Tolbert, the nephew of the late president William Tolbert, argued that Liberia enlisted for two reasons. The first was economic. West African states tend to be small and without sufficient economies of scale to justify businesses, especially manufacturing, with few exceptions (Nigeria, Ghana, Côte d’Ivoire). In 1975, Liberia’s population was less than two million, which was too small to make for a viable industrial market. President Tolbert thought that integration with the other West African states would enhance Liberia’s economic growth. Second, Dr. Tolbert argues that Liberia desired to identify politically with its African counterparts. Forming a regional trading group within West Africa was therefore a logical political development for Liberia and the other states of the region.403

As the evidence shows, Liberia’s accession to ECOWAS in 1975 did not significantly change the country’s economic prospects. Just four years later, the country would spiral down into the worst episode of its history, first under Samuel Doe’s reign of terror, then through two civil wars under Charles Taylor.


In May 1975, the authors of the ECOWAS treaty had a vision: to create a single regional economic space as a building block for a continental common market

403 Email correspondence with Dr. Richard V. Tolbert. August 4, 2020.
through integration and collective self-reliance. ECOWAS had a clear economic mandate with the ambition to provide better opportunities for trade between member states in the region. The founding states, including Liberia, agreed to “…accelerate and sustain the economic development of their states and creation of homogenous society, leading to the unity of the countries of West Africa by the elimination of all obstacles to the free movement of goods, capital, and persons.”

President Tolbert was directly involved in the formation of the Monrovia Declaration adopted by the OAU meeting held in Monrovia in 1979. The Monrovia Declaration led to the Lagos Plan of Action for Africa’s Economic Development for 1980–2000. Samuel Doe ousted President Tolbert in 1980, however, and so Tolbert was not involved in the Lagos Conference. Doe came to power through a military coup organized by junior officers of the Liberian army. He was a 28-year-old master sergeant and a member of the Krahn ethnic group. In 1981, the World Bank produced the Berg report. It promoted structural adjustment programs for African states, Liberia included. Consequently, ECOWAS would be modeled on the neoliberal template and even more so after the treaty’s revision in 1993. Neoliberalism attempts to tackle poverty reduction via low taxes, trade liberalization, and privatization of state-owned enterprises.

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405 Temitayo Isaac Odeyemi, “Regional Integration and the Political Economy of Morocco’s Desire for Membership in ECOWAS,” in *Pan Africanism, Regional Integration and Development in Africa* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 106

Liberia’s Economic Growth from 1975 to 1989

Liberia acceded to ECOWAS in 1975 with the hopes of expanding its GDP and expanding trading capacity with regional states. However, there was no significant increase in trade as a result of adhesion to ECOWAS. Intra-regional exports of small-economy states such as Liberia declined from 1968 to 1984. The increase in the regional exports were also as minimal as there were increases in imports. The community’s four more relatively developed states—Cote d’Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, and Senegal accounted for 54.5 and 58.2 percent of regional imports and 91 and 82.5 percent of exports between 1978 and 1984 respectively. The volume of trade within ECOWAS was high among the four more developed countries as well as among landlocked countries bordering coastal states with which they share borders. The Table 4.1 below shows Liberia minimal regional trade as a percentage of its total trade between 1978 and 1984. It shows that Liberia’s total exports to ECOWAS was 0.043 percent in 1978 compared to 0.003 percent in 1984, illustrating a sharp decrease in trade volume. Increasing trade between member states was one of the major reasons for ECOWAS existence. But Liberia’s trade record does not show evidence of any increase. Nigeria, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, and Senegal have collectively controlled 87 percent of ECOWAS trade since its inception.


408 Julius Emeka Okolo, p. 184

409 Table 3.1 is borrowed from Julius Emeka Okolo, “Obstacles to Increased Intra-Ecowas Trade,” *International Journal* 44, no. 1 page 182 and is compiled from data from IMF.

Liberia’s GDP did not expand following adhesion to ECOWAS as well. Liberia’s GDP peaked in 1979, the end of a trend that had started in 1945. It began to decline soon after, exacerbated by the coup of 1980. The GDP per capita in 1975 was $362 with a growth rate of 15.1 percent in the Tolbert years (see Table 4.2).\textsuperscript{411} Doe’s unsteady regime led to a cumulative GDP loss of nearly 50 percent by 1989.\textsuperscript{412}


Table 4.1 Regional Trade of ECOWAS states as proportion of total trade

1978-84 (%)\(^{413}\)

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<tr>
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**Source:** Calculated from data obtained from *Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook 1985* (Washington: International Monetary Fund, April 1985).

\(^{413}\) Table borrowed from Julius Emeka Okolo, "Obstacles to Increased Intra-Ecowas Trade." *International Journal* 44, no. 1 (1988), 182
The 1980s were not good for Liberia. Samuel Doe proved inept at handling the structural challenges the country faced. Real GDP per capita (in PPP terms) fell by half from $1,765 in 1980 to $969 in 1989. It would further fall to its nadir of $151 in 1995. Doe attended ECOWAS meetings to reinforce his image as a legitimate national leader rather than increase trade. For example, in 1981, Doe attended

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ECOWAS heads of state meet in Freetown, Sierra Leone and spoke about neighborliness and non-interference.\(^{416}\) Although the entire ECOWAS region experienced significant growth in global trade between 1980 and 2014, with total goods imported by ECOWAS multiplying four times, intra-regional trade remained marginal.

Doe allowed foreign merchant vessels to register as Liberian. Countries targeted included Canadian, Chinese, and European ships. Liberia gained considerably from the foreign investment of the shipping firms and established Monrovia as a tax haven. Doe’s foreign policy was a rebuttal of Tolbert’s. Doe appealed to U.S. President Reagan’s Republican instinct. He said, “The government cannot solve all problems,” and so, despite egregious failures, Washington stuck with him.\(^{417}\) American assistance for Liberia surged to its all-time high during Doe’s first five years, increasing six times and reaching $500 million in 1989. During Doe’s regime, Liberia received more aid from the United States than any other African country except Egypt.\(^{418}\) Ironically, as opposed to the desires of ECOWAS’s advocates, Liberia was more dependent on American aid under Doe than it had been under Tolbert.


Liberia’s total external debt doubled between 1983 and 1987, when it was estimated at $1.4 billion. Debt servicing accounted for 15.9 percent of the 1987 budget. At the end of Doe’s ten-year rule, Liberia’s external debt was $3.5 billion, including $221 million owed to the U.S. government, $600 million to International Monetary Fund (IMF), and $120 million to the World Bank. It was subsequently suspended from getting assistance from these entities for defaulting on its loan payments. Doe’s Liberia looked to exaggerated African identity for legitimacy, but the cost was its financial soundness. The authoritarian nature of Doe’s regime, the financial crises he created in the country, and the ethnic favoritism that he intensified led to the collapse of his regime. By 1984, a popular slogan in Liberia was “same taxi, new driver,” an acknowledgment that any hopes of change had dissipated. Liberia’s economic data does not show any growth associated with ECOWAS. Rather, it shows a shrinking economy under Doe. Real GDP per capita (PPP) terms fell by half from $1,765 in 1980 to $969 in 1989. Also consider the decreasing GDP per capita while in ECOWAS. Liberia’s GDP per capita was $608 in 1962, $786 in 1973, $577 in 1984, and $273 in 2013. Furthermore, America’s relationship with Liberia became even more “special” in 1980 after Doe ousted Tolbert. ECOWAS had no substantial economic role for Liberia in the 1980s, so why did Liberia remain in it?

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419 Paul Gifford, *Christianity and Politics in Doe's Liberia* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University press, 2002), p.34

420 Gabriel I.H. Williams, *Liberia, the Heart of Darkness*, 24

421 Karl Derouen and UK Heo, eds., *Civil Wars of the World*, 500

Liberia’ Trade Patterns After 1989

The 1989–2003 Civil War had a devastating effect on Liberia’s development. Most foreign businesses were either destroyed or left the country. The United Nations banned exports from Liberia, including diamonds and timber.\footnote{Greg Mills, Why States Recover Changing Walking Societies into Winning Nations, from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe (Oxford, UK: Hurst, 2015), chapter 14.} Yet in 1997, during the Taylor administration, Liberia’s economy grew by over 100 percent despite being in a civil war.\footnote{J. Aloysius Toe, “Liberia's GDP Paradox” (The Perspective, April 2, 2013),} Taylor’s rule rejected sovereignty as geography-specific. Taylor did not care for territorial limits if they stood in his way of gaining profits. The invasion of Sierra Leone was in part due to Taylor’s “sharp business practices,” according to one Liberian fighter.\footnote{William Reno, Warlord Politics and African States (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publ., 1999), 98} Taylor was mostly interested in profits from regional trade in diamonds, timber, and cash crops in and beyond Liberia.\footnote{William Reno, 98} Taylor’s Liberia’s economic growth shows two patterns.

First, Liberia hardly needs its neighbors for economic growth because it does not trade with them. It is rich in natural resources and has a suitable tropical and subtropical climate for plantation farming. Liberia does not trade with most ECOWAS members because they all produce the same things. Instead, it trades with China, the European Union, the United States, and Côte d’Ivoire, which is its only significant ECOWAS trade partner, and by far, the most industrialized West African
state.\textsuperscript{427} Liberia needs countries that would import their raw materials. There is no reason that members of ECOWAS would do this, nor evidence that they have.

Second, Liberia’s economic growth has not historically translated into development. Liberia’s economic growth has sprouted, translating into an increase in the value of national expenditure, including revenues, goods, and services. ‘Booms’ over the course of Liberian history have not enriched the population or raised the standard of living (See table 4.2). When Taylor grew the economy in 1990 from a reduction of 51 percent to a growth of 12 percent, it was not due to ECOWAS or external actors. Liberia was better off in 1962, before ECOWAS existed, then it was in 2013 as an ECOWAS member.\textsuperscript{428}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Table 4.2 Liberia’s HDI trends based on UNDP data.\textsuperscript{429}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Life expectancy at birth</th>
<th>Expected years of schooling</th>
<th>Mean years of schooling</th>
<th>GNI per capita (2017 PPP$)</th>
<th>HDI value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1,753</td>
<td>0.435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>0.432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1,533</td>
<td>0.435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>55.4</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1,128</td>
<td>0.432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>1,293</td>
<td>0.455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>62.3</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>1,442</td>
<td>0.477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>62.8</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>1,383</td>
<td>0.476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>63.3</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>1,376</td>
<td>0.481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>63.7</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>1,319</td>
<td>0.480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>64.1</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>1,258</td>
<td>0.480</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Liberia’s trade with its neighbors is minimal and indicative of a pattern among small-state economies in Africa joining RECs with whose members they hardly trade. Among African countries, Liberia has one of the lowest shares of intra-African trade at 4.7 percent of its trade volume. Although ECOWAS experienced a surge in global trade from 1980–2014, as demonstrated imports that quadrupled over time, intra-regional trade is still small and has not led to growth or development.\textsuperscript{430} Côte d’Ivoire alone accounted for 88 percent of Liberia’s intra-African trade. After Liberia’s civil war ended, Côte d’Ivoire accounted for 5 percent of Liberia’s intra-African trade. At ECOWAS, Liberia’s total trade was $20 million in 2017. It mainly imported fish, motor vehicles, apples, and electrical transformers. There is an indication that ECOWAS has not made a substantial trade growth in Liberia. The organization has


\textsuperscript{430} Muriel Eyram Silo Ametoglo, Ping Guo, and Kwami Ossadzifo Wonyra, “Regional Integration and Income Inequality in ECOWAS Zone,” Journal of Economic Integration Vol. 33, No. 3 (September 2018), 606
not achieved much in economic objectives. South Africa, Sierra Leone, Ghana, and Egypt accounted for an additional 8 percent of Liberia’s exports. The country’s intra-African imports stood at $173 million while exports were $374 million.\footnote{Trade Data Analysis, “Liberia: Intra-Africa Trade and Tariff Profile” (Tralac, 2020), https://www.citationmachine.net/chicago/cite-a-website/manual)} Liberia’s exports are concentrated in the extractables such as iron ore and diamonds, and other commodities such as rubber and timber.\footnote{Jaime de Melo and Armela Mancellari, “Regional and Global Trade Strategies for Liberia” (London, UK: International Growth Centre, London School of Economics, 2013), 10} Instead of increasing trade within ECOWAS, Liberia sources for imports even further in countries like China and India since 2000.\footnote{Jaime de Melo and Armela Mancellari, 12} See Table 4.3 below.
Table 4.3: Liberia's Trading Partners: Top destinations and origins

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Destinations</th>
<th>All goods</th>
<th>Manufacturing goods</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>All goods</th>
<th>Manufacturing goods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Share</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Share</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Share</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>44.9%</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>Ivory cost</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ECOWAS states trade more externally than internally. Liberia trades more with its neighbor Côte d'Ivoire than it does with other ECOWAS members. The trade level with Côte d'Ivoire were already significant before accession to ECOWAS in 1975. ECOWAS has not created infrastructural links for member states for internal and external trade. As of 2013, only 45 percent of Liberian households had access to a decent road within five kilometers. ECOWAS still lacks a regional rail network, and electric power reaches only 50 percent of the citizens and meets only 30 percent

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434 Source: Adopted from Jaime de Melo and Armela Mancellari, “Regional and Global Trade Strategies for Liberia” (London, UK: International Growth Centre, London School of Economics, 2013), 10


of the demand. If ECOWAS was committed to the goal of integrating West Africa as a trade region, it would have been aggressive about creating infrastructure since its founding in 1975.

In October 2019, ECOWAS special representative to Liberia, Tunde Ajimoso, said, “Sheer size of the single market could provide a more conclusive environment for industrial diversification and regional complementarities.” It is difficult to see how Liberia benefits from such talking points with a collapsing economy. As Yanqui Zaza from Liberian newspaper Daily Observer wrote: “If Liberia cannot provide reliable revenue and expenditure projections, how will it reduce its 27 percent inflationary rate to 4 percent target rate set by ECOWAS?” The great possibility was that it would export to Nigeria or Ghana, but that has not happened. Liberia still exports extractive goods that Nigeria does not need.

Security Benefits of ECOWAS for Liberia

In this section, I explore the security roles of ECOWAS for Liberia as a small-economy state. When Liberia joined ECOWAS in 1975, the country did not anticipate that ECOWAS would become a major security player. Tolbert, like other African


rulers of the era, talked about the need to respect the policy of non-intervention, a central principle of African foreign policies since the treaty of OAU in 1963.\textsuperscript{440}

However, ECOWAS did intervene in Liberia, unexpectedly, and with widespread ramifications that changed the country. I explore the logic behind Liberia’s accession during different regimes in Liberia from 1975. The argument is that the decision to remain in ECOWAS arose from the need for regime legitimation. In regime security, the governing elites pursue security from violent challenges to their rule in weak or conflict-afflicted states.\textsuperscript{441} Regime security differs from national security, which is the “apparent physiological, mental, and emotional well-being of the whole state.”\textsuperscript{442} Regime security is the stability of a specific regime controlling a state. National security encompasses the nation as a collective.

Tolbert signed onto the ECOWAS’s Non-Aggression Protocol (PNA), which stated that states must refrain from conflict to attain the goals of the community.\textsuperscript{443} Doe extended Tolbert’s non-aggression commitment and signed, in 1981, the Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance Defense (PMAD). PMAD article two states that “any armed threat or aggression directed against any Member State shall constitute a threat or aggression against the entire Community.”\textsuperscript{444} However, it did


\textsuperscript{443} Asim Rizvanovic, “Violent Peacekeeping, 2

\textsuperscript{444} Asim Rizvanovic, “Violent Peacekeeping, 2

164
not specify relevant operative details, leading to contestations when it became operational in Liberia later that decade.

Although Tolbert had hesitated to place Liberia into a military alliance with ECOWAS, Samuel Doe invited ECOWAS into Liberia to protect his regime. His ascension to power put an end to over a century of Americo-Liberian rule of Liberia. However, Doe’s regime was an oppressive one guided by the military. Among other things, it executed opponents, extended patronage to the Krahn people, and entrenched American influence. Shortly after coming to power, Doe executed President Tolbert and nearly all the leading members of Tolbert’s administration. Doe’s regime paved the way for the Liberian civil war that defined the country’s security association with ECOWAS.

Doe had attempted to become a new leader of the American-Liberian oligarchy. He also wanted to become respected throughout West Africa. Among West African leaders, Doe sought respect as a colleague and a team player. In the larger international community, he became the poster boy for American commercial and military interests in Africa. Doe visited and created relations with West African countries that could protect him. One of these was Nigeria, the de facto hegemon of ECOWAS. Doe’s desire for allies increased exponentially after an attempted coup by a former ally. In November 1985, Army Commanding General Thomas Quiwonkpa rebelled and invaded Liberia from across the Sierra Leonean border. Quiwonkpa almost succeeded in toppling Doe. The Krahn-dominated Armed Forces of Liberia fought back fiercely and regained the capital city. Shortly after, Quiwonkpa was

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executed. Doe then became even more violent, especially against the ethnic communities that had supported Quiwonkpa in Nimba county.⁴⁴⁶

Later, in 1990, Doe invited ECOWAS to Liberia to help him stop the speed of Charles Taylor’s rampage of Liberia. By June 1990, rebels had occupied two-thirds of the country, and Doe’s regime was helpless. Many civilians were fleeing to foreign countries. Doe had no choice but to request assistance. In a letter addressed to the chairman of ECOWAS and the members of the ministerial meeting of the Standing Mediation Committee (SMC), he wrote, “It would seem most expedient at this time to introduce an ECOWAS peacekeeping force into Liberia to forestall increasing terror and tension and to assure a peaceful transitional environment.”⁴⁴⁷

Initially, ECOWAS contemplated shoring up the Doe regime through arms and ammunitions, and if there was a need, military advisers. ECOWAS set up the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), which was a West African multilateral force, the first military arrangement of this kind in Africa. The Nigerian Armed Forces led ECOMOG, with substantial support from Sierra Leone and Guinea.⁴⁴⁸ The legal backdrop of ECOWAS’ mission was the 1981 mutual defense assistance protocol signed in Freetown, mentioned earlier. Yet, in 1989, only the Anglophone members of ECOWAS supported the intervention in


⁴⁴⁷ Letter addressed by President Samuel K. Doe to the Chairman and Members of the Ministerial Meeting of ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee, 14 July 1990, Weller, M., *Regional Peace-keeping and International Enforcement*, p. 61

Liberia. Francophone countries such as Côte d’Ivoire, Burkina Faso, and Senegal disapproved of the intervention.\textsuperscript{449} Abidjan was weary of Abuja using the Liberian intervention to shore up its power in the region.

Taylor saw ECOWAS as protecting Doe’s regime and not the interests of the Liberian state. The SMC once reported that “it became clear to the ministerial meeting that the National Patriotic Front of Libera (NPFL) was holding on firmly to their initial position of demanding the departure of President Doe.”\textsuperscript{450} Taylor accused ECOWAS of essentially handing him down a set of instructions to roll back his forces from Monrovia. According to Taylor, “NPFL took arms, got rid of Doe and took more than 95 percent of the country and so earned the right to rule Liberia.”\textsuperscript{451}

ECOWAS leaders converged in Banjul, Gambia in 1990 to elect an interim government while the two forces were agitating against the process. Amos Sawyer, a professor of political science, headed the Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU).

The ECOWAS intervention was successful in stopping Taylor from capturing power in 1990, but it was not successful in saving the life of Samuel Doe, who was backed by Nigeria. Prince Johnson, who had been a member of Taylor’s NPFL but broke away due to ideological differences, formed the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL). Johnson’s forces captured and killed Doe in September of

\textsuperscript{449} Cyril I. Obi, “Economic Community of West African States on the Ground, 121

\textsuperscript{450} Clement E Adibe, “The Liberian Conflict and the ECOWAS-UN Partnership,” \textit{Third World Quarterly} 18, no. 3 (1997), 473

\textsuperscript{451} Clement E Adibe, 474
1990. Doe was killed on the premises of ECOMOG headquarters. The location of Doe’s death dissipated any perception of ECOWAS as neutral. ECOMOG then changed its operation from peacekeeping to peace-enforcement.

While under siege from Taylor’s men, Doe accused ECOWAS of “meddling in Liberia’s internal affairs.” Taylor’s NPFL reported that ECOWAS’s selection of Sawyer showed complete disregard for the constitution and sovereignty of Liberia. Doe and Taylor’s response to Sawyer’s presidency further illustrates that ECOWAS was temporarily useful for Doe (or Taylor, for that matter) if it kept him in power temporarily but made him obsolete when he went against its wishes. ECOWAS could not bring peace to Liberia either through force of arms or through negotiations. Even when elections were organized, Taylor, the brutal warlord, was elected. ECOWAS failed to secure the Doe regime, the Sawyer regime, and then the Taylor regime.

President Amos Sawyer and his government could not secure peace, relieve human suffering, or stage elections. The IGNU depended on ECOWAS troops from Nigeria and other West African states to keep peace in Monrovia. Meanwhile, Taylor controlled a swath of Liberian territory. ECOWAS protected Sawyer from the collapse of his administration, but it did not offer the same protection for thousands of Liberians who suffered Taylor’s terror.

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452 Samuel K Ngaima, 37

453 Clement E Adibe, “The Liberian Conflict and the ECOWAS-UN Partnership,” Third World Quarterly 18, no. 3 (1997), 475

In October 1992 Taylor launched “Operation Octopus” to take over Monrovia, disarm warring factions, and replace Amos Sawyer as head of state. Sawyer’s regime typifies how a REC can legitimate a leader internationally even in the absence of domestic approval. His term ended in 1994 when ECOWAS forced him to step down. The Chairman of the Council of the State became the official head of state as a transitional effort toward peace. ECOWAS held a mini-summit on the formation of a Liberian National Council of State in 1995. The United Nations, the European Union, and the OAU were represented, as were the warring factions, including George Baloy (Liberian Peace Council), Alhaji Kromah (United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy, ULIMO), and Taylor’s NPFL. ECOWAS chose David Kpormakor as the civilian head of the state council. After a few years, a stalemate led to the dissolution of the first council, and a second one led by Wilton Sankawalo transitioned the country to the elections of 1996. ECOWAS not only established the council of the state but protected it in a precarious and volatile environment. Yet it did not and could not impose a durable political settlement on Liberia.

