



United Nations
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CRIS

Comparative Regional Integration Studies

UNU-CRIS WORKING PAPERS

W-2008/2

Dynamics of Regional (non-) integration in Eastern Africa

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April 2008

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ABSTRACT

The African continent has witnessed since the nineties a rebirth of regional arrangements aiming at furthering the integration of Africa. However the process of regional integration has faced a great variety of obstacles. Studying the processes of integration in Eastern Africa allows us to take a more in depth look at the various dynamics favouring or disfavouring regional integration in Africa. This paper first takes a look at the reality on the ground and how there is in fact an active regionalisation process going on at multiple levels of governance. We then turn to the more formal efforts currently underway in Eastern Africa looking first at the attempts for economic or trade integration, then at regional organisations tackling the issue of peace and security. The technical organisations responsible for regional cooperation on specific development related issues are also briefly explored. This permits us to analyse the obstacles affecting regional integration in Eastern Africa. Two types of explanations are considered: structural impediments and policy or governance related impediments. The identification of these obstacles allows us to conclude with findings that may be useful in terms of future policy making so as to favour a deeper regional integration in Africa.

Among the numerous trends that have marked political and economic relations in the second part of the 20th century, the emergence of regional organisations and processes of regional integration represent one of the most fascinating and fast growing processes. The African continent has not been left out and is also home to multiple regional interconnections and formal groupings. In fact, many international actors such as the United Nations, the World Bank, the European Union, and African ones like the African Union, the African Development Bank, and various African head of states have called for a greater integration of the African continent¹. As a result, numerous regional organisations have been set up throughout the continent. However, whereas Africa is notable for the *quantity* of regional groupings, which end up overlapping one another, there is room for an increase in the *quality* of the integration processes. Despite the signing of numerous treaties and agreements, few steps have been taken in the direction of an effective integration of the African continent.

The aim of this paper is to investigate the reasons why regional integration in Africa has remained weak and somewhat ineffectual despite the abundant integration processes that have been and that are currently going on within the African continent. Throughout the continent numerous regional organisations have been set up to manage a variety of economic and political issues. Such formal regional organisations include the East African Community (EAC), the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD), the International Conference for the Great Lakes Region (IC/GLR), but also the African Union (AU) and many others². Moreover, along side these organisations exists an important number of technical or cooperation arrangements with a regional range such as the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) or the Lake Victoria Basin Commission (LVBC). Rather than solely focussing on the more formal aspects of regional integration, this paper will also take a look at the regionalisation processes happening in Eastern Africa so as to also take into account the informal aspects of the socio-economic and political dynamics happening in the region. This phenomenon, referred to as regionalisation (in opposition to formal regional integration) (Hettne, 1999: 7-8), is particularly useful while studying African regions given the importance of informality in many features of Africa's politics and economy. It is only by taking a broader look at the ongoing processes in Africa and the strategies adopted by the states in the region, but also by non-state actors, that it will be possible to analyse the reasons why integration encounters so many problems.

The eastern part of the African continent represents a good case study to understand some of the dynamics accompanying regional integration. Many of the features affecting the integration process are particularly salient and exacerbated in Eastern Africa. Whether it concerns the economic aspects of integration, the political or the security ones, Eastern Africa can be considered as a typical example of the African regional integration conundrum. The problem of defining what is the Eastern Africa 'region' already demonstrates how difficult it can be to identify 'regions', 'groupings' or 'complexes' within the continent³. In 1976, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) managed to somehow bypass this difficulty by stating

¹ See among others: UNECA (2004), *Assessing Regional Integration in Africa*, Addis Ababa, UNECA; World Bank (2005), *Africa Action Plan*, Washington, World Bank; ACP-EU (2000), *Cotonou Agreement*; OAU (1991), *Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community (Abuja Treaty)*; AU Commission (2004), *Strategic Plan of the African Union Commission; Vol. 1 Vision and Mission of the African Union*, Addis Ababa;

² Outside Eastern Africa we may cite: Economic Community of Western Africa States (ECOWAS), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), etc.

³ It seems adequate to indicate at this point that in this paper Africa as a whole will be referred to as 'Continent' in order to avoid confusion with the 'regions' composing it.

that “there shall be *five* Regions of the OAU namely, Northern, Western, Central, Eastern and Southern” (OAU, 1976: CM/Res. 464 (XXVI)) (italics added) and leaving to a later date the task of explicitly stating which countries are part of which region. The appurtenance to a particular group is therefore not strictly defined and can be said to follow an un-stated ‘tradition’. As a result, within the OAU and nowadays the African Union (AU) **Eastern Africa** is composed of the Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Rwanda, the Seychelles, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. Therefore, the region is cross-cutting along different other widely used ensembles such as **East Africa**, **(Greater) Horn of Africa** and even the **Great Lakes** and the **Indian Ocean**⁴. For our research we define Eastern Africa as the grouping being used by the AU to which will be added Burundi whose security and economy is tightly linked to other Eastern African countries as is proved by its recent accession to the (EAC). This delimitation enables us to take into account the perception of the continental organisation towards this region. This is also to stress that in order to understand the political and economic evolution in Africa it is of utmost important to look at all level of governance⁵, i.e. local, national, regional, continental and international.

This paper will be divided in three parts in order to cover most of the important aspects related to regional integration in the Eastern Africa region. The first part will focus on informal regionalisation in Eastern Africa. In that regard, it will be demonstrated how Eastern Africa constitutes a coherent security complex with deep imbrications of a vast array of actors ranging from governments to rebel groups. The importance of movement of people across boundaries, whether as refugees or as part of a traditional transhumance lifestyle, will also shed some light on the ongoing regionalisation processes. Similarly, the phenomenon of cross border trade will be reviewed by also encompassing informal trade and trade networks rather than being limited to the study of declared and official trade.

The second part will review the more formal agreements and regional organisations that can be found in Eastern Africa. For that purpose, two economic blocs, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the East Africa Community (EAC), will be the first organisations on which we will focus our attention. The Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) will be analysed as part of the security and development cooperation agreements alongside with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (IC/GLR). Eventually, the technical regional organisations will be reviewed in order to understand how they can be considered as part of the integration processes.

The third part will take a more analytical turn by trying to identify reasons for the weakness of regional integration in Eastern Africa. Two types of explanations will be considered. On one hand the structural reasons that impede the emergence of strong and efficient regional organisations will be developed. On the other hand the more conjectural questions linked to states and governments’ policies will be considered.

⁴ East Africa is usually used to describe Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. Horn of Africa encompasses Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Sudan, when the adjective ‘Greater’ is used it may as well encompass Uganda. The Great Lakes refers to Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Uganda (to which are sometimes added Tanzania and Kenya). The Indian Ocean includes the coastal countries and the islands located in the Indian Ocean.

⁵ ‘Governance’ here should not be restricted to the state-centred definition given by the World Bank. Hyden’s definition of governance as “those measures that involve setting the rules for the exercise of power and settling conflicts over such rules” (1999: 185) is more appropriate for a region where state’s power is challenged by many other actors.

Eastern Africa Regionalisation

From Bayart (1989) to Reno (1999) and from Chabal and Daloz (1999) to Van De Walle (2001) to cite the most notorious one, there have been numerous authors that have demonstrated the importance of informality in the conduct of policies in Africa. To leave aside this fundamental feature of African politics when studying processes of regional integration would only give an insufficient and biased view of the ongoing dynamics. In order to understand the various processes that are affecting (positively or negatively) integration in Eastern Africa, it is necessary to first explore the ground upon which the integration attempts are going to be built upon.

