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**Regional integration and regional governance under the new African
initiatives: a critical appraisal**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. BACKGROUND	2
3. REGIONALISM'S MIXED RECORD	5
3.1 Background	5
3.2 Impediments to African regionalism	6
4. RELATING THE AU AND THE RECs	10
5. COLLUSION OR COERSIONCOERCION? WHAT NEPAD AND THE PEER REVIEW MECHANISM MAY BE ENVISAGED TO DO	12

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	African Development Bank
AEC	African Economic Community
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
AU	African Union
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CSSDCA	Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Co-operation in Africa
EAC	East African Community
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FLS	Frontline States
HSRC	Human Science Research Council
NAI	New African Initiative
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
SACU	Southern African Customs Union
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADCC	Southern African Development Co-ordinating Committee
SAMP	Southern African Migration Project
UEMOA	l'Union Économique et Monétaire a Quest Africaine
UMA	Arab Maghreb Union
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

1. INTRODUCTION

Africa's emerging governance, peace and security architecture, comprising the African Union (AU), the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA), emphasises a new focus on regional integration in the pursuit of Africa's long-absent economic and social regeneration. The architecture also posits a tentative return to a focus on politics, after decades of pre-occupation with economics. The architecture's emergence indicates further that democratic norms are alive and well on the African continent. However, a gap between policy and implementation exists. It is argued here that it is not as much the policies themselves that are at fault, as the manner in which they are arrived at and the instruments available for their implementation. This paper contends that the gap between policy and implementation may be filled by regional organisations that: are accountable to and representative of the people they represent, as well as complimentary to the AU and as a result equipped with the institutional infrastructure to bring about AU objectives.

To the extent that we can speak of 'regions' at all in Africa, where five such entities were designated by fiat of the now-defunct Organisation of African Unity (OAU), this paper aims to assess the progress in regional integration on the continent in the context of the emerging governance, peace and security architecture. The African Development Bank (ADB)¹ defines governance as "a process ...in which power is exercised in the management of the affairs of a nation, and its relations with other nations"². This is extrapolated to the continental level by sketching 'governance' as the management of continental affairs, and the relations of the continent with the rest of the world, as well as the management of intra-continent relations. Thus, representation is a requirement for the allocation of power in continental politics, and what I have termed 'institutional efficacy' relates to the following:

- Institutions that are organic outgrowths of constructive regional interstate interaction
- Institutions that are accountable to the citizens they purport to serve
- Institutions that are managed in the wider best interests of the regional membership
- Institutions that are streamlined, with the basic aim of implementing stated objectives and
- Institutions that complement and facilitate the work of the AU, within a regional setting.

The paper begins with a background sketch of the concept 'regional integration', as it has progressed on the continent to date, reflecting both theoretical and empirical constraints in the definition of African regional integration. This is followed by a brief account of regionalism's mixed record to date, including a discussion of impediments to regional integration in Africa as outlined by NEPAD's 'Regional Integration Initiative'. Following this, an examination of the proposed relationship between the AU and the Regional Economic Communities

¹ The African Development Bank (ADB) Group is a major multilateral development financier on the African continent, and funder of numerous activities and projects aimed at promoting governance.

² African Development Bank Group Policy on Good Governance, African Development Bank Group.

(RECs), the interface of regional and continental governance, is conducted. Lastly, the prospects for continental and regional governance within the context of NEPAD and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) are investigated. This paper is concerned mainly with the political and governance aspects of regional integration.

2. BACKGROUND

Regional integration on the African continent has come under numerous influences and has itself been inspired by many factors, well documented by both African and western scholars³. While the waves of global regionalism are commonly limited to two; namely the wave sparked by European integration in 1958 and that prompted by the ending of the Cold War in the early 1990s, waves of regionalism in Africa are more numerous. At times are the regionalist trends remnants of colonial designs (EAC and SACU), at other times the fruits of voluntary action (SADCC and ECOWAS), and sometimes the consequences of malevolent foreign policy ('outward movement' and 'dialogue' of South Africa's apartheid government).

The emerging initiatives to change Africa's terms of engagement in the international arena (comprised of the AU, NEPAD and the CSSDCA) hint at a new role for regional integration: that of continental governance.