Charles Taylor wanted power and ECOWAS was an obstacle to the pursuit of his goal. The NPFL objected to ECOWAS’ intervention because it threatened Taylor’s desire for power. Like Doe, Taylor had no legitimate concern for Liberia’s people. Taylor had worked for Doe as the director-general of the General Service Agency (GSA). Taylor embezzled over $1 million in state funds and fled to the

455 Clement E Adibe, 477

456 Niels Hahn, Two Centuries of US Military Operations in Liberia, 152
United States, where he was arrested and faced extradition charges. He escaped Boston’s Plymouth prison in 1985.\(^{457}\)

ECOWAS had recommended a ceasefire, and a possible election after the peace process, but Taylor was not sure if he would win the election in a fair contest if ECOWAS oversaw that election. His suspicions were not farfetched because ECOWAS had aligned with some of the fighting factions in the Liberian civil war. Specifically, ECOWAS had supported the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) and the United Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO).\(^{458}\)

Ordinary Liberians also grew to dislike the intervention. Liberians accused ECOMOG of grand theft, reflected by the wry description of ECOMOG as “Every Car or Movable Object Gone,” an indication of how ubiquitous the plunder had become.\(^{459}\) Taylor agreed to “play ball” with ECOWAS when the Nigerians and the Ghanaians agreed to accommodate his regime rather than continue a full-blown war with NPFL. After the Second Abuja agreement in 1996, Ghanaians had convinced Nigerian leader Sani Abacha that an offense against Taylor would hurt the peace efforts. The Nigerian head of ECOMOG command, General Victor Malu, argued for ECOMOG’s increased role in Liberia’s internal affairs. The proposal incensed Taylor and he successfully requested his dismissal. This weakened ECOMOG’s influence.


\(^{458}\) Colin M. Waugh, *Charles Taylor and Liberia Ambition and Atrocity in Africa’s Lone Star State*, 22

and capabilities in Liberia, leading to ECOMOG’s withdrawal from Liberia in 1998.\footnote{Charles T Call, “Liberia: Exclusion and Civil War Recurrence,” 83}

Taylor’s victory in the 1997 ECOWAS-organized election was surprising, but in their desire for peace, Liberians overwhelmingly voted for the NPFL. The common saying for Taylor’s campaign was, “He killed my ma, and he killed my pa, I’ll vote for him.”\footnote{Niels Hahn, 157} He was elected out of a consensus that choosing him would stop him from committing further atrocities.\footnote{Niels Hahn, 157.} Taylor would shock the world with his political savviness. In the peace process held in Abuja, Nigeria, ECOWAS advocated for the disbandment of the Liberian security forces in a reorganization attempt. Taylor argued that as the elected head of state, he was also the commander-in-chief tasked with protecting his country. He could not oversee the transfer of his army to external actors. The UN and ECOWAS, being committed to the principles of democracy and sovereignty, thus, allowed Taylor to turn his security forces into the national army of Liberia.\footnote{Mary H. Moran, Liberia, 122}

Taylor would later start an interminable regionalized war in West Africa by backing rebellions in Guinea, Côte d’Ivoire, and Sierra Leone. In Liberia and Sierra Leone, fighting continued until May 2003 before the anti-Taylor factions moved into Monrovia. A final effort by Taylor to stop his eventual ouster had caused an uprising that forced ECOWAS to send in peacekeepers from Nigeria, Mali, and Senegal in

\footnote{Charles T Call, “Liberia: Exclusion and Civil War Recurrence,” 83}
\footnote{Niels Hahn, 157}
\footnote{Niels Hahn, 157.}
\footnote{Mary H. Moran, Liberia, 122}
July 2003, marking their second intervention in Liberia.\textsuperscript{464} In August 2003, the ECOWAS Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) ended the 16-year-old civil war and installed an interim government. ECOWAS adopted the Peace Plan for Liberia through ECOWAS Mission in Liberia (ECOMIL). Taylor resigned and flew to exile in Nigeria in the same month. Nigeria’s political elites allowed Taylor to stay in Nigeria, indicating that ECOWAS norms at this time were not aligned with human rights or promotion of democracy. Rather, it reveals that Nigeria’s intervention in Liberia was to protect Doe. It was tangential from the course of democracy which was not imprimatur in ECOWAS in this era. In September 2003, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) voted to convert ECOMIL into the United Nations Intervention Stabilization Force. The UN deployed 15,000 peacekeeping troops.\textsuperscript{465} The UN and ECOWAS established The National Transitional Government (NTG), headed by businessman Gyude Bryant in October 2003. Bryant led Liberia for two years until the election of 2005. Like its predecessors, his regime relied on ECOWAS to maintain in power.

Despite his conflicts with ECOWAS, Taylor did not remove Liberia from the REC. He chose to stay in ECOWAS for the same reasons he wanted to become president. First, at the core of Taylor’s foreign policy was plunder and power. Taylor instigated the civil wars of Liberia and extended them to Sierra Leone and Guinea. Taylor knew that many of the Nigerian military heads of state were military men with

\textsuperscript{464} Yomi Akinyeye, ed., \textit{Nation-States and the Challenges of Regional Integration in West Africa: The Case of Nigeria} (Paris: Karthala, 2010), 131

\textsuperscript{465} Stephen Ellis, \textit{The Mask of Anarchy}, xxiv
little battlefield experience.\textsuperscript{466} If he defeated ECOWAS, then he would gain the respect of Nigeria and claim leadership of the organization, thereby insulating his regime from further external attacks. It could also make him a \textit{bona fide} regional leader. Taylor’s army was composed of fighters from different countries, including Côte d’Ivoire and Burkina Faso. He also had Libyan mercenaries fighting for him.\textsuperscript{467} As a rebel in the early 1990s, he turned up at an ECOWAS conference in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso in full military fatigue. His equally well-protected security guards jogged alongside his convoy from the airport to downtown in show of loyalty, strength, and might.\textsuperscript{468} Taylor was not afraid to ask for support from anyone for his mission. In one call to President Clinton in 1997, Taylor was chastised for human rights violations, but this did not stop him from asking for military help. “I’d like to get your assistance in the military situation, training our army and helping train our police force,” he asked.\textsuperscript{469} President Clinton did not acquiesce.

Second, Taylor stayed in ECOWAS because he had friends in the organization. Burkinabè leader Blaise Compaoré and Ivorian leader Félix Houphouët-Boigny had personal reasons for supporting Taylor at the outset of his campaign. Taylor was fighting against Doe, who killed Tolbert and his family. One of Tolbert’s

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{466} Amos Sawyer, 445

\textsuperscript{467} Amos Sawyer, “Violent Conflicts and Governance Challenges in West Africa: The Case of the Mano River Basin Area,” \textit{The Journal of Modern African Studies} 42, no. 3 (March 2004), 447


\textsuperscript{469} Johnny Dwyer, \textit{American Warlord: A True Story} (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2016), 100
\end{footnotes}
sons, Adolphus Tolbert, was the son-in-law of President Houphouët-Boigny.\footnote{Nwolise, O., The Internationalization of the Liberian Crisis and the effects on West Africa, in Vogt, M., (ed) The Liberian Crisis and ECOMOG, p. 57} Doe’s coup widowed Houphouët-Boigny’s daughter. The Ivorian leader asked his other relation, alleged son-in-law and Burkinabè leader Blaise Compaoré, for aid. Blaise Compaoré trained Taylor’s men and introduced Taylor to Libyan leader Ghaddafi, who was then supporting all “anti-imperialist coalitions” in on? the continent.\footnote{BBC Monitoring Report, 5 January 1990, Documents 8 & 9, ibid, p.33 See also Côte d’Ivoire: Friend or Foe? in African Confidential, vol. 13, No. 18, 14 September 1990} Upon attaining power, Taylor had to sustain these relationships. ECOWAS offered an opportunity to regularly meet with his patrons as well as opportunities for a future military alliance if there was a need. These relationships solidified the role of ECOWAS as a recurring opportunity for elite social networking, rather than mere photo-op sessions.

Since the 1990s, ECOWAS’ responses to crises have become increasingly rapid, elevating the REC as one of the most pragmatic in the stabilization of the norms of democracy as well as peace building and peace keeping. ECOWAS revised the treaty in 1993 to confer the organization powers to intervene in domestic issues. The new agenda emphasized conflict prevention, management, resolution, peace keeping, and security. ECOWAS followed up these resolutions with the mechanisms for democracy and good governance in 2001. Since the first intervention in Liberia, ECOWAS has mediated conflicts in Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, and Liberian again in 2003, and in Côte d’Ivoire. According to historian Mark Hubard, “ECOWAS failed in its objective of either achieving outright military victory or forcing Taylor to

\footnote{Nwolise, O., The Internationalization of the Liberian Crisis and the effects on West Africa, in Vogt, M., (ed) The Liberian Crisis and ECOMOG, p. 57}
negotiate sincerely.” The country was internally incoherent with numerous predatory warlords and lack of conventional warfare. The regionalized conflict led to deaths of over 250,000 people. The brutal murder of Doe undermined ECOMOG’s moral highroad. Since it attained peace, Liberia has chosen to remain in ECOWAS under the presidencies of Mrs. Johnson-Sirleaf and George Weah. Why has Liberia remained in ECOWAS after its needs for ECOWAS-provided security faded?

In January 2006, Liberia became the first African country to elect a female president and chose to remain in ECOWAS. President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf no longer wanted Liberia to be looked as a “nation in permanent violent turmoil.” She focused on rebranding and opening up Liberia to foreign investments. The world poured billions of dollars of aid into Liberia to support its transition into democracy and to prop up the administration of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, a World Bank economist, feminist, and Nobel Laureate. *The Economist* reported that by 2010, Liberia was receiving about $360 per person in aid per year. A UN mission also kept Liberia’s peace at the price of about $500 million per year. In 2017, Liberia elected George Weah, an ex-global soccer star who campaigned on anti-corruption and pro-poor policies. However, both Johnson-Sirleaf and Weah’s administrations

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were rife with scandals. Additionally, inflation peaked at 29 percent in December 2019. Today, half of Liberians still live below $2 a day, a low level to which the population descended in the 1990s.  

Why did both Johnson-Sirleaf and Weah choose to remain in ECOWAS using security as their justification? In January 2017, at the inauguration ceremony of Nana Akufo-Addo as the president of Ghana, Johnson-Sirleaf said that:

> When ECOWAS was founded about 40 years ago, every one of the 16 countries, with very few exceptions, was under military rule or one-party system. Today, we can say that ECOWAS as a region is the lead in democratic transition. The majority of our leaders today have reached power through the democratic process. We must ensure that there is no roll back. We must make sure that this social dispensation is never lost for we cannot afford to go back to the days of military coups and social unrest.

ECOWAS has been a catalyst for rehabilitation and social reformation in the post-conflict era. It took the lead in expediting institutional development for purposes of peace creation, maintenance, and the rehabilitation of society. The CPA signed in 2003 and facilitated by ECOWAS laid the foundation for peace in post-conflict Liberia, building upon what ECOMOG had achieved in the first intervention. Yet this does not explain how the personal interests of the new Liberian leaders also influenced these decisions to keep the country in ECOWAS.

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478 Chris Kwaja, “The Role of Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS) in Post-Conflict Rehabilitation, (69).
The UN’s involvement in the peace process aided its efforts, granting ECOWAS a new lease on life. Perhaps the most crucial takeaway related to ECOWAS in Liberia is that Liberian political elites faced difficult choices of whether to accept ECOWAS or to fight it. The RECs are legitimated at the ruling elite’s convenience. That is, if they find material or political benefit, then they are on board. In contrast, if the political elites’ interest diverges from ECOWAS, they tend to take an opposing stance.

Johnson-Sirleaf had ties to the old guard that had ruled Liberia until the ouster of Tolbert in 1980. She was born to an indigene Gola father and a mixed-race mother of the Kru group and German blood who culturally “passed” as an Americo-Liberian. She worked for President Tolbert as deputy minister of finance and later as minister of finance. She supported, at least, two rebel movements. She offered logistical and financial support to Charles Taylor in his attempt to overthrow Samuel Doe in 1989. A decade later, she sided with the Liberian United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), a rebel group that was operational from 1999 to the end of Taylor’s government in 2003.479

Johnson-Sirleaf supported an organization that was antagonistic to Doe, whose primary backing was ECOWAS. Doe unabashedly supported ECOWAS under the leadership of the Nigerian military rulers, simply because ECOWAS was then anti-Taylor. Johnson-Sirleaf went against ECOWAS and aligned with Taylor at that time. However, after losing the election against Taylor in 1997, Johnson-Sirleaf

supported a rebel group backed by ECOWAS, which was fighting Taylor during the Second Liberian Civil war. These choices are indicative of switching alliances to these RECs as they support short-term political goals. Further, they reveal a pattern of choices made on political convenience without considering national interests. They show how a regional organization like ECOWAS can get caught up in the domestic politics of a member state, but without providing an enduring security framework.

President Johnson-Sirleaf did not want to prosecute Taylor. She focused on rehabilitating the country, which was on the verge of collapse after 16 years of war. She argued that pursuing justice for Taylor’s crimes would alienate Taylor’s supporters and weaken her government. Some reports have indicated that Johnson-Sirleaf made a deal with some of Taylor’s backers; they supported her electoral campaigns on the condition that she pardoned Taylor.\(^{480}\) However, in 2006, external forces would push Johnson-Sirleaf to a different position. The UN Security Council expanded the mandate of the UN peacekeeping force in Liberia to include the arrest and prosecution of Taylor if he attempted to return to Liberia. Johnson-Sirleaf may have feared Taylor coming back. She requested that he be extradited to Free Town, Sierra Leone. In March 2006, Taylor attempted to escape from Nigeria and was caught and extradited to Sierra Leone. Fearing that Taylor could reorganize himself, Johnson-Sirleaf supported Taylor being tried at the International Criminal Court

(ICC) in the Hague.\textsuperscript{481} Thus, at this juncture, Johnson-Sirleaf relied upon ECOWAS for security reasons. Without the backing of Nigeria, her regime would be weak and prone to attacks from Taylor supporters.

George Weah, who had to select Taylor’s ex-wife, Jewel Taylor, as vice president to win, shows the influence of these elite networks further. Weah wanted to take advantage of Taylor’s popularity in Bong County, the country’s third most populous.\textsuperscript{482} Weah also wanted to distinguish his government from Johnson-Sirleaf’s. He wanted to tap into his extensive network—including his access to some of the Americo-Liberian elites through Ms. Jewel Taylor. The extent of Weah’s success is unknown, but he emerged victorious. Weah, who was 51 at the time, won the second round of the polls with 61.5 percent of votes. He was sworn in as president in January 2018.\textsuperscript{483}

With few exceptions, there is a consensus that ECOWAS’ intervention in Liberia during the first civil war had laudable motives. A similar observation applies to the peace process and the subsequent intervention and peacekeeping operation after 1997. However, the security roles of ECOWAS for Liberia since 2003 are minimal. Liberia did not anticipate the security benefit in 1975 and it was not a primary reason for accession. Still, the security imperative for remaining in ECOWAS highlights the


interests of the political elites, particularly the strengthening of their regimes from rivals, as I illustrate further in the subsequent pages.

_Diplomatic Culture and their Limits in ECOWAS_

The rivalry of French-speaking members of ECOWAS predates the formation of the bloc and has led to the proliferation of several entities within ECOWAS. The case of the West African Economic Monetary Union (WAEMU), which exists as a remnant of the French colonial rule is illustrative. WAEMU was relaunched in 1994 and included former French colonies except for Guinea. It has much narrower but similar objectives and goals to ECOWAS. WAEMU derailed COWAS’s iconic decisions, such as the intervention in Liberia in 1990 and the adoption of a common currency in 2020. In December 2019, French President Emmanuel Macron and Côte d’Ivoire’s leader Alassane Ouattara agreed to change the name of CFA Franc, the currency used by UEMOA members, to the ECO. Many have seen the CFA Franc as not only a cultural imprint of French colonial rule but also an “unofficial system under which France exerted influence over its former colonies in sub-Saharan Africa long after independence.” Although this was true until the introduction of the Euro, it is unclear whether France still dictates terms in French West Africa. It is, at least, clear that France has some say in their domestic issues. The contradiction is that ECOWAS had plans to roll out a common currency for ECOWAS, also named ECO. President Ouattara’s announcement will certainly terminate the efforts of a joint

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currency for ECOWAS, inflaming an already strenuous relationship between the Anglophone and the Francophone camps. For Liberia, the ongoing conflict between Anglophone and Francophone Africa puts it at a precarious situation. It must choose between its largest trading partner, Côte d’Ivoire, and its long-term protector, Nigeria.

Liberia has had a closer relationship with countries in the MRU, its immediate neighbors, than with other ECOWAS states. The MRU was established in 1971 and operationalized in 1973, two years before ECOWAS. Originally, it was a union between Sierra Leone and Liberia, but Guinea acceded in 1980 and Côte d’Ivoire in 2008. The countries of MRU reflect different colonial pasts but share a much closer African heritage. President Tolbert signed the MRU declaration, which among other things, reads:

“We, the Presidents of Liberia and Sierra Leone, desiring to establish a firm economic foundation for lasting peace, friendship, freedom and social progress between our countries, do hereby declare: First, that a Customs Union to be called the Mano River Union shall be established between Liberia and Sierra Leone.”

Although they are historically tied to three different world powers, which has resulted in different official languages, these nations are also bound together by cultural similarities. All three original members are partly comprised of the same ethnic groups, their families extend beyond the borders, and they are all resource-rich

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Before Abidjan’s accession to MRU in 2008, all the countries had low human development index numbers, had weak state capacity, and were prone to conflict. From a cultural and economic standpoint, MRU makes more sense for Liberia than ECOWAS. In MRU, Liberia does not have to confront Nigeria and has a cultural affinity that might bind them together. It makes sense for Liberia to accede to a regional REC like MRU, but there is no economic or security logic for ECOWAS.

_ECOWAS as an Agent for Regime Legitimation and Sovereignty-Boosting_

Why Liberia enlisted and has remained in ECOWAS requires an understanding of how the regimes in the country use international diplomacy for other non-apparent purposes. First, a succession of Liberian regimes has used ECOWAS to legitimate themselves in international forums for both international and domestic recognition. Second, ECOWAS, and other RECs to which Liberia is a signatory, strengthen Liberia’s sovereignty in such a way that Liberia gets the benefits of sovereignty as an independent state, including recognition and aid. The ruling elites then use these hallmarks of sovereignty for the benefits that come with international standing. Third, the RECs extend the neopatrimonial networks of the state as avenues of dispensing political opponents or awarding loyal followers with prestigious appointments. Rather than serve strategic neoliberal or security roles, these RECs serve instrumental roles for political elites who determine national policy for small-economy states.

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488 Terry Mays, Historical Dictionary of International Organizations in Africa and the Middle East (Boulder, CO: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 248

Regime Legitimation

Liberian ruling regimes are often insecure, facing the possibility of ouster from either military coups d’état, violent rebellions, or contested elections. These regimes are constantly looking for legitimation from ECOWAS. Recognition with ECOWAS also signals acknowledgment from the African Union and the international community at large. Second, it elevates their domestic standing vis-à-vis their opponents. There are benefits to international recognition. ECOWAS is like an insurance policy for these regimes. Even if ECOWAS could not save a regime, it can legitimize the intervention of some outside power, like the UN, the French (in Côte d’Ivoire), or the British (in Sierra Leone). Perhaps, this is an important reason the recent peacetime rulers of Liberia would never consider leaving the organization. Tolbert’s regime further illustrates this logic, as I will demonstrate in the following paragraph.

In 1979, Tolbert hosted 48 African leaders and 3,000 delegates at the 16th annual summit of the OAU. Tolbert was chairman of the OAU a year earlier, and part of his agenda was to highlight the power of Liberia as a continental trendsetter. Tolbert wanted to conceal internal fissures that had wrecked his regime’s control of the country. The OAU summit was intended to celebrate Liberia’s rise out of a predicament. Four months earlier, it had been engulfed in food riots. 412 Liberians had died, and $50 million worth of property had been destroyed.\(^\text{490}\) Tolbert had spent $25 million to build a conference center and a world-class hotel, which the country

could not afford. Tolbert wanted to show off Liberia’s sophistication to the rest of Africa while triumphing over a continuing unresolved problem of insecurity. At the ensuing conference, leaders brought up the issue of a pan-African peacekeeping force. There was not an agreement because of concerns of sovereignty, ideological differences, and the cost of financing such an operation.491

The OAU summit of 1979 offers a window to examine how Tolbert used foreign policy to bolster not only Liberia’s sovereignty but also the Americo-Liberian regime. Bolstering the regime using regional entities became a pattern in Liberia and security was a plausible excuse for remaining in these regional entities. It suggests that some of the reasons for which these states accede to these bodies are more complex than previously recorded.

Domestic pressure forced Tolbert to consider regime legitimation through joining several RECs in a span of five years, starting from the MRU in 1971 and hosting the OAU leaders’ summit in 1979. Although President William Tubman was confined to his domestic agenda, partly because he had no viable rivals who questioned his rule, his successor Tolbert was keen on regional politics, but with a different agenda. Tolbert sought an active diplomatic role to bolster his image both at home and abroad. Tolbert was not expected to last as long as Tubman’s successor. He had many challengers who were equally formidable within the ruling True Whig Party (TWP). Some of his competitors included Secretary of State Joseph Grimes and

powerful Speaker of the House Richard Henries. Tolbert proved politically challenging for his opponents. He raised his international image traveling around the continent and giving speeches on African solidarity against western imperialism. Tolbert understood that Africa had changed and distanced Liberia from Washington. His main quest was to assert Liberia’s moral authority in a liberated continent that was leaving Monrovia behind, and one way of doing this was through regionalism.

During his time in government, the Liberian state took initiatives to improve Liberia’s standing in the neighborhood as a pan-African state. Liberia signed the MRU, a REC named after the Mano River and serving as a boundary between Liberia and Sierra Leone. One of the most important achievements of MRU was the construction of the Mano River Bridge, which shortened the distance in travel from Monrovia to Freetown.

