

Interrogating the Origin of Sub-Regional Organizations in the 19th and 20th Century

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ABSTRACT

Sub regional organizations are interrogated in this paper; the research examines the validity and significance of prevailing knowledge on the subject topic. It asks the fundamental structural question: Was there a basis for sub regional organizations? The correlation between political will, sovereignty and multilateralism are examined in context.

The study relied on documentary data. The documentary data were sourced from newspapers, journal papers, internet sources and correspondence. The documentary was subjected to internal and external criticism for authentication, and then to textual and contextual analyses. It also complimented the secondary data with some unprinted sources.

The paper concludes, however, that statehood will dwindle in influence, and sub regional structures shall increase in influence within statecraft policy; national interest shall graduate into sub regional interest.

KEYWORDS: Economy, Peace, Sub Regional, Multilateral

1. INTRODUCTION

Sub-regional organization means is sub regional planning agency has formally established under a joint powers agreement for general and multilateral planning purposes. Sub-regional organizations were an experiment in building political and policy space beyond the territorial sovereignty. The goal of sub-regional members was economy and political integration amongst geographical contiguous land or littoral territories. Sub-regional membership, also to some extent challenges sovereignty.

Sovereignty is important to contemporary international relations. Although sovereignty does not mean that a state is free to do what it likes in the international system (Fawcett, 1971). Sovereignty means that the "independence of each state can be seen as a set of limitations on the exercise of sovereignty towards it by every other States. Besides that, international relations are governed by rules and regulations which although not enforceable by a world police force or army are nonetheless obeyed by States (Akehurst, 1982). This is a self-imposed lot of restraint on the freedom of actions of sovereignty independent states in their relations with each other

However, it must be argued that every sub-regional organization must have these irreducible characteristics" which are:

- a) it must have a membership which should consist of 'two' or more sovereignty States
- b) Every sub-regional organization pursues the common interests of its members in its contiguous domain. Beside that, a sub-regional organization must also have their aims and objectives and scope identified clearly in the sub-region organizations constitution (Gould & Klob, 1964)

Accordingly, sub-regional organizations can be defined as a “formal continuous-structure established between one or from two or more sovereignty states with the aim of pursuing the economic, military and political interests of the membership (R.W.Mansbach & al, 1976). Moreover, a sub-regional organization has a regular meeting which they call an assembly, and a permanent secretariat

It must be noted that international organizations could either be universal or regional. The focus of this chapter is sub-regional organization examples of such organizations in Africa are South Africa Development Community (SADC), Common Market For Eastern And Southern Africa (COMESA), Economic Community of West African States, Economic Community of Central African States, Arab Maghreb Union, Intergovernmental Authority for Development, Some other sub-regional organization outside Africa are the Arab league Maghreb Union (AMU), Caribbean Community (CMRICOM), European Economic Union (CEAU), European Union (EU).

2. ORIGIN OF SUB-REGIONAL ORGANIZATION

Contemporary Sub-regional organizations have their antecedents in the 19th century Europe when a system of multilateralism was arraigned by European powers to tackle problems within their reveling international system. This process of multilateralism was known as the concert of Europe. The Concert System and its Congresses started with the Congress of Vienna in 1815 which was called to restructure European cities and towns; it also rearranged the administration of some towns and cities, after the end of the Napoleonic wars. A number of meetings were subsequently held, most notably the Congress of Paris in 1856 that held in London in 1971 and subsequent ones in 1912 and 1913; these are besides the Berlin conference of 1878 and 1884 and 1885. The Berlin conference partitioned Africa among the European powers. European representatives drinking their teas and smoking their cigarettes used multilateral agreements to divide Africa to suit European interest. The African territories lost their land to the Europeans because they had no multilateral solutions to their political, military and economic challenges more so they were unable to hold forth the contiguous littoral and land sovereignties.

The concert system was “the manipulation of multilateralism at its rudimentary form but it established a growing sense of interdependence among the state of Europe. The concert system was a semblance of international parliamentary system, which undertook a deal by collective action with current problem. However, the concert system lacked a permanent structure and was not properly guided through the structures. For instance, the concert system had no secretariat, no regular meetings, and no constitutional framework that must guide their activities. Nonetheless, the concert system set a precedent which was later followed by other European statesmen, under the name of Hague system, 1899 – 1907, was noted for its conferences whose major objective was to grapple with the myriad political problems that existed during that period.

The Hague system was much of improvement to the concert system. Another notable aspect of the Hague system was the recognition it gave to small and weak States. At the Hague system, the small states got a strong taste of independence and equality. The principle of sovereignty equality of states had since become the bedrock of emerging organizations like the League of Nations and the United Nations. Besides that, the Hague system went another step further in trying to ensure peace and security, in the international system by drawing up a convention for Pacific settlement of disputes among members States, a panel of arbitrators were then established to resolve problems. The emerging policy described the bounded and bonded character of its member states in processes that might incorporate their national interests. The interests of members are attached to their agreements within their multilateral space.