One of the proposed cornerstones of continental governance is the APRM. This Mechanism, as an instrument of self-monitoring, represents a new and unique opportunity for continental governance. However, its efficacy in serving as a tool of norm sharing and, at the extreme, coercion to democratic practice, is compromised by the level of regional integration on the continent. Regional integration in its current form is compromised by the exclusive level of membership of regional 'clubs' (comprising heads of state and government), as well as institutional inadequacies, not least the absence of universally agreed-upon mechanisms of censure, at the regional level. Other institutional inadequacies include the manner in which decisions are taken at the regional level, relying on unanimity to carry decisions, and the lack of transparency of regional organisations.

The deliberations of the Community of Democracies, an intergovernmental forum for democratic states, yielded the view that the growing convergence in responsibility among states for maintaining and defending democracy at the regional level is a positive sign of adaptation and progress among the regional governmental institutions of the world. While this may be true of the Organisation of American States, the European Union and the Commonwealth, there are question marks over the ability of regional organisations in Africa to perform the same functions. This paper argues that what is lacking is a sufficient degree of regional cohesion among African states at both the continental and regional levels. Regional cohesion is defined by Andrew Hurrell as a combination of:

- 1) the growth of societal integration within a region (regionalisation)
- 2) regional awareness and identity
- 3) regional inter-state cooperation and
- 4) state-promoted regional economic integration.

³ See Asante SKB, 1996, and Bach D. (ed), 1999, for example

This would lead to “the emergence of a cohesive and consolidated regional unit”⁴. A further aspect of this regional cohesion is that it can be understood in two senses; namely, “when the region plays a defining role in the relations between the states (and other major actors) of that region and the rest of the world” and “...when the region forms the organizing basis for policy within the region across a range of issues”⁵. The implications of such cohesion for increasing the standards of democratic practice in a region are clear. However, it would seem at first glance that if the region forms an operational base for policy-formation in the region, instead of the posturing of individual states, it might be possible for greater progress to be made regarding the sharing of norms and democratic practice across boundaries. In some respects, the region, and latterly the continent *are* serving as operational bases for policy-formation on issues of democracy and good governance, but the results have yet to materialise in favour of Africa’s impoverished, marginalized and disaffected populations. Even at the continental level, notwithstanding near-universal accession to the AU Constitutive Act, the determination that democracy is a worthwhile pursuit is not self-evident.⁶

There is the additional, related problem of representation at the regional and continental levels. Representation deficits domestically are inevitably duplicated at the continental level. This results in the anomalies of repressive states and states at war agreeing at gatherings of Heads of State and Government to abide by democratic principles. While President Bashir of Sudan may sign the AU Constitutive Act, for example, he does not speak for a unified Sudan. The same applies in a number of other African states where armed conflicts at varying levels of intensity persist.

It is necessary early on to clarify the position on regional integration that will be taken in this paper. Without fixing too stringent definitions to the process of examining the progress of economic regional integration to date, this enquiry will nevertheless pay attention to the economic, as well as the political and social, aspects of regional integration on the continent.

The African scholar, SKB Asante, turns to the dictionary for a definition of ‘integration’, and notes that a sense is given of “combining parts in a whole”⁷. While that may be the eventual aim of the framers of the AU and NEPAD⁸, the path to that end must be clearly delineated, lest millions of dollars be spent ill advisedly on institutions that span the continent, when more localised institutions should be prioritised. Bourenane⁹ offers the following, more precise, definition of ‘regional integration’: “...a voluntary pooling of resources for a common purpose by two or more sets of partners belonging to different states. The process aims to reinforce structural interdependencies of a technical and economic sort, with positive effects on economic welfare.”

⁴ Hurrell A. ‘Explaining the resurgence of regionalism in world politics.’ *Review of International Studies*. 1995; 21:334-337.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Morocco has declined to accede, given the accession of POLISARIO’s Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic.

⁷ Asante SKB. *Regionalism and Africa’s Development*. London: Macmillan, 1996.

⁸ While Muammar Gaddafi suggested a ‘United States of Africa’, under a federal system, the extent of ‘combining parts into a whole’ envisaged by the AU and its socio-economic programmes appears to be delineated more in cultural and possibly, economic terms, rather than political terms. Mention is made, however, of the need “to pursue continental solidarity in all international negotiations” in the CSSDCA document, but the idea of an eventual federation has been widely resisted.