Within the field of regional studies also there has been a wide critique of the centrality of the state in older analysis of integration processes. Hettne, one of the proponents of a new approach on regionalism considers that: “[W]hereas the old regionalism was created ‘from above’ (by the superpowers), the new is a more spontaneous process from within the region and also ‘from below’ in the sense that the constituent states themselves, but increasingly also other actors, are the main proponents for regional integration” (1999: 7). In the continuation of Hettne’s viewpoint Söderbaum considers that “‘regionalization’ refers to the process of cooperation, integration, cohesion and identity creating a regional space (issue-specific or general). It furthermore implies an activist element, a strategy of regionalization, which can be pursued by both state and non-state actors. Regionalization may be caused by regionalism, but it may also emerge regardless of whether there is a regionalist project and regionalism ideology or not.” (Söderbaum, 2004: 7)

Security, for example, represents a key issue through which it is possible to identify trends showing how contacts, amicable or on the contrary conflictual, participate in the regionalisation of Eastern Africa. The involvement of formal actors such as state and governments and of more informal actors in the form of rebel groups, militias and warlords have created an area where the decision of one affects directly or indirectly the neighbouring states. Eastern Africa therefore constitutes a ‘security complex’, or in Buzan (et. al.) words, a “set of states whose major security perception and concerns are so inter-linked that their national security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another” (1998: 12). Moreover, according to the new framework of analysis developed by Buzan (et. al) “security complexes cannot be limited to state and interstate relations and to politico-military issues; they must make room for other types of security units and issues” (1998: 198).

Since the 1960s, Eastern Africa has not known a single conflict-free decade. For example Sudan witnessed a civil war between the North and the South for 30 years while Ethiopian governments fought against Eritrean rebels for more than three decades. In Rwanda a genocide targeting the Tutsi population and moderate Hutus resulted in 800 000 deaths. But compared to the rest of the continent, the recent conflict history of Eastern Africa differs by the importance of inter-state conflict⁶. Intra-state conflicts, or civil wars, have also occurred on numerous occasions; however conflict between states remains a rarity rather than the norm

⁶ According to the Uppsala Conflict Database of 2006 (which does not include the 2006-2007 Ethiopian intervention in Somalia), interstate conflicts involving countries of East Africa account for four out of eight of the accounted African interstate conflicts (Uppsala Conflict Database, 2006).

in Africa⁷. The decision by the OAU to impose the sanctity of colonial borders has been criticized by many different groups throughout Africa but has nevertheless been fairly well respected by the various African governments. The invasion by Somalia of the Ogaden region in Ethiopia in 1977-1978, the Tanzanian intervention to oust Idi Amin launched in 1978, the Ethiopian-Eritrean war between 1998 and 2000 and the Ethiopian intervention in Somalia since December 2006, all demonstrates that Eastern Africa has seen a larger share of interstate conflict and intervention than the rest of Africa. Far from being small border skirmishes these conflicts have all seen the full scale intervention of the involved parties leaving on their trail numerous victims both military and civilians. Towards the end of the Ethio-Eritrean war of 1998-2000, “it was estimated that over 370 000 Eritreans and approximately 350 000 Ethiopians had been affected by the war, which was also estimated to have cost 30 000 lives and led to arms purchases by both countries totalling some US \$700 million” (Aboagye, 2001). Even when they are not engaged in an open war, the countries in the region remain very suspicious towards one another obliging them to take into account each other’s moves and political decisions (Ruth, 2001; Prunier, 2004).

This suspicion has also led to a policy of indirect involvement in internal affairs of other countries of the region. This involvement has taken different forms along the time. One of the most common strategies that have been used throughout the region has been the support of one or many insurgent groups opposing the government of the neighbouring country. The extent of the support has ranged from the provision of armaments to the rebel group up to a full scale intervention alongside the rebel group (Clapham, 1998). For example, in 1979, when the Tanzanian army intervened in Uganda in order to oust Idi Amin, they did so by fighting along the Uganda National Liberation Front a rebel group which had been established with the blessing of Tanzania (Mushemaza, 2001: 63). But a very good example of the reality of the Eastern Africa ‘security complex’ is visible in the event that have led to the downfall of the Somali president, Siad Barre, and his regime and the collapse of Somalia. In 1988, the Ethiopian army fighting the Eritrean rebels lost a major battle near the town of Afabet. Following this military setback, Mengistu Haile Mariam, the then Ethiopian president was forced to sign an agreement with Siad Barre in order to be able to concentrate his armed forces in the north of the country (De Waal, 2004: 187). Part of the agreement included that both Ethiopia and Somalia would stop their support to their respective insurgent groups and release their prisoners of war. The Somali rebel groups either faced the risk of being jailed in Ethiopia, as was the case for Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed⁸ the leader of the Somali Salvation Democratic Front, or could no longer stay in Ethiopia and suddenly returned to Somalia where they fought against Barre’s regime and eventually succeeding in ousting him.

Ironically, it is this very same support to rebel groups that has partly contributed to the regionalisation of Eastern Africa. Within the region, the current head of state or government of no less than five countries are former insurgents or rebel leaders which benefited from support from neighbouring countries⁹. The influence of the bounds that were forged during

⁷ The Uppsala Conflict Database lists eight interstate conflicts in Africa over the period ranging from 1946 to 2006. Over the same period of time, it lists 32 strictly internal armed conflicts and 19 internationalized internal armed conflicts. (Uppsala Conflict Database, 2006)

⁸ Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed was a colonel in the Somali army when the then Somali president Siad Barre launched the offensive on Ethiopia in 1977 and would later return to Somalia as the president of the Transitional Federal Government with the support of Ethiopian troops almost 30 years later.

⁹ President Museveni and the NRM accessed to power in Uganda in 1986 with the help of Rwandese refugees. The favour was returned some years later when Kagame’s RPF managed to take over Rwanda after having benefited from extensive Ugandan support (Lemarchand, 2001: 89). Both the EPLF in Eritrea and the EPRDF in

the bush wars can not be dismissed. Their importance in the processes of regional integration is nowhere as visible as they are with the links between the Rwandan president Paul Kagame and his Ugandan counterpart Yoweri Museveni. The accession of Rwanda to the East African Community represents the epitome of this relationship that was first established in the eighties in the mountains of western Uganda when they were both fighting for the National Resistance Army against the then Ugandan government of Milton Obote and Tito Okello. As Lemarchand puts it the “ties of solidarity between Kagame and Museveni were thus forged in the crucible of battle” (2001: 89) In the Horn, Ethiopian Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi, provided support to Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed, who first became president of the autonomous region of Puntland before being elected in 2004 as president of the Somali Transitional Federal Government. Interestingly the father of Mohammed Ghedi, the Prime Minister of Somalia at the time of the Ethiopian intervention, was a Colonel in the Somali National Security Service and is alleged to have been the contact person between the Siad Barre government and the Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF) which was then headed by Meles Zenawi the current Ethiopian Prime Minister. This proximity between the Ethiopian leaders and the head of the Somali government has been helpful to strengthen the ties between the two countries including by the support Ethiopia in favour of Somalia’s adhesion to the Sana’a Forum for Cooperation¹⁰. In that way, both could support each other in combating against common enemies (Terlinden and Debiel, 2004: 16).