The union had only two leaders, Liberia’s William Tolbert and Sierra Leone’s Siaka Stevens. Guinea, another neighbor, did not join the MRU until 1980. Guinea’s Sékou Touré also intended to use the union for regime legitimation, rather than for development. He signed a mutual defense treaty agreement with Tolbert that could be invoked on a needs basis. Touré would send in troops to help stop the rice riots of 1979 that eventually led to Tolbert being ousted. Tolbert was afraid of the increasing unpopularity of the Americo-Liberian ruling elites. Perhaps he thought the

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493 James Ciment, 237

494 Christopher Clapham, 78-79

495 Christopher Clapham, “Liberia”, 78-79
MRU could offer a last line of defense. The same logic would apply for his accession
to ECOWAS as well as Liberia’s hosting of the OAU in 1979. As Tubman’s
accession to the OAU had been done to protect his regime, so was the triangular
alliance of the MRU. Tolbert, Stevens, and Touré all joined and stayed in these RECs
for regime legitimation even as it also added trade activities between the two
countries.

ECOWAS legitimizes its members’ governments internationally by signaling
their hold on power through ambassadors’ or the heads of state’s presence in regional
meetings. The regime of Samuel Doe further stressed the role of foreign backers in
the legitimization of Liberian regimes. Doe utilized regionalism to whitewash his
image. He admired Ibrahim Babangida and saw him as a godfather. He named one
Graduate School of International Relations after Babangida as well as a major
highway in Liberia. Besides Nigeria, he sought close relations with President Joseph
Momoh of Sierra Leone. Momoh and Babangida went to the same military school in
Kaduna at the Nigerian Defense Academy.496 Babangida and Momoh would play
crucial roles in ECOWAS intervention in Liberia, with almost 90 percent of the
budget and soldiers donated by Nigeria in support of Doe.497

Doe’s era began a pattern in Liberian history where foreign powers protected
and legitimated heads of state and governments in Monrovia. Doe had ousted Tolbert
but would later invite ECOWAS to preserve his regime. In ECOWAS, Doe saw an

496 Comfort Ero, “ECOWAS and the Subregional Peacekeeping in Liberia,” The Journal of
Humanitarian Assistance Field Experience and Current Research on Humanitarian Action and Policy,

497 Clement E Adibe, 473
organization that would potentially save not only his regime but also his life. Neither happened as he died while attempting to contact his ECOWAS backers.\footnote{Funmi Olonisakin, “ECOWAS: From Economic Integration to Peace-Building,” in ECOWAS and the Dynamics of Conflict and Peacebuilding (CODESRIA, 2011),11} Although the Doe regime began with great hope and support from most Liberians, it quickly destroyed the fragile economy and turned into an oppressive military regime. Doe also created divisions that paved the way for the Liberian civil war and ECOWAS’ first involvement in Liberia. In the previous section, I showed that ECOWAS did not really contribute to Liberia’s security. It might have stopped the bleeding, but it did not cure the wound. Eventually, the undesired outcome–Charles Taylor’s ascension to power–happened. For regime legitimation, I make the case that ECOWAS was an effective tool for regime legitimation and prop-up. The two things are related but they are not the same. The regimes do not enlist and stay in ECOWAS because of national interest. They use ECOWAS because it serves their immediate short-term political goals.

For example, Doe fostered positive relations with the United States and openly asked for U.S. military aid, even though he ran a police state. He was an important junior trading partner and military ally as Liberia hosted CIA’s most significant facility in Africa. However, his reign was that of terror. He openly executed more people than any Liberian government. Doe killed hundreds of rival ethnic opponents, dismembered the body parts of an ex-ally who attempted to topple him, and even executed 16 members of his cohort, the People’s Redemption Council
A rigged election in 1985 enabled Doe to extend his power for another five years as well as build an extensive patronage network. The United States validated this election on the grounds that a rigged election was better than no election at all. Washington, D.C. was not pleased with Doe’s excesses, but they offered him support when it mattered the most. When Washington’s support was not forthcoming, Doe sought help from ECOWAS.

If there was a Liberian leader who would be exceedingly grateful to ECOWAS, it would be Amos Sawyer. ECOWAS not only made Sawyer president, but it also legitimated and protected his regime in the face of great resistance. Amos Sawyer’s era as head of the IGNU characterized the era of the “interims.” He was the head of state from 1990 to 1994 and was the longest ruler of the ECOWAS-backed regimes. Although Sawyer commanded power and respect in Monrovia’s intellectual circles, he was barely known upcountry. He was sworn in as president outside Liberia, and it was several months before he could safely enter Monrovia. His reign completely relied on ECOWAS support, and he still only controlled Monrovia and its outskirts.

ECOWAS insisted that Sawyer’s IGNU not include any rebel factions, so it could be free from competing rebels. All contesting parties were discredited for their

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499 Benjamin G. Dennis and Anita Denis, Slaves to Racism: An Unbroken Chain from America to Liberia (New York: Algora Publishing, 2008), 112

500 Stephen Ellis, The Mask of Anarchy, 63

501 Stephen Ellis, The Mask of Anarchy, 63–64

participation in the war. Taylor refused to recognize Sawyer as head of state because he saw him as an illegitimate figurehead put in place to quash his ambition to be the leader of Liberia. Sawyer himself was obviously a strong advocate of the ECOWAS intervention. In an interview with African Report, he said: “The Liberian problem is no longer a Liberian problem. It is a regional problem, and the countries of the region are dealing with it as they would deal with their problems.”

These remarks were partly self-serving. ECOWAS sought to and made Sawyer president. They also protected and maintained his government, even though its reach was limited. Sawyer’s regime failed to alter the political landscape. Ordinary Liberians felt that he could not bring them out of the conflict. His government was seen as a government put in place by regional forces and not the Liberian populace. In 1992, the IGNU absorbed at least five rebel factions. Several peace processes ensued even as the military power of some of the rebels waned. Eventually, Taylor accepted a peace process that led to the formation of a five-person transitional government. The conferences in Cotonou 1993 and Akosombo 1994 paved the way for the peace process leading to the Liberian election of 1997. Sawyer’s departure left room for a new peace process facilitated by ECOWAS, the United States, the United Nations, and the OAU.

Taylor’s alliances made regional powers nervous. Powerhouses Nigeria and Ghana were deeply suspicious of him. He had charmed regional leaders such as Félix

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503 Africa Report, March–April, 1991
504 Africa Report, March–April, 1991
Houphouët-Boigny of Côte D’Ivoire and Mobutu of Zaire (present day Democratic Republic of the Congo). Taylor had argued that he was the man to bring peace and order in Liberia. Using his American connections, he had convinced the Carter Center that if he were elected, he could bring peace to the region.\footnote{E. Philip Morgan, 6} Even the Nigerians who had vehemently opposed Taylor softened their stance.

By 1995, the ECOWAS peacekeeping mission was in disarray. The morale of the soldiers dropped as the number of casualties continued to rise. What was to be a short technical mission had turned into a torturous war with no end in sight. The Liberian public grew skeptical of the intentions of Nigerians and the other peacekeepers. The Sani Abacha regime in Nigeria held a peace conference in Abuja in 1995, where Taylor was a crucial player. It was here that a path for the elections of 1997 became a reality. From obscurity, Taylor navigated the complicated ECOWAS circles to emerge a winner out of a process set to block his ascendance to power. In this way, ECOWAS legitimated Taylor as it had Doe and Sawyer previously. Taylor first rejected the legitimacy and the legal backdrop of ECOWAS activities in Liberia. He had finally realized that he had to work alongside, not against, ECOWAS. He did this by participating in peace processes organized by ECOWAS, including participating in an election it oversaw.

Charles Taylor rose out of obscurity and finally got the legitimacy he wanted by winning the elections of 1997, backed by ECOWAS. In fact, an assortment of international actors, including ECOWAS, sponsored and coordinated these elections. Taylor’s National Patriotic Party (NPP), an offspring of his rebel group, won by a
landslide of 75 percent. Taylor’s victory further entrenched his position at the helm of Liberia and triggered the exit of ECOMOG forces.507

Without ECOWAS in Liberia, Taylor finally got what he needed: complete control of the Liberian state and territory. He became the first president since Tolbert without a foreign backer. Liberia became a warlord economy. During his bid for the presidency, Taylor made many enemies. These enemies declared war on him, including the LURD. Taylor’s Liberia marked an increased use of children as combatants, the use of narcotics, and rampant robberies, rape, and murder. The Hollywood movie Blood Diamond offers a fictional version of Liberia under his rule. His opponents grew in number as Liberians returned home from neighboring countries. One such faction was the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), an organization for anti-Taylor dissidents.

The key feature of Taylor’s Liberia was the absence of external force that either intervened or kept Taylor in check. The Liberian government disintegrated as the civil service crumbled. It was a typical case of a “warlord state,” as Philip Morgan has remarked.508 The government existed for the sole purpose of serving Taylor’s wishes; basic services like security and property rights were non-existent. Taylor himself admitted that his government officers “paid themselves” with what they could get.509 He defaulted on 12 peace agreements spearheaded by ECOWAS except for the


508 E.Philip Morgan, 7

one that endorsed his presidency. In some cases, he refuted his own signatures on peace agreements.510

Taylor was ultimately not able to fight off his rebels. In June 2003, the warring factions signed a peace accord sponsored by the UN and ECOWAS in Accra. Under pressure from ECOWAS, especially the influence of Ghanaian president John Kufuor, Taylor promised to resign. He said: “Mr. Chairman, Colleague Heads of States, as a patriot, I am willing to make any sacrifice for my beloved Liberia. And therefore, I say to you all and the people of Liberia that I [will] resign as President of Liberia if my resignation is what will bring peace to Liberia.”511

Although Taylor was promising to resign in Accra, in Freetown, the Special Court for Sierra Leone was indicting him for war crimes in Sierra Leone. ECOWAS heads of state had planned another meeting for that day, but it was rescheduled because of the indictment. A memoir of a Ghanaian diplomat wrote, “There is no way Ghana will arrest Taylor.”512 The diplomatic culture in ECOWAS had no precedent for that. The same day, Ghana airlifted Taylor back to Monrovia, where they arranged his exile to Nigeria. A contingent of ECOMOG fighters was dispatched to Liberia for the second time. The new ECOMOG contingent was operating in conjunction with a United Nations Peacekeeping Mandate and a special UN representative to restore


order in Liberia. This new mission heralded a new interim regime in Liberia. It also signaled the return of regimes fully backed by external actors.

Taylor’s incident shows the diplomatic allure of protection provided by African RECs. In dire times, and having been legitimated as a leader, political elites can find cover from threatening incidents, like Ghana arresting another head of state while he was its guest. A leader also finds ready-made exit plans, as did Taylor when Nigeria offered to host him even though he was a fugitive of the international community. After Taylor agreed to step down, Gyude Bryant led Liberia’s sixth transitional government from October 2003 to January 2006. His regime was put in place by ECOWAS and backed by a battery of international players concerned with the peace process of Liberia. Bryant was the popular choice of the three major factions, MODEL, and Taylor’s NPFL. According to Cyril Allen, chairman emeritus of Taylor’s party and principal negotiator during the Accra peace talks, “Bryant did not have enough time to make any significant impact, but the role he played was the role he should have played, to transition the country to democratic elections.”

Bryant’s government officers were loyal to the factions they represented, not to the state. His legitimacy lay in the eyes of the ECOWAS and the UN mission in Liberia, not the Liberians. The rebel Liberian factions were an exception. In a speech to the 59th United Nations Assembly in 2004, he thanked regional leaders for their support: “We remain immensely grateful for the role of South Africa and ECOWAS for providing regional leadership in the search for peace in Liberia. The pivotal roles

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played by both the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Republic of Ghana deserve special commendation.”

Bryant successfully led the country to the election of President Johnson-Sirleaf who advocated pro-democracy values through ECOWAS. She placed democracy at the center of post-conflict Liberian politics. ECOWAS later took on democracy as a norm in the region. At her inauguration, attended by regional leaders such as presidents Olusegun Obasanjo (Nigeria), John Kufuor (Ghana), Tejan Kabbah (Sierra Leone), Blaise Compaoré (Burkina Faso), Amadou Touré (Mali), Faure Gnassingbe (Togo), and Thabo Mbeki (South Africa), President Johnson-Sirleaf thanked ECOWAS for its commitment to the Liberian peace process. She further expressed the commitment of her regime to ECOWAS by saying:

Our foreign policy will take due cognizance of the sacrifices and contributions that have been made to restore peace, security, and stability to our country. We will therefore work to be a responsible member of sub-regional, regional, and international organizations, including the Mano River Union, ECOWAS, African Union, and the United Nations. We will do all that we can to honor our obligations, past and current, and enforce all international treaties to which our country has subscribed.

President Johnson-Sirleaf did not change much in Liberia’s foreign policy. Threatened by the possible return of ex-warlord Charles Taylor, she colluded with the Nigerians to send Taylor to The Hague. This enabled her to avoid having Taylor tried in Liberia, where there was a remote possibility of his acquittal and regrouping his

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army for another round of civil war. It was not ECOWAS, but actors within it, who brought about Taylor’s arrest and prosecution. Nigerian leader Olusegun Obasanjo handed over Taylor after the United States criticized Obasanjo for hosting an international war criminal. Even though Johnson-Sirleaf was democratically elected, she still relied on regional actors within ECOWAS to protect her regime. She secured her country through the UN mission put in place because of the diplomatic actions of ECOWAS.

**Sovereignty-Boosting Aspects of ECOWAS**

As in the case of other West African states, there is insufficient evidence that Liberian leaders are committed to a form of regionalism that erodes absolute sovereignty. Instead, the political elites in Liberia use the REC to promote, rather than reduce, absolute sovereignty. “Sovereignty boosting” refers to the process of shallow regionalism for domestic purposes, in contrast to the kinds of deep regionalism that might transfer some sovereign rights to a regional body in a foreign capital. All RECs are not equal or even similar. They fall between regional (intergovernmental) cooperation and regional integration (supranational) entities. Regional cooperation involves cooperation at the state level and aims to solve

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collective action problems often limited to the economy, politics, and security.\textsuperscript{519} Deep integration focuses on the establishment of all-encompassing regionalism. It is acquired through the establishment of supranational institutions with delegated responsibilities and powers to make collectively binding decisions, potentially including collapsing the existing national boundaries. “Shallow regionalism” arises from neo-functionalism. The central tenet of neo-functionalism is the idea of the spill-over effect, which argues that integration in one sector will beget further integration in other areas.\textsuperscript{520} Stanley Hoffmann’s liberal governmentalism suggested that national governments should control the levels and speed of regional integration. Hoffmann also argued that an increase in power at the supranational level is driven by national governments as dictated by the prevailing economic conditions.\textsuperscript{521}

In the case of Africa, the pursuit of regionalism follows from states’ weakness and internal security dilemmas to reinforce sovereignty. Sovereignty-boosting implies a game of rhetorical and symbolic regionalism, but with little follow-up or implementation.\textsuperscript{522} In Liberia, the authority of the state had been limited to settler

\textsuperscript{519}Tanja A. Börzel, “Comparative Regionalism: European Integration and Beyond,” in Handbook of International Relations, ed. Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, and Beth A. Simmons (London, UK: SAGE, 2013),503


\textsuperscript{521}Andrew Moravcsik, The Choice for Europe: Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 17

areas and did not extend into the interior until 1945. Starting from the 1970s, the ability of the state to project its power over the national territory came into question through riots, then a coup, and subsequently, two civil wars.\textsuperscript{523} Liberia broadcasts its sovereignty over its territory because of the perennial challenges to the authority of the state. The local and continental RECs, including ECOWAS, MRU, and the OAU, offered opportunities for Liberian leaders to attend conventions with other leaders where the Liberian flag would be flown, and the anthem played. While looking over past ECOWAS heads of states summits, I realized that no Liberian head of state has ever missed an ECOWAS summit.

At face value, these acts signified Liberia’s commitment to regionalism and integration. Still, they were performances of a diplomatic culture to reinforce Liberia’s membership in the international society. The domestic political structure of countries such as Liberia necessitates a reaffirmation of their sovereignty from the collapsing state that they find themselves in.\textsuperscript{524} In short, for Liberia, ECOWAS serves the purpose of reproducing, consolidating, and legitimizing the state and the leaders serve this purpose by attending conventions and conferences of the relevant RECs.

Sovereignty-boosting within ECOWAS is restrictive, representing the national interest as the interest of government leaders, ranking civil servants, and influential bilateral and multilateral donors. In other words, the state is not the state, but rather a


\textsuperscript{524} Börzel Tanja A. and Thomas Risse, eds., \textit{The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Regionalism} (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2016), 278
“neopatrimonial interest group or a postmodern mafia syndicate.”

States like Liberia are weak in many cases, incapable of providing public goods. To save face, they place heavy emphasis on the formal understanding of sovereignty, exercising sovereignty through fixation on borders, the principle of non-interference, and non-intervention. This way, they exaggerate the principle of sovereignty to protect the often ‘kleptocratic’ regimes that control domestic politics. Pierre Englebert makes this case most pointedly in his work State Legitimacy and Development in Africa.

Under the leadership of William Tubman, Liberia’s concern was maintaining national independence and avoiding entanglement with the colonial powers of Britain and France. To that end, Liberia has historically taken positions that affirm “non-interference” in the internal affairs of other states as articulated by the OAU. The most important Liberian diplomatic initiative of the post-independence period was the Monrovia Conference of 1961. The conference brought together independent African states who were alarmed by Pan-Africanists. The Pan-Africanists, represented by Ghana’s Kwame Nkrumah, had argued for the creation of the “United States of Africa” as a strategy to dispel neocolonialism. William Tubman and his allies,

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526 Fredrik Söderbaum, “Modes of Regional Governance in Africa: Neoliberalism, Sovereignty Boosting, and Shadow Networks”, 424


529 James Ciment, 209
including Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie, affirmed the principle of sovereignty, which was confirmed in the Treaty of Addis Ababa in 1963. The Monrovia camp questioned the viability of an African federation on a cultural and historical basis. Instead, they championed a systematic integration formulated through economic and regional partnerships. Regional organizations, in their view, were a promising alternative that could preserve the status quo and not diminish the influence of their newfound sovereignty. Nkrumah, on the contrary, was pushing for rapid integration in the early days of independence, implying the end of sovereignty for individual states. Yet the new OAU ratified the sanctity of sovereignty and the organization as an appendage of the idea of sovereignty, rather than an actual pursuit of continental unity.

The OAU Charter was a document of compromise conceived mostly as an intergovernmental institution emphasizing respect for sovereignty and non-interference in internal matters. It focused on political partnership and cooperation at regional levels. Nevertheless, Tubman took no active role in African diplomacy. Tubman was already in his seventies and disliked flying. As such, he attended few OAU conferences and did not attempt to take up leadership roles in the organization, even though he was one of the most senior leaders on the continent at the time.

530 Christopher Clapham, 78


534 Christopher Clapham, 78
During Tolbert’s era, Liberia’s foreign policy diversified to include continental outreach as a strategy for regime legitimacy. Before his big “OAU party” of 1979, Tolbert made Liberia signatory to the treaty that established ECOWAS. ECOWAS promotes economic integration while affirming non-interference and sovereignty of constituent states. West African citizens expected ECOWAS to mirror the success of the European Common Market, but the leaders were keen to protect their sovereignties. The desire to steer Africa toward supposed economic growth, pan-African rhetoric, the diplomatic culture of regionalism, and regime and sovereignty-boosting influenced Tolbert to join ECOWAS.535

Tolbert intended to reaffirm Liberia’s moral authority as a sovereign state in a liberated continent that had seemingly passed Liberia by without taking any notice of it. The Washington Post reported that “Tolbert staked much on his first OAU summit in Monrovia.” Tolbert spent $25 million on the conference center and a hotel complex.536 Nowhere was sovereignty-boosting more demonstrable than in Liberia under the Taylor regime. The New York Times article, “Hunting for Liberia’s Missing Millions” records how Taylor ran the state like a mafia family. The country’s leading timber company sent tax payments to Taylor’s private account rather than the national treasury. Taylor is quoted as saying, “[The] country is at war. This is our remedy.”537 After the end of his kleptocratic regime, Taylor used ECOWAS to buy time and


536 James Ciment, 237

negotiate for his exit using the argument of sovereignty. Although the United States pressured Taylor to be charged and convicted for war crimes, ECOWAS leaders did not agree. They requested that the international community respect Liberia’s sovereignty and Africans’ ability to solve their problems. President Obasanjo said, “We in the subregion should be encouraged to formulate solutions to our problems, the international community, the UN and the Security Council should support us to implement them.”

When ECOWAS decided to change its agenda to security, its legal protocol only anticipated the inter-state, and not intra-state, conflicts. The protocol had emphasized sovereignty-boosting, as was the case with MRU. ECOWAS had no legal authority to interfere in the internal affairs of sovereign republics, a fact which made the peacekeeping operation of ECOWAS contestable. Many critics pointed out that the OAU’s charter included the principle of non-interference. However, Nigeria and its allies argued that non-interference did not apply when it came to gross human rights violations.

ECOWAS functioned as a broadcaster of the sovereignties of small-state economies. Liberia is a prototype of a weak state first eroded by privileged elites and second by the ambitious and self-serving political class. These groups either used the armed militia or foreign actors to acquire and maintain their power. It is this feature

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539 Abdel-Fatau Musah, ECOWAS and Regional Responses to Conflicts, 153

of Liberia that most convincingly explains why the country has remained in ECOWAS despite the incongruous economic alignment.

**ECOWAS As Reinforcement of Liberia’s Neopatrimonial Networks**

By extending the so-called ‘national’ interest of a specific ruling elite, RECs in Africa tend to entrench and extend the neopatrimonial networks of small-economy states. The narrow agenda of sovereignty-boosting and regime legitimization force states such as Liberia to confine the plan to a balancing act. Although these networks created by RECs are not new, they are perpetuated and facilitated by forums such as ECOWAS, OAU, and MRU, where leaders meet regularly. During the Doe regime, it became increasingly difficult to separate government officials from criminal syndicates. A government taskforce to recover debts to the government revealed that most debtors were government officers, including army officers close to the president. Foreign creditors pushed and funded the idea of an audit because Liberia’s national credit score was plummeting. It revealed that the entire system of government rested on corruption syndicates with networks all over the globe but especially based in West African capitals.\(^{541}\)

Charles Taylor further accentuated and leveraged these international connections for personal gain. Taylor used his contact with Libyan leader Gaddafi to convince exiled Liberians, including Johnson-Sirleaf, and businesspeople of different nationalities, that he had the best chance to defeat Doe and reclaim Monrovia. He also offered new political networks that would be broader and more lucrative than Doe’s.