Economic issues and the problems of underdevelopment in places like Western Africa, Southern Africa, Eastern Africa had led to the use of concepts such as neo-independence, neo colonialism and structural interdependence to foreign states (Adeniran, 1983). Closely related to these new development has been a resurgence of political economy - political economy emphasizes the interaction of economic and political forces. It seeks greater integration of politics and economic assimilations. This perspective correlate to the functionalists, neo-functionalists, world federalist and integration theories which posit that the gradual obliteration of national borders and the political consolidation of federation of the world’s inhabitants would create “security zones”

Interrogating the Sub-Regional Organization Concept

The socialization of the contemporary state has made the state more or less solely responsible for the welfare and defense of its citizens. This dedication, inevitably, also embraces every gamut of state activity; economic, political, cultural, social, etc. posing very serious obstacles to international cooperation and interdependence.

Every state wants to utilize its natural resources to the exclusion of other members of the international community. Statesmen sometimes find it rather difficult to enter into agreements which they think do not favor their own Nationals. As a mark of sovereign independence, states do have a lot of trappings: each state has an identity in terms of a state's name, national flag, national anthem, national currency and, indeed, national passports. Besides, each state has national boundaries which may or may not be clearly delineated. Thus such requirement like a National Passport hinders movements - which infringes economic and political integration among members or on the other hand, create artificial barriers to international cooperation and understanding for sub-regional organizations

States are reluctant to enter into any agreement or deals which are seen as encroaching upon their freedom of action as sovereign independent actors in sub-regional international systems. This phenomenon is much more pronounced in the developing areas but even the developed territories do sometimes behave in this manner. The same reason, among others, has been an obstacle to West Africa Economic and Political Integration under the auspices of ECOWAS. Concerning Europe, the western European governments of moderate right wing complexion pursued economic recovery, welfare service provision, and western European integration in practical matters during the 1950s. In 1952, a European Defense Community formalized West Germany's military position. This was to be replaced by German membership of NATO, but a major thrust towards greater unity, as before, was economic. The crucial step came in 1957: the European Economic Community (EEC) then came into being when France, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Italy joined in signing the Treaty of Rome (Roberts, 2002). Besides looking forward to the creation of a "common market" embracing its members, within barriers to the free movement of goods, services and labor were to be removed, and with a common tariff, the treaty also provided for a decision-making authority, a bureaucracy and a European parliament with advisory powers. Some spoke of the reconstitution of Charlemagne's heritage. It spurred countries which had not joined the EEC to set up their own, looser and more limited, European Free Trade Association (EFTA) two and half years later (Roberts, 2002). By 1986, the six countries of the original EEC, by then it had become simply the EC- the word "Economic", significantly, had been dropped. Five years later, EFTA members merged with the EC. The European Economic Community was renamed the European Union (EU), in 1994. From an original six members in 1957, a series of enlargements had taken EU membership to 27 nations by the beginning of 2007 (Roberts, 2002).

Western Europe's slow but accelerating movement towards a modicum of political unity demonstrated the confidence of those who made the arrangements that armed conflict would never again threaten Europe. Despite the good intentions of Europe, Britain's refused to join the EEC in the 1960s and for many years, the British resisted membership of the EU because among other things they considered themselves as an island and wanted to maintain their insularity from the mainstream Europe. The British were uncomfortable to play second fiddle to nations like France and Germany hence the choice of Brexit in the 21 century.

Although progress in this direction is still confined to Europe, there are signs that other sub regions of the world are copying the European example. For instance, it is a truism that a viable ECOWAS would go a long way to blunt particularistic national interests in the West African sub region. The same argument could be advanced for other developing sub regional areas such as the Caribbean, Latin America and even Southern Africa where we have the SADCC (Olusola & Amadu, 1998). The Southern African Development Community (SADC) has been in existence since 1980, when it was formed as a loose alliance of nine majority ruled states in Southern Africa known as the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), with the main aim of coordinating political and economic integration projects in order to lessen economic dependence on the then apartheid South Africa. The founding member states are: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. SADCC was formed in Lusaka, Zambia on April 1 1980, following the adoption of the Lusaka Declaration- Southern Africa towards Economic and political Liberation. The Transformation of the Organization from a coordinating conference into a Development organization took place August 17, 1992 in Windhoek, Namibia, when the Declaration and Treaty was signed at the summit of Heads of State and Government thereby giving the organization a legal character. The member states are Angola, Botswana, and Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. SADC headquarters are located in Gaborone, Botswana.