The multiplication of conflicts throughout Eastern Africa also had some major negative consequences. One of which is the extent of arm flows in the region and the deadly effect of having such a high number of firearms spread in countries that struggle to ensure the rule of law within their own borders. In 2000, the South African based Institute of Security Studies estimated that there were around 2 million illicit small arms and light weapons circulating within East Africa and the Greater Horn region (ISS, 2000). Two inter-state conflicts, the Ogaden War in 1977-1978 and the Ethiopia-Eritrea war in 1998-2000, provoked important arm-race between the involved parties and contributed to fuel conflicts all the way to Rwanda and the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (Belachew, 2005: 207). The perpetuation of some intra-state conflicts has also stimulated the demand for firearms. “The breakdown of law and order opens the demand for arms, as security becomes an individual, clan or ethnic matter of concern. Situations or conflicts are pushing many communities into arming themselves for self-defence and to secure their property” (Wairagu, 2004: 112). Efforts have been made, with the support of the UN, to increase the control and monitoring of firearms and improve security by introducing disarmament programs. In 2000 the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda agreed to collaborate in order to reduce arm flows in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa Regions (Nairobi Declaration, 2000).

The constant insecurity that has defined Eastern Africa for the last decades has also had consequences on the migration patterns and the movement of people. Eastern Africa remains one of the regions with the highest number of refugees. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated in 2006 that there was up to 1,4 million refugees living in

Ethiopia made much use of their military bases in Sudan to overpower Mengistu’s *Derg* regime in Ethiopia (Woodward, 2003: 122). Most recently, the Ethiopian backing of the Somali Transitional Federal Government was crucial in its fight against the Islamic Courts Union.

¹⁰ The Sana’a Forum for Cooperation includes Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen with the aim of promoting economic development and cooperation on peace and security issues. However it is widely believed to be an alliance against Eritrea against whom each member state has had grudges in the past (Redie, 2007: 5)

the region (UNHCR, 2006). There have been very little studies on the effect of refugees on regional integration despite the fact that it represents a clear case of cross border movement of people entailing important socio-political and economic consequences. The question of refugees when linked to regional integration is often seen as a problem that can be solved by integrating the country of origin and the country hosting the refugees. Nevertheless, the question of refugees can also be seen as an example of grass-root regionalisation. It is of course difficult to assess the contribution of refugees to the regionalisation process. The evolution of post-1994 Rwanda would represent a very interesting starting point in such an assessment. The fact that a large part of high level officials of the current government of Rwanda were refugees educated in neighbouring Uganda or Tanzania has undoubtedly contributed to Rwanda's turn towards its Anglophone eastern neighbour rather than francophone DRC. Another good example is the way the return of South Sudan refugees from Kenya to their homeland has opened up the way for Kenyan investment in South Sudan.

But the grass-root regionalisation process resulting from a cross-border movement of people is not limited to the refugees' flows. There is in fact a more constant trans-border transhumance that has been active for many years in the form of pastoralist groups whose territory often spreads across more than one country. Pastoralist groups represent one of the major issues in Eastern Africa. "The Horn is home to the highest concentration of traditional pastoralists in the world. Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia rank first, third and fifth respectively in the world in term of pastoral population size, and more than one-third of Djibouti's inhabitants are pastoralist" (Markakis, 1994: 218). These pastoralist groups tend to escape the formal control of the state but still represent one of the major aspects through which contacts are established across boundaries. Moreover, pastoralist communities tend to live in the low inhabited border areas often disconnected from the capital city (Little, 2005: 13). And the pastoral way of living has often posed problems to centralised states as it tends to escape their control (Markakis, 1994). On a regional perspective, on the contrary, it can be seen as one of the most developed way, albeit very informal, through which regionalisation occurs on the ground. In the recent years there has been an increased interest in the role of these pastoral groups in cross border trade. For example, a UNU-WIDER Research Paper focussed on the case of cross-border commerce in the horn of Africa and demonstrated that pastoralist communities are one of the important actors involved in such trade patterns. It is, for example, demonstrated by the networks established by Somali traders. "Somali traders and transporters are found throughout East Africa and well into central Africa and the Middle East. These networks have grown in significance with the implosion of the Somali state. The segmentary kinship and clan idioms strengthen them by enhancing trust and guarding against deception in business dealings" (Little, 2005). But even if this type of trade is important in terms of scale it remains somehow secluded to an area of informality. Nevertheless, it demonstrates that trade can flourish even by bypassing the formal state governance and in fact by creating a new parallel trade-based informal type of governance extending from the local to the regional.

Pastoralist groups also contribute quite extensively to the informal networks of cross border trade that exists in the Eastern Africa region. Studies conducted by Little (2007) on the extent and consequences of unofficial cross-border trade in Eastern Africa have demonstrated that such type of trade is not limited to short distance transportation of small amounts of crops but can also involve moving large quantities over very long distances. The Ethiopian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development recently calculated that the existence of informal trade networks for livestock was costing the country no less than 138 million dollars a year (Dawit, 2007). For traders in the Eastern Africa region the porosity of borders offers an incredible

opportunity to escape taxation and governmental control. The fact that Somalia has been without an effective government for the last 16 years also provides the most adventurous traders with an entry port that escapes states' control. "The export trade in small stock from Somalia (including Somaliland) was larger in 1998 than during pre-1991 when the country had a government. [...] In 1998 Somalia (including Somaliland) accounted for 850,000 goats and 1.25 million sheep, or more than 95 per cent of all goat exports and 52 percent of sheep exports from the entire eastern Africa region" (Little, 2005: 3). But cross-border trade involves a much more diverse range of products than livestock and food commodities (COMESA, 2007: 19). For example, a very lively trade is the one focussing on *Khat* the mild narcotic whose usage is widespread in the horn of Africa and even beyond. For example it was estimated that between 1999 and 2000 the export of *Khat* was the second export earning for Ethiopia behind coffee (Dechassa, 2001). The Asian entrepreneurs that have long been living in East Africa have also been able to establish very vibrant trade networks that are based on family lines or on traditional links. Indian traders do in fact represent some of the major entrepreneurs in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda and are involved in goods trade coming from India and other Asian countries to be distributed all over East Africa (Dubey, 2000). For example, the first Export Processing Zone to start operating in Kenya which was opened by the Sameer Industrial Park owned by Naushad Merali an Indian trader whose family had long been living in Kenya (Ranja, 2003: 6).

However, there are cases illustrating that the existence of well developed informal trade networks can very clearly be a factor that is pushing forward formal trade integration. Such pushes for a regional integration 'from below' have occurred, for example, in countries such as Uganda and Ethiopia who have tried to facilitate the conditions under which the existing informal traders could act 'legally'. However, this bottom-up push for integration have only been half-successful as the new measures introduced both by Uganda and Ethiopia focused on small cross-border trade and did not take into account trade occurring on a larger scale (Little, 2007: 29). In another notable case, the EAC has witnessed a very strong boost in favour of the integration of the region following the decision by Celtel, a major mobile phone lines provider, to merge its Kenyan, Ugandan and Tanzanian network and thus offering the first regional borderless network in the world (IPPMedia, 2006).