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Taylor forged relationships with the old guard of African politics such as Mobutu, Ivorian leader Konan Bédié, and others. Similarly, he had an international fighting force at NPFL, which was representative of an integrated West African elite class. For example, Taylor’s chief of operations, Mohamed Adams, was a Ghanaian national. The deputy of the nefarious Anti-Terrorist Unit was Abu Soleimani, also a Ghanaian. The first vice president of NFPL was Kukoi Samba from the Gambia, and many of his troops held Burkinabè passports. In this way, Taylor regionalized his force, but for pilferage and destruction, not for rebuilding Liberia. His efforts reflected a broader pattern of Liberia’s political elites’ ambitious efforts to navigate the intersections of commercial and political networks and the profits that accrue by controlling these networks through the regionalized and domestic clientele.542

RECs also operationalize networking sessions for regional elites formed out of regionalized meetings. For example, Côte d’Ivoire’s president Henri Konan Bédié made money from commercializing his dealings with various rebel factions in Liberia.543 Some Ivoirian officials owned rubber plantations in rebel-controlled territories in Liberia. Similarly, Guinean officials also made diamond deals with ethnic Mandingo leaders in Liberia with links to Senegal and Mali. Additionally, high-ranking Guinean officials may have been linked to the smuggling of “blood diamonds” to Sierra Leone during the war. ECOWAS’ intervention was an opportunity for regional elites to speed up the mafia-like extortion of Liberia that was


exacerbated by the civil war. The intervention had been personalized and corrupted, just as the states that make up ECOWAS.\textsuperscript{544}

Even Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf has not been immune from accusations of nepotism. President Johnson-Sirleaf was appointed as the Head of the ECOWAS observation mission for the Nigerian election of 2019.\textsuperscript{545} Before that, she had served as the chairperson of ECOWAS heads of the state assembly. Although her qualifications for these positions are not contested, the fact that her administration was known for rampant nepotism raised eyebrows. The BBC reported that, at one time, she had appointed up to 20 members of her family to government posts.\textsuperscript{546}

ECOWAS’s role for Liberia is, among other things, one of regime legitimation, sovereignty-boosting, and extension of neopatrimonial networks. Liberian rulers have also used the local RECs to reward loyalists or minimize the threats of potential political rivals. These REC memberships let Liberia accumulate diplomatic positions to reward close relatives and loyalists. A good example is the case of Edwin Snowe, who was appointed ECOWAS’ parliamentary committee chair on political affairs.

Mr. Snowe is an ex-son-in-law to Charles Taylor, whose ex-wife, Jewel Taylor, is serving as the Vice President of Liberia. Mr. Snowe had been elected Speaker of the National Assembly from 2006 to 2007 and was ousted due to charges of corruption. During Taylor’s rule, Snowe served as the head of Liberia Petroleum Refining


\textsuperscript{545} ECOWAS, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf calls for Peaceful, Free and Fair Elections, March 9, 2017, https://www.ecowas.int/31160/)

Cooperation, where he was charged with misappropriating $1 million from the coffers. Snowe’s appointment by ECOWAS’s speaker, Sidi Tunis, was lauded by current president George Weah, who is said to have backed it.\textsuperscript{547}

Figure 4.3: Flow chart summarizing how Liberia uses ECOWAS.

ECOWAS roles for Liberia

- Promotes economic development
  - Inhibited by extractive trade structure
  - No Strong Impacts since 1975
  - It is still the most stated role for ECOWAS

- Enhances security
  - ECOWAS intervened in Liberia twice
  - The interventions strengthened and reinforced struggling regimes
  - The security roles are useful but short-term. Had unintended consequences, e.g., election of Charles Taylor

- Leaders use ECOWAS to legitimate themselves internationally
  - Doe invites ECOWAS
  - Amos Sawyer is protected by ECOWAS
  - Taylor gets to power through an ECOWAS election
  - Johnson-Sirleaf promotes ECOWAS democracy

- Sovereignty-signaling
  - Liberia is weak, and ECOWAS exaggerates its sovereignty
  - Broadcasted sovereignty enhances access to private gains such as appointments, aid money for ruling elites

- Neopatrimonial networks
  - Extension of crony elite and family pacs
  - Entrenched control of the state for private use by regional elites
Conclusion

From the outset of his regime in 1971, Tolbert was starting to feel the pressure to act as an autonomous African ruler, and not some extension of America’s presence in Africa (the Tubman posture). He joined the local African “club” (ECOWAS) that his neighbors were creating. It did not threaten his position in power and, in fact, reinforced his legitimacy; it gave benefits at no cost. Tolbert probably had little expectation of economic benefits but was ideologically committed to African solutions. Doe, for his part, had little domestic legitimacy, but being recognized and accepted by ECOWAS helped him solidify his regime. In his hour of need, he begged ECOWAS to save him and his regime. The data shows that ECOWAS did nothing for Liberia’s economy from 1975 to 1989. See Figure 4.3 illustrating a summary of key arguments.

From 1990 to 1997, ECOWAS played a direct security role in Liberia, and this benefited the internationally-recognized rulers who came from elite classes. Afterward, ECOWAS played a more indirect role in securing the fragile regimes that followed. For Johnson-Sirleaf, ECOWAS was a useful political resource, even though it did almost nothing for Liberia’s economy. It deterred any potential coup-makers, who would have feared Nigeria’s overbearing influence. Let us recall that Nigeria (ECOWAS’ muscle) returned to a democratic experiment in 1999, and Nigeria would want to have protected Johnson-Sirleaf and encouraged democratization. This also applies to the EU and the American NGOs. They are also stakeholders in these RECs. The idea of ECOWAS support for a female Liberian president fascinated the international community. They pumped foreign aid into Liberia and propped
Johnson-Sirleaf up as both an example of excellence and a testament of what Africa could be in the future. The glory of ECOWAS from the intervention was not lost to the public eye. A fulsome embrace of ECOWAS by Her Excellency and vice versa could only have been expected, even if ECOWAS has done little or nothing to boost the Liberian economy.
CHAPTER FIVE: NAMIBIA AND THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY (SADC)

Introduction

This chapter discusses Namibia as a case study of a small-economy state that acceded to a regional economic community (REC), even though it would potentially gain less economically than its relatively more prosperous neighbors. Namibia is a member of the SADC alongside two of Africa’s economic giants South Africa and Angola, and the populous Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). SADC is the richest REC in Africa per capita and benefits both from the diversified economy of South Africa and Angola’s petrodollars.\(^\text{548}\) This chapter examines four hypotheses as to why Windhoek joined SADC in 1990 and then remained in the organization ever since. The chapter explores the possible economic, security, social, and political imperatives for Namibia’s choices.

Namibia is a perfect case study of RECs and small state economies for three reasons. First, Namibia is a newly independent state, gaining self-rule from South Africa in 1990 (See Figure 5.1 for a map of Namibia). As was the case with South Sudan, Africa’s newest state, I analyze why Namibia chose to join SADC despite having a long-standing association with the South African Customs Union (SACU). Second, Namibia is a coastal state. Therefore, it did not join RECs to escape the predicament of being landlocked. Third, it is an outlier compared to the previous case

studies of South Sudan and Liberia. Namibia is a small-economy state only because of its neighborhood. The World Bank considers Namibia an upper-middle-income country because of its relatively high per capita income. Still, the size of its economy pales in comparison to even landlocked Zambia and sparsely populated Botswana. Its economy is also 27 times smaller than that of South Africa. Like the other case studies in this dissertation, I ask the following questions: why did Namibia initially join SADC? What does Namibia gain economically by staying in SADC and not switching to SACU? How does Namibia’s membership benefit the country’s elites, and are their rewards economic, political, or psychological?

\[549\] IMF indicates that the GDP for Namibia was $14,368 billion. South Africa on the other hand, had a GDP of $385 billion for 2019 figures.
This chapter starts with a brief history of Namibia’s political economy, followed by testing the economic logic of the RECs as tools of trade and development. I find that the economic reasoning for Namibia in SADC is relatively weak, considering that Windhoek does well in SACU, and analysis of SADC’s security regime follows. Although there is a history of military cooperation for some SADC members, such attempts are not in line with the prevailing peace since the end of apartheid. I end by examining the social roles of these RECs for Namibian

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550 World Atlas Physical map of Namibia showing major cities, terrain, national parks, rivers, and surrounding countries with international borders and outline maps.
regimes. I indicate that Namibia does have cultural grounds to be in SADC. Still, Namibia’s cultural ties pale compared to the power and opportunities provided to elites by its continued membership in SADC. Lastly, the chapter analyzes the arguments centered on the potential diplomatic reputations and solidarity politics within SADC.

The Origins of a Dependent Economy: Namibia Under German and South African Rule

Namibia’s economic history is tied to Germany and the Republic of South Africa. Both countries occupied it as a colony. The establishment of Namibia as Germany’s colonial outpost can divide into the concessionary period beginning in the 1860s and direct colonial rule starting in 1884. During the concessionary era, the Germans acquired natives’ lands by private companies, often through dubious agreements with local elders.\(^{551}\) Representatives acted without formal approval of the German state in amassing swathes of agricultural land. Businessman Adolf Lüderitz signed concessions with local Nama and Herero chiefs, leveraging protections from rival communities.\(^{552}\) Through Lüderitz, Namibia became vital to Germany’s imperial possessions. However, Germany’s economic interest in Namibia included short-term calculations involving land speculation, not industrial investments.\(^{553}\) By the end of the 1880s, Namibia was not turning profits for these speculators, and many

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\(^{553}\) Jeremy Sarkin, 74

In the Christmas season of 1884, German Chancellor Otto Von Bismarck played host for the Berlin Conference. Europeans wanted to subdivide Africa in the next decades according to their interests and geopolitical ambitions. Bismarck wished to establish the rules for the partitioning of Africa in the ensuing “scramble for Africa.”\footnote{555}{Steven Press, Rogue Empires Contracts and Conmen in Europe’s Scramble for Africa (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 239}

Germany planned to use its colonial holdings to relocate excess population in industrial Europe.\footnote{556}{Jeremy Sarkin, Germany’s Genocide of the Herero: Kaiser Wilhelm II, His General, His Settlers, His Soldiers (Cape Town, South Africa, SA: UCT Press, 2011), 237}

Economic activities intensified as copper and diamond mining started booming in 1890.\footnote{557}{Marion Wallace, History of Namibia From the Beginning to 1990 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 116–120}

Germany established a robust colonial presence in Namibia with a new capital city of Windhoek. The colonialists relegated natives to the “native reserves” from 1898 onward, as European fortune seekers expropriated all Herero land and prevented them from keeping cattle.\footnote{558}{Marion Wallace, 219.}

The Germans passed laws that restricted the movement of native people and barred them from the German-settled areas called the “Police Zone.”\footnote{559}{Suresh Chandra. Saxena, Namibia Challenge to the United Nations (Pretoria: State Library, 1982), 3}

The “Police Zone” refers to two-thirds of the total area of Namibia, mainly in the south in which German – and later South African
– colonial administrators established effective European-style police and government presence starting from around 1900.\textsuperscript{560} The local chiefs in the police zone became tied to the German polity through coercion and manipulation.\textsuperscript{561} The colonialists’ plan for Namibia included, among other things, plans for a new Germany in tropical Africa.\textsuperscript{562}

The Herero and their allied ethnic groups resisted German colonial rule. This resistance led to the Great Resistance War of 1904-08, during which the Herero and Nama genocide occurred.\textsuperscript{563} German troops systemically killed approximately 110,000 people of the Herero and the Nama ethnic groups. The genocide was the first of the twentieth century and offered opportunities for Germany to experiment with techniques that later influenced the Jewish Holocaust.\textsuperscript{564} The indigenous populations, including but not limited to the Herero and the Nama, lost their land, property, and finally lives. General Lovan van Trotha led a campaign that starved off the people, including women and children, instituted forced labor, and banished survivors to the desert. Trotha’s campaign had the tacit approval of German public opinion.\textsuperscript{565}


\textsuperscript{561} Marion Wallace, 163

\textsuperscript{562} Reinhart Koessler, \textit{Namibia and Germany: Negotiating the Past} (Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2015), 51.


\textsuperscript{564} Jeremy Sarkin, \textit{Germany’s Genocide of the Herero}, 21

\textsuperscript{565} Helmut Bley, \textit{South-West Africa under German Rule: 1894–1914} (Evanston, IL: North-Western University Press, 1971),159.
The Herero genocide was a means to get Namibians’ occupied land. The intent was to create Germany in Africa, and the Herero were in the way. Like other European powers, Germany wanted a colony to settle excess population, expand their industrial markets, and colonialism was a fashionable thing that major European states were doing. After 1908, Namibia became a settler society with a German-dependent mercantilist economy. The pattern of German colonization of South West Africa was like that of other colonial powers of Africa, but it was unique in other respects. The German colonial officers believed that Africans were equal to animals, with no right to property. Germany allocated half of all arable land for German settler farmers. The African residents became contract laborers and German settlers left the northern parts of Namibia, at the border with Angola, as reserved native lands.

By 1913, the mercantilist economy associated with the German colonial state employed 90 percent of all adult Black males within the “police zones”—more than 12,500 on farms and nearly 10,000 in the mining sectors. The Germans also employed migrant laborers, especially the Ovambo from Angola. They numbered about 12,000. At this point in its colonial history, Namibia was profitable for the Germans. By the end of German rule, nearly all Black were worse economically

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566 Jeremy Sarkin, *Germany's Genocide of the Herero*, 51


and more reliant on the European wage-based system for everyday goods and services than ever before.⁵⁷⁰

Though German rule in Namibia was relatively brief, it had a devastating effect on indegenes’ prospects for economic development, leading to their eventual pursuit of advancement through South Africa after independence. The brutal wars against the local communities severely reduced the working-age population, forcing the Germans to turn to forced labor. The expropriation of the land deprived the natives of access to grazing land and rents from minerals. Most importantly, the loss of cattle limited food sufficiency and offset the economic balance. The denial of education for natives further undermined Namibia’s potential to charter its economic trajectory or participate meaningfully in the new mercantilist economy. Consequently, the German colonization laid the foundations for Namibia’s economic dependency on external actors, even as it introduced the country to the international political economy.⁵⁷¹

Following World War I, the League of Nations entrusted South Africa with the administration of Namibia in 1919.⁵⁷² White-rulled South Africa extended its control to the country’s northern communities with the aid of the Portuguese rulers of

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⁵⁷² Marion Wallace, *History of Namibia From the Beginning to 1990*, 217.
Angola. South Africa was built on the economic framework it inherited from the Germans with two objectives. The first was to create permissible conditions for Afrikaner settlement. The state incentivized the process by granting access to South African citizenship, subsidies for farmers, technical assistance, and supportive infrastructure development. The second objective was to attract foreign capital to exploit Namibia’s rich mineral resources. The state opened doors for external investments, capital flow, and land ownership. The state then derived revenues from taxes levied on profits, taxes, and saved money from the low-paid labor of the Black Africans. In sum, South Africa intended to link Namibia inextricably to its economy as a subservient source of exports.

South Africa’s role under the League mandate was to safeguard indigenous rights, and in this respect, Namibia was not legally a colony of Pretoria. Instead, it was a territory under which the mandatory power had a duty to promote political, economic, and social progress. Indeed, this is what the African Namibians had in mind at the end of German rule. They had hoped that South Africa would solve their grievances against the Germans. However, it turned out that they had substituted one imperial master for another. Indigenous people lost even more land to the Afrikaner

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574 Tekaligne Godana and John E Odada, 252

Voortrekkers and remnant Germans.\textsuperscript{576} In 1922, native land ownership was at 11 percent of the total but dropped to less than 4 percent by 1946. Close to 90 percent of all arable and ranch land was under the control of White settlers. German absentee landlords, numbering close to 6,000, maintained ownership of lands from the locals who had no agricultural and grazing lands.\textsuperscript{577} The government heavily subsidized White ranchers but discouraged natives from keeping cattle. On July 25, 1925, the South African Union government approved a constitution that permitted Namibia’s limited self-government. However, the internal government applied only to White settlers.\textsuperscript{578}

Following World War II, the UN made Namibia a trusteeship territory under Chapter XII of the UN charter in 1946. South Africa responded by rejecting this position in 1947 and 1948 and extending the representation of White settler legislators at their legislative houses in Cape Town. In November 1953, the UN established a committee to supervise South Africa’s administration, but South Africa refused to cooperate. The UN warned South Africa against delay in handing over Namibia to the UN. South Africa refused to obey the UN’s directive, and the matter went to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) three times, in 1949, 1955, and 1956.


\textsuperscript{577} Susan Glover, 30

\textsuperscript{578} Henning Melber, “Shadows of the Past,” 17
The ICJ ruled that territory should be under the International Mandate exercised by the UN.579

In October 1966, the UN general assembly terminated South Africa’s mandate in Namibia. It further declared the territory to be under the direct control of the UN. The UN Ad Hoc Committee for South West Africa recommended the following: “practical means by which South Africa should administer South West Africa to enable the territory to exercise the right to self-determinism and achieve independence.”580 South Africa responded in 1969 by claiming that Namibia was its sixth province. In 1970, South Africa’s actions led to its suspension from the UN, triggered by the apartheid policies and a forceful takeover of Namibia.

Economically, South Africa exploited Namibia’s abundant mineral resources, including diamonds and uranium deposits. South Africa also exported its racist political system of apartheid to Namibia.581 Under South African rule, White immigration rose, and by 1936, there were twice as many European immigrants as there had been under German administration (31,200 compared to just 15,000 in 1914).582 The increase in European immigration correlated to the increasing poverty of indigenous ethnic groups, as South Africa intensified Black discrimination by limiting opportunities for Black Africans. For example, Black employees would make

579 Dunia Prince Zongwe, *International Law in Namibia* (Langaa RPCIG, 2019), 250


roughly one-tenth of a White employee with the same skill and experience level.\textsuperscript{583}

South Africa’s long rule exacerbated institutionalized racism, the disempowerment of Namibian ethnic groups, and entrenched economic dependence on South Africa.

\textit{South West Africa People’s Organizations (SWAPO) and Namibia’s Liberation}

South Africa’s refusal to grant self-rule to Namibia led to resistance from Namibians. Nationalists from Namibia sent petitions to the UN seeking to end South Africa’s illegal occupation.\textsuperscript{584} The Herero Chiefs Council first formed the South West African National Union (SWANU) in 1959. Later, in April 1960, Ovambo migrant workers in Windhoek and the country’s mines created the SWAPO, which became the most potent organization to resist South African occupation.\textsuperscript{585} The ideological connections shaped in the struggles were the ingredients for the coalition of states that formed SADC. SWAPO became an armed liberation group, much like South Africa’s African National Congress (ANC), Zimbabwe’s ZANU, and Mozambique’s FRELIMO.\textsuperscript{586} Namibia’s independence movement triggered a range of alliances of the Frontline States (FLS), a predecessor to SADC. At first, beginning in 1964, SWAPO’s exile camp was in Tanzania, enjoying the support of Julius Nyerere’s Tanzania African National Union (TANU). Other bases were in southern Zambia.
under the protection of Zambia’s ruling party United National Independence Party (UNIP), led by Kenneth Kaunda, and Botswana.\textsuperscript{587}

From 1970, it was mostly Angola’s Popular Movement for Liberation of Angola (MPLA) that became a host and sponsor of most SWAPO fighters.\textsuperscript{588} MPLA backed SWAPO, led from the outset by Sam Nujoma. MPLA was an officially Marxist-Leninist organization that received support from the Soviet Union beginning in the 1960s and from both the Soviet Union and Cuba at the hour of independence in 1975.\textsuperscript{589} After that, Angola became a launching pad for SWAPO’s guerilla attacks inside Namibia against South African installments. By 1977, the MPLA asserted itself as Angola’s government but had not defeated its rivals soundly.\textsuperscript{590}

The conflict between MPLA and Jonas Savimbi’s National Union for Total Independence (UNITA) dragged on for almost three decades. UNITA was a splinter group from National Front for Liberation of Angola (FNLA), a Zairean-supported Angolan nationalist movement. The war also attracted international attention, serving as a surrogate battleground for the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. It became a protracted internationalized conflict involving Cuba, Zaire, China,

\textsuperscript{587} Godfrey Mwakikagile, 110


\textsuperscript{589} Elizabeth Schmidt, \textit{Foreign Intervention in Africa: from the Cold War to the War on Terror} (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2013), special focus on chapters 4 and 5 on War and Decolonization in Portuguese Africa and another on White Minority Rule

\textsuperscript{590} Luregn Lenggenhager, 94

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and South Africa.\textsuperscript{591} The tripartite accords, an agreement signed by foreign ministers of Angola, Cuba, and Namibia in 1988 at the UN headquarters in New York, ended Cuba’s intervention in Angola and scheduled South Africa’s withdrawal, setting the path for the independence of Namibia. Further, the agreement reinforced MPLA’s bond with SWAPO, planting the seeds for future cooperation with SADC.\textsuperscript{592}

\textit{From the Frontline States to SADC}

Namibia’s history with SADC parallels the country’s history with anti-apartheid politics. A group of allied southern African states had supported the collapse of apartheid and the advent of democracy in South Africa loosely since the mid-1960s and formally since 1975.\textsuperscript{593} The FLS included Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The FLS found it difficult to disengage economically from apartheid South Africa, even as they disagreed with the racist ideology of its government. Moreover, some of the FLS, namely Botswana, Swaziland, and Lesotho, were also in the powerful and South Africa-dominated SACU.\textsuperscript{594}

The Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) developed as a reaction to the reality of independence for the FLS and the

\textsuperscript{591} Mats R Berdal, \textit{Greed & Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars}, (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publisher, Inc, 2000), 47

\textsuperscript{592} Elizabeth Schmidt, 126


\textsuperscript{594} Olivier Basdevant, Belmacio Benicio, and Yarbol Yakhshilivikoz, “Inequalities and Growth in Southern African Custom Union (SACU) Region” (Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund, 2012), 4
perpetuation of apartheid in South Africa.\textsuperscript{595} The Lusaka Declaration of 1980 formally transformed the FLS into SADCC, including the following nine founding members: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The states mentioned above sought both to stimulate their economic development and to reduce their dependency on South Africa. Tanzania and Zambia had already attempted to reduce South African infrastructure’s dependence on the SADCC countries by constructing the Tanzania–Zambia Railway (TAZARA) between 1970 and 1975. In the event South Africa imposed sanctions on Black-ruled states in Southern Africa, then the TAZARA railway, funded by the Chinese government, would be the lifeline for landlocked Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Malawi.\textsuperscript{596}

The Lusaka Declaration of 1980 was titled “Southern Africa: Toward Economic Liberation.” Among other things, it recognized the dependence of member states on South Africa’s infrastructure. The SADCC approach differed from the common markets and customs unions pursued by the West African States (ECOWAS) and SACU. Its development projects “aim[ed] at the reduction of economic dependence not only on the Republic of South Africa but also on any single state or groups of states.”\textsuperscript{597} Instead, SADCC adopted “sectoral programming,” which

\textsuperscript{595} Trudi Hartzenberg and Gavin Maasdorp, “Regional Integration Arrangements in Southern Africa: SADC and SACU,” in \textit{Trade Reform and Regional Integration in Africa} (Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund, 1997), 433


\textsuperscript{597} Samir Amin, Derrick Chitala, and Ibbo Mandaza, eds, 9.
focused specialization for specific states in specific sectors. SADCC committed to lessening supply-side restrictions on the economy. The key components included low corporate borrowing rates, looser business regulations, deregulation, and trade relations that reduce tariff rates for member states. The states would achieve this through inter-governmental cooperation on industries ranging from infrastructure development to human resources.