Almost the same case is Western Africa; the signing of the ECOWAS charter, set up under the Treaty of Lome in May 1976, was an effort to find a system to galvanize the two linguistic features in the sub-region. ECOWAS has sixteen member states covering all of West Africa's two million square miles and 150 million people. Its broad aims are: to set up a customs union over fifteen years by progressive reduction of import duties. ECOWAS is a Treaty, which far surpasses past accords and arrangement and it closely envisage better economic arrangement as before 1975. It envisages not only a free movement of persons, goods and capital, but also a harmonization of industrial programs with provision for a solidarity fund that would serve the dual purpose of being both a compensatory fund or loss of revenue that might be incurred by certain member states as a result of the removal of trade barriers and, inter-alia, a fund for development purposes (Duyile, 2021). The ECOWAS Treaty is very flexible and accommodating, for example, the tolerance of micro-integrative system within the community, as evidenced in Article 59 of the Charter, which deals with other regional associations and third countries. To judge from the last decade, ECOWAS is growing stronger and it is not just only in the economic sphere. Military interventions have been organized by fellow West Africans nations to provide stability to war ravaged nations within the geographical region (Ojo & Duyile, 2021). ECOWAS is administered by an executive secretary with the headquarters in Lagos. There are commissions dealing with transportation, monetary problems, and customs for instance, notwithstanding the agreement on the free movement between ECOWAS citizens, some members do still close their borders almost at will and without speaking with their neighbors (Duyile, 2021). Between 2020 and 2023, Nigeria has sealed its border without recourse to its other members. In that regard, it is ironical that in an age when the World has shrunk to an unbelievable size due to the revolution in communications, the gap between people should also be widening.

It seems States are not comfortable with supranational organizations like sub-regional organization. However, using ECOWAS and SADC for example and the EEC; States had in many ways associated to meet challenges that may sometimes affect their economic and political existence, ECOWAS for instance had to form a military bloc to quell same challenges such as that in Serra-Leone and Liberia; in the recent times, terrorist groups like Boko Haram has been much of a challenge to West Africa region- hence, the need for joint military action from some of them. When member states are challenged economically and military; members are sometimes willing to step down some of their sovereignty for their general goal. In the 21st century, ECOWAS members can transfer their loyalties to supranational bodies, essentially in today's parlance, there is increasing cooperation between States, covering many areas, covering many areas of activity, from maritime safety and terrorist activities in each case, state sets out to protect mutual benefits and interests.

Concluding Remarks

The emergence of sub-regional organizations no matter how effective the way seem, is a welcome development in the right direction. Sub Regional organizations are gradually developing into sovereigns; slowly making in road into what were traditionally the preserves of nation-states: security, economic development, welfare, including health of citizens. All indications points that nation-states will become weaker in the 21st century while sub-regional and supranational organization shall become stronger. Supranational arrangement holds the ace for the future of mercantilism, politics, militarism, and strategic alliances; states are always looking for advantages hence the need to use such agreements to compete better than others. However, the sub regional organizations are best when the associations are contiguous through geography. By the connotation sub-regional, can only mean geographical contiguous territories in terms of littoral or land platforms. One is quickly reminded here, of Morocco quest to join ECOWAS despite not categorized geographically has situated in Western Africa. Morocco's economic interest in ECOWAS lies in increasing trade with the countries of the region, where the trade balance remains in favor of Morocco. That said, Morocco's exports only represent 3.8% of the bloc's total imports, which means there is plenty of room for expansion for Morocco within ECOWAS. Although, Mr. Mustapha El Khalfi, says Morocco interest in joining ECOWAS stems from its desire to build a strong South-South Partnership (Punch, 2018). Geographically, Morocco is situated in Northern Africa, arguably closer to Europe than Western Africa; however, makes it an unsuitable member, judging from the overall interest of the groups.

Another Sub Regional organization in the past that foreign interest interfered in their geographical association was the South East Asia Treaty Organization. In September of 1954, the United States, France, Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia, the Phillipines, Thailand, and Pakistan formed the South East Asia Treaty Organization, or SEATO in Manila. The purpose of the organization was to prevent communism from gaining ground in the region. This sub regional organization was meant for military purpose. However, this sub regional organization fell out with the foreign (not part of their geographical space) members because the organization held its final exercise on February 20, 1976, and formally ended on June 30, 1977. With administrative headquarters in

Bagkok, SEATO had no standing forces. Some members were unhappy to support the USA in the Vietnam War and SEATO was abandoned in 1977. The Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN) replaced the non-military aspects of the Treaty. Regional interests sometimes don't tally with other outside views.

Sub regional blocs are important to the growth of nations. Neighboring states share interests associated with core landmarks of a nation's territory and climatic challenges. They become agitated if other foreign interest bring their own views and sometimes dichotomize members as ECOWAS and SEATO.

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