These various dynamics clearly demonstrate that Eastern Africa provides for a fertile ground upon which can be developed regional integration efforts. Moreover, the numerous ongoing regionalisation processes are not restricted to one single level of governance but concerns actors at the local, the national and the regional levels. But even in that case, a feature that also characterises these dynamics is their informality. Some of the most effective examples of regionalisation occur in areas that are on the margin of 'official' and 'formal' politics. This phenomenon leads to a situation where the 'formal' agreements reached between the Eastern African States can difficultly encompass a large part of the existing contacts and trade networks that occur in parallel to official policies. Iheduru, while studying West Africa, considers that the agents involved in 'regionalisation from below' can not always be transformed in formal regional integration. "[T]he 'natural' regions they have created contrast with the formal regional structures that are notoriously committed to the legal fiction of sovereign and juridical equality of states and the principles of non-interference in the internal affairs of member states." (Iheduru, 2003: 62)¹¹

¹¹ See also Bach (1999: 11) for an account on how illegal trans-state trade and networks interest favoured the dissolution of the Senegambian Confederation.

Formal Integration in Eastern Africa

After having reviewed some aspects of the regionalisation processes taking place in Eastern Africa, we can now turn to the more formalised attempts in favour of a regional integration. When speaking about regional integration in Eastern Africa one of the most striking aspects is the number of attempts that were launched by heads of state and governments in order to resolve a large variety of problems that are affecting the region. This has created a situation where regional organisations abound and are involved in issues linked to economic development, security or technical cooperation. Even though this paper will examine the organisations according to their areas of activity, it would be wrong to assume that there is a clear separation of task between them. An organisation such as IGAD is at the same time in charge of peace and security issues, of development issues and is recognised by the AU as one of the African Economic Communities. This multiplication of the orientation for a regional organisation is in fact one of the features identified by Hettne to distinguish 'new' regionalism from 'old' regionalism (1999: 8). In the African continent, there is not only an overlap between the geographical scopes of the existing organisations but also an overlap in their areas of activity. Even by taking just the most advanced field in which the regional organisation is involved, as is the case in this paper, the overlapping of the arrangement is obvious.

In regard to the attempts at integrating trade and the economy of Eastern Africa region, one of the most ambitious economic regional organisation that has been established in Africa is the COMESA. The COMESA was thus established in 1994 in Lusaka, Zambia, replacing the Preferential Trade Area (PTA), with the aim of creating a common market for Eastern and Southern Africa countries¹². The transformation of the PTA into COMESA dovetailed the signing by the OAU of the Lagos Plan of Action and the Abuja Treaty that made provision for building the continental unity through the creation of Regional Economic Communities. However, COMESA covered a very large geographical area and encompassed countries in very different state of development. Extending from Egypt in the north, all the way to Angola in the South, the inter-governmental organisation eventually planned for the establishment of a Free Trade Area by 2000, of a custom union by 2004 and of a monetary union by the year 2025 (COMESA Treaty, 1994). Despite efforts in these regards, the original plan had soon showed to be over ambitious and COMESA needed to postpone the dates to attain the goals that had been set for the regional bloc. The organisation has also been affected by the withdrawal of some member states such as Namibia, Mozambique and Tanzania who, among other reasons, have decided to focus their attention to their SADC membership¹³.

Despite the low level of (officially declared) intra-regional trade, the logic behind the setting up of COMESA was to establish a Free Trade Area (FTA) among its member states in order to allow for their economic development. Nevertheless, some member states have been reluctant to engage themselves in a FTA and decided to opt-out when it was established mainly because they considered that their national economies were not ready enough to compete at a regional level. As a result, when the Free Trade Area was launched in 2000 only

¹² The countries signatory to the COMESA treaty in were: Angola, Burundi, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo (as Zaïre), Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

¹³ For a detailed look at the process that led Namibia to quit COMESA and favour SADC see Hansohm (et.al) (2005) *Namibia's Withdrawal from COMESA: A Case Study of Successful Policy Research in Namibia*, NEPRU Working Paper N°10.

nine out of the 19 member states were taking part¹⁴. Meanwhile, the debate still rages in the countries that have still not joined COMESA's trade agreements (Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia). Tanzania for example quit COMESA in September 2000 in order to concentrate on its membership to the South African Development Community (SADC) and to the EAC. But an increasing number of voices, both from within and from outside the country, have called for Tanzania to return to COMESA and take part in the Free Trade Area (Ngunjiri, 2007).

Another regional organisation that has gained importance in the recent years is the EAC which is in fact a revival of an existing regional bloc. The previous EAC experience reflects some of the downfalls of integration in Africa (Mugomba, 1978). In 1967 Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya had signed an agreement to establish a common market. However, the opposing political economy conducted by socialist Tanzania and free-market Kenya, coupled with political tensions between Tanzania and Uganda led to the demise of the regional group and the eventual abandonment of the EAC in 1977. It would take 20 long years before the heads of state of the three countries would agree to reinitiate the EAC and decide to set on a path leading all the way to a political federation. Before realising this final goal, the member states of the EAC will first advance their economic integration. The gradual steps towards political federation included first the establishment of a free trade area soon followed by the introduction of the EAC Custom Union which entered into force on 1 January 2005. The East African leaders were also well aware of the problems that had provoked the end of the previous EAC and thus made special provisions so that Kenya, the regional industrial power, would continue to pay duties on goods entering the other member state (EAC, 2004). However, these rates follow a declining scale and will be reduced to 0% at the end of the five years following the entry into force of the Custom Union.

The EAC is also notable for its assumed final goal of building a political federation headed by a single president (EAC, 1999a). A special committee on Fast Tracking East African Federation was even adopted in 2004 in order to identify the possibilities to speed up the political integration process. Earlier, the three member states had already agreed on a Memorandum on Foreign Policy Co-ordination whereas the three member states would take a common stand on international questions and would assist each other in countries where they do not have Missions (EAC Memorandum, 1999b). The idea of an East African Federation is being very actively advocated by Uganda but has received a somewhat more mitigated response in Kenya and even more in Tanzania (Akolo, 2007). The more recent accession of Rwanda and Burundi in July 2007 might also create some difficulties in the realisation of the political integration scheme. The 2007 enlargement process nevertheless demonstrates that the regional group views itself as more than a regional trade agreement. Both Rwanda and Burundi had first to implement a certain number of changes before being allowed to join the regional group. The EAC was also the only African regional organisation to make an express demand to the African Union so that it would be considered as a Regional Economic Community. Even more recently, the EAC became the only African regional bloc to have signed the Economic Partnership Agreements proposed by the European Union (EU, 2007).

In order to understand the efforts made at the regional level to solve the many problems linked to peace and security two regional organisations need to be looked at in more details: IGAD and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (IC/GLR) who have both developed comprehensive frameworks on peace and security.

¹⁴ To this date the FTA still only covers 13 countries including Libya which became a COMESA member in 2006.