There were essential links between SADCC countries and South Africa, which bound the SADCC countries to South Africa, even as they pursued economic independence from Pretoria. Culturally, seven of the nine SADCC countries were members of the Commonwealth of Nations, English-speaking, and had a history of British colonialism. Economically, South Africa had huge investments, particularly in mining, in some member countries, especially the SACU states and Namibia. Angola and Tanzania had no direct commodity transactions with South Africa, but they would have experienced trade flow disturbances if they had broken trade relations with South Africa. In addition to the existing trade networks, there were (and remain) physical infrastructural links, including roads, railways, hydropower plants, and ports. Simply put, South Africa’s economic capacity was a necessary lifeline for trade in Southern Africa.

Six of the original members, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, are landlocked and had no viable options besides trading through

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599 Padamja Khandelwal, “COMESA and SADC: Prospects and Challenges for Regional Trade Integration” (Washington, D.C.: International Monetary Fund, 2004), 12
South African ports. Heads of governments in the Southern Africa region agreed to transform SADCC into the SADC, focusing on regional integration and economic development, in Windhoek, Namibia, in August 1992. Although SADCC concentrated on the liberation of southern African states and reduced dependency on South Africa, SADC’s objectives focused on regional development and integration of Southern Africa. Currently, members of SADC include latecomers such as Mauritius (1995), the DRC (1997), Seychelles (1997–2004, joined again in 2008), Madagascar (1997, readmitted in 2008 after suspension). Namibia, Botswana, Eswatini (Swaziland), and Lesotho share a joint membership in both SADC and SACU, which complicates the economic rationale of SADC because SACU is already a custom union and de facto currency union.

In August 1994, South Africa became the eleventh member of SADC. South Africa joined in, signaling the end of apartheid as well as complementing SADC’s economic programs. At the time of adhesion, South Africa’s economy was three times SADCs combined. Its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was many times the average of its neighbors. South Africa’s history of industrialization, migrant labor policy, and infrastructure development has profoundly affected the socio-economic and political relations in SADC. South Africa continues to dominate in a changing

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600 Derrick Chitala, “The Political Economy of SADCC and Imperialism's Response,” 21-23
601 Trudi Hartzenberg and Gavin Maasdorp, 442
global context with new opportunities and challenges for small-economy states in the region.603

As discussed above, Namibia’s political-economic history is one of enduring economic dependence upon South Africa from a long colonial history started by the German settlers. Yet Namibia’s ruling party, SWAPO, has long-standing political ties with other independent majority-led countries whose ruling parties supported Namibia’s pursuit of majority rule. Since it gained independence, Namibia has promoted a liberal, mixed economic model that has encouraged foreign direct investment and economic growth while also attempting to address the legacies of apartheid.604 Still, dependency on South Africa and solidary commitments to FLS states are critical for Namibia’s regional foreign and economic policy. Going forward, I examine the economic rationale for Namibia’s association with SADCC and then SADC.

*The Economic Rationale for Namibia’s Participation in SADC*

This section reviews Namibia’s economic motives for joining SADC and for remaining in SADC since 1992. It also evaluates why Namibia enlisted in SADC when it was already in the functioning and well-organized SACU and the economic results of those choices. SACU is the oldest REC in Africa, originating in 1889, and it

603 Jan Vanheukelom and Talitha Bertelsmann-Scott, “The Political Economy of Regional Integration in Africa” (Maastricht, Netherlands: European Centre for Development Policy Management, 2016), 12

has been functioning as a customs and monetary union since 1921.\textsuperscript{605} SACU has had some tangible economic benefits for Namibia, as I demonstrate below. The post-independence era in Namibia has maintained low but steady growth in per capita income. Since the early 1990s, average GDP growth has been higher than what used to be the case during the colonial period (see Table 5.1). The growth arises from the opening of two new diamond mines, an extension of coastal waters by getting sovereignty over Walvis Bay, and expanding government services.\textsuperscript{606} Real GDP grew 5 percent from 1991 to 1992, contracted 2 percent in 1993 due to collapsing diamond prices, and expanded again by 7 percent in 1994 and 5 percent in 1995.\textsuperscript{607} The country had a GDP of $2.786 billion in 1990 at independence, which has grown to $14.52 billion by 2018. GDP per capita was $1944 in 1990, and now it is at $5,930.\textsuperscript{608} Namibia’s Human Development Index (HDI) in 1990 was 0.579, but that has improved to 0.645 by 2018, which is high for a sub-Saharan African country. The average in the region is 0.547.\textsuperscript{609}

\textsuperscript{605} Trudi Hartzenberg and Gavin Maasdorp, 442

\textsuperscript{606} NL Happe et al., “Recent Economic Developments” (Washington, DC, USA: IMF, 1997), 4

\textsuperscript{607} NL Happe et al, 58

\textsuperscript{608} IMF, “Report for Selected Countries and Subjects,” International Monetary Fund: Data and Statistics, October 2018

Yet “Namibia is a rich country with poor people,” according to Namibian political economist Henning Melber. The structural legacy of settler colonial rule concerning export economy and gross economic inequalities created by the colonial policies led to persisting social disparities. HIV has also remained a challenge in the country, affecting almost 14 percent of the population by 2010. Although the number of European-descended citizens in Namibia was close to 100,000, between 15,000 and 20,000 economically influential German-speaking Whites dominate Namibia’s economy. They own most of the commercial lands and hold concessions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>GDP Per Capita Growth (Annual percentage growth since 1980)</th>
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<td>1980</td>
<td>6.10</td>
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on the country’s mining and fishing industries.\textsuperscript{614} Deutsche Welle (DW) reported in 2018 that whites owned over 50 percent of commercially viable land while Black or mixed-raced citizens owned only 16 percent.\textsuperscript{615}

Despite its demonstrable progress since 1990, Namibia is still a country of two extremes.\textsuperscript{616} On the one hand, the White minority and a small group of Black elites enjoy the first-world economy; on the other hand, Namibia is a low-income country with widespread unemployment and high poverty levels. Frustrations are high outside the ranks of the elite. The country’s poverty rate stood at 15.5 percent in 2019 compared to 37 percent in 1992, and the unemployment rate was close to 34 percent compared to 19 percent in 1990.\textsuperscript{617} In 2011, Namibia was the third most unequal society globally, despite the economy growing at 4.3 percent over five years. Inequality has been pervasive, even as some elite Black Namibians accumulated wealth and stakes in the economy since gaining independence.\textsuperscript{618}

\textsuperscript{614} Henning Melber, 1


The extraction of minerals for export and fish processing drives the Namibian economy. Mineral mining accounts for 12.5 percent of the country’s total GDP but earns more than half of the country’s foreign exchange earnings. Namibia has plentiful precious alluvial diamonds, as well as marine diamonds. The Namibian government has attempted to add value to the diamond mines at home to increase manufacturing. It has done this through Namibia Deserts Diamonds (NAMDIA), a state-owned company born out of an agreement between the Namibian government and diamond giant De Beers corporation in 2016. Diamonds made up 20 percent of total exports in 2007, up from 11 percent in 2003. They account for 10 percent of GDP, 40 percent of revenue share, and 7 percent of annual government revenue share. In 2018, mining contributed to 14 percent of Namibia’s GDP. Uranium contributed about 1.5 percent. The mining sector percentage in 2008 was 17.2, about 5.9 percent of the GDP. There are two main uranium mines in operation, the China National Nuclear Corporation’s Rössing mine, and China General Nuclear Power Corporation’s Hasab Mines.

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619 Alec Crawford, Jessica Mooney, and Harmony Musiyarira, IGF Mining Policy Framework ASSESSMENT: Namibia.” (Windhoek, Namibia: International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD, 2018), 1


621 SACU, “Namibia Annex” (WTO, 2008), 9

622 Alec Crawford, Jessica Mooney, and Harmony Musiyarira, IGF MINING POLICY FRAMEWORK ASSESSMENT: Namibia, 5

As discussed above, Namibia has witnessed both poverty and affluence. The legacies of German and South African rule have deeply structured the Namibian economy. South Africa is now its leading trading partner both in SACU and in SADC. Today, the country relies heavily on the export of extractive minerals. This dependence manifests in its membership in SACU, an organization I further explore next.

SACU is the oldest existing customs union in the world and the most advanced in the continent. It links the Namibian economy to South Africa, providing a common external tariff and a common excise tax.\textsuperscript{624} According to an agreed formula, the revenues collected are deposited to South Africa’s National Revenue Fund, which then redistributes them. The SACU revenue has historically constituted a large part of Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, and Swaziland’s revenues (BLNS).\textsuperscript{625} Lesotho, Namibia, and South Africa have a common monetary area (CMA) linked to South Africa’s Rand. This arrangement’s benefits included a low and stable inflation rate for the relatively less developed countries and a guarantee of foreign exchange reserves.\textsuperscript{626}

SACU is profitable for Namibia, and it makes economic sense to remain a member. Receipts have increased from N$507.5 million in the financial year of 1990/91 at independence to N$2.9 billion in 2000/2001 financial year, a fivefold increase in revenue. The amount accounted for 25 percent of the total revenue of the

\textsuperscript{624} World Trade Organization, “Trade Policy Review Body: Southern African Custom Union” (WTO, 2003), vii

\textsuperscript{625} World Trade Organization, 2

\textsuperscript{626} World Trade Organization, 2
state in 1990/91. The receipts for 2019/2020 show a staggering amount of N$18.9 billion, representing 28 percent of the total state budget of N$66.5 billion from SACU revenues. In 2017, internal-SACU imports amounted to $13.8 billion, and Namibia was the leading importer of goods from other SACU countries, accounting for 30 percent compared to South Africa’s 23 percent. Intra-SACU exports amounted to $14 billion, dominated by South Africa, which accounted for 71 percent of total exports than Namibia’s 13 percent (see Table 5.2).

Table 5.2 SACU Revenue Shares 2014/15-2018/2019

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<td>18.1</td>
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<td>18.6</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>19.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eswatini</td>
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<td>6.2</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>-16.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesotho</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>-8.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Namibia</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>-10.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>43.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forecast CRP</td>
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<td>84.2</td>
<td>86.7</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>93.3</td>
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% Share of CRP

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<td>22.2</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>21.3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eswatini</td>
<td>8.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesotho</td>
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<tr>
<td>Namibia</td>
<td>20.8</td>
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<td>44.9</td>
<td>45.2</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>47.1</td>
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Because SACU is economically viable for Namibia, this sharpens the question of why it is worth it for Namibia to have remained in SADC, especially because these

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two RECs have different provisions, goals, and product coverage. The returns for a relatively small economy like Namibia’s are meager.

**Possible Benefits to Namibia of SADC Membership**

This section traces some of the benefits that Namibia potentially accrues from its membership in SADC. Before independence, SWAPO had attended SADC conferences as an observer, illustrating the region’s interest to bring Namibia into the fold.⁶³¹ SADC had been necessary to President Nujoma’s government as a possible way to get out of the stagnating economy he had inherited from South Africa. In 1988, the real GDP of Namibia had been lower than it had been in 1977. The real GDP had declined by 23 percent between 1980 and 1990. Unemployment was at a high of 33 percent.⁶³² Before independence, South Africa embarked on privatizing its holdings in Namibia to deny capital and resources to the incoming government. It also facilitated capital flight from Namibia and weakened Namibia’s leverage during negotiations for independence.⁶³³ Nujoma had thought that SADC would assist Namibia to get out of that economically subordinate position.

President Nujoma regularly reiterated the principle of mutually beneficial relations between Namibia and SADC during visits to and from SADC member states. In July 1990, during a state visit by Botswana’s President Quett Masire, which

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⁶³³ Hartmut Krugmann, “Fundamental Issues and the Threats to Sustainable Development in Namibia” (Government of Namibia, 2001), 30
marked the first visit by a foreign head of state to Namibia, Nujoma stated that Botswana had useful knowledge and expertise for Namibia. Still, Namibia had natural resources and a vast coastline. Nujoma argued that Namibia and Botswana should complement each other. Nujoma reiterated the same theme in 1990 in Lusaka, where he asked Zambia’s leader Kaunda to support agricultural expertise and support. At Zimbabwe’s trade fair in 1991, Nujoma championed mutual relations and increased trade relations through joint tourism marketing. Nujoma zeroed in on diplomatic policies that facilitated the continuity of relationships forged during the liberation struggles while highlighting Namibia’s need for skill, technical expertise, and bureaucratic experience.

In August 1992, Namibia hosted a SADCC summit that welcomed South Africa into the group (after apartheid) and changed its name to SADC. President Sam Nujoma articulated some of the achievements of SADCC for Namibia and why Namibia was committed to the organization. President Nujoma said that “Namibia remains fully committed to SADC, and recognizes that membership in this economic grouping with a population of over 70 million assures easy access to a large market for [Namibia’s] export products… Furthermore, [Namibians] see SADC as featuring in its investment and development programs, and thus providing the best opportunity

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634 Peya Mushelenga and Jo-Ansie van Wyk, 62

635 Office of the President (Namibia) Statements by H. E. Sam Nujoma, President of the Republic of Namibia, March 1990 – March 20, 1995. (Windhoek: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1999), 32

636 Office of the President, 94

637 Office of the President 1999, 94
for satisfying the basic needs and aspirations for [it’s] people.” He sold Namibia as vital to SADC because it provided an expanded market.

Yet Nujoma acknowledged that Namibia was going to make sacrifices. In his 1992 address to SADC heads of states, he said: “In the short term, national governments may have to be prepared to accept initial losses of revenues and that inefficient sectors would become vulnerable to competition. But such painful measures may be necessary [because] they result in stronger economies.”

Indeed, in the years following independence from 1991 to 2001, Namibia continued to depend on South Africa for imports. The manufacturing base was modest, but the country benefited from duty-free export to Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, and South Africa–members of SACU.

Trade within SADC was a “work in progress” with the objectives of strengthening infrastructural links. To establish Namibia as a vital port for SADC countries, the Namibian government constructed the Trans-Kalahari highway linking Walvis Bay with Gaborone, completed in 1998. Namibia also built the Trans-Caprivi highway, which linked Walvis Bay port to Lusaka, Zambia, in 1999. The two projects stimulated trade within the SADC region for the landlocked states in the bloc. This

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increase did not change Namibia’s fundamental reliance on the “Rainbow Nation,” however.641

Namibia is still grossly dependent on South Africa, and as trade records show, trade patterns have hardly changed from 1990. It exported primary products to mostly non-African countries such as Belgium, China, France, Netherlands, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and the United States, except South Africa.642 South Africa was also a source of imports for the economy.643 Mining, especially diamonds, dominated exports, accounting for over 55 percent of exports in 2001, compared to 41 percent in 1997. Other exports included fish, live animals, meat, beverages, and foodstuff. In 1997, Namibia exported goods worth $561.3 million to SACU members of which South Africa accounted for $520.3 million. In 2001, Namibia exported $380.4 million in total, but $308.5 million went to South Africa.644

Namibia’s intra-African trade demonstrates dependence on and ties to SACU, especially South Africa. In 2018 Namibia exported and imported goods to and from Africa to $2.4 billion and $5.4 billion, respectively. South Africa accounted for 61

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642 The latest available country-specific data shows that 84% of products exported from Namibia were bought by importers in: China (25.6% of the global total), South Africa (16.9%), Botswana (10%), Belgium (7.4%), Spain (4.8%), Zambia (3.8%), United Arab Emirates (3.4%), Democratic Republic of Congo (3%), Italy (2.4%), Netherlands (2.3%), France (2.2%) and the United States (2.1%), Daniel Workman’s, http://www.worldstopexports.com/namibia-top-10-exports/


percent of the total value of Namibia’s African trade. However, trade with Zambia, a fellow SADC member, doubled from 2017 to 2018. Zambia now accounts for 18 percent of Namibia’s total trade value while Botswana’s 13 percent and the DRC’s 2 percent. Trade with South Africa declined by 1.2 percent from 2017 to 2018. Additionally, 76 percent of Namibia’s African exports go to South Africa, and 19 percent to Zambia, the DRC, and Angola. Including countries outside Africa, the destination for Namibian goods included China (20 percent), South Africa (17 percent), Belgium and Botswana (8 percent each), and Spain (6 percent). The EU received 25 percent of total exports from Namibia, SACU received 25 percent, SADC (non-SACU) 8 percent, and COMESA 8 percent. The country re-exported commodities from Zambia, including copper, other ores, fish, live animals, beverages, natural minerals, and stones. The economic value of Namibia’s trade with SADC, simply stated, is not present.

Namibian President Hage Geingob was elected chairperson of the heads of governments for SADC in 2019. In his status report, President Geingob stated, “our review of the status of integration in SADC reveals that implementation has progressed well, notwithstanding some challenges.” President Geingob listed


646 Tralac Trade Data Update (3)


several SADC achievements, such as the SADC Free Trade Area (FTA) signed in August 2008. He also cited the regional payment system for cross-border transactions known as SADC Real-Time Gross Settlement (SADC RTGS) in 2013.649 The SADC RTGS is an automated interbank settlement system that settles payment obligations between participating banks in real time for SADC countries. It has been operational since 2014. The President also listed the Southern African Power Pool (SAPP) opening, which is a combined grid for all its members. It is notable, however, that Angola, Malawi, and Tanzania failed to ratify this agreement. President Geingob reported that SADC has ongoing discussions of an African continental FTA to solve the overlapping membership issue.650

On trade, the SADC FTA was signed in 2008, allowing for tariff-free imports into the SACU region from other SADC countries. However, Angola, the DRC, and Seychelles have not yet honored the FTA, and Namibia’s trade numbers within SADC are small, corresponding to its status as a small-economy state. For example, SADC accounts for an average of 2 percent of Namibian exports.651 In January 2021, SADC - excluding SACU members–imported 10 percent of Namibia’s exports due to the high demand for fish. Countries with significant impact in SADC were Zambia

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650 Kizito Sikuka, “SADC Regional Integration Agenda on Course but More Needs to Be Done – Geingob,” Namibian Economist

and the DRC. Despite the FTA, intra-SADC trade remains at a small percentage of 10 percent compared to within the EU at 40 percent. On average, 90 percent of the volume of SADC trade is with external countries. Moreover, South Africa dominates the intra-regional trade within SADC because of the differences in economic development levels and homogeneousness of the economies.

Some SADC’s achievements are commendable. However, Namibia could likely still achieve the same goals by fostering bilateral agreements with member states. Similarly, Namibia could use its membership in SACU to negotiate for infrastructural development projects with member states. In 1990, Namibia had the sixth-highest manufacturing output per capita of $205, nearly double the regional mean. The manufacturing industry was mostly in food processing, as it has been since 1990. Manufacturing accounted for 13 percent of GDP in 1992, and by 2017, it had shrunk to about 12 percent of GDP, even as exports of primary products increased. Namibia’s trade patterns do not indicate an economic advantage for participation in SADC. Although trade volumes are increasing slightly, as indicated by Zambia, much of Namibia’s economy relies on SACU, not SADC. Economically, SADC does not make much sense for Namibia, at least in the short term. Thus, this section has demonstrated that the productivity of SACU dwarfs SADC’s economic purpose for

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654 Christopher Hope, Developmentalism, Dependency, and the State Industrial Development and Economic Change in... Namibia since 1900 (S.l., Switzerland: Basler Afrika Bibliograph, 2020), 77
Namibia. I explore SADC’s security role in the next section to find out more viable reasons for Namibia’s rationale for joining and remaining in SADC.

Security Roles of SADC for Namibia

SADC has the second most active security organs among Africa’s RECs, after ECOWAS. President Hage Geingob has stated that SADC’s peace and security framework has successfully prevented multiple post-election conflicts in the region.655 SADC’s Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections have helped stabilize politics in the DRC, Eswatini, Madagascar, Malawi, South Africa, and Zimbabwe.656 Rwandan President Paul Kagame attended the SADC heads of government meeting in Windhoek in August 2018 and lauded SADC for its security efforts. President Kagame, attending as the chair of the African Union (AU), commended SADC “for paying close attention to security and stability within the region [and] even beyond.”657 From Kagame’s statement, it may seem evident that SADC has an excellent record of security as a critical hallmark of its agenda. However, a closer examination of SADC’s security imperatives, especially for smaller states, reveals otherwise.