⁹ Naceur B. *Regional Integration and Cooperation in West Africa: Theoretical and Strategic Approaches*.

While this definition captures the voluntary, collective and economic welfare essences of regional integration, it lacks emphasis on the political, social and security aspects of this process. Social, political and security interdependencies also inform and direct regional integration in Africa. Intergovernmental management of regional integration processes is still the reality, but security and political realities on the ground influence these concerns at the level of Heads of State and Government to a large extent. Hence, these aspects, especially in the African case, cannot be excluded or downplayed in spite of the primacy of the state in regional politics. It is precisely because of these economic, political and social impediments that regionalism on the continent has enjoyed a mixed record in influencing state behaviour.

3. REGIONALISM'S MIXED RECORD

3.1 Background

There are 14 regional economic groupings in Africa. Of these, the five pre-eminent organisations are those that stemmed from the OAU's decision in March 1976, to outline 5 regions of the OAU; namely the north, south, east, west and central regions. These OAU designated regions are represented, in the main, by: the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) in the north, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in the south, the East African Community (EAC) in the east, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the west, and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in central Africa¹⁰. The emerging African architecture collectively calls for the streamlining of the regional organisations, although not necessarily under these 5 jurisdictions.

Of Africa's 14 regional and sub-regional organisations, at least 4 (ECOWAS, SADC, EAC, ECCAS/CEEAC)¹¹ include clear peace and security components embracing democracy in their establishing treaties, or boast protocols dealing outright with these matters. This leaves the vast majority of regional organisations without any direct pronouncements on democracy and its defence and advancement in those regions. This begs the question that if democracy was not "deemed a worthwhile pursuit" at such a localised level, what would deem its pursuit any more worthwhile at a continental level? This is a question to be answered by the AU in its attempts to interact meaningfully with the RECs. Hence, some degree of democratic norm sharing does exist on the continent, although this is not a universal phenomenon. While norm sharing may exist at the level of the region, the conclusion should not be prematurely drawn that this may be transposed to the continental level. The key lies thus in the relationship between the AU and the RECs. Before we interrogate the dynamics of such a relationship, however, we take a look, from NEPAD's point of view, at the impediments to regional integration in Africa.

¹⁰ Mwanasali M. 'From the Organization of African Unity to the African Union.'

Baregu M. and Landsberg C. (eds). *From Cape to Congo: Southern Africa's Evolving Security Challenges*. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003.

¹¹ The Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) upholds the responsibility to defend the rights of its people, and contribute to justice and equality among the founding countries. However, there is no direct commitment to democracy evident.

3.2 Impediments to African regionalism

Regionalism has been touted as a possible solution to African economic problems since the mid- to late-1970s. Displaying a mix of both 'western' and African solutions to problems on the continent, its appeal to African states stems from many sources. Not least of these attractions are the prospects of larger markets, greater solidarity in international negotiating forums and the possibility of sharing knowledge and expertise. In the current global political economy, however, it has been suggested that the west has far less to gain from African solidarity and as such, has done all in its (often overwhelming) power to impede it. Africa has however, cultivated a few obstacles of its own, as will be discussed in this section. Special emphasis is accorded to NEPAD because it is the AU-sanctioned continental socio-economic programme.

Non-inclusive integration efforts are recognised by the NEPAD secretariat as one of the most fundamental of impediments to regional integration. In the typology of five regionalist categories outlined by Andrew Hurrell (1995), regional cohesion is one of the requirements for a movement toward full regional integration.

Clearly, NEPAD strives for the conception of regional cohesion that implies a "cohesive and consolidated regional unit", with the African continent acting concertedly to improve its current conditions. It is unabashedly a plan for Africa's re-insertion into the thick of world affairs as a credible and respected actor, a plan that must be underwritten by continental unity to ensure success. It is unclear to what extent NEPAD envisages the conception of regional cohesion, which includes the notion of a region forming the 'organizing basis for policy' within the region across a range of issues. Indeed, this is treacherous ground to tread on, venturing into the terrain of national sovereignty. It is this very lack of evidence that 'the region' is an organising basis for region-wide policy (as opposed to each given national state pursuing, if not expressly its own interests, then at least greater benefits than costs to itself from given policies) that hampers the progress of regional integration in Africa. This is not without good reason. African regional organisations must contend with their members' preoccupations with problems related to domestic development¹² and often even their very political survival. It is probable that governments are loathe to actively recruit the support of extra-governmental actors involved in regional decision-making, because they are of the view that the region is an untested terrain where national sovereignty is (or should best remain) indivisible. This inclination may be stronger where it concerns states with authoritarian tendencies. They may have less of an interest in inviting the participation of non-state actors that do not directly add to their position of strength domestically. NEPAD should thus create a space for non-government actors, but simultaneously put in place provisions that will safeguard the rights to freedom of speech and association of such actors.

Although NEPAD, as one of the pillars of the African Renaissance, engenders much Pan-African sentiment it is worth remembering that states remain at the forefront of such plans. These states have foreign policies unique to each and operate in a hostile global environment. It is not only disparate politics, but also vastly different economic situations from one African country to the next that have proven hindrances to regional integration in the past. These economic disparities are most evident in the official record of formal cross-border flows. It is these records that advertently or not 'hide' less formal flows - both those from the continent and those from international governmental organisations. This problem is part of the wider problem of a lack of reliable information. Astonishingly, according to NEPAD's Regional Integration Initiative, officially recorded intra-regional trade accounts for just one-third of cross-border flows among African countries. This may be linked in no small part to the restrictive, arguably outdated, immigration policies of most African countries. It

¹² Asante SKB. *Regionalism and Africa's Development*. 1996.

may thus be inevitable that the focus is on officially recorded information, given that those other, unofficial cross-border flows, whether of people, or of goods, are often associated with criminality and illegality¹³. A review of immigration policy in a manner that accords with the reality of movements of people and goods across national boundaries appears to be one way in which to deal with the information deficit that results from outmoded immigration policies. As Peberdy notes, such a review of immigration policy will bring added benefits to cross-border trade. She contends that while provision is made for large retail concerns to operate across national boundaries, there is not enough being done to remove the impediments to smaller and medium-sized enterprises trading across borders¹⁴. Better-informed governments may also make better decisions regarding the harmonisation of industrial and business regulations.

A serious problem is posed by the different levels of economic and financial advancement experienced by each member state of a regional body. While limitations on government spending and tax cuts may endear the South African finance ministry to the international financial institutions, these policies may be followed at greater cost in countries of lesser economic advancement, where governments are under pressure to take the lead in providing basic services and better standards of living for their people.

The more uneven regional partnerships are (in terms of the economic development of the contracting states), the more disproportionate are the gains and losses from regional integration. Adequate compensation for losses is yet to be resolved, resulting in less commitment to regional projects¹⁵. Furthermore, the issue of overlapping integration groupings is a symptom of a larger problem; namely, that membership in regional intergovernmental organisations has not borne the benefits for African states that it has promised, while exacting costs that weak economies may not be able to bear. The recent departure of Seychelles from SADC, reportedly because “the \$500 000 annual membership fee asked of it did not provide value for money”¹⁶ provides a sobering insight into the costs, monetary and other, of membership in regional organisations for small, poor countries. Hard-hit by the post-September 11 global tourism slump, Seychelles could not rely upon SADC for assistance, but had instead to relinquish its membership and funnel its meagre resources elsewhere. Several countries find themselves in similar positions with regard to the AU. The general poverty of the African continent and the mixed results of regional integration appear to render intergovernmental organisations something of a luxury, especially among the poorest states.

It is clear that many, if not all of the regionalist projects have not reached their stated goals. Time may be a factor, given that many bodies were established only in the 1970s and beyond, and have to grapple not only with the complexities of economic integration, but also with those of political integration, limited domestic interest and support for integration projects, and domestic development problems.

Supply rigidities have led to an inadequate supply of high quality and competitively priced goods. African governments and architects of regional integration are not aware that ameliorating inelastic supply issues and eradicating poverty may entail extensive partnerships with external governmental actors.

¹³ Peberdy S. *Hurdles to trade? South Africa's immigration policy and informal sector cross-border traders in the SADC*. Presented at SAMP/LHR/HSRC Workshop on Regional Integration , Poverty and South Africa's proposed Migration Policy, Pretoria: 2002.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ NEPAD Regional Integration Initiative.

¹⁶ Mail and Guardian. <<http://www.mg.co.za/Content/13.asp?ao=17070>> Monday 13 October 2003.

Political instability, while the most visible of the political problems with which regional organisations must contend, is not necessarily the main problem. Interstate politics plays a primary role in regional integration. While most regional integration projects were initiated with economic motives in mind, it has become increasingly difficult to separate political motives from economic motives in African politics.

External interference has long been cited as an impediment to regionalism in Africa. France's continuing influence in its former colonies in western Africa has been blamed for a lack of coherence in ECOWAS. Certain divisions within SADC have been attributed to South Africa's 1999 trade agreement with the European Union. It is true however, that external factors, while sometimes responsible for undermining efforts at regional integration, can also work to solidify such efforts. The formation of SADCC preceded by the Frontline States (FLS) in response to South African aggression in the 1970s and 80s is a case in point. The pervasiveness of external influence in regional affairs however, is bound to replicate itself in continental politics. This was never demonstrated more clearly than in the dilemma faced by Angola, Cameroon and Guinea in the lead-up to the ill-fated Security Council vote on war in Iraq in early March 2003, in spite of the stated anti-war stance of the AU. African continental projects also run the risk of being overshadowed, and even threatened, by events in the world at large: such as the 'war on terror'¹⁷.

In spite of these shortcomings however, the success of NEPAD depends heavily on the effectual operation of RECs. RECs must be strengthened in order for the outcomes envisioned by NEPAD to take shape. Regional bodies, even lacking in capacity and institutional leadership as they are, are mostly organic outgrowths brought into being as solutions to particular problems. As such, each regional organisation has evolved its own particular character and is geared, at least in theory, towards addressing the most pressing questions in its 'neighbourhood'. Among the states of the Horn of Africa, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development grew out of the desire among Eritrea, Ethiopia, Uganda and Djibouti to combat and to better prevent the effects of drought in their region. The Mano River Union has just three members; namely Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. They came together in 1973, pre-dating the larger West African grouping of ECOWAS by two years, to constitute a customs and economic union in order to improve the living standards of their respective populations. Lastly, as is well-documented, SADCC resulted from the efforts of Southern African states to resist the South African apartheid state and relax their economic dependence on it, among other factors.

NEPAD does not cut to the quick of the problems with regional integration on the continent. The underlying problems of regionalisation for development persist in the face of regionalist projects that attempt to emulate projects in more developed parts of the world. Some ways of ameliorating the problems with regional integration to date, include improving the stock of information that governments have access to. Also, all-inclusive regional organisations must have mechanisms that provide for different levels of integration. Some commentators have isolated procedural shortcomings within regional organisations themselves, such as the requirement for unanimous decision-making and the peripheral involvement of bureaucrats employed in Secretariats. States like Ghana have shown their commitment to regional integration by appointing a ministry to deal with matters of regional integration and NEPAD. This should be the level of commitment of every African state, or continental projects will not progress from the vapid inertia that characterised the OAU. The NEPAD document, although promoting the fortification of regional intergovernmental organisations, does not go far enough in spelling out the modalities of interaction between the existing regional bodies and the AU. One has to look to the AU and the Memorandum of the CSSDCA for such guidelines.

4. RELATING THE AU AND THE RECs

The document outlining the duties and responsibilities of the AU's Peace and Security Council, as well as the Memorandum of the CSSDCA, provide a more in-depth outline of the possible shape that the relations between the AU and the RECs will take than NEPAD's Regional Integration Initiative.

According to the Peace and Security document, the relationship between the AU and the RECs will be largely instrumental. This would appear to be the best outcome, if the assumption on which this paper is based (that there is a lack of regional cohesion at the continental and even the regional level in some parts of the continent) proves true. The exact nature of the relationship between the RECs' Mechanisms and the AU's Peace and Security Council, according to the Peace and Security Protocol, is to be characterised by:

- Information-sharing (early-warning, providing information for ministerial meetings, summits)
- Implementation of programmes, especially in respect of post-conflict management duties of demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration
- Creation of a collective security policy and common defence system of the AU (although the precise role of the RECs in this is not clear)
- AU as a "forum in which the RECs coordinate activities of their Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution" and develop close cooperation in the areas of preventive diplomacy and peacekeeping
- Representation of the regions by 17 states in the Peace and Security Council - 7 permanent and the remainder on the basis of equitable regional representation (rotating every 2 years).