The IGAD was first set-up as the Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD) in 1986 to find solutions to the problems caused by the severe drought and subsequent famines that had affected the region in the early 1980s. It is only by a gradual spill-over effect that the regional organisations started being concerned with the question of peace and security. Eventually, when the IGAD was revitalized in 1996, the leaders of its member states very clearly defined an agenda for the regional organisation to “promote and maintain peace and security” (IGAD, 1996). This formalisation of the competences of IGAD allowed for a greater involvement of the regional organisation in the mediation efforts to solve some of the long lasting conflicts of the Horn of Africa. IGAD’s role was instrumental in the signing of the Machakos Protocol between the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) and the Sudanese government (Prendergast and Mozersky, 2004). In 2005, the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between these two parties was also the result of the important involvement of the regional organisation. Similarly IGAD has been very influential in the process that allowed for the formation of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in Somalia. Since the collapse of Siad Barre’s regime, IGAD and the various states of the Horn of Africa region had repetitively tried to find a solution for Somalia’s absence of any government and authority. IGAD even made a tentative plan to send some peacekeeping troops to Somalia but the plan failed to materialize as the consensus for the deployment was hard to reach and was eventually overcome by the unilateral Ethiopian intervention in support of the TFG¹⁵.

IGAD has also developed its own mechanism for conflict early warning. The Conflict Early Warning Mechanism (CEWARN) entered into force in August 2003 and has a mandate to monitor and analyse a series of information in order to detect on time the risks of escalation and conflict. The Mechanism acts both as an early warning instrument and early response unit working at the regional level (IGAD, 2002). It is the existence of CEWARN within IGAD’s framework that has pushed the African Union to identify IGAD as the organisation to help in the implementation of the Eastern Africa chapter of the African Standby Force (ASF) plan (AU, 2003). However, the establishment of the East African Stand-up force encountered some problems as IGAD did not cover all the countries expected to take part in the East African Stand-by Brigade (EASBRIG). The Eritrean decision to withdraw its membership from IGAD, following its deep-seated disagreement with the decisions made by the regional body and other member states, will also negatively affect the capacity of the inter-governmental organisation to deal with important regional issues. Even with the establishment of the East African Standby Brigade Coordination Mechanism (EASBRICOM) outside of the IGAD framework, the unresolved dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea will represent a hurdle for the implementation of this peace and security programme. The EASBRIG was expected to encompass all 13 countries of the Eastern Africa region; however, both Tanzania and Mauritius have decided to join the Southern African equivalent SADC BRIG. The countries currently part of EASBRIG are: Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Rwanda, the Seychelles, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda.

More recently another ambitious plan to tackle with security issues has also been established focussing this time on the Great Lakes Region. Back in 2000, while the Great Lakes was still entangled in the conflict in DRC, the UN Security Council pushed towards the organisation of an international conference bringing together the heads of states and government of the region

¹⁵ Even after the victory of the joined Ethiopian-TFG troops, the peacekeeping operation would not come from IGAD but from the AU with the deployment of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

in order to find sustainable solutions to the challenges of development and peace and security (UNSC Res 1291 & 1304, 2000). The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (IC/GLR) which encompasses 11 core countries and seven co-opted countries still considers itself as a process rather than a regional organisation¹⁶. The first conference was thus held in 2000 in Nairobi, but it was only in 2004 following the adoption of the Dar es Salaam Declaration on Peace, Security and Development in the Great Lakes Region that the International Conference gained some substantial powers. The 2006 Conference in Nairobi also encouraged the institutionalisation of the Conference especially by deciding to open a secretariat in Burundi (ICGLR, 2006a).

The IC/GLR has several projects which are divided in four main areas: Peace and Security, Democracy and Good Governance, Economic Development and Regional Integration and Humanitarian and Social Issues. Within the area of Peace and Security, the Regional Programme of Action launched by the ICGLR directly addresses the issues of: Joint Security Management of Common Borders, Reinforcement of Capacities in the Sub-Region to fight the illicit Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons and transnational crimes and terrorism. The IC/GLR member states additionally signed a Protocol on Non-Aggression and Mutual Defence in the Great Lakes Region through which they have agreed to refuse the threat or use of force against one another. The protocol also takes some bold steps by stating clearly that the member state will have to criminalize any act of aggression or subversion against other States by individuals or groups operating in their respective States (ICGLR, 2006b: Art3§4). In a region where the acts committed by armed groups supported by a given state have led to extremely violent and deadly conflict, such a provision may offer a way out to the cycle of violence (Church and Jowell, 2007).

The IC/GLR is also an innovative framework dealing with peace and security as it takes a more holistic approach. The IC/GLR, for example, calls for co-operation in poverty reduction as a strategy to fight against insecurity in the region (ICGLR, 2006a: Art.19). The harmonization and strengthening of regional co-operation policies and the development of infrastructure linking the member states constitutes the two other sub-programmes that are part of the Economic Development and Regional Integration thematic area. It is also interesting to note that the Regional Plan of Action for Economic Development and Regional Integration calls on the member states to develop or jointly exploit transborder resources including by creating or strengthening Transborder Development Basins (TDBs) (ICGLR, 2006c: 5). The IC/GLR also makes plan to create series of Economic Development Corridors throughout the Great Lakes Region in order to increase the interconnection within the region but also with the outside world.

Apart from the recently established IC/GLR there are already a number of regional arrangements in Eastern Africa that have been set-up to facilitate the regional management of resources or to enable better cooperation between various states to address a particular problem. These integrated development projects can not always be considered as regional organisations *per se*, but they nevertheless participate in the integration process. It is even possible to consider that IGADD has evolved into a regional organisation (IGAD) even though it started as a very technical organisation whose mandate was limited to specific development issues.

¹⁶ The IC/GLR website clearly states that “The Conference is a process” http://www.icglr.org/F_END/about.asp

It is almost impossible to name each and every of the existing technical regional organisations but some particularly prominent ones need to be mentioned as an illustration of the type of existing arrangements. One of these is the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) which was launched in 1999 by all the riparian states of the Nile River Basin. The establishment of NBI is in fact the result of a long process of negotiations between 10 countries¹⁷ whose development also depends on a fair distribution of the rights they may exercise over the water resources offered by the Nile. The signing of an agreement had been a pressing issue as the only legal text that had been existing until then was the 1959 agreement between Egypt and Sudan which excluded countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya or Tanzania. By establishing the NBI, the riparian states have agreed “to achieve sustainable socioeconomic development through equitable utilization of, and benefit from, the common Nile Basin water resources” (NBI, 2002). For that purpose, NBI’s work depends on the decisions made by the Council of Ministers of Water Affairs of the Nile Basin (Nile-COM) which is assisted by a Technical Advisory Committee (Nile-TAC). The overall implementation of the programmes agreed between the Ministers is also undertaken by the Secretariat based in Uganda. For example one of the projects currently being implemented by the NBI is the Ethiopia Power Export Project, whereas Ethiopia will be enabled to export electricity to Sudan by connecting the two countries power grid.

Similar technical organisations have already proved to be useful for the management of other resources that are unevenly distributed on the African continent. In regard to cooperation on energy resources, experts from Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda met in 2004 in Addis Ababa in order to finalise a Memorandum of Understanding that would lead to the establishment of an East African Power Pool (EAPP) in 2005. The EAPP makes provision for an increased interconnection of the power grids of its member states also to facilitate the export and import of electricity. This regionally integrated power grid has been established not only to ease the access to electricity for consumers that are no longer dependent on the national power grid, but also to improve power system reliability by allowing for reserve sharing. The creation of a regional programme for power exchanges also pushed forward the case of regional standard norms, and thus actively participates in the process of regional integration. It is not innocent that the Inter-governmental memorandum of understanding that allowed for the establishment of the EAPP has received the blessing of the COMESA, the EAC, the NBI and the AU.