SADC’s security role is complicated and does not make sense for Namibia today. As a de facto one-party state with over 30 years of stability, Namibia no longer

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655 “Statement by His Excellency Dr. Hage Gottfried Geingob, President of The Republic of Namibia And Chairperson Of SADC,” Ist Mid-Year Coordination Meeting (July 8, 2019).


needs external assistance. External assistance to SWAPO was necessary during the White minority rule to help Namibia achieve independence. Nevertheless, after Zimbabwe’s and Namibia’s independence and the end of apartheid, there are no foreseeable external threats to these states that warrant a security community.\footnote{Anne Hammerstad, “Domestic Threats, Regional Solutions? The Challenge of Security Integration in Southern Africa,” \textit{Review of International Studies} Vol. 31, No. 1 (January 2005), 74} I illustrate this further below.

Some White nationalists feared that majority rule would lead to a bloodbath. In the 1970s, the White leaders of Southern Africa labeled the liberation movements as “communists,” and they also argued that the liberation movements represented an onslaught against Western civilization. President P. W. Botha argued for a “total strategy” to combat the Soviet-backed ANC. In the end, the majority rule did not sever Western influence in Southern Africa, and there was not a blood bath. There are two reasons for this. First, after his victory, Namibia’s leader Sam Nujoma said that “there are no losers in elections,” and they would be able to “enjoy the fruits of freedom.”\footnote{Rogers Southall, 138} Mugabe did the same thing in the 1980s. As he argued in 1980, “Whites were still on top economically, but the Black Zimbabweans would not make them suffer.” Mandela took this commitment further. He transformed South Africa into a “rainbow nation”\footnote{Archbishop Desmond Tutu was the first person to call South Africa “the rainbow nation”. It’s a reflection on the fascinating diversity of SA, not only in the identities of its people but in the landscapes, wildlife, cultures, and activities it offers. South Africa is a country which, because of its variety, can be all things to all people, truly a rainbow of varied opportunities and experiences.} of racial equality and engineered South Africa’s return as the

\footnote{Archbishop Desmond Tutu was the first person to call South Africa “the rainbow nation”. It’s a reflection on the fascinating diversity of SA, not only in the identities of its people but in the landscapes, wildlife, cultures, and activities it offers. South Africa is a country which, because of its variety, can be all things to all people, truly a rainbow of varied opportunities and experiences.}
h egemon in regional politics. Second, there was visible encouragement from Western countries, which wished to draw the region closer to the West. Western nations did not want a confrontation between South Africa and the FLS, so they encouraged SADC to emphasize regional security after majority rule. From this standpoint, Namibia was connected to SADC’s security aspirations, even though an external threat—apartheid South Africa—was already eliminated.

As highlighted by the foreign ministry, Namibia’s national security platform calls for a collective effort at security management. It highlights “the promotion of security domestically, within [the] neighborhood, and in the global arena.” Namibia’s collective perspective arises from the country’s ruling party orientation from pre-independence. At independence, SWAPO had 27 missions abroad, including 12 within Africa. SWAPO offices dotted the capitals of the F.L.S., the precursor to SADC. Many of the political and security issues enshrined and articulated in SADC morphed into Namibia’s security policy at independence. Adriana Hull Lins de Albuquerque and Cecilia Hull Wiklund have described a “liberation legacy,” which has created a shared experience and unity that continues to shape its foreign policy. To a high degree, Namibia’s independence was possible because of the efforts of the

661 Rogers Southall, 138
662 James Sideway, Imagined Regional Communities: Integration and Sovereignty in the Global South (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2003), Act two, SADC.
664 Andre du Pisani, “Namibia’s Foreign Relations and Security Policy, 369
665 Adriana Hull Lins de Albuquerque and Cecilia Hull Wiklund, 2
FLS and SADCC. For the most part, the security plan for SADC was the attainment of South African Black majority rule in Southern Africa, and by 1994 that had been achieved. Hence, the security reasons that made Namibia accede in 1990 vary from those that have made it remain in SADC.

Upon securing independence, Namibia faced foreign and domestic security challenges. One of the most pivotal regional security issues was the Namibian state’s territorial integrity related to South Africa. South Africa had controlled Namibia’s main seaport, Walvis Bay, and an offshore island formation called the Penguin Islands. Walvis Bay did not constitute part of the settlement drawn under the United Nations Security Council Resolution 435 of 1978, which prescribed Namibia’s independence process that finally unfolded in 1989. Walvis Bay remained under Pretoria’s control because the Western Contact Group states (the United States, Germany, Britain, France, and Canada) outmaneuvered Namibia on South Africa’s behalf. The port was of strategic and security value in 1978 when the Cold War was still ongoing. South Africa benefited from this resolution as it was a pro-Western state. Namibia claimed sovereignty over Walvis Bay in the 1990 constitution. A bilateral negotiation between Namibia and South Africa led to joint administration of the port in 1992 without Namibia’s full control.

In 1993, Pretoria ceded to pressure from the ANC and Pan African Congress Party (PAC), leading to formal recognition of Namibia’s claim over Walvis Bay.667


667 Andre du Pisani, 372
The Walvis Bay diplomatic situation was not resolved by SADC but rather through a bilateral agreement involving Windhoek and Pretoria. The absence of a critical role for SADC in the Walvis Bay negotiations exposed the organization’s paucity of diplomatic clout besides piling pressure for majority rule in Southern Africa. The Walvis Bay issue was not a security issue per se. Rather it was a diplomatic issue that had security implications had South Africa refused to concede Walvis Bay. It is difficult to determine whether SADC would have had the wherewithal to confront South Africa militarily on behalf of Namibia.

In 1992, Botswana, a fellow SADC member, claimed sovereignty over the fluvial island of Kasikil, also called Sedudu Island, which is about 2 square miles on the River Chobe. The island is of economic significance because of its tourism potential, freshwater, and natural beauty. The colonial treaties between Germans and British were not conclusive on the boundary issue. Botswana claimed sovereignty over the land, as did Namibia. The conflict almost led to a full-blown military confrontation as the two countries stationed troops on both islands in 1991. A bilateral attempt at solving the issue has not been successful.668 Robert Mugabe was called in to mediate between the two countries on behalf of SADC, but without much success. SADC launched the Organ for Politics, Defense, and Security (OPDS) in 1996 in Blantyre, Malawi to support security and the maintenance of the rule of law.

in the region. The OPDS became part of the SADC treaty. However, the treaty did not lead to a settlement between Namibia and Botswana. Both countries agreed to resolve the ICJ issue, where the court ruled in favor of Botswana’s claim in 1999. Namibia accepted the ruling, marking another incident where SADC’s diplomatic apparatus needed rescue by an international system. The fact that it took the ICJ to solve a boundary dispute that was first undertaken by a reputable SADC member, Zimbabwe, exposes SADC’s weak security institutions.

SADC has strengthened its security apparatus to respond to both conflicts and human security concerns, especially the HIV pandemic that has devastated Southern Africa. The SADC region remains the most affected region by HIV globally, which is the main threat to the region’s security. The UNAIDS Global Report of 2010 reported that 34 percent of people living with HIV/AIDS were citizens of SADC, comprising an estimated 13.4 million people of the 16-member organization. By 2014, HIV prevalence among adults aged 15 to 49 years was 14 percent. SADC established the HIV/AIDS unit by the secretariat, which monitors the SADC HIV/AIDS Strategic Framework as an intervention to reduce the devastating impacts of HIV/AIDS in SADC states. SADC does not really help in controlling HIV/AIDS.

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670 Andre du Pisani, 375


As a country, Namibia’s security challenges are primarily internal. Namibia was racially stratified at independence, and there was a real prospect of a security issue arising from White supremacists refusing to cede control to SWAPO in 1990. Instead, Mishake Muyongo’s Caprivi Liberation Army waged an insurrection in 1999 aiming at secession for the Caprivi strip from Namibian territory, citing the mistreatment of minority Lozi people. Namibia inherited the Caprivi problem from the predecessors of the state. It posed a severe challenge to SWAPO’s attempt at regime consolidation. Caprivi was a result of arbitrary colonial boundaries decisions between Germany and Britain, which created a panhandle allowing Germany to access the Zambezi River. SWAPO was never fully able to consolidate the Caprivi region, leading to refugees flowing to neighboring Botswana. As of 2017, eight men were still on trial for treason related to the insurrection of 1999. Besides that, Namibia has been stable internally, and there has not been a cause for alarm that would require SADC’s intervention. The Caprivi problem was a situation in which SADC’s security organ could have stepped in for Namibia. SADC did not help with this potentially destabilizing situation, and it demonstrates its inability to confront emerging security concerns.

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673 Andre du Pisani, 372

674 The Caprivi strip is a geographical salient protruding from the north east corner of Namibia and extending Namibia such that it borders Zambia and is close to Zimbabwe by about 100 miles. German colonizers wanted this strip to access the Zambezi river.

SADC’s security protocol addresses human security issues and responds to subregional conflict through peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding initiatives. The Mutual Defense Pact (MDP) is a crucial document that legally guides SADC’s peace operations. It requires states “to consider the development of a collective security capacity and conclude a mutual defense pact to respond to external military threats.” But the MDP on paper is different from the MDP in practice. States have intervened on individual terms and not as a collective. In the DRC civil war from 1996 onwards, Namibia joined forces with Angola and Zimbabwe to intervene to aid President Laurent Kabila’s government in 1998. It continued this support to Joseph Kabila to fight off a war waged against him from a combined force of Uganda, Rwanda, and internal rebels.

SADC gave cover for unilateral interventions, but it did not intervene collectively. South Africa served as a useful mediator by playing neutral. Namibia has also been involved in Lesotho’s political crisis, especially the mediation efforts following the electoral crises in 1998 and 2014/2015. In addition to the protocol, SADC also has an Early Warning System, a regional peacebuilding center, and the SADC Standby Force, often regarded as the most sophisticated among the African

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678 Dorina A. Bekoe, 1
Standby Force initiatives advocated by the AU. However, the Standby Force has never gone into action in the SADC region.

SADC’s efforts toward security have not been apparent whether they were SADC’s operation or if they were domestic agendas of specific states. For example, military and diplomatic actions taken by South Africa have often elicited skepticism that such efforts represent the collective decisions of member states. South Africa and Botswana’s contentious military engagements in Lesotho (1998), Zimbabwe, Angola, and Namibia (1998) were unjustified as SADC operations. Moreover, the regional response to the Congo war generated a debate on African RECs’ exact role on peacekeeping because it pitted members of two RECs (EAC and SADC) against each other in what was supposedly a peacekeeping mission undermining collective actions. Although the EAC did not endorse Uganda and Rwanda’s mission in the DRC, it was still a distasteful situation. It is fair to say that SADC’s poor track records in collaborative decision-making and the convoluted peace process have hampered the REC’s legitimacy as a peacemaker. Moreover, they made enemies for Namibia, as indicated above in the DRC where Namibia intervened without a consensual agreement of all MDP signatories.

In sum, Southern African security challenges, especially Namibia, are mostly intra-state, and the state has shown the capacity to handle its domestic problems

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680 Dorina A. Bekoe, 5

681 Dorina A. Bekoe, 8
without external intervention. In the last 30 years, Southern Africa has progressed from being a hotbed of wars to become one of the most peaceful regions in Africa, partly due to the hegemonic position of South Africa than the security competence of the regional REC. Challenges may result from social unrest and human insecurity emerging from unresolved legacies of settler colonialism, especially in Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Namibia. There is no indication that Namibia, which faces no real external threats from non-SADC members, is in SADC for security. Security considerations play a minimal role in Namibia’s decision to remain in SADC. This ideological logic can be unmasked through southern African states’ tendency to subsume national sovereignty with a specific regime’s right to rule. Therefore, instead of asking what SADC does for Namibia, we should ask what SADC means for SWAPO, Namibia’s ruling party.

Political Roles of SADC for Namibia and SWAPO

In this section, I make the case that Namibia’s enlisting and remaining in SADC requires an understanding that SWAPO has constructed Namibia’s “national interest” to align with what is, in fact, SWAPO’s regime interests. That is, SADC performs the political role of entrenching the SWAPO’s government as the legitimate representative of the Namibian cause. SADC also reinforces the bond formed during

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682 Anne Hammerstad, 87


684 Anne Hammerstad, 87
the struggle against apartheid rule in Namibia. Thus, SWAPO keeps Namibia in SADC for political reasons as opposed to economic or security purposes.

Roger Southall has written how liberation movements in Southern Africa have captured the state in several countries. He cites the example of ANC that has transformed the state by deploying party personnel to essential institutions of state to control the state apparatus. For example, President Jacob Zuma stated explicitly, “We place our premium on the involvement of our [ANC] cadres in all centers of power.” R. W. Johnson’s concept of “exclusive nationalism” offers explanatory logic as to why SWAPO’s agenda becomes synonymous with Namibian “national interest.” Johnson describes exclusive nationalism as the “just and historically necessary conclusion of the struggle between the people and the forces of racism and colonialism.” Johnson continues to say that exclusive nationalism leads to two conclusions. First, sins committed by the revolutionaries are excusable. Second, the parties and their regimes become the representation of the oppressed people’s oneness, also called “the general will.” The nationalists demand respect, rendering dissent as a rebellion against the state. For SWAPO, popular support cobbled up with slight authoritarianism ensures legitimacy through regular and consistent elections. Johnson’s framework also reveals that the liberation parties’ disingenuous efforts are simply powered grabs and maintenance of their regimes.

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685 ANC 99th Anniversary on January 8, 2011 from Roger Southall, 136

686 Rogers Southall, 4


688 Rogers Southall, 4
There is a blurred distinction between party and state in Southern Africa. Nevertheless, this practice of deployment of officious party loyalists is not exclusive to South Africa. It is also at the heart of liberation parties in Namibia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Angola, and even Tanzania. All these countries are still ruled by the parties that took them to independence in one form or another. There are specific characteristics that make it relevant to the ex-settler states. The political economies of South Africa, Namibia, and Zimbabwe were White-dominated. The Black subjects were subordinate and lacked the skills to run the economy. Namibia had been subject to White economic dominance through Germany and South Africa, a factor that ignited a desire for redistribution of wealth. SWAPO did not settle for the Africanization of the state, and they wanted to transform the state. How they transformed the state necessitated reorienting their foreign policy, even as their trade patterns remained the same.

Why SADC Makes Sense for Namibia and SWAPO

The putative purposes of Africa’s RECs are economic imperatives. Advocates for these RECs are quick to point out the desire and determination to increase intra-African trade as their driving force. However, there is scant evidence that these

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689 Rogers Southall, 136

690 Rogers Southall, Democracy in Africa: Moving Beyond a difficult legacy (Cape Town SA: HRC, 2003), 141

RECs have led to economic growth through intra-regional trade, especially for small states such as Namibia. Instead, empirical evidence shows that SADC is weak as an economic engine. The security contributions are also dubious. Few RECs have taken security positions firmly rooted in collective efforts from their pertinent RECs. Devoid of tangible economic and security benefits, SADC serves the following complex diplomatic roles: sovereignty-boosting, regime legitimation, strengthening diplomatic alliances that were formed during the independence struggle, and celebrating the founding leader Namibia as a Pan-Africanist. Consequently, SADC helps with important socio-diplomatic purposes for Namibia.

The first argument explains why Namibia acceded to SADC in the first place. I utilize anti-apartheid politics as Namibia’s obvious motivation for doing so. The explanation as to why Namibia has remained in SADC is multipronged. Collectively, Namibia remains in SADC because it depends on South Africa economically and is keen on finding alternative trade and diplomacy options. Second, the reputational damage would be dire for a regime with a long history of pan-African solidarity rhetoric if it decides to leave SADC. As a small state, Namibia is looking to ramp up its presence in regional geopolitical calculations that sometimes oppose the positions taken by South Africa. SADC offers the opportunity to act without seeming aggressive.

*Why Namibia Acceded to SADC*

The relationship between SADC and SWAPO centers on the shared history of struggle against colonialism. Hence some scholars have described SADC as “a club
of anti-colonialists.” SWAPO had attended the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and SADC summits before independence. It was at the OAU’s Heads of States meeting on June 1972 at Rabat, Morocco, where OAU took a resolution to recognize SWAPO as the sole and authentic representation of Namibia’s people. The acknowledgment paved the way for the UN’s recognition later that year. The FLS assisted in diplomatic engagements. In 1977, four Western states who were members of the UN Security Council, also known as the Western Contact Group (WCG), initiated negotiations for Namibia’s independence. President Ronald Reagan came to office in 1981 and refused negotiations with SWAPO, arguing that he could only engage states. In return, SWAPO entrusted the FLS with negotiating with the WCG on their behalf, but at this time, SWAPO had virtually acquired the status of a government in exile with legitimacy in continental and regional organizations. Based on this history, it was a given that Namibia had to join SADCC at independence.

Namibia finally acceded to SADCC in January 1990 as its tenth member state. President Sam Nujoma declared the country’s commitment to pursue a foreign policy

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agenda that reiterated Namibia’s assurance to stand with the countries that supported its quest for self-determination:

“… we of this sub-region including a post-apartheid, democratic, united and non-racial South Africa are fully committed to pooling our resources for the common good of our countries and peoples. It is also a further demonstration that the peoples of this region, even when the obnoxious system of apartheid is removed, will still need to reach out to one another for regional growth and prosperity. SADCC will, no doubt, provide the right framework for the community of nations of Southern Africa... we are living in times where countries the world over are moving towards integrated production and trade areas. In our sub-region, we have already made substantial progress in establishing a framework for future closer cooperation. We must now examine more closely the modalities of a truly integrated single SADCC economy.”

When Sam Nujoma hosted the SADCC heads of states in 1992, the organization was transforming from SADCC to SADC and to a focus on development cooperation toward security and political collaboration. SADC’s main concern was to guarantee the political association formed during the struggle against White minority rule would end apartheid. As an institution, SADC does not have supranational powers over member states and therefore cannot decree a particular course of action. The organization uses consensus and persuasion to bring about change. However, membership in SADC offered options relevant to Namibia’s need to affirm its independence and formulate a foreign policy outside of South Africa’s orbit. It allowed Namibia to entrench its commitment to other liberation movements in the

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697 Arrigo Pallotti, “A Development Community without a Development Policy?” 515

region and express its gratitude to the former FLS. The Namibian Foreign Ministry has stated that one of Namibia’s foreign policy objectives is to “safeguard Namibia’s sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national unity.”

**Namibian-South African Relations**

South Africa’s history with Namibia is complicated. Namibia feels underappreciated by its powerful southern neighbor. For example, Pretoria held on to Walvis Bay even after Namibia’s independence. P.W. Botha stated publicly that Walvis Bay would only be returned to a “friendly” Namibian government. The two countries’ foreign policies are also subject to political disagreements, specific regional ambitions, and unsolved old grudges.

Fifty years after the advent of the ANC, Namibian nationalists launched SWAPO in 1960. Until then, ANC had continued its efforts to liberate Black South Africans and the end of South African annexation of Namibia. Although the Chinese Communist Party ideologically influenced SWAPO, the ANC looked to the Soviets for inspiration. SWAPO’s military wing, the People’s Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), fought an extraordinary guerilla war against apartheid, South Africa. The ANC, for its part, waged a mostly non-violent resistance campaign. SWAPO felt that ANC lacked dedication to ending apartheid or decolonization of Namibia. Relatedly, some party officials in ANC characterized SWAPO as stragglers in the liberation

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struggle. SWAPO viewed ANC as mostly urban sophisticates. The ruling parties carried over these grudges affecting how they oriented their foreign policies.

Following independence, during the reign of Nujoma, high politics between Pretoria and Windhoek remained ambivalent, even stormy at times. Namibia was always on the offensive, accusing South Africa of undermining its development efforts. South Africa’s approach to Namibia’s independence was punitive. Pretoria had left Namibia with a debt of R726.5 million, accounting for about 20 percent of Namibia’s GDP. The new SWAPO government would spend about 11.5 percent of its total revenue to service this debt. They were paying for South Africa’s colonial administration costs and the cost of the war against SWAPO. South Africa argued that the debts were developmental for Namibia, as they had been used for infrastructural improvements. South Africa later agreed with Namibia on the debt cancelation plan. Yet Namibia seemed to want something more. Windhoek desired economic independence from Pretoria, a desire that drove its foreign policy agenda, particularly under Sam Nujoma’s presidency, from 1990 to 2005. His “emancipatory” foreign policy agenda focused on liberating Namibia from South Africa. He attempted to disregard the colonial economic links even though such efforts have been futile.

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701 Tjiurimo Alfredo Hengari and Chris Saunders, 170


703 Tjiurimo Alfredo Hengari and Chris Saunders, 170

Namibia had a head start on South Africa diplomatically. Once independent, Namibia became a member of the UN, the Commonwealth, OAU, and SADC, whereas South Africa remained isolated diplomatically until 1994. Namibia joined several RECs to check the monopoly of South Africa, most notably through SADC. Namibia joined SACU in 1990, partly driven by economic concerns. On average, SACU contributes about 25–37 percent of Namibia’s revenue from its customs intake. Upon its accession to SACU, Namibia immediately argued for higher revenues from the customs union, which remains a point of conflict with the REC. Namibia also joined the CMA within SACU in 1992, only to withdraw a year later when it introduced its own currency. Namibia did link its currency to the South African Rand, however.\textsuperscript{705} In 1992, at Windhoek, Nujoma had reiterated this position, “if all nations of the southern Africa region were to adopt this approach to amicable neighborly relations and economic development, then we all could be equally prosperous,” he said.\textsuperscript{706} Later on, boundary and territorial disputes thwarted Nujoma’s idealistic visions.

Namibia had to settle several boundary issues with its neighbors. The first was the ownership of Walvis Bay. South Africa continued to occupy it despite the UN’s position on the issue. Walvis Bay is the only deep-water port on the Namibian Atlantic coast. It is fundamental to Windhoek’s foreign policy as it marked the first test of the country’s sovereignty and diplomatic influence. President Nujoma said that Walvis Bay “must be a true tax haven for those who want to set up enterprises...”