An instrumental role for RECs would be a sound platform for interaction with the AU. This is especially true given the renewed emphasis on early warning that is presupposed by the AU's conflict prevention and management functions. The delegation of programmes to the RECs presupposes a strengthening of the capacities of these communities. The AU conception of its relations with RECs also appears to uphold the sanctity of state sovereignty by not making any demands upon states with regard to involving more actors in the regionalisation process. The functions it has outlined emphasise this.

The memorandum of the CSSDCA, veers more toward integrative regional cohesion as characterised by the Hurrell definition. In its "core values" and "commitments to give effect to the values", it is far more explicit in terms of what the goals of the emerging African agenda are and how to attain them. The CSSDCA envisages a far more intimate relationship between the AU and the existing RECs. As in other plans, RECs retain their position of importance and are urged to strengthen and harmonise. The need for a framework of cooperation between the AU Mechanism and the regional security mechanisms is recognised. The CSSDCA, unlike the NEPAD, calls for the involvement of "all national stakeholders" in regional integration. Harking back to Hurrell's characterisation of regional cohesion as a situation in which the region "plays a defining role in the relations between the states (and other major actors) of that region and the rest of the world" and "when the region forms the organizing basis for policy within the region across a range of issues", the CSSDCA Memorandum also calls for a common

¹⁷ Kornegay Francis. 'Africa agrees to disagree on Iraq'. Business Day.
<<http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200303310618.html>> 31 March 2003.

industrial strategy for the RECs. It calls for the states of Africa to display “continental solidarity in all international negotiations”.

Although NEPAD’s Regional Integration Initiative emphasises the importance of regional organisations in the functioning of the AU, at the centre of its motivations are economic reasons for greater cooperation between states within the sub-region. These economic reasons include: the transformation of Africa’s economies, the improvement of industry and business and the facilitation of integration with the world economy. While these motivations are vague as they are stated in the document, they point towards an overwhelming emphasis on the economic benefits of regional integration. NEPAD’s remaining two motivations for regional integration are the promotion of the AU and to “address common political problems”. With its long-term view of RECs as building blocks of a greater AU, the NEPAD initiative mirrors that of an older plan, that for an African Economic Community (AEC). Arguably one of the most challenging tasks for NEPAD is combining the existing RECs with the aims and objectives of the continental socio-economic development plan.

The factors that inhibit greater regional integration are both political and economic. There is both a desire by the AU to be the supreme voice of peace and security operations on the continent, and a need for greater levels of international investment and development aid on the African continent (which of necessity require certain assurances about stability and governance). ‘Regionalism’ on the African continent thus defies any traditional conceptions of regionalism. Even strands such as ‘developmental regionalism’ and ‘open regionalism’ outlined in recent literature fail to capture theoretically what can be empirically observed in the continent’s interstate relations¹⁸. Regional integration in the past has taken place in a manner that cannot be neatly categorised into existing theories on regional integration. The AU itself defies any such categorisation, being simultaneously the outgrowth of continental frustration with the OAU, the fast-track regeneration plan of a ‘new breed’ of African statesmen, and a response to both political and economic realities on the continent and to influences further a field. The characterisation of this regionalism is also unique in the sense that it defies the notions of developmental regionalism as comprising strategies of ‘de-linking’ and self-reliance. The regionalism under which the new African agenda is cast is a hybrid of the developmental regionalism of de-linking and the open regionalism of greater integration with the world economy through joint policy strategies in trade and development, for example in the form of extra-regional trade agreements. There are many difficulties attendant to pursuing both simultaneously. South Africa, for one, has been criticised for being “in Africa”, but not so assuredly “of Africa”¹⁹.

5. COLLUSION OR COERCION? WHAT NEPAD AND THE PEER REVIEW MECHANISM MAY BE ENVISAGED TO DO

The peer review process is the embodiment of regional and continental governance in the new African agenda. According to an analysis of peer review as an OECD working method²⁰, the effectiveness of peer review depends on “the influence and persuasion exercised by the peers during the process”. The principle of popular representation at continental level must compete here with the notion that only those in government can truly

¹⁸ Fawcett L, and Hurrell A. (eds). *Regionalism in World Politics*. Oxford: OUP, 1995.

¹⁹ Baregu M. ‘Economic and Military Security.’ Baregu M, Landsberg C (eds). *From Cape to Congo: Southern Africa’s Evolving Security Challenges*. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003.

²⁰ Pagan F. 2002.

be considered 'peers'. The caution that African heads of state have maintained in the past with regard to the 'domestic affairs' of their peers, provides a sober indication of the prospects for NEPAD and the Peer Review Mechanism as agents of change in African politics.

The relatively high level of institutionalisation of the AU compared to NEPAD has resulted in the additional problem of housing the Peer Review Mechanism that has been the source of considerable controversy since the establishment of the AU in 2001. The AU is the successor organisation of the OAU, and all but one African state, Morocco, are members of the organisation. By dint of the near-universal subscription to its authority and legitimacy as the mouthpiece for Africa, the AU has a considerable advantage over NEPAD and the Peer Review process. Hence the refrain of African leaders from South Africa to Nigeria is that the AU cannot be separated from NEPAD and the Peer Review process. What secured G8 interest at the annual G8 Summit at Kananaskis, Canada in 2002 however, was the promise of NEPAD as a drastic, liberal-leaning, and apparently revolutionary plan for Africa's development, stemming from African leaders and not externally imposed. NEPAD and the Peer Review process were subsequently hyped up beyond realistic expectation, and much consternation resulted from the revelation late in 2002 that peer review would not include political review, but only economic and corporate review that would take place only under the jurisdiction of the AU. To observers in the North, the AU has even been cast as "an obstacle in the propagation and implementation of the New African Initiative (NAI) (forerunner to NEPAD)", and concerns have been expressed about "the limited scope of the AU...giving rise to the reservations about the meaningfulness of the NAI"²¹. Furthermore, because of its all-encompassing membership, the AU has little to offer those governments that are democratic, and little with which to punish those that are not. This is because membership is not an exclusive privilege either by the requirements for membership, or by the benefits thereof.

As mentioned earlier, the emerging African architecture calls for the strengthening and streamlining of Africa's regional organisations. There is thus a commitment by the framers of this architecture to rationalising the functions of such organisations and making them more complementary, in a bid both to avoid duplication amongst organisations operating at the same level and between these organisations and the AU. Not least of the problems complicating such efforts is the proliferation of regional organisations. Of greater concern however, is the threat of rivalry between the more established regional organisations and the newer AU. For example, the 'Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in Africa' underlines the Mechanism's objective to "[ensure] that any external participation [in a conflict] takes place under the supreme responsibility of the Security Council of the AU"²². While this may not pose an immediate problem, the Peace and Security Council's duty to "harmonise and coordinate the activities of Regional Mechanisms in the field of peace, security and stability to ensure that these activities are consistent with the objectives and principles of the Union..."²³ may be an unwelcome incursion on the territory of regional organisations. However, regional organisations, particularly those with evolved security structures may retain their positions of pre-eminence due to the provision that considerations of 'comparative advantage' will prevail in determining the modalities of the partnership between the AU Peace and Security Council and the mechanisms of regional

²¹ Melber H. 'The New African Initiative and the African Union: A Preliminary Assessment and Documentation.' *Current African Issues*. Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2001; 25.

²² Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, Article 3. Adopted by the 1st Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union. Durban: 9 July 2002.

²³ Relationship with Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, Article 16 (1a & b). Adopted by the 1st Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union. Durban: 9 July 2002.

organisations. The relative sophistication of regional organisations may also render them comparatively advantaged in both early warning and the preparedness and availability of troops for the African Standby Force, in which they expected to be “fully involved”²⁴. Furthermore, the controversial manner in which individual state interests have come to the fore in the brief histories of intervention of both SADC and ECOWAS militates against a “pooling of sovereignty” required by such cooperation at the continental level.

Given the constraints on regional cohesion, as discussed above, what are the implications for regional and continental governance? The OECD describes peer review as “the systematic examination and assessment of the performance of a State by other States, with the ultimate goal of helping the reviewed State improve its policy making, adopt best practices, and comply with established standards and principles”²⁵. By and large, this tallies with the objectives of peer review as stated by African countries in the base document of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), which styles the Mechanism as “An instrument voluntarily acceded to by Member States of the AU as an African self-monitoring mechanism”. Its primary purpose is:

foster[ing] [of] the adoption of policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated regional and continental economic integration through sharing of experiences and reinforcement of successful and best practice, including identifying deficiencies and assessing the needs of capacity building.

The participating states, according to the 8 January 2003 draft of the Objectives, Standards, Criteria and Indicators document of the APRM, have made the instrumental adjustments to their domestic legal and human resources systems, including “adopting appropriate laws, policies and standards, as well as building the necessary human and institutional capacity”²⁶. The draft document makes the assumption that sharing of information will result in increased adoption of best practices and standards and that higher levels of trust will lift intra-country (sic) investment and trade, improve physical infrastructure and help to foster common African positions for negotiations in the world at large.

The reality is that more than higher levels of trust are required to achieve these goals. For one thing, according to figures provided by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)²⁷, intra-trade levels among Africa’s 9 foremost trade blocs as a percentage of total exports of each trade bloc, are minimal. Of the nine blocs for whom figures are recorded, UEMOA (13.5%), SADC (10.9%), ECOWAS (9.8%) and COMESA (5.2%) are the best-performing intra-trade blocs. This is comparable with the figures of trade blocs in other developing regions, but is by no means a promising sign for the prospects of regional integration. Furthermore, these figures point to a dulling of the edge of ‘gains from trade’ as an instrument of regional governance. The political reality on the continent also points toward NEPAD acting more as a platform for collusion than as an instrument of coercion.

²⁴ Article 16 (5). Adopted by the 1st Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union. Durban: 9 July 2002.

²⁵ Pagani F. *Peer Review: A Tool for Co-operation and Change: An Analysis of an OECD Working Method*. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, General Secretariat Directorate for Legal Affairs, 2002.

²⁶ Objectives, Standards, Criteria and Indicators for the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). Draft 8, January 2003.

²⁷ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. *UNCTAD Handbook of Statistics*. <<http://www.unctad.org>> January 2003.

Some suggestions for strengthening the role of RECs in the Peer Review Process include the following:

- Conducting initial reviews, to be carried out by regional groups of eminent persons, to prepare for or compare with AU findings. This must be followed by exercises in which norms and best practices are shared informally, either prior to AU reviews, or while they are in progress.
- Increasing economic interdependence among member states, ie by undertaking projects to improve infrastructure. This may serve as a confidence-building tool and may engender a greater sense of community between member states.
- Ensuring the compliance of all member states with regional instruments of governance, ie protocols and declarations. This could be achieved through the streamlining of goals and the implementation of rules regarding the ratification of protocols, treaties, declarations, and the like. Furthermore, follow-up monitoring mechanisms must be established to ensure that agreements at regional and continental level are put into practice.
- The media profile of RECs must be enhanced so that citizens of the states that comprise them become more aware of the functioning and roles of these communities. Once this has been achieved, greater interest in the outcomes of initial peer reviews will be generated. This will bring reviews under additional scrutiny and exert greater pressure on governments to improve their performance.

6. CONCLUSION

Regional integration on the African continent is a mixed bag of development regionalism, open regionalism, attempts at de-linking and various stages of economic union. It is faced with a number of challenges that persist in the face of attempts to find 'African solutions to African problems': the capacities of these institutions to serve as tools of continental governance are clearly hamstrung.

As noted by Simon and Johnston, "in a situation of state failure, the prospects for success of intergovernmental regional integrative organizations must be questionable, so long as membership is exclusively governmental."²⁸ However, the prospect for membership of regional organisations being anything but exclusively governmental appear dim for the foreseeable future. Because the question of sovereignty, in Africa as in the rest of the world, looms large over any attempts at cooperation between states, the question arises whether the emerging African architecture has brought anything new to the process of regional integration on the African continent. Due to the state-centric orientation of the three initiatives and the weak constraints on states regarding the participation in projects such as the APRM, it would appear that they have not improved development prospects for the people of the continent, despite promising to do so. Thus, the continental instruments for coercion may become no more than forums for collusion.

Regional organisations must act together with the AU on an increasingly cluttered continental stage. By strengthening regional communities, it is hoped that broader representation and peaceful persuasion through norm sharing and complementary institutions can converge to effect the collective objectives of the new

²⁸ Simon D, Johnston A. *The Southern African Development Community: Regional Integration in Ferment*. Briefing Paper. New Series. The Royal Institute of International Affairs, Southern Africa Study Group, 1999; 8.

African agenda. This agenda has not only raised Africa's international profile, but has also instilled hope for its regeneration.