Technical regional organisations have a very important role to play in the process of regional integration. In Europe, it would be difficult to downplay the role that was played by the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) in launching the process that has given way to the European Union. It would be possible to see similar evolution happening in Eastern Africa with some technical organisations managing an increased number of projects and programmes by a slow spill-over effect. The success of these technical regional organisations is also partly due to the fact that they are often seen as addressing issues of low-politics on an ad-hoc basis (Mitrany, 1966). It is easier for ministers to find agreements on the pooling together of the management of a given resource but it is much more difficult to find agreements on issues of ‘high politics’ especially in a region where there still is an important distrust among the states.

¹⁷ The 10 countries taking part in the negotiations were: Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. However, Eritrea only has an observer status within the NBI.

The multiplication of these regional schemes also poses the problem of their coordination. Given their variations in terms of scale, member state, and mandate the programmes and projects that are being put into practice by these different organisations may very well lack coherence. The overlapping of the regional arrangement leads to low ratification and implementation of agreed treaties and programmes, incompatibility of some programmes and a duplication of effort (UNECA, 2006: 55-59). Another important feature characterizing the existing regional arrangement is the strict top-down approach that has been used to establish them. Regardless of their main policy area of concern (trade, peace and security, development) the organisations and cooperation framework that have been set up in the Eastern Africa Region are highly dependent on the goodwill of the heads of state and government of the countries in the region. However, as we will see in the next chapter, this does not mean that there is a strict separation between the reality on the ground and the decisions reached at the top-level. On the contrary the imbrications are numerous even though they can not always be translated into formal agreements.

Weak integration in Eastern Africa

Structural impediments to regional integration

Looking at the existing processes of regionalisation and the experiments at regional integration that have been taking place in Eastern Africa it is possible to wonder why there has been so few effective results at integrating the region. The existence of an informal regionalisation happening on the ground combined with the more formal push being done by top-level officials creates hope for Eastern Africa to engage on a regional integration process bringing tangible and sustainable solutions to the region. The various efforts that are being undertaken have encountered many hurdles along the way and on a variety of issues linked to peace and security but also socio-economic development Eastern Africa can still not claim to have succeeded in its integration.

One of the major impediments that continuously slow down any prospect for economic regional integration concerns the structure of trade in the Eastern Africa region. Regional trade agreements are usually measured by taking into account the level of intra-regional trade. In the case of COMESA for example the intra-regional trade amounted to US\$4.8 billions in 2003; however this only represented a bit less than 7% of the total trade of COMESA member states (Comstat, 2005). For most of the countries in the region the main trade partners are not the neighbouring countries but markets located further away and that have a higher demand for the products that are being exported. In most cases the regional market still represents a margin of the exportation of the other member states. The entry into force of the COMESA free trade agreement has been followed by a very encouraging rise in the intra-COMESA trade. Between 1997 and 2005, trade within the region has more than doubled in value (Comstat, 2005). Nevertheless, most of the countries in the region still do privilege access to markets in Europe, North America or Asia rather than tapping into COMESA markets. More than aiming at facilitating the conduct of intra-regional trade, the decisions adopted by the COMESA member states are first and foremost measures to build such type of trade.

The efforts to increase intra-regional trade have also been hindered by the continued existence of non-trade barriers in Eastern Africa. Out of the many existing non-tariff barriers (NTBs) some are even linked to the difficulty regional organisation in Africa face in regard to the

implementation of their decisions. In the case of COMESA the asymmetrical implementation of trade rules has negatively affected the growth of intra-regional trade by complicating the conduct of business through legal means. For example, the introduction of the rule of origin was expected to facilitate trade in the COMESA region by allowing traders not to pay import duties or to pay reduced tariffs. Yet complications still exist because the majority of COMESA member States have to date, not implemented the COMESA simplified trade regime or have only managed to implement part of it. “Informal NTBs such as non-acceptance of rules of origin certificates, cumbersome bureaucratic procedures, and restrictive standards are some common problems.” (Khandelwal, 2004: 10) This creates a situation where it is very difficult to benefit from this regional scheme because of an unfriendly business environment due to the unclear and unharmonized trade tariffs in between the member states. In fact it becomes sometime more rational for traders to avoid facing the bureaucratic complication created by the regional agreements, and forces them to conduct their businesses informally. A study conducted on the cross-border trade of beans between Kenya and Uganda found out that “institutional restrictions in form of lengthy documentation procedures involved in the issuance of licenses coupled with high clearance fees forces many traders to resort to informal crossing points.” (Mauyo et al., 2007: 582)

The success of trade within the Eastern Africa region also depends on the capacity of the region to offer investors an attractive business environment. Despite agreements at the regional level within COMESA including specific instruments to facilitate regional trade, customs documents and procedures continue to hinder smooth regional trade. Little (2007) in his study of cross-border trade in the horn of Africa has identified two major problems affecting the realisation on the ground of the policies adopted to favour regional trade. Firstly, he notes that there is in general a low level of implementation of the decisions. The problem does not only rest on the unwillingness of governments as it has been mentioned by other authors but has to do with the incapacity member states have in terms of capacity for the implementation of the decisions (Finger, 2001). Secondly, the regional agreements also suffer from a lack of visibility as traders involved in cross-border trade are unaware of the advantage the regional agreement offers them¹⁸ or on the contrary would face new difficulties in doing so. “In the Horn region where some [cross border trade] restrictions have been eased, the amount of paper work and time required to qualify under new regulations is so cumbersome that most traders do not bother with it” (Little, 2007: 29).

In addition, the multiplicity of existing institutions that characterizes Eastern Africa is clearly detrimental to the continental integration and development goals. Because of the overlapping of regional agreements transaction costs will continue to remain high within the region. A study undertaken by the UNECA has clearly stated the problem: “lack of harmonized instruments governing trade and market integration programmes means that each regional economic community has its own rules of origins and certification process, limiting trade among communities. The irony of this outcome: production structures in African countries vary and different competencies and comparative advantages exist within the continent, but it is much easier to import goods from outside the continent than from within. The paradox of an integration conscious continent with such poor performance in intra-continental trade remains an embarrassment for the proponents of the African Economic Community.” (UNECA, 2006: 55-56). The African Economic Communities (also known as Regional

¹⁸ It is worth mentioning that the regional organisations understand that this lack of awareness is detrimental to trade growth and are making efforts to sensitise traders of the various advantages offered by the regional arrangements. For example, the EAC organised such workshops at border stations (EAC, 2006)

Economic Communities) were the principal outcome of the Abuja treaty, adopted in 1991 by the OAU, which made plans for a gradual economic integration of the African continent. The African continent is currently at a crossroad where it becomes necessary to make some improvement in the confusing situation surrounding the RECs in order to reach the objectives set by the Abuja treaty and the African Commission's Strategic Framework. The rationalization of the regional integration process is a necessary step in order to strengthen the viability of the continental integration. The problem posed by overlapping membership might become aggravated once the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) are put into practice (Stevens, 2006).

A major challenge that also needs to be addressed in order to have a flourishing intra-regional trade in Eastern Africa concerns the infrastructure. More exactly it is the absence of infrastructure that hinders the capacity of the countries in the region to engage more actively in intra-regional trade. According to a 2001 study conducted by the UNCTAD international transport costs faced by African countries are almost twice as high as the world average (UNCTAD, 2001). The problem posed by transport cost is particularly relevant for the landlocked countries of Eastern Africa as for example Rwanda faces transport costs that reach as high as 48% of the value of its exports (UNCTAD, 2001). As a research paper of the World Bank puts it "freight costs are [...] a far more restrictive barrier to African exports than tariffs, a point that should direct increased attention to transport cost saving measures" (Amjadi and Yeats, 1995: 11).

In order to promote intra-regional trade, it is of outmost importance that the countries of the region resolve the problem of insecurity and the high level of violence that still characterizes the region. The efforts taken in this direction by the IGAD, the ICGLR and the AU are of course laudable but they still have a long way to go before creating a stable and business friendly situation. The UNECA considers that there are multiple reasons why security issues should be tackled: "first conflicts in any member of a regional economic community undermine economic integration and growth throughout the entire community. Countries in conflict cannot focus on integration. Second, conflicts create distrust. Third, conflicts divert resources that could be used to strengthen national economies and promote regional integration. Fourth, conflicts result in contraction of markets and erection of non-tariff barriers to regional trade." (UNECA, 2006: 16). Very few countries of the Eastern Africa region have managed to escape a large scale intra-state or inter-state conflict in the last 20years. Even Kenya, once heralded for being an island of peace in the region, is affected by its proximity with lawless Somalia and has witnessed numerous deaths in the violence that followed the December 2007 elections. Similar post-electoral violence have also erupted in the Tanzania federation and especially Zanzibar (Kaya, 2004), in Uganda (Tabaire, 2007) and in Ethiopia (Abbink, 2006). The other countries of the region are either recovering from a deadly conflict or completely entangled into one. Sudan, for example, is facing the double challenge of managing a post-conflict situation in regard to the south of the country but is still facing a raging conflict in its western province of Darfur (Collins, 2007). Another preoccupying issue is the fact that despite efforts undertaken at the regional level, there is still a very high level of distrust among the member states in the region.

The continuing distrust has to do with the deep and historically entrenched grievances that exist between and within the various states of Eastern Africa. A very good example in this regard is the unresolved dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The end of the war between the two countries in 2000 has not resolved the tensions that had ignited the conflict. On the

contrary the high level of distrust between the brother enemies is now having important and deadly consequences at the regional level (Abbink, 2003). The establishment of the East African Stand-by Brigade (EASBRIG) whose headquarters and logistic base will be located in Ethiopia can only run into a dead end as Eritrea and Ethiopia are still issuing threats at each other. It is almost unthinkable for the two states to carry on joint military exercise while their troops are still facing each other over an unresolved border. Recently, IGAD suffered a major blow as the government in Asmara decided to suspend Eritrea's membership to the regional organisation. This withdrawal was mainly motivated by the perception, in Eritrea, that IGAD was aligning itself with Ethiopia on a variety of issues and did not sufficiently take into account the demands and views expressed by Eritrea. The fact that the two major military powers of the horn of Africa are at loggerheads represents a major risk for the stability of the whole region. On the ground it has already translated by a proxy war being fought in and around Mogadishu where Ethiopia has sided with the governmental force while Eritrea is supporting the opposition.

The other unresolved security issues concern the disarmament of rebel groups and militias roaming freely in different parts of the Eastern Africa region. The various conflicts that have occurred in Eastern Africa have flooded the region with small arms and light weapons that have ended up in the hand of rebel groups, insurgents but also state sponsored militias (Belachew, 2005). Disarmament campaigns are becoming a prerequisite for the eventual development of the region. The situation that has been created in Northern Uganda because of the Lord Resistance Army (LRA) has had dire consequences. Moreover, the incapacity of states in Eastern Africa to monitor and control their borders increases the risks of having conflicts and violence spill over to the neighbouring countries. The LRA for example is posing a security threat not only to Uganda but also to Southern Sudan, Eastern Congo and all the way to Eastern Central African Republic (Prunier; 2004). Moreover, there are still in the region a certain number of armed groups that are benefiting from state support. For example, Ethiopia has repetitively accused its northern neighbour of harbouring series of rebel groups that are fighting against the Addis Ababa government.

Policies of (non-)integration

It would be wrong to assume that the elements going against, or slowing down, regional integration are sui generis events. On the contrary, by many aspects states and governments in the region are consciously playing a role that contradicts some of their regional integration commitments. The structure of regional integration in Eastern Africa is very much the result of the policies and strategies adopted by the leaders from the region. To understand why there has been so little devolution of power to the regional organisations, or why states have been so reluctant to allow for the institutionalisation of the already existing regionalisation, we have to turn to the national politics and decisions of the state from the region.

One common feature that defines the policies of the states in the Eastern Africa region is the attachment that is given to state sovereignty. For both historical reasons and more practical and economic reasons the governments from the region are refusing to transfer any kind of their sovereign powers to another level of governance where their decisional power might be reduced. Even for a regional organisation like IGAD whose framework is entirely based on inter-governmentalism, the advantages of being a member is continuously weighted against the opportunity cost of free riding. Eritrea for example decided to opt-out from IGAD once it felt that the organisation became too constraining and did no longer serve its own security purposes. The calculation made in this case somewhat resembles the one made by Morocco in

1984 to withdraw from the OAU. It is also interesting to note that the calculations are not only made for questions relating to security but do also apply for economic matters. In 2000, Tanzania withdrew from COMESA not only to focus more on its membership to SADC, but essentially because it did not agree with the plans being drawn up by COMESA to introduce its FTA. At the time, the Tanzanian president Benjamin Mkapa had publicly expressed that he was reluctant to fast-track the implementation of a FTA and that his policy was to strengthen the capacity of Tanzanian national industry (Corporate Africa, 2000).

The participation or not to a regional organisation depends on the interest one country feels he may gain. Clapham offers an interesting view on the foreign policies of African states by pointing out that one of their guiding principles is that of the regime survival (Clapham, 1996). It is possible to identify a similar dynamic when looking at the regional integration efforts being undertaken in Africa. The success or failure of a regional arrangement can be highly dependent on the advantages it can offer to the leaders themselves. Being part of a regional organisation can, for example, increase the legitimacy of a head of state (Clapham, 1996: 56; Sindjoun, 2002: 91). The Somali president heading the TFG gained its recognition first by IGAD despite the fact that it was a government in exile with almost no control whatsoever on Somali territory. In his study on the political economy of regionalism Söderbaum, also argues that African leaders may engage in regional frameworks if it permits them to continue pursuing a strategy of personal enrichment by transposing the 'shadow state' (Reno, 1999) to the regional level (Söderbaum, 2004: 105). "In [regime-boosting] type of regionalism the main concern of involved regimes is with their own survival and status, rather than broader national and societal goals. All types of regime-boosting may not necessarily be detrimental" (Söderbaum, 2004: 112-113). From an institutional perspective, African states also have a strong incentive to actively seek a legitimisation of the state from the outside as it offers an efficient alternative to the weak sovereignty and recognition within their own borders (Jackson and Rosberg, 1982).

In Africa, and even more so in Eastern Africa, there is a constant calculation on the cost of participating and the cost of free-riding or withdrawing from the organisation. The right balance is often found by taking part in regional integration processes that are not too constraining. On the institutional side, this is translated by a strong push in favour of a strictly inter-governmental regional organisation. Each of the regional organisations that have been set-up in Eastern Africa are organised following a very strong inter-governmental system where all the decisional power is concentrated in the hands of the heads of state and government. The roles attributed to the secretariats and commissions are always limited to the implementation of the decisions made at a higher level and never include any decisional capacity. Even for the EAC which still represents the most advanced regional integration effort in Eastern Africa, the main bodies of the organisation are its Summit of head of state and governments and the ministerial council where decisions can only be taken on the basis of consensus (EAC Treaty, 1999). "[T]he Achilles heel of the founding texts is the unanimity rule and the requirement for domestic ratification and incorporation of regional instruments into the domestic laws of the member states. The implication is that each member state reserves the right to pursue an independent line of action if it does not agree with a particular measure." (Takirambudde, 1999: 157)

The multiplication of one state's membership to regional organisations is also driven by a very rational choice being made by the governments. There are many cases in which the cost of not being a member of a regional organisation exceeds the cost of adhering to the

organisation. The attitudes of African States towards their regional membership are shaped by the direct advantages it may offer. A very clear example is given in the adhesion of Rwanda and Burundi to the renewed EAC. Both countries are landlocked and heavily depended on Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda for their imports and exports. In such a situation, Rwanda and Burundi had to join the EAC in order to have their position being taken into account when trade matters are being discussed in the sub-region. As stated by Hurrell these regional arrangements “involve a reassertion and extension of state authority as part of a process by which states are increasingly willing to trade a degree of legal freedom of action for a greater degree of practical influence over the policies of other states and over the management of common problems” (1995: 42). Similarly, withdrawal from an already existing regional arrangement can be interpreted by the states as being costly even more so than adopting a strategy to slow down the integration process from within the organisation.

There has been criticism on the fact that African states only pay lip-service to the regional schemes they are involved in (Mistry, 2000). However, this fails to take into account the fact that governments in these very same states may be in fact adopting a tacit strategy to resist the push for deeper integration. One of the reasons why only a few of the decisions made at the regional level are being ratified and implemented by the national institutions is because states are still unwilling to introduce legal provisions that would curtail their already weak power or control over the national economy (Bach, 1999: 6). This tension between the need to maintain ones control and the pressure to cooperate with neighbouring states is well expressed by Clapham when he recounts the creation of the OAU back in 1963: “It was their interest in their own individual sovereignty, and their determination to maintain it both against their own neighbours and against the outside world, that led them both to reject continental union on the one hand, and to seek the protection of fellow African states on the other” (1996: 107). In the case of Eastern Africa the integration dynamics follows a similar pattern. The major incentive for states to agree on, and actually implement, a regional framework depends first and foremost on the perception by each one of the member states that their participation will provide them with positive outcomes. However, the nature of these outcomes may very well differ enormously from the one stipulated in the agreed plan. An economic agreement can be signed not so much as to increase trade but to preserve peace and security, and vice-versa.

Conclusion

The Eastern Africa region has witnessed many efforts in favour of regional integration. Not only has there been numerous formal regional organisations that have been set up to integrate various countries and to form a region, but there has also been some dynamics on the informal side that have favoured the regionalisation of Eastern Africa. The inter-connections that exist across the borders of the Eastern African states has also created a security complex where each states security depends on the actions being undertaken by his neighbours. In this volatile region where conflicts are rife, rebel groups, insurgents and even refugees create a dynamic that ties together all the actors within one region. The regionalisation of Eastern Africa also benefits from the existence of a very active network of cross border traders. The case of the cross border cattle rustling, and the fact that the appropriated cattle may be sold in markets throughout the region demonstrates that there are already a grass root connections that bypass the borders and favour an inter-linkage within the region. On the formal side, the attempts that have been undertaken have focussed on different issues that are of importance for the countries in the region. The COMESA has offered the most ambitious plan to integrate the economy of Eastern Africa. Despite a few bumps on the

road it has managed to introduce a free trade area among some of its member states. However, the existing asymmetry that characterizes the level of implementation of COMESA's provision within the member states still causes some problems by creating non-tariff barriers affecting trade within the regional bloc. Another experiment in the formal integration of Eastern Africa is the East African Community. This regional organisation is remarkable for its ambition to one day transform itself into a unique federation. In regard to security issues also the region has witnessed some important progresses. The IGAD is very active in developing instruments to curtail conflicts in Eastern Africa. After instituting an early warning mechanism it has also been tasked to set up the Eastern African chapter of the African Union's stand-by force¹⁹. The Great Lakes countries have also been engaged in a process aiming to find regional solution to the security problems that have been affecting them for decades. The provisions made by the ICGLR in terms of security represent one of the boldest steps in favour of peace in the region. The ICGLR also pushes forward the implementation of projects aiming at the development of regionally integrated infrastructures. On the subject of the regional management of resources and infrastructure, some existing regional technical cooperation arrangements have already proven their efficiency. The Nile Basin Initiative, for example, offers an efficient window of opportunity to establish projects on a regional basis.

Despite the existence of these various dynamics on favour of regional integration, the prospect for a strong integration in Eastern Africa is still in doubt. There are some important structural constraints that are weakening the integration process in the region. Trade within the COMESA region is for example deeply affected by the economic structure of the various countries of the region. The lack of any harmonisation between the various ongoing formal regional arrangements also creates a situation where the overlapping of regional blocs creates an unclear fiscal and legal pattern for the export and imports of goods. The absence of adequate infrastructure also creates an obstacle on the road towards the integration of the region. Similarly, the lack of a secured environment tends to negatively affect the prospects of a peaceful Eastern Africa. There is still a too important level of distrust between the states composing the Eastern Africa region and it slows down or even sometimes halts the integration processes. The level of integration in Eastern Africa is in fact still being highly commanded by the states themselves and their calculations of the advantages and disadvantages of taking part in a regional arrangement. The very strong attachment to the sovereignty of the states in Africa has created a situation where the head of states and governments are unwilling to reduce their room for manoeuvre by engaging themselves in a too constraining regional organisation. Even when the established organisations are characterized by their intergovernmental structure, the member states can very well adopt strategies to block the advancement and implementation of the decisions taken at the regional level. The multiplication memberships to regional organisations is also driven by a calculation whereas states consider that not being a member of a given regional bloc, and thus not being involved in the decision making process, is more costly than being involved in too many regional arrangements.

The furthering of the regional integration processes in Eastern Africa is dependent not on the strengthening of the regional organisations themselves but on the adoption by the member states of policies that do effectively encourage integration. The deadlock of regional integration in Eastern Africa will be resolved if the states within the region understand and believe that their long term interest rests on a resolute commitment to the provisions being

¹⁹ IGAD was tasked to set up the Eastern chapter of the African Standby Force knowing that it would eventually handover the responsibility to EASTBRIGCOM which would then act independently from IGAD.

made at the regional level. There are enough processes, both informal and formal, that have contributed to the regionalisation of Eastern Africa. There is now a fertile ground marked by numerous cross-border interconnections between the local, the national and the regional actors of Eastern Africa. The last push now has to come from the states themselves in order to strengthen the region and its integration.

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