\textsuperscript{705} Tjiurimo Alfredo Hengari and Chris Saunders, 170

\textsuperscript{706} SADCC, “Records of Summit held in Windhoek, Namibia”, August 17, 1992 §, https://www.sadc.int/documents-publications/show/847
Walvis Bay was to boost intra-regional SADC trade as well as speed access to landlocked SADC countries. Namibia even earmarked funding for the construction of Trans-Kalahari and Trans-Caprivi highways to connect Walvis Bay to Botswana, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.\textsuperscript{707}

Nevertheless, Namibia’s repossession of Walvis Bay in 1994 was not only about independence. One Namibian activist yelled, “complete sovereign state,” to illustrate that without Walvis Bay, Namibia was not entirely free.\textsuperscript{708} Rather, Walvis Bay was an indication of Namibia’s strategic geopolitical ambitions. Through SADC, Namibia waged a contest of an alternative infrastructural depot for landlocked SADC states and an alternative SADC export route. International pressure and the imminent end of apartheid had forced Fredrick De Klerk’s South African government to transfer Walvis Bay’s administration to Namibia despite protests within the Afrikaner National Party’s ranks.\textsuperscript{709} As of 2012, Walvis Bay’s importance as a gateway to Southern Africa had increased. Namibian government already planned to construct additional berths, container terminals, maintenance quays, and marina developments to set up Walvis Bay as the quintessential Western gateway of Southern Africa to complement Dar-es-salaam in Tanzania to the east and to compete with Cape Town.


\textsuperscript{708} Ronald Imbayago, “Namibia ‘A Complete Sovereign State’ as Walvis Bay Returns”

\textsuperscript{709} Frank Matanga, “Towards an Understanding of Foreign Policy Making Process of a New State:
in the south.\footnote{SADC, “Maritime, Ports & Inland Waterways,” Southern African Development Community, 2012, \url{https://www.sadc.int/themes/infrastructure/maritime-ports-inland-waterways/}.} However, economists have argued that the notion of transforming Walvis Bay into a logistics hub in SADC is flawed, partly because Namibia cannot afford it because Walvis Bay serves as a feeder port rather than a hub. As of 2017, it was handling roughly 200,000 containers per year.\footnote{Jade Lennon, “The Flaw in Namport's N$20b Plan,” Medium (Medium, March 28, 2019), \url{https://medium.com/@Jade_Lennon/the-flaw-in-namports-n-20b-plan-9a87b2ccff60}.}

Namibia disagreed with South Africa over the 1,000-kilometer border in the Orange River Basin and its minerals. Before 1990, South Africa had claimed sovereignty over the river and its minerals. South Africa agreed to move the boundary to the middle of the river but did not cede control over the river’s mineral deposits. The dispute also involved grazing rights on the riverbanks, islands, and fishing vessels. Water scarcity issues in the Orange River Basin have aggravated the issue, even though South Africa and Namibia agreed to settle the boundary problem. Still, South African companies have diamond mining concessions in the river, and they often raise the alarm when Namibians do the same.\footnote{News24, “SA, Namibia Face Border Feud,” News24 (News24, June 4, 2001), \url{https://www.news24.com/xArchive/Archive/SA-Namibia-face-border-feud-20010604}.}

President Nujoma’s experience as a revolutionary leader influenced his foreign policy calculations. Besides intervening in Angola, a close ally due to a shared anti-colonial legacy, Namibia teamed up with Zimbabwe and Angola in the DRC intervention in mid-1998. Namibia had sent 2000 soldiers to the DRC in 1998 alongside more substantial forces of regional allies. Their mission was to prop up Kabila’s regime against Rwanda and Ugandan-backed rebels. Nujoma argued that he
was intervening in the DRC because the “democratically elected government” was under attack. The New York Times quoted the spokesperson for Kabila’s government, Didier Mumengi, saying, “Angola, Zimbabwe, and Namibia said clearly that they were going to help us, and that’s what they are doing.” Nujoma’s decision to join the Second Congo War elicited criticism from opposing politicians and segments of the ruling SWAPO. However, it is not clear if Namibia was motivated by loyalty to its northern neighbor Angola. In the streets of Kinshasa, it is common to hear “Namibia-Congo moto moko,” which means Namibia and Congo are people. Perhaps the reference point is that the extended Bantu Bakongo kinship that straddles beyond the DRC, Congo Brazzaville, Angola, and Namibia.

Namibia uses SADC to expand its foreign policy options. Namibia does not want to be dominated by either South Africa, its southern neighbor, or Angola, with its powerful military, in the North. Membership in SADC offers options relevant to Namibia’s need to affirm its independence and carve out a foreign policy independent of South Africa. At the David Rockefeller Lecture at the Council on Foreign Relations in 2016, Namibian President Hage Geingob said, “I made a joke once that we are looking for [the] Security Council [seat]… I think we must get two big countries. Nigeria and South Africa are possible candidates…We should also think of

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neutral smaller [countries] because wisdom is not only confined to big powers.”

The pursuit of Namibia’s relevance has taken place within the SADC region and through other diplomatic ventures based on solidarity movements.

Namibia has just as long and complicated history with Angola as it does with South Africa. Political and military cooperation has always existed between Luanda and Windhoek. However, this cooperation has also been accompanied by misunderstandings and disagreements. Namibia’s ruling party SWAPO used Angolan territory to launch attacks on South African military operations. The Namibian independence war drove over 43,000 Namibian refugees to Angola. After Angola’s independence in 1975, SWAPO established formal ties with MPLA, Angola’s ruling party MPLA trained SWAPO militants in addition to offering military aid. These efforts made Angola an enemy state to South Africa, leading to an elongated conflict involving Angola, South Africa, SWAPO, and other external actors. The conflict lasted until 1989 when Angola, Namibia, and South Africa

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718 Hidipo Hamutenya, 89


signed the Tripartite Agreement in New York. Angola signed an MDP with Namibia in 1999. Shortly after, Namibia arrested supporters and sympathizers of UNITA, MPLA’s rivals. Namibia sent troops to fight UNITA insurgents in southern Angola. The war in Angola between UNITA and MPLA did not end until the death of UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi in 2002. By the end of 2001, there were over 30,000 Angolan refugees in Namibia. Namibia expatriated many of them after 2002.

Angola is a significant trade partner with Namibia, but trade numbers have not increased since 1992. While representing Angola at Africa and Middle East Regional Organizations meetings, Ambassador Afonso Edwardo said, “relations [of Namibia] with Angola are good politically but not economically.” Namibia blames Angola for the low trade volumes. Namibian products entering the Angolan market suffer tariffs and non-tariff taxes despite SADC, including restrictions on imports. For example, Angola introduced a ban on Namibian cement importation in 2011 without forewarning the Namibian authorities. For Namibian companies, Angola is a tough


724 Hovy Béla, Statistical Yearbook (Geneva, Switzerland: UNHCR, 2004), 408


market. Telecom Namibia established a joint venture with an Angolan company, Mundo Startel SARL, but Telecom Namibia pulled out in 2011 after significant losses of about N$2.3 million from 2009-2010. The companies have complained about corruption, inadequate infrastructure, and language barriers, among other factors that hamper business in Angola.\(^{727}\)

The camaraderie during the anti-imperial struggle did not translate into tangible economic partnerships after independence. There is no political conflict between Angola and Namibia, but economic tensions have risen as a result of Angola’s protectionism. In Cunene, Angolan authorities limited the movement of people into Namibia to purchase goods not available in Angola. Angola’s move restricted informal cross-border trade to protect the domestic market.\(^{728}\) Through Angola, Namibia leverages its economic influence to fend off its continued dependence on South Africa.

*Liberation ties and Loyalties for SWAPO?*

This chapter explores SADC’s unstated purposes that may be driving small states to join and remain, reiterating the main research questions: what did Namibia hope to gain in joining SADC? And what rewards and aspirations have impelled Namibia to remain a member of SADC? The evidence shows that the political elites’ regional interests become the drivers of the official foreign policy of these states. This section emphasizes how RECs are constructions of a state’s new identities as envisioned by the ruling regimes. They offer opportunities to orient national

\(^{727}\) Hidipo Hamutenya, 15

\(^{728}\) Innocent Moyo and Christopher Nshimbi, 163
identities, construct solidarity narratives, pursue diplomatic efforts, and affirm and entrench the ideological legitimacy to rule. Namibia remains in SADC partly to entrench its commitment to other liberation movements turned ruling parties in the region.

Strong historical affinities keep these ruling parties together. SADC offers opportunities for Namibia’s efforts at “thanksgiving” and binds it due to the legacy of FLS during the apartheid and White minority rule. These efforts are beneficial to the ruling party SWAPO, for they affirm its legitimacy as the accurate representation of the Namibian state. For SWAPO, staying in SADC contributes to maintaining the party’s domestic rule.

SWAPO’s interest to stay in power is neither about “national interest” nor about pan-African solidarity, except insofar as pan-African solidarity is a domestic political resource for SWAPO. Foreign policy in the SADC region has wavered between national interest and a variant of pan-African solidarity. Matteo Grilli indicated ideological links between Nkrumahism and the socialism of the liberation movements in Southern Africa, including SWAPO in Namibia. SWAPO and ZANU-PF, especially through their leaders Mugabe and Nujoma, praised the Ghanaian founding leader Kwame Nkrumah, citing that his ideas of pan-Africanism were the helpful inspiration. In Namibia, it is difficult to make this connection because it attained independence toward the end of the Cold War. Indeed, since Namibia’s


730 Matteo Grilli, Nkrumahism and African Nationalism: Ghana’s Pan -African Foreign Policy in the Age of... Decolonization (S.L.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019),111
independence, it has not developed an ideological or policy platform that has
promoted pan-Africanism. SWAPO mixes its regime interest with the experiences
through which it acquired assistance during the struggle. As contained in a 2004
White paper, the foreign policy objectives of Namibia are exceedingly broad and
devoid of specific details. It states in part:

Namibia’s bilateral relations can be placed within the historical context of the
struggle for independence. The country attaches high value to the decisions of
the United Nations and other international organizations, particularly the
fraternity of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) (now the African
Union) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) as well
as the Non-Aligned Movement …

SWAPO, for example, uses the liberation struggle as gospel and an expression
of patriotic history. In Namibia, SWAPO projects itself as the sole liberator of the
Namibian people, and it is respected and recognized as such by the populace. Sam
Nujoma’s autobiography titled Where Others Wavered illustrates SWAPO’s
conflation of pan-Africanism with self-praise. Andre du Pisani has argued that
Nujoma asks his readers to pay attention and respect to him as the pinnacle of
Namibians. The autobiography portrays the author as the only possible political
savior of Namibia. It functions as a reputation builder for ‘one-person, one-

731 Joseph Diescho, “Namibia’s Attitudes towards Pan-Africanism,” in Namibia’s Foreign
Relations Historic Contexts, Current Dimensions, and Perspectives for the 21st Century (Windhoek,
Namibia: Konrad Adenauer Foundation, 2014), 413

732 Joseph Diescho, “Namibia’s Attitudes towards Pan-Africanism,” 415

733 Joseph Diescho, “Namibia’s Attitudes towards Pan-Africanism,” 420

734 Henning Melber, “Struggle Mentality versus Democracy: The Case of SWAPO of
Namibia,” in National Liberation Movements as Government in Africa (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge,
2018).
movement." The account is rather incongruous with the facts of Namibia’s history. As an independent state, Namibia has only paid episodic attention to Africa as a collective and has no substantive policy plan for pan-Africanism. Pan-African rhetoric is a sleek way to obscure that Namibia’s desires for power and influence are ends in themselves. Below are examples of how SWAPO has conflated pan-Africanism with its desire to maintain control.

From 1990, SWAPO attempted to forge a united country. SWAPO avoided racial politics and embraced a conciliatory tone toward the previously ruling White population. SWAPO needed economic development to deepen its rule, and the White settlers had the financial power. President Nujoma led the country for three five-year terms. He amended the constitution to extend his rule beyond the agreed two terms. However, he failed to get another extension in 2005. Thereafter, Nujoma grew closer to Zimbabwe’s long-term leader, Robert Mugabe. Nujoma retained SWAPO’s presidency but became hostile to White citizens of Namibia. He labeled criticism from White citizens as racist, reactionary, and imperialist. In Nujoma’s first two terms, pan-Africanism was lip service, but White citizens became political piñatas and pan-Africanism much more important in the political discourse when confronted

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with challenges. Namibia had no formidable policy on pan-Africanism beyond the “idioms of the liberation struggle.” In Namibia, pan-Africanism was not an ideology for continental unification but a tool of the ruling party to maintain its power.

The misuse of pan-Africanism for regime legitimation by SWAPO is also observable in the Pan-African Parliament (PAP). As an AU member, Namibia is also a member of the PAP, which is headquartered in Midrand, South Africa. Members of this huge parliament are political appointees. Namibia has four representatives at the PAP: Kasingo Loide, Tobias Tangeni, McHenry Venaani, and McLeod Laura. Three of them are high-ranking SWAPO members. Loide Kasingo, for example, is also the Deputy Speaker of the Namibian parliament. Perhaps, the PAP is an extension of the rewards that come with being a ruling party.

Moreover, Namibia declined to join the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), mutually agreed instrument voluntary acceded to by member states of the African Union as a self-monitoring mechanism. These organizations are carefully crafted tools to “perform” pan-Africanism without substantive efforts toward actualizing those desires or commitments. In his address to the APRM meeting in January 2017, Namibian President Geingob said that: “Namibia has always supported the APRM since its inception... Namibia and Botswana were considered worldwide as good examples of democracy in Africa, and we, therefore, decided to abstain from

738 Joseph Diescho, “Namibia’s Attitudes towards Pan-Africanism,” 420
739 Joseph Diescho, “Namibia’s Attitudes towards Pan-Africanism,” 420
joining the APRM as we did not want to be used as a point of reference to be used against our fellow African countries.” The explanation reiterated that SWAPO is not as pan-African as it claims. If it were, then a starting point would be seizing the opportunity to be an example for the rest of the continent.

The relationships between the revolutionary parties are often as personal as they are political. The parties have bonded by other other’s quest for solidarity. Liberation parties like SWAPO, return and repay old favors in unique ways. Membership in regional bodies, such as SADC, is one way. South Africa’s ANC, Zimbabwe’s ZANU-PF, and SWAPO all share particularities of settler colonialism in many shapes and guises. In each case, the struggle involved military endeavors but ended up in power through a compromise that forestalled sweeping changes envisioned through radical socialist ideals espoused in their manifestos. During their pursuit of power and independence, they required and attained independent African states’ support, chiefly the FLS. These parties retain power despite decades of underperformance. However, in Namibia, the tide is beginning to turn.

Namibians went for elections in 2019. Although SWAPO did not lose, President Hage Geingob faced a significant challenge from the independent opposition candidate Panduleni Itula, who got 29 percent of the total votes. President Geingob was re-elected with a 56 percent majority, a sharp reduction from 87 percent in 2014. SWAPO lost its supermajority of the parliamentary seats, which it had held

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since 1994.\textsuperscript{742} Analysts said the breakup of SWAPO into factions enabled this decline. For example, Panduleni Itula was a longtime SWAPO member but defected because of corruption scandals that had hit the ruling party. DW reported that the days when “SWAPO was the nation, and the nation was SWAPO” might be ending.\textsuperscript{743} For parties in domestic decline, like SWAPO, a regional organization populated by former comrades is surely one tool for domestic regime maintenance.

Namibia does not have to look far for an example. In Zimbabwe, SADC has presented a united front in support of Zimbabwe’s regime, with Botswana being a rare exception. SADC agreed with former President Mugabe’s assertion that Zimbabwe’s problem is primarily a land question and that imperialists support dissenters. SADC summits sent congratulatory messages to the Zimbabwe government on its successful land redistributions. SADC did not criticize Zimbabwe’s electoral processes, often congratulating the “people of Zimbabwe” and the government each time a contested and flawed election happened.\textsuperscript{744} In the early days of the crisis, SADC avoided mediating the crisis and was forced by AU, which put them in charge of mediating the crisis in 2009. Ironically, SADC has pointed out its role in Zimbabwe as an example of successful mediation. SWAPO certainly


\textsuperscript{744} Gavin Cawthra, \textit{The Role of SADC in Managing Political Crisis and Conflict: The Cases of Madagascar and Zimbabwe} (Maputo, Mozambique: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Mozambique, 2010), 29
counts on SADC to stand by its government in case it needs to falsify election results in the future, as the Mugabe regime did.

Nevertheless, SADC looked the other way as Mugabe’s regime tortured opponents and unleashed violence in opposition areas. ZANU-PF’s excessive use of violence was tolerable for Thabo Mbeki’s ANC even as he conducted what he labeled “quiet diplomacy” that seemingly did not denounce the violence meted out to Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) supporters. SADC has argued that Zimbabwe faces “illegal sanctions” from the United States, the United Kingdom, and the European Union. SADC, therefore, is a potential backup plan for regimes with liberation history. SWAPO knows that in the event of a contested election, SADC will always have its back. The solidarity narratives are not only historical romanticizing rhetoric. They are useful mechanisms for regime maintenance and legitimation.

SADC is now too large of a REC to facilitate close relationships among all parties and to have harmonious policies. Since 1997, SADC has included the DRC. This means the REC stretches from Africa’s southernmost city Cape Town to north of the Equator line in the Equatorial province of the DRC. Aside from the DRC, SADC also includes the Indian island nations of Mauritius, Madagascar, Comoros, and Seychelles. SADC’s expansion overstrains its underdeveloped economies and frustrates the growth of its nascent institutions. In 2008, Angola and the DRC did not

745 David Francis, pg.17

join the free trade agreement, perhaps SADC’s most significant achievement of the
dealers proposed the inclusion of Kabila’s regime suffering from a severe lack of
legitimacy and needing the legitimation of powerhouses such as South Africa and
because of Nujoma’s personal relationship with Kabila rather than genuine Namibian
interest. Laurent Kabila, Mugabe, Eduardo dos Santos, and Nujoma were all warriors
when the world was divided neatly between the colonialists and the colonized, and
themselves, went along because of the DRC’s abundant natural resources and
electrical power potential.

The takeaway is that SADC leaders are antagonistic to domestic interference
in the internal politics of member states. They have an unspoken pact to “hear no
wrong and see no wrong” about Southern Africa’s opposition parties. The former
revolutionary parties, now the establishment parties, have developed a common
political culture that lets them stay in power by protecting each other. Internally, they
dominate electoral politics by using the narrative of their role in the countries’
liberation. Externally, SADC offers members an opportunity to heighten the legitimacy of their power and reinforce their shared bonds of liberation struggles. In the case of Mugabe, public criticism would not augur well with any of the revolutionary parties. Botswana’s attempt to speak up on Zimbabwe’s human rights crises elicited a flippant response from other SADC members. Namibia has paved a path of cooperation and one of solidarity with its allies during the struggle. SADC allows SWAPO’s solidarity and commitment toward liberation to function as insurance of potential legitimacy tests at home. Pan-Africanism becomes rhetoric that only cleanses disreputable intentions of capture and retention of power.

**SADC’s Reputational Potential**

It is a viable argument that Namibia adheres to SADC as a way of signaling its commitment to the AU’s agenda of increasing continental integration. SADC is one of the eight certified RECs working with the AU. Namibia had no real choice but to join SADDC in 1990, and it has no real choice but to remain in the organization, lest it becomes a pariah state within Southern Africa.

Namibia obviously does not want to become a pariah state and cares about how it is seen regionally. I discuss reputation on two fronts. First, the reputational cost of not playing along may drive small state economies such as Namibia that may appease regional actors. Namibia faces one foreseeable challenge to its reputation internationally, especially in Africa: landlessness and poverty among Blacks. It is a double-edged sword because, on the one hand, Namibia would like to affirm its

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commitment to racial justice and economic independence of Blacks in Namibia and elsewhere, but on the other hand, Namibia is fully aware of the dangers of reckless confiscation and redistribution of White wealth, as Zimbabwe witnessed. In October 2020, President Geingob made remarks on the issue of income inequality. “We are proud to be an upper-middle-income country… but that is forgetting that we are coming from an apartheid background where Blacks were left out,”\(^751\) he said. The President further stated that “distribution is an issue, but how do we do it? We have a racial issue here, a historical racial divide.”\(^752\) Enlisting in SADC—an organization with a long history of racial solidarity—assist the SWAPO regime of accusations of not working on inequality and land problems. Inequality and landlessness are complex problems without simple solutions, but SADC enables SWAPO to protect its image of being committed to racial inequalities and injustices.

SWAPO’s image problem has affected how they do politics regionally. In July 2012, SWAPO leaders canceled the planned visit of the then expelled leader of ANC Youth League, Julius Malema. Malema is a firebrand populist best known for his support of land-redistribution in Southern Africa. He is also the leader of the far-left and populist Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF). Radical leaders of SWAPO had invited him to give a keynote address at the inaugural event commemorating SWAPO youth leader Chris Hawala who died in 2008. The leadership of SWAPO felt that Malema’s speech, titled “Towards the African Youth Manifesto: Economic Freedom


\(^{752}\) Axel Threlfall and Nyasha Nyaungwa
in our livestime,” would jeopardize the relationship with ANC and incite Namibians. Membership in SADC improves Namibia’s profile in the region and as a reliable neighbor (and predictable player) in African affairs. SADC’s membership signals Namibia’s commitment to equality in theory.

Reputational reasons may drive Namibian heads of states to commit to ambitious projects at AU or SADC summits, though without following through. The OAU played a crucial role in Namibia’s fight for independence. The OAU first recognized SWAPO as the legitimate representative of Namibia’s people in 1975, before the UN followed suit in 1976. Because of these efforts during the struggle and Namibia’s membership in the AU, the country has participated in activities held by the AU, attended meetings and international conferences, and voted in line with common African positions when required at international forums. For example, in 2013, at the fiftieth-anniversary celebration of the OAU, President Nujoma articulated his gratitude for African states. He said that “indeed, in Namibia, our struggle for freedom and independence was part of the wider and total liberation of the African continent from colonialism and foreign occupation.”

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755 Bience Gawanas, 272

Namibia “performs” pan-African initiatives supported by AU, such as Africa Day. Although it is generally insignificant in other countries in Africa, Africa Day is an official holiday in Namibia. Namibia also displays the AU flag alongside its national flag in national buildings. Students are encouraged to celebrate Africa Day and to study pan-Africanism. These efforts are superficial signaling of Namibia’s commitment to pan-Africanism. Celebrating the African Day holiday and hoisting the AU flag does little to promote Namibia’s standing in the continent. Instead, they help preserve its reputation as a good-standing member of the union.

The second reason for the reputation logic arises from the fact that RECs are often funded by external donors. Member states must have a positive reputation with the donors of these specific RECs. Europeans love regional organizations. Before Brexit, the EU appeared to be an example of a successful integrationist project. There is a perception that it is best for the world. Europeans are big donors, and they tend to channel their aid through regional organizations. Thus, countries like Namibia must play this game. There is no cost to play but a high cost in refusing to do so.

As with other African RECs, Europe is the center of SADC trade and ideological influence. As stated above, Europe is the leading donor for the SADC’s budget. Frank Mattheis has suggested that the “D” in SADC indicates both SADC countries’ desire to emulate Europe developmentally and honor Europe’s commitment to that process. Since the SADCC years, the EU has had an active agenda in the regional affairs of Southern Africa. Today, SADC personnel often engage and interact with those of the EU. Either the EU funds much of the training or

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757 Bience Gawanas, 19
has its officials participating. Some SADC events have also happened in Europe. The dependence on Europe restricts capacity building, encourages European norms in the organization, and engages with foreign actors rather than domestic actors. Currently, there is an ongoing Economic Partnership Agreement between the EU and SADC. However, the organization has failed to negotiate as a bloc. Namibia delegated negotiations to South Africa. Some of the key players in the region, such as Angola, have bolted the process.  

For small states such as Namibia, a positive reputation is like money in the bank. A positive reputation can unlock resources and avenues for cooperation that may not be possible because of its size. Within SADC, Namibia has actively pursued recognition as an essential player. Although SADC does not have a formal legislative branch, it has the Namibia hosts’ parliamentary forum. Namibia hosts the SADC Parliamentary Forum (PF) in Windhoek, where it does not charge any rent for the building that its government owns. SADC’s budget for this only caters to the operational costs. The PF facilitates cooperation on regional issues as they concern regional parliaments. The PF often holds a biannual gathering of five parliamentarians from each SADC country and provides a forum for exchanging ideas and discussions on pertinent issues. Hosting the PF and paying for the building that houses the PF demonstrates Namibia’s status as a good SADC member.


759 Ulf Engel and Frank Thomas Mattheis, chapter 7
Figure 5.3 Illustrative flow chart showing the key arguments

SADC Roles for Namibia

Stated reasons for adhesion and remain in SADC. There is scant evidence that SADC has performed these.

- Economic rational explanations
  - SADC promotes economic development
  - SADC reduces poverty through increased trade
  - SADC advocates economic growth through free-trade
  - Infrastructure links such as Walvis Bay Port and Trans-Caprivi Highway

- Security imperatives
  - Mainly through SADC’s organ on politics, defense, and security
  - Consolidates democracy
  - Defends and maintain peace, security and stability
  - Combat HIV/AIDS and other contagious diseases

- Regime-boosting and solidary with revolutionary parties
  - Joining SADC is an act of gratitude to frontline states for their decolonization support
  - SADC can back SWAPO in the event of a contested election

- Non-stated but functional reasons for adhesion and remain in SADC
  - National interest is debatable as SWAPO contracts Namibia’s foreign policy
  - Joining SADC is an act of gratitude to frontline states for their decolonization support
  - SADC can back SWAPO in the event of a contested election

- Pursuit an independent foreign policy from South Africa
  - SADC entrench SWAPO’s commitment to other liberation movements
  - signaling commitment to the AU

- Neighborhood Reputation
  - Membership in SADC offers options
  - Europe is the leading donor for the SADC’s budget. SWAPO wants some
  - Jobs for loyalists and positive reputation that unlocks resources and avenues for cooperation

- International legitimacy
  - SADC can back SWAPO in the event of a contested election

- National interest is debatable as SWAPO contracts Namibia’s foreign policy

- Economic rational explanations
  - SADC promotes economic development
  - SADC reduces poverty through increased trade
  - SADC advocates economic growth through free-trade
  - Infrastructure links such as Walvis Bay Port and Trans-Caprivi Highway
Conclusion

This chapter has examined the uses of SADC for Namibia. The chapter has analyzed SADC’s observable roles for Namibia, exploring why Namibia enlisted in 1992 and why the country has remained in the organization since then. A summary of the key arguments are found in Figure 5.3. The evidence shows that Namibia’s economy has not derived substantial gains from joining SADC. Economic indexes do not show any optimistic projections from this accession. Instead, Namibia has entrenched its historical patterns of trade with South Africa and the other SACU countries. Indeed, the association with SACU has reinforced Namibia as a strong economic performer, with its currency pegged to South Africa’s strong Rand.

Concerning security, Namibia has not faced severe domestic or foreign security challenges that require a security community. The end of apartheid in 1994 eliminated the single-most threatening foe of Black-led republics in the region. Until then, the fear of many of these countries was a White-led South African takeover. Currently, most of the security challenges are internal, with the limited need for a regionalized response. Where needed, a bilateral security agreement with South Africa would be adequate. SADC’s record on security and the diplomatic resolution of disputes is rather dismal.

What SADC does for Namibia is subjective and unrelated to the country’s national interest. In short, it is an alignment of socio-political roles embedded in the psychology of the ruling elites arising from a long history of shared liberation struggle among the former frontline states. The ruling party, SWAPO, has much to lose reputationally if it chose to leave SADC, but much to gain by staying in. In
addition to the loyalty-push and pull-factors, SADC helps Namibia solidify the regime from threatening allies. SADC has a history of supporting ruling regimes that lose elections, Mugabe in Zimbabwe, for example. Besides, SADC allows Namibia to chart an independent foreign policy away from Pretoria, a dominating neighbor. Consequently, SADC’s roles for Namibia are its roles for the ruling SWAPO party. They include an assortment of regime-boosting, sovereignty-strengthening, and solidarity-enhancing initiatives than economic or security roles.
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

This dissertation has focused on the roles of regional economic communities (RECs) for small-economy states in Africa. It explains why such states have enlisted and remained in RECs, despite their noticeably dismal economic performances. The participation of small-economy states in their local RECs requires examining their political structures and cultures. The regime interests defined by the political needs of the ruling elites substitute for national interests. The RECs’ functional roles fall short of explaining the rationales for small-economy states to enlist in these RECs; economic rationalism and security needs are shown not to apply. Instead, examining how the ruling elites use RECs reveals how these organizations entrench and legitimate the elites’ neopatrimonial networks. In addition, RECs send a signal from small-economy states in Africa to the international community that their countries are sovereign.

The case studies of South Sudan in the East African Community (EAC) (Chapter Three), Liberia in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (Chapter Four), and Namibia in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) (Chapter Five) reveal a collection of roles that underpin a systemic pattern: regime entrenchment, the reorientation of foreign policy and collective identity, solidarity pacts, and the extension of neopatrimonial networks. In summary, ideas such as Pan-Africanism and genuine sub-continental integration are “performances” intended to showcase commitment. They are not at the root of the actual participation of African states in their local RECs.
The dissertation has deployed the concept of state capture in connection with regional integration. Scholars have written extensively about regime-boosting and sovereignty-signaling regionalism. However, there is a gap in the literature on the connection between regionalism and state capture. This study shows that RECs strengthen sovereignty claims by giving small-economy states a voice in international forums. Their flags are displayed, and their presidents act as heads of states and appoint ambassadors. In a true sense, some countries are weak and unable to present the basic requirements of statehood: security, effective control of territory, and payment of civil servants. However, these leaders are often self-serving, and their preoccupation is not to loyalty to the states they head but to the material gains they control upon accessing the government. Typically, sovereignty enables them to make international deals, negotiate mining contracts, control foreign aid and assistance, employ relatives and appoint cronies to plum positions. For the most part, RECs constitute opportunities for them to expand their networks and find jobs for political allies or rivals that they may want to contain.

In the first case study, the evidence reveals few state-centric roles for South Sudan in the EAC. Economically, South Sudan’s economy has deteriorated since it joined the EAC. It has contracted from $15 billion in 2011 to a meager $4.6 billion in 2021. This 30 percent decrease in GDP is not due to South Sudan’s accession to the EAC. The country has faced several challenges, including conflict with the Republic of Sudan over the Abyei Region, a civil war pitting major political actors in the country against one another, a drop in oil prices, drought, and conflict-induced famine. Paradoxically, the EAC did not help South Sudan with either its security or
economic challenges. This insecurity situation affected South Sudan’s economy and may well have eroded the benefits it would have gained from the EAC. Besides, though RECs often perform security roles, in this case, they did not help either. Instead, South Sudan relied on a UN and AU peacekeepers contingent for its security. The EAC was not instrumental enough in supporting peace negotiations, which were instead led by another body: the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

The evidence shows that South Sudan’s acceded to the EAC to serve the needs and interests of the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) government. Central to the decision to join the EAC is the political and ethnic identity of the SPLM elites. The decades-old struggle to secede from Arab-led Sudan generated consciousness of Black identity among these elites. The union of many Southern Sudanese ethnic groups followed from the need for unity in the face of the Arab-dominated government in Khartoum that had imposed collective suffering on the ethnically non-Arab south. As independence came, fissures within many Southern Sudanese ethnic groups emerged. A consensus of psychological distrust toward Khartoum developed among South Sudanese people and their elites. In the event, seeking to affiliate with the EAC became a natural rejoinder against Arabism. It is the institutional expression of a solidarity pact with most Black and African countries in East Africa. Because Uganda and Kenya were loyal backers of South Sudan’s pursuit of independence, South Sudan felt welcome in the EAC. Meanwhile, the economic and security rationales were scant, or even absent. However, the zeitgeist of the moment, the solidarity pact, and the shared narratives of what it means to be South
Sudanese and African encouraged SPLM elites to join the EAC to bolster their reputations and serve their interests which they discursively conflated with those of the state.

Yet another reason for South Sudan’s accession is that many SPLM elites had lived and studied in Uganda or Kenya. They had second homes in these countries. The 2016 global Corruption Index ranks South Sudan as the 175th most corrupt country globally; its leaders invest and hide their loot in member countries of the EAC. This second reason is not as easy to document as the first, but there is evidence that stolen South Sudanese money is laundered and stashed in Kenyan and Ugandan banks. It is likely that the EAC treaty, which encourages intra-regional trade, facilitates the transfer and security of these investments. The neopatrimonial links between South Sudanese and East African elites facilitate the rampant corrupt deals between South Sudanese politicians and Kenyan and Ugandan banks, which are, in turn, often controlled by the political elites.

The second case study was that of Liberia in ECOWAS. Analysis of Liberia’s past relationship with ECOWAS in published books, peer-reviewed articles, newspaper articles, published economic data, and economic reports reveals two patterns. First, Liberia’s ruling regimes oriented foreign policies to the exigencies of preserving regime survival. The political elites sought to bolster their successive regimes through affiliation with foreign actors who guaranteed material and diplomatic support. Second, sovereignty-boosting is crucial for the past and existing government to shape the legitimacy of their rule. In their respective ways, each group of successive elites has operated like a cabal of exploitative actors whose agenda is
often to claim the sovereignty of Liberia for self-serving purposes. Successive
governing elite groups have pursued regionalism as a function of the available
benefits to draw to their regimes, but not in the interest of the Liberian nation.

The dissertation has explored the metamorphosis of the Liberian political
economy from a laissez-faire arrangement under Tubman to Tolbert’s state-led
model. Notwithstanding its history as Africa’s oldest republic, Liberia pursued a
weak regional foreign policy and focused on engagement with the United States
during Tubman's era. Tubman “performed” regionalism by strengthening ties with
African nationalists. He attended the African-Asia Conference in 1955 and the
African States Conference in Ghana in 1958. Then, in 1958, he organized the second
African States Conference. However, Tubman elected to ally with Felix Houphouet-
Boigny of Cote d’Ivoire, who favored a step-by-step integration model rather than
rapid unification of Africa, as advanced by Kwame Nkrumah. Tolbert’s era
introduced an aggressive pro-African integration policy and a turn to the left. He
signed the Treaty of Lagos in 1975, which founded ECOWAS. Despite signing the
treaty, Liberia continued to over-rely on trade with external powers, exporting
primary commodities, with limited developmental impact on the country.

Under Sergeant Samuel Doe, there were no obvious economic benefits for
Liberia from ECOWAS membership. There were, however, plenty of immaterial
rewards from regional cooperation for Doe. Under pressure from Charles Taylor’s
National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) and his allies in 1989, Doe invited
ECOWAS to come to his aid. It was under Doe’s regime that ECOWAS’ security
imperatives were realized. Thanks to his long-standing friendship with Nigerian
leader General Ibrahim Babangida, Doe pinned his hopes on Nigeria’s hegemonic status in ECOWAS to save his regime. However, ECOWAS’s intervention in Liberia did not lead to lasting peace. Doe was killed near ECOWAS’ headquarters in Monrovia, even as Liberia’s economy was already in tatters.

The intervention was marred by an array of challenges, such as the allegations that it had compromised Liberia’s sovereignty or complaints that it served as a gateway for Nigeria’s domination of Liberia. The intervention was also criticized on account of strengthening the hold of rebel groups and increasing corruption. French-speaking countries in the region were suspicious of Nigeria’s motives and secretly aided Taylor’s NPFL. ECOWAS intervention led to the end of the first civil war in 1997. However, it also had the unintended consequence of helping Charles Taylor capture the presidency through an election organized in a milieu of fear and violence. In 1999, a second civil war broke out when new rebel groups took up arms against Charles Taylor. The war ended in 2003 with ECOWAS sending Charles Taylor into exile in Nigeria. A series of ECOWAS-backed governments then took power until Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was elected president in 2006.

Throughout Liberia’s history with ECOWAS, including two ECOWAS military interventions, there is little evidence of economic growth arising from Liberia’s membership in ECOWAS. Instead, the evidence shows that ECOWAS exacerbated continued dependence on external support and helped maintain the illegitimate rule of successive regimes. Often, ECOWAS bestowed legitimacy on the regime’s right to rule—a twisted form of social contract utterly devoid of public consent, as seen in the externally imposed regime of Amos Sawyer. Most Liberians
do not benefit from these power performances, but the foreign policy agenda made sense for regime legitimation purposes. As a fledgling democracy, Liberia has continued its membership in ECOWAS for reputational and regime-legitimacy reasons. Evidence suggests that Liberia gains more economic benefits from the Mano River Union (MRU)—a small REC including Liberia’s immediate neighbors, Cote d’Ivoire, Guinea, and Sierra Leone. Liberia trades with these countries the most, and they share many cultural similarities. However, for the ruling elites, MRU offers fewer opportunities for regime legitimation and sovereignty-boosting compared to ECOWAS.

The final case study was on Namibia and its membership in SADC. Though Namibia is a relatively wealthy country, it is still a small-economy state compared to its regional neighbors, South Africa, Angola, and Zambia. Namibia has a long history with South Africa, only attaining independence in 1990. The legacies of German and South African rule have made the economy dependent and externally oriented. South Africa is now Namibia’s leading trading partner in both the South African Customs Union (SACU) and the SADC. To this day, the country heavily relies on exporting extractive minerals, just as it did in colonial times. This dependence manifests in Namibia’s membership in the SACU, from which it generates substantial revenue. Namibia hardly trades with the other SADC countries. It mainly exports extractive minerals, such as diamonds and uranium, to China and European countries.

Namibia’s economy is tied to South Africa, but it is challenging to find an economic explanation for its membership in SADC. The end of apartheid ushered in a new era in which foreign threats disappeared and security ceased to be an issue. There
has not been a genuine national security threat for Namibia from another country since 1990. HIV/AIDS, however, has had significant internal security costs. SADC did not create a sub-regional response team for HIV/AIDS or otherwise ameliorate the HIV/AIDS crisis. States managed the scourge internally, besides receiving support from donor countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and organizations such as the UN.

Evidence suggests that the ideological underpinnings of Namibia’s liberation constitute a vital push factor for enlisting and remaining in SADC. Namibia’s ruling party, the South West Africa People’s Organization (SWAPO), previously an anti-apartheid liberation party, uses the SADC as an ideological clubhouse to meet and share notes with other liberation parties that are still in government. These parties include South Africa’s African National Congress (ANC), Angola’s Movimento Popular de Libertacao de Angola (MPLA), Zimbabwe’s Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), and Mozambique’s Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (FRELIMO), among others.

As a matter of principle, SADC leaders are antagonistic toward domestic interference in each other’s internal politics. They have an unspoken pact to “see-no-evil and speak-no-evil” when it comes to suppressing opposition parties of southern Africa. These once-revolutionary parties have developed a common political culture, enabling them to stay in power by protecting each other. Internally, they dominate their electoral politics by capitalizing on the narrative of their role in the liberation of their countries. Externally, SADC offers its members an opportunity to heighten their legitimacy and emphasize their shared bond forged in the liberation struggles. As a
case in point, none of the revolutionary parties ruling neighboring states raised concerns about Mugabe’s increasingly repressive behavior. Botswana’s attempt to speak up about gross human rights abuses in Zimbabwe elicited a flippant response from other SADC members.

In conclusion, since attaining independence for their states, African leaders have viewed RECs as the building blocks of hope for African unity. The RECs’ objectives have been to stimulate industrialization through expanded markets, foster regional-level free trade, and raise tariff barriers against non-members. Essentially, these RECs were put in place to achieve economic independence from ex-colonizers. However, the leaders of the young republics were generally opposed to the erosion of national sovereignty and the emergence of effective supranational organizations. Today, RECs function as supports for struggling regimes, signalers of sovereignty, and enhancers of good neighborliness. Equally, RECs serve as lifeless remnants of Pan-Africanism and are primarily employed to “perform” regionalism. In a real sense, the economic roles of sub-regional communities are minimal; most of them have not ratified some of the basic regulations that facilitate free trade. In addition, their security functions are far from clear and straightforward. Some RECs, like ECOWAS, have cultivated a culture of improving regional security through interventions, often boosted by the presence of powerhouses such as Nigeria. However, as demonstrated by ECOWAS’s failed interventions in Liberia, such interventions have done little to solidify or consolidate security dynamics. Soon after the Nigerian intervention, Charles Taylor, the archetypical African warlord, captured power and abused the population.
This dissertation has pursued a two-pronged approach. The first was to examine why RECs persist when they do not generate economic growth and development. The second was to investigate why these RECs endure and precisely why small African economies maintain their respective memberships. Evidence suggests that for small-economy states in Africa, RECs are not useless organizations, and in this sense, regionalism has not failed. This study’s main contribution is to reveal that the ruling African elites have hijacked and appropriated the concept of regionalism for self-serving purposes. They use regionalism to perform unadvertised roles not outlined in the founding documents of the RECs. These roles depart from the conventional expectations of economic growth and security improvement. The dissertation has found that small-economy states enlist and remain in RECs because they increase rents, entrench elite networks, and offer protection against domestic enemies or competitors. RECs also help small-economy states maintain a positive international image at a relatively low cost.
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VITA

CLIFF UBBA KODERO

EDUCATION

2021 Florida International University, Miami, FL
Ph.D., International Relations
Dissertation: *Rethinking the Functions of Regional Economic Communities: Why African Small States Join and Remain in Sub-Regional Entities*
Dissertation Advisor: John F. Clark, Ph.D.

2021-Present The College of Idaho, (Caldwell, Idaho)
*Role:* Visiting Assistant Professor
*Courses:* POE 351 Political Economy of Development
POE 380 International Political Economy
POE 120 International Politics

*Responsibilities*
- Teach students to understand and analyze human society.
- Teach to reassess personal values regarding economic and political issues.
- Gain an understanding of economic and political principles within a broad domestic and global societal context.
- Express complex and personally developed political and economic positions both orally and in writing.

2020 Deans Fellowship, Florida International University
2020 Hayek Fund Scholarship, Institute for Humane Studies
2020 Graduate Student for Conferences, Professional Development and Research, FIU
2020 Clark-Alonso Africa Scholarship, Florida International University

2019–2021 Florida International University (Miami, FL)
*Role:* Instructor of Record 322
*Course:* CPO 3204 African Politics

*Responsibilities:*
- Mentored students through office hours and one-on-one communication.
- Checked assignments, proctored tests, and provided grades according to university standards.
- Prepared lessons according to course outline to convey all required material and deepen student understanding of subject matter.
- Streamed classes online and uploaded videos for later viewing by distance and absent students.
- Documented attendance and completed assignments to maintain full class and student records.

Assisted faculty with clerical tasks such as copying papers, collecting assignments, and preparing materials for upcoming classes.

2019–Present *Role:* Teaching Assistant


*Responsibilities:*
- Evaluates student performance, including grading exams, quizzes, assignments, and papers in international relations, political science, and African studies
- Meets with the course instructor and assists in determining grading criteria.
• Tracks and records individual and overall course grades in multiple formats, including but not limited to entering class results in spreadsheets or on the online learning management system (LMS).
• Provides and records student grades for Early Warning, Midterm Reporting, and Final Grades according to established deadlines.
• Tracks and records student class attendance.

2019
Clark-Alonso Africa Scholarship, Florida International University
2019
Induction into Phi Kappa Phi Honors Society
2018
M.A., Africa, and African Diaspora Studies
2018
Research Assistant, African and African Diaspora Studies Program

Responsibilities
• Researched information regarding HIV/AIDS and LGBT rights in the Caribbean.
• Prepared materials for reports, presentations, and submission to peer-reviewed journal publications.
• Performed statistical, qualitative, and quantitative analysis.
• Conducted legal researched and drafted legal memos and summaries on gentrification in Miami.
• Analyzed acquired information and presented to professors.

2016–2019
University of Wyoming (Laramie, WY)
Role: Teaching Assistant
Courses: Introduction to African Studies, Globalization, Senior’s Capstone Writing, Introduction to African American Studies, Intro to politics of developing nations.

Responsibilities:
• Assisting the faculty member with class instruction
• Grading student papers
• Taking notes
• Organizing class schedules
• Chief advisor of the primary instructor

2016
The University of Wyoming, Laramie, WY
M.A., International Studies
Thesis: Dangerous Memory: Contrasting Public and Private Memories of the Rwandan Genocide Using Hutus in the United States

2015
Fellowship Scholar, University of Wyoming Center for Global Studies
2015
Social Justice Research Scholar, University of Wyoming
2015
Induction into Sigma Iota Rho (national honor society for international studies)
2012
Principia College, Elsah, IL
B.A., Political Science
2009
Winfred Membry Hanzlik Award for Global Citizenry, Principia College
African Studies Association (ASA) (Membership)
Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA) (Membership)
American Political Science Association (APSA) (Membership)
Fluent in Kiswahili and English (Languages)

PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS