

Regional Conflict Management and the Transformation of
Regional Organizations in
Africa: The Cases of the African Union (AU), Economic
Community of West African States
(ECOWAS), and the Intergovernmental Authority on
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Acronyms

AU	African Union
ACRWC	African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights
AFISMA	AU-led International Support Mission to Mali
AFRIPOL	African Union Police Cooperation Mechanism
AEC	African Economic Community
AGA	Africa Governance Architecture
AMISOM	African Mission in Somalia
AMU	Arab Maghreb Union
APSA	Africa Peace and Security Architecture
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
AUC	African Union Commission
CADSP	Common Defense and Security Policy for the African Continent
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement (2005) – Sudan
CPLP	Comunidade de Países de Língua Portuguesa
CSSDCA	Conference on Security, Stability, Development, and Cooperation in Africa
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration
EAC	East African Community
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)
ECOMIL	ECOWAS Mission in Liberia
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council - UN
ECOSOCC	Economic, Social and Cultural Council - AU
ECPF	ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework
ECOMOG	ECOWAS Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
IGADD	Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Desertification
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund

MINUSCA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Central African Republic
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MISCA	Integrated Mission in Central African Republic
NEPAD	New Partnership for African Development
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OAU	Organization of African Unity
PCRD	Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development
REC	Regional Economic Communities
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SSR	Security Sector Reform
UNAMSIL	United Nations Peacekeeping Mission to Sierra Leone
UNDHR	United Nations Declaration on Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNAMID	African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operations in Darfur
UNAMIR	United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UN-OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force – Bosnia
UNREC	United Nations Regional Center for Peace and Disarmament
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNU	United Nations University
UEMOA/WAEMU	Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine/West African Monetary Union

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Chapter One: Introduction

Region-building has been a key part of Africa's development strategies and has shaped policy and academic debates on the continent's political economy over the past sixty years of independence. Africa has experimented with different approaches to regional cooperation to develop effective strategies for promoting regional public goods. Many regional organizations have been created to manage collaboration on issues such as trade, economic growth, peace, and security. Each goal of regional cooperation presents distinct political priorities and opportunities, which in turn shape the incentives for states to engage in cooperation, as well as the benefits and drawbacks of inaction or failure to cooperate. The institutional structures adopted by many of Africa's regional organizations—together with the motivations behind them—align with the goals these organizations seek to achieve. Some objectives create stronger incentives for regional cooperation than others. Research on African regionalism shows that conflict prevention and reducing cross-border spillovers from conflicts are more compelling incentives and are principal drivers of cooperation in peace and security efforts, as seen in cases like the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the African Union (AU) (Byiers & Desmidt, 2016; Karkare & Byiers, 2019; Hentz, Söderbaum, & Tavares, 2009). Khadiagala (2018, p. 1) notes that, through greater involvement in conflict prevention, management, and resolution, regional organizations such as the AU and ECOWAS have gained greater legitimacy in opposing unconstitutional changes of government across different states. On the other hand, scholarly work also indicates that “regional aspirational agendas” related to non-securitized issues like trade and industrialization—where potential benefits and beneficiaries are often uncertain—tend to generate less urgency and weaker incentives for cooperation compared to cross-border emergencies caused by conflicts or epidemics (Byiers, Woolfrey, Medinilla, & Vanheuke, 2019, p. 10).

Research on African regionalism often highlights the challenges Africa faces in its economic regional initiatives and its pursuit of ambitious integration projects such as customs unions, common markets, common currencies, and even political unions (Hentz, Söderbaum, & Tavares, 2009; Ebaye, 2010). In this study, while demonstrating how conflict transformation has been a key motivator for regional cooperation in Africa, I assess the impact of engagement by three African

regional organizations—the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)—in conflict transformation on their development. The research primarily shows that pursuing collective regional strategies for conflict transformation has been a major driver of regional cooperation and the formation of regional organizations in Africa. It has also been posited that engagement in conflict transformation has given these organizations platforms and opportunities for growth that were previously unavailable when they focused on objectives unrelated to security. I argue that, lacking strong economic incentives or soft power—such as the influence wielded by the European Union¹—the existential threats from ongoing civil wars have served as more compelling motivations and rallying points for regional integration among African states.

The study further finds that these regional institutions across Africa have undergone significant organizational changes since their founding, mainly driven by their defense and security efforts, particularly their conflict transformation initiatives. The main question addressed by the study is why these organizations, initially created to promote economic development within their regions and across Africa, have been more profoundly transformed by their conflict transformation efforts than by their initial developmental goals. As a result, this thesis moves beyond traditional frameworks that explain the transformation and impact of regional institutions within welfare and development paradigms to explore a new approach focused on security-driven institutional change. By applying sociological methods to institutional learning, the study aims to contribute to scholarly discussions on regional organizations and broader debates about the evolution of international institutions. Additionally, examining how conflict transformation influences the development of regional organizations is expected to enhance securitization theory and related fields.

The Importance of Conflict Management in Region-Building in Africa

Peace and security, especially the transformation of conflicts, did not always rank highly among the objectives African states sought when launching their first regional cooperation initiatives in

¹ The EU is often said to deploy ‘soft power diplomacy’ in the pursuit of a desired outcome, without force, through persuasive tactics. Soft power involves the use of the ‘power of attraction’ or the ability to make the opposing side want what you want. EU has preferred to employ soft power policies, attracting new members and allies through its norms (European values) and the creation of a shared European identity. Soft power is contrasted with ‘hard power which involves the use of force – military or economic coercion- to procure a desired outcome. (CES - The University of Northern Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2022).

the immediate post-independence period. The initial African efforts toward regional cooperation were driven by the need for a regionalist approach to the continent's economic development. As a result, the first wave of African regionalism in the 1960s led to the creation of regional institutions focused primarily on fostering economic development and trade cooperation. Over the following decades, regional building in Africa has been primarily shaped by these objectives. In later years, Africa tried to adopt a functionalist model of integration similar to the European Union², but these efforts have not achieved significant success. As Ravenhill (2016, p. 46) observed, decades of experimentation with this model of regional economic cooperation have not produced the hoped-for close economic integration or faster economic growth in Africa, and no tangible welfare benefits have resulted. Oyejide (2000, p. 1) also makes a similar point, noting that Africa's "traditional trade-focused model of regional integration" has failed to boost intra-regional and continental trade and economic growth.

Numerous studies have underscored that the absence of conducive conditions for successful regional cooperation, coupled with the complexities inherent in the regionalism models favored by African states, has impeded efforts at region-building across the continent. Scholars such as Fawcett (2016, p. 30) attribute the challenges in effectively implementing the European Union (EU) model of integration in Africa to the lack of essential preconditions that facilitated regional development in Europe. Similarly, Piccolino (2015) observes that regional integration in Sub-Saharan Africa has often been based on a unilateral interpretation of the EU model of "integration from above," particularly concerning institutional frameworks and expectations regarding the evolution and benefits of the integration process. Furthermore, Piccolino emphasizes that transplanting the EU model of regional building to Africa has predominantly involved the transfer of EU norms and institutions, frequently without adequate consideration of the differing social and economic contexts of Europe and Africa. The absence of the requisite economic and political conditions that enabled European integration has hindered efforts to replicate the EU model of economic collaboration within Africa. Fawcett highlights that region-building inherently reflects the "agency of local actors" and emphasizes the significance of contextual factors in the success

² Early theorists of European integration, like Mitrany, argued from a functionalist perspective that international integration – the collective governance and material interdependence among states – exhibits its own internal dynamic as states integrate in specific functional, technical, and economic areas (Mitrany, 1975).

of such initiatives. Consequently, while the construction of regions and the responses of regional actors to the challenges of region-building are often contingent upon factors such as existing institutional frameworks, leadership, crises, and external influences, ideas about regionalism – “its scale, its ambitions, and its language – also possess a local character” (2016, p. 32). Therefore, the attempts to rigidly impose the EU model on the African continent, without due regard for the substantial differences between European and African contexts, have undermined region-building efforts in Africa. As a result, analysts evaluating the success of the region-building project in Africa—primarily based on objectives related to improving welfare through enhanced economic cooperation and trade—have frequently deemed African regional institutions to have failed. Piccolino and Minou (2017, p. 124) have noted, for example, that African regional organizations, influenced by the EU model, have pursued unrealistic economic goals that they often fail to attain.

However, Ravenhill (2016, p. 42) contends that analytical approaches that assess the performance of Africa’s regional organizations solely on the basis of their apparent objectives often overlook the organizations’ capacity to effectively execute “latent” functions, even when they fall short of their original aims. For instance, although African regional organizations, at their inception, were primarily mandated to foster economic cooperation among founding member states and may not have fully achieved their aspirations for regional integration and economic growth, this should not lead to the outright condemnation of these institutions as entirely unsuccessful. Ravenhill (2016, p. 42) also highlights the inadequacy of evaluating a regional institution's performance solely by its proclaimed objectives, emphasizing that organizations can fulfill latent functions even when they manifestly fail to meet their declared goals. Only by adopting an approach that considers region-building in Africa beyond the confines of the institutions' stated objectives is it possible to avoid prematurely declaring these endeavors as failures.

Conversely, analytical approaches that go beyond the explicitly stated economic and welfare goals of Africa’s regional development initiatives to include the “latent” functions they serve show that their usefulness has often been underestimated. Regional organizations such as ECOWAS, IGAD, and the African Union, which, upon examination of their stated core objectives, could easily be dismissed as having been “designed to fail,” have still played a notable role in carrying out tasks related to conflict prevention, management, and resolution. Historically, African countries seem more willing to cooperate in addressing

security issues and more inclined to allocate resources to regional conflict mitigation efforts than to other regional public goods. The direct threats posed by conflicts and their regional spill-over effects often provide clear feedback regarding policy failures and their consequences. These threats tend to create stronger incentives for consensus on regional building than for other aspirational goals of regional initiatives, such as economic growth and trade. African nations' commitment to regional cooperation in non-security areas—such as transnational infrastructure, trade, economic development, and food security—has generally been weaker and less evident. This is mainly because failure to achieve these objectives involves minimal reputational risk, sanctions, or costs. Vanheukelom (2019) argues that African leaders see implementing commitments in sectors such as agriculture and infrastructure within regional frameworks as "unattractive," mainly because they find it hard to show immediate positive results or the costs associated with regional action or inaction in these areas. On the other hand, the margin for error is much narrower when it comes to issues of peace and security. Countries have stronger incentives to cooperate regionally to resolve conflicts and prevent their escalation and spillover. The costs and benefits of regional cooperation in peace and security, especially in conflict prevention, management, and resolution, are more clearly defined.

Several African regional organizations, from the continental level—the AU—to subregional groups such as ECOWAS, SADC, and IGAD, have prioritized peace and security, as well as conflict transformation, over their initial goals of promoting trade and economic development. The interests of member states within the AU and Regional Economic Communities seem to align regarding conflict transformation, especially when states see inaction as a greater threat and more costly. Conflict transformation has become a major driver of regional cooperation in Africa and has greatly influenced the institutional structures of these organizations. In particular, as these organizations have taken on active roles in conflict transformation, they have undergone significant internal changes—both institutional and normative. This phenomenon is especially evident in the cases of the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

Evolution and Transformation of the AU, ECOWAS, and IGAD

The African Union and Conflict Management

The AU is Africa's only continental – pan-African – organization with the political mandate,

legitimacy, and institutional capacity to develop and implement continental African principles, commitments, standards, programs, and policies on various issues. The AU is a successor to the Organization of African Unity (OAU), founded in 1963 due to the anti-colonial fervor of the immediate post-independence period and the movement for African unification under slogans such as “African Unity,” “African Fraternity,” and “Pan-Africanism” (Olivier, 2010). The OAU was mainly established as a forum to rally the newly independent states around the goal of continental integration and unification. However, ironically, its foundational principle and objective also emphasized the defense of the sovereignty of these newly formed African states. As Olivier (2010) notes, the adherence to this “iron law of impenetrable national sovereignty,” which the OAU regarded as its “ruling paradigm and political lodestar,” along with the challenges of nation-building and consolidating national identities, hindered efforts toward continental integration and organizational growth.

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) had a limited mandate, mainly to create a framework for minimal intergovernmental cooperation on the liberation of African nations from colonial rule, trade, and continental economic development. To a lesser extent, it also addressed peace and security issues. The OAU was characterized by a weak institutional structure and limited resources for conflict transformation, which greatly hampered its ability to actively engage in resolving conflicts across the continent. As a result, the organization adopted an ad hoc political approach to conflict prevention, management, and resolution, focusing on direct diplomatic and political actions and appeals in conflict situations. This approach ultimately proved ineffective because it lacked a strong normative and institutional foundation (ACCORD, 2014). These limitations severely restricted the OAU’s role in conflict transformation, further weakening its institutional and normative capacities. Because the OAU viewed its role in conflict management as limited, it became so disregarded as a security actor that few states were willing to invest in expanding its capabilities or strengthening its organizational structure. Consequently, by failing to intervene in conflict transformation, the OAU undermined its own potential for meaningful change. In a way, this inaction was not entirely detrimental, as it allowed the OAU to survive the three turbulent decades of its existence without attracting potentially harmful scrutiny of its effectiveness – if it did not act, it did not fail and thus could not be dismissed as a failed institution. The organization thus managed to endure by essentially concealing its vulnerabilities.

Conflict Transformation and AU Transformation

The events of the 1980s and 1990s brought the OAU into the spotlight. They triggered a wave of changes within the organization, eventually leading to its complete transformation into a new organization – the African Union (AU). From the 1980s onward, the African continent saw a rise in intra-state conflicts. By the 1990s, these conflicts led to a complete breakdown of peace, threatening the stability of the entire continent. The ripple effects of the Cold War's end and the collapse of the bipolar global order affected Africa, as irredentist and ethnic conflicts, once contained by Cold War powers, erupted and worsened. Moreover, the very borders that the OAU was founded to defend became increasingly challenged. Most conflicts originated from governance issues, such as “state capacity or lack thereof, ideology, instrumentalization of ethnic identities, access to and control over scarce resources, poverty and inequality, proliferation of armed groups willing to fight against the state, the spread of small arms and light weapons, and transnational organized crime” (ACCORD, 2014). It soon became clear that the OAU was unprepared to provide security or address the challenges that followed the end of the Cold War. The organization lacked both the normative and institutional frameworks needed to confront these issues. As a result, the AU was established in 2000. Essentially, the AU arose from African states recognizing the OAU's failure to address the continent's crises.

Perhaps the most significant change shown by the AU was the resolution, outlined in Article 4 of its founding Act – the Constitutive Act of the African Union – to relax the principles of non-interference and equality of states, and to add to them the principles of non-indifference and non-recognition of coups d'état and unconstitutional changes of government (African Union, 2001). This major normative shift was crucial and revolutionary in expanding the organization's influence over nearly every conflict across the continent and broadening its mandate for conflict management. The organization now committed itself with renewed dedication to preventing, managing, and resolving conflicts on the African continent, establishing a more comprehensive normative and institutional framework to support these efforts. This new framework paved the way for a “robust re-emergence of African agency” in governing its peace and security agenda (ACCORD, 2014).

Nexus of AU Transformation and Its Involvement in Conflict Transformation

There appears to be a mutually reinforcing relationship between the African Union's (AU) growth and conflict transformation: on one hand, the AU's involvement in conflict transformation has led to the transformation of those conflicts; on the other hand, this involvement has coincided with organizational reforms within the AU itself. Due to its role in conflict transformation, the organization has implemented numerous structural changes, reflected in newly adopted normative and institutional frameworks. Notably, these include the creation of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), the African Governance Architecture (AGA), and the Peace and Security Council (PSC), a group of institutions described as "forward-looking and proactive continent-wide security infrastructure" that leverages the capabilities of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to promote greater continental integration, especially in peace and security (2014). Additionally, the Constitutive Act of the AU authorized the establishment of several other important institutions, some of which do not directly relate to the AU's mandates concerning peace, security, and conflict transformation. Moreover, the AU has enacted many normative changes, captured in various agreements and protocols ratified and implemented by member states.

Using its new peace and security architecture, the African Union (AU) has undertaken efforts to transform many violent conflicts and resolve political crises across the continent, achieving varying levels of success. Its peace and security initiatives include sanctioning unconstitutional transfers of political power, conflict prevention, and deploying peacekeeping operations. Since its inception in 2000, the AU has conducted over 50 peace operations in more than 18 countries throughout Africa (Vanheukelom, 2019). The objectives of peace and security, especially the prevention, management, and resolution of conflicts, are of utmost importance to the AU and are central to its legitimacy, relevance, and authority as a global actor. Conversely, as the AU has taken on more responsibilities for conflict transformation, it has also adopted new norms and organizational structures. However, the exact impact of the AU's conflict transformation efforts on its overall evolution remains under-researched and not fully established. This study aims to determine whether and how engagement in conflict transformation has influenced the broader development of the AU.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

Like the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is an evolved version of a predecessor organization, though it shares the same name. ECOWAS exemplifies a regional African organization best known for its “latent functions” in maintaining peace and transforming conflicts rather than for its explicitly stated economic development goals. Established in 1975, ECOWAS aimed to create a regional economic market and boost trade among member states. However, due to widespread political instability and numerous internal conflicts and tensions within and between member countries, ECOWAS had to shift its focus to peace and security issues. In 1978, just three years after its founding, the organization ratified the Protocol Relating to Non-Aggression (PNA) in Lagos, Nigeria, which was designed to prevent member states from threatening or engaging in aggressive acts against one another (Bamfo, 2013). Later, in 1981, it signed the Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance on Defense (PMAD) in Freetown, Sierra Leone, which became effective five years later (Bamfo, 2013). The rise of intrastate conflicts in West Africa during the 1980s and 1990s led ECOWAS to increasingly engage in conflict transformation, often at the expense of its original goals. Nonetheless, ECOWAS has made significant advances in political and security cooperation, especially in conflict transformation.

ECOWAS has notably achieved tangible results in the realms of political and security cooperation, particularly in conflict prevention, management, and resolution. As the organization itself recognizes, it has demonstrated its capacity to undertake conflict prevention, peacemaking, and conflict resolution, achieving significant success in managing violent conflicts and deploying preventive diplomacy – which combines fact-finding missions with discreet diplomacy, diplomatic pressure, and mediation (ECOWAS, 2008). The decision to establish the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) – a joint military intervention initiative aimed at supporting peace operations during the Liberian civil war in 1990- marked an “explicitly political character” (Diez, Tocci, Faleg, & Scherwitz, 2017; Piccolino & Minou, 2017), a stance not previously adopted. Although the ECOMOG mission to Liberia was controversial and yielded mixed results, it served as a catalyst for ECOWAS’s engagement in regional conflict management. Following the Liberian mission, ECOWAS has participated in numerous other conflicts within the region. Its involvement has encompassed peace operations in Sierra Leone (1997), Guinea-Bissau (1998), Côte d’Ivoire

(2002), and Liberia (2003), as well as participation in the 2013 AU-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) (ECOWAS, 2008; Piccolino & Minou, 2017).

Thus, the internal dynamics of West Africa have greatly influenced ECOWAS's shift from solely economic integration and market expansion to conflict transformation. Moreover, since ECOWAS's efforts in conflict transformation have successfully resolved various disputes, its active role in this area also reflects its organizational and normative growth. The development of ECOWAS has been gradual and iterative, marked by incremental changes that seem to respond to feedback from its conflict transformation initiatives. These efforts have been accompanied by numerous organizational reforms, as evidenced by various norms codified in protocols and decrees, as well as the creation of new institutions. A significant milestone in ECOWAS's development was the adoption of a revised Treaty in 1993, which involved a near-complete overhaul of the organization's goals and institutional structure. Aggad and Miyandazi (2017, p. 5) associated the revision of ECOWAS's Treaty with its proactive engagement in transforming violent conflicts within the region. They observed that the revised Treaty included legally binding norms related to democracy and governance, partly driven by the organization's recent conflict transformation efforts, including the conflict in Liberia in 1990. The revised Treaty mandated the creation of several organizational mechanisms and institutions with increased authority and expanded mandates. It established an ECOWAS Commission to replace the ECOWAS Secretariat, transformed the ECOWAS Tribunal into a Court of Justice, and created an ECOWAS Parliament. It also increased the authority of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, empowering it to impose sanctions on member states for non-compliance with ECOWAS law (Aggad & Miyandazi, 2017, p. 7). Furthermore, following the mission to Liberia in 1990, ECOWAS developed a more structured framework for conflict prevention, management, and resolution, adopting the 1999 Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security; the 2005 Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (PDGG); and the 2008 ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (EDPF) (ECOWAS, 2008). The adoption of the frameworks underscores ECOWAS's efforts to embed peace initiatives within its broader objectives.

Based on the foregoing, it can be asserted that conflict transformation has furnished ECOWAS with the framework for implementing institutional modifications. Similar to the African Union

(AU), scholarly research on ECOWAS has predominantly overlooked the potential link between the institutional and normative evolution of ECOWAS and its substantial engagement in conflict mitigation in West Africa.

The Transformation of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

Finally, like both the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in the Horn of Africa exemplifies a regional organization that has undergone organizational changes while engaging in conflict transformation. IGAD was initially established as the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD) in 1986, with the mandate to address drought and desertification, which contributed to one of the worst famines in history in the Horn of Africa during the early 1980s. Like ECOWAS, IGADD was founded in a region marked by state fragility and instability caused by ongoing internal conflicts and interstate tensions. However, IGADD was initially reluctant to engage in conflict transformation efforts, partly because of its limited mandate and its strict adherence to the Organization of African Unity (OAU) principle of non-interference. Yet, as the intensity of conflicts in the Horn of Africa increased during the late 1980s and early 1990s, the leaders of member states realized that pursuing development in such a volatile environment would be futile unless conflicts and state instability issues were first addressed.

On March 21, 1996, the heads of state and government held a second Extraordinary Summit of IGADD in Nairobi, where they agreed to rebrand the organization as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and give it an expanded mandate to include conflict prevention, management, resolution, and humanitarian affairs, along with infrastructure development, food security, and environmental protection (Murithi, 2009). Since then, the transformed IGAD has actively worked to address some of the world's long-standing and deadly conflicts, especially in Sudan and Somalia, and has been recognized by member states as having sufficient legitimacy and credibility to engage in their internal affairs. Over the years, IGAD has built comprehensive normative and institutional frameworks as it engaged in transforming these conflicts, gradually becoming an organization primarily responsible for conflict transformation in the Horn of Africa. IGAD has also subsequently been engaged in the management and resolution

of the civil war in South Sudan since its eruption in 2013.

Like the AU and ECOWAS, IGAD's involvement in conflict transformation within the Horn of Africa shows a co-transformative relationship with its organizational growth. Although favoring a more informal institutional structure than the AU and ECOWAS, IGAD has still established a semblance of formal institutional infrastructure and adopted a more comprehensive and robust normative system. Since 1996, the organization has expanded its structural capacity and created a series of hierarchical intergovernmental bodies to carry out its functions. These include the Authority of Heads of State and Government, which meets annually; the Council of Ministers, made up of Foreign Ministers, which meets twice a year; the Committee of Ambassadors/Plenipotentiaries assigned to the Secretariat, responsible for advising and guiding the Executive Secretary; and a Secretariat, led by an Executive Secretary appointed by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government. Many of these institutional developments have occurred alongside the organization's active conflict management efforts in Sudan, Somalia, and South Sudan. Initially established as a modest forum for intergovernmental cooperation to address specific issues such as drought and desertification, IGAD has undergone a significant transformation, building strong administrative and institutional capabilities and expanding its objectives and reach across the Horn of Africa. Its revitalization in 1996 led to an expanded mandate that now includes not just economic cooperation but also conflict prevention, management, resolution, and humanitarian affairs (Adar, 2016, p. 49).

Incidentally, when the IGAD summit of January 2005, held in Abuja, deployed a peace support mission to Somalia (IGASOM) consisting of 10,000 peacekeepers, it had yet to adopt explicit provisions in its founding agreement for intervention in a member state (Healy, 2009, p. 14). Several analysts, like Healy (2009, p. 14), argued that IGAD lacked sufficient institutional mechanisms for political oversight of such a mission. Hence, in a sense, IGAD's institutional development has followed its political initiatives – IGAD acts first, then builds institutions in response. Furthermore, its expanded role in conflict management has enhanced its legitimacy as a regional actor and earned it continental and international recognition as the most important actor in the Horn of Africa region. IGAD's ownership of the peace processes is partly attributable, first, to the isolation of the region after the failure of US-led UN intervention in Somalia in 1993, and then to the member states' desire to exclude secondary actors from outside the region, such as

Egypt, Libya, and Yemen, from involvement in regional conflicts. As Healy (2009, p. 11) has noted, IGAD's peace-making activities have helped secure the organization's legitimacy and foster wider acceptance of IGAD as the only suitable forum for managing conflicts in the Horn of Africa.

Once again, despite growing interest in IGAD's role in conflict transformation in the Horn of Africa, there has been no explicit research examining the evolution of IGAD as an organization during this period of engagement. In fact, research on IGAD's behavior and development remains limited.

The Research Puzzle and the Major Hypothesis

In the preceding discussion, I have demonstrated the evolution of the AU, ECOWAS, and IGAD over the years, including the expansion of their organizational structures and the overhaul of their normative foundations. I have also indicated that significant transformations within these organizations have occurred contemporaneously with, or after, their involvement in conflict transformation efforts across the continent. This study investigates the nature of the relationship between the conflict transformation initiatives undertaken by these organizations and their subsequent transformations.

The study begins with the premise that engagement in conflict transformation catalyzes organizational learning, thereby prompting transformative changes within regional organizations. Accordingly, the research seeks to determine whether these changes constitute learning outcomes arising from the conflict transformation initiatives. It aims to elucidate the mechanisms by which interactions between organizations and violent conflicts precipitate organizational transformation.

This study examines the development of three organizations from their founding to the periods when they actively engaged in conflict transformation. While academic research on African regional integration has acknowledged the vital role of regional organizations in conflict transformation across Africa and how these processes have sometimes overshadowed the original goals of these organizations, there has been little focus on how conflict transformation initiatives affect their organizational growth. The existing literature generally attributes organizational

changes within regional organizations to external events and actors. For instance, Karkare and Byiers (2019) state that regional integration in Africa often results from "historical path dependencies, negotiation, bargaining, and power dynamics between and within states and regional organizations."

Several accounts also associate the establishment of numerous African regional organizations with external influences. A frequently cited example is France's support, which is considered instrumental in the founding and development of the Francophone West African regional grouping, the Union Économique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine (UEMOA). Conversely, many of these studies assign minimal agency to African regional organizations in their development, implying that their initiatives alone are unlikely to significantly influence their transformation. The organizations are viewed as possessing limited agency, insufficient to drive their internal changes. In opposition to these arguments, this research advocates applying organizational learning theory to the study of change within international organizations. It posits that these entities possess adequate agency to learn and adapt. The hypothesis that organizations can learn rests on assumptions with important implications for the study of international organizations, especially within the framework of international relations theory. These assumptions include the notion that IOs possess autonomy and power, thus independent agency beyond what is delegated by their founding states, and that they can undergo both dysfunction and change.

The core premise of my hypothesis posits that international organizations occasionally deviate from the original intentions and preferences of their founders yet do so without facing significant consequences. Based on various studies within social science disciplines, this appears to be a reasonably straightforward conclusion. As Barnett and Finnemore (1999, p. 699) highlight, numerous International Relations (IR) theories suggest that the formation and maintenance of IOs are responses to issues such as "problems of incomplete information, transaction costs, and other barriers to Pareto efficiency and welfare enhancement for their members." These theories have often been criticized for emphasizing "why" states establish IOs, while paying insufficient attention to "how" these organizations behave post-establishment. In a different work, Barnett and Finnemore (2004, p. 2) observe that IR scholars, by concentrating predominantly on states and their behaviors, have viewed international organizations primarily as instruments serving state interests. Accordingly, international organizations are conceptualized as "structures of rules,

principles, norms, and decision-making procedures through which others, typically states, act” (2004, p. 2).

Furthermore, Weiss and Wilkinson (2014, p. 3) note that although research on international organizations has been widespread within the field of international relations, these studies tend to treat international organizations and global governance as subfields within the broader discipline, thereby underestimating their significance as independent global actors. This research aims to contextualize the transformation of international organizations through organizational learning within the larger discourse on international organizations. The fundamental hypothesis—that regional organizations can learn and adapt—suggests that these entities have a certain level of autonomy, power, and the capacity for both dysfunction and change. However, this proposition may be criticized by mainstream IR approaches. My approach employs a sociological perspective, specifically organizational learning theory, to clarify changes within regional organizations. This choice is not meant as a critique of IR theories but because organizational learning and adaptation are more easily integrated into this framework than into traditional IR paradigms. For instance, mainstream rationalist IR theories, such as liberalism and realism, tend to focus mainly on instrumental rationality and efficiency, often neglecting the full scope of IOs' empirical realities. As a result, they overlook important aspects of IO behavior, primarily how these organizations act after their creation. As Barnett and Finnemore (1999, p. 699) suggest, understanding the autonomy and power of IOs—how and why they deviate from their original mandates—remains a vital area of inquiry, challenging the efficiency goals emphasized by IR theories and calling for a significant “reconsideration of IOs and what they do.”

I must immediately add a caveat that even the mainstream rationalist theories acknowledge some level of organizational change in international organizations; however, they primarily treat change as rational, negotiated responses to external factors such as shifts in state interests or preferences. Moreover, the perceived necessity for this change is attributed not to organizational dysfunction but to these same shifts in state interests. Consequently, these rationalist approaches have largely neglected elements of organizations that are captured by the organizational learning perspective. The realist approach, with its focus on the distribution of relative power capabilities within the international system, can account for the multitude of actors and numerous instances of

international cooperation (Charrette & Sterling-Folker, 2014). In this work, I posit that organizational learning offers an approach that accounts for both the organization's internal functioning and the external factors that influence its operations.

A crucial element of my discourse on realism pertains to the function of International Organizations within global power structures—specifically, whether these organizations merely serve to uphold existing power distributions and interests, as suggested by realists, or whether they are, as Barnett and Duvall (2014, pp. 48-9) articulate, “intended and accidental agents of inclusion and empowerment,” actively transforming social relations that influence actors' capacities to shape future conditions. In contrast to neorealism's hypothesis of a balance of power as a mechanism to restrain states, classical liberal internationalism adopts a more optimistic perspective on the prospects for peace and cooperation among liberal states, with significant implications for international organizations (Jönsson, 2014, p. 105). Neorealist and neoliberal paradigms, by concentrating solely on two instruments of power—namely, material coercion (or inducements) and information—and on the capacity of International Organizations to influence state conduct (Barnett & Finnemore, 2004; Forsythe, 2014), have not fully encompassed the diverse behaviors exhibited by International Organizations. Neorealists further regard International Organizations as “intervening variables,” mediating between the self-interests of states by altering or manipulating the structure of opportunities and constraints through their control of information (Barnett & Finnemore, 1999, p. 704). Although these approaches attribute certain causal influences to International Organizations, such as their impact on income distribution, they do not entirely acknowledge these entities as possessing “autonomy and purpose independent of the states that comprise them” (pp. 704-5).

On the other hand, rational choice approaches, especially the principal-agent (PA) models, focus on how states delegate tasks to International Organizations, viewing them as proactive agents that influence the structure and conditions of relations among states, between states and International Organizations, and between International Organizations and other non-state actors (Tamm & Snidal, 2014, pp. 132-3; Hawkins, David, Daniel, & Michael, 2006). Although the Principal-Agent (PA) theory aims to establish a framework for considering International Organizations as autonomous entities with independent interests and capabilities, and to explain dysfunctional

behaviors within IOs, it does not adequately demonstrate that International Organizations have ontological interests distinct from those of their principals. As Barnett and Finnemore (1999, p. 706) have noted, the challenge in applying the PA model to analyze International Organizations is its inability to allow us to “impute independent preferences a priori.”

Two additional theoretical frameworks have focused on the evolution of International Organizations over time—namely, critical theory and the functionalist approach. Critical theory generally relates to the overall development of international organizations and offers insights into opportunities and barriers to organizational progress (Cox, 2014, p. 159; Cox, 1969). Conversely, functionalists such as Mitrany (1975) emphasize how International Organizations, created to address technical, non-political issues, tend to evolve as solutions to these problems force the organization to expand existing institutional frameworks or create new ones entirely to manage emerging challenges. Similarly, new-functionalist perspectives also acknowledge the capacity of International Organizations to adapt through socialization and “spill-over processes” (Haas E. B., 1964). Nevertheless, although both critical theory and the functionalist approach recognize internal organizational processes as crucial to change, they fundamentally see change as a historical progression—a teleological “incremental, quasi-automatic, and path-dependent process” culminating in the formation of an “international government” (Breul, 2005, p. 48).

The sociological theories, especially the constructivist approach, provide a broader explanation of the origins of power, autonomy, and legitimacy within international organizations, as well as how their fundamental normative structures influence their capacity to learn and adapt. Ruggie (1998) described the “creative leadership in international organization” as “social constructivism in action.” While recognizing the perspectives of realists and liberalists—that state interests and preferences limit the agency of international organizations—they point out that these interests and preferences are “neither fixed nor exogenously given” and can be shaped and reshaped by international organizations (Ruggie, 1998, p. xii). Ruggie emphasizes that “ideational” factors are crucial for the agency of international organizations in defining and redefining the interests and preferences of states.

This research shows that sociological approaches, more than other frameworks, can predict and

clarify the effects of international organizations and highlight their agency in shaping actors, interests, and social goals. It draws on Weberian bureaucratic theories and sociological institutionalist views on organizational behavior to argue that the rational-legal authority shown by International Organizations gives them power and independence from states. Additionally, this authority can also lead to organizational problems—defined here as “behavior that undermines stated goals of the organization” (Barnett & Finnemore, 1999, p. 707). Viewing International Organizations as bureaucracies helps identify dysfunctions caused by internal forces—like bureaucratic culture—that derive their authority and independence from these organizations. Barnett and Finnemore (1999, p. 702) call these dysfunctions “pathologies” linked to bureaucratic culture. As mentioned earlier, understanding International Organizational dysfunction is key to this analysis, since it is mainly through recognizing these dysfunctions that organizational change becomes necessary.

Problematizing Accounts of Change in African Regional Organizations

A common approach in the study of African regionalism is to examine how Africa’s regional initiatives develop within the broader context of global integration trends. It also highlights how external actors, particularly the European Union (EU), along with other international entities such as the United Nations and the United States, influence the emergence and development of regional institutions. Scholars studying African integration often note the tendency of African countries to imitate the EU model of integration, a phenomenon called diffusion (Karkare & Byiers, 2019). Even when regional organizations are based on neofunctionalism³, which holds that integration occurs naturally over time, many analysts look beyond these organizations to identify the sources of change. For example, the push for African integration in the 1960s and 1970s was driven by a global wave of market-based intra-state and intra-regional cooperation. This movement led to the creation of regional groups such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the East African Community (EAC), and the Economic Community of West African States

3. I employ the concept of neofunctionalism herein without prejudice to the various critiques it has attracted from scholars of European Union (EU) integration. Schmitter and Lefkofridi (2015, p. 2) have observed that this experimentation with neofunctionalism in contexts where conditions were, in contrast to Western Europe, adverse “to the generation or cultivation of spillovers from one functional domain to another, and from lower to higher levels of authority” contributed to the numerous misunderstandings of the theory by its critics. Schmitter and Lefkofridi (2015, p. 2) further note that when this approach was applied to comprehend other efforts at regional integration in less favorable environments, it (correctly) predicted the organizations’ failure “even to achieve the objectives proclaimed in their founding treaties”. Although the explanatory power of neofunctionalism in understanding European integration has been extensively contested, it appears that the architects of the African integration projects have been significantly influenced by this theory and have drawn upon its insights to develop a ‘neofunctionalist template for region-building’.

(ECOWAS). This period saw limited intergovernmental cooperation, as member states were hesitant to cede sovereignty or control over the integration process. As a result, opportunities for regional organizations to grow or change were quite limited. Any evolution within these organizations depended heavily on the political will of the member states. Where such willingness existed, it relied on their ability to gather the resources needed to support regional growth and transformation.

The United Nations' intervention in the early 1980s, when it launched initiatives through its Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) to revamp the African integration project, marked a significant phase in the development of regional integration in Africa. In collaboration with the Organization of African Unity (OAU), UNECA introduced the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) and the Final Act of Lagos (FAL), which proposed the revitalization of the African integration agenda through the establishment or revitalization of three Regional Economic Communities (RECs) as a step toward complete African integration. The documents advocated for the enhancement of the already established Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the creation of a Preferential Trade Area (PTA) in 1981 for Eastern and Southern African nations, and the formation of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in 1983 (Olivier, 2010). The Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) represented a pivotal stage in the progression of regional integration in Africa, notably by reintroducing Pan-Africanist themes such as "African solidarity" and self-sufficiency, promoting economic progress through self-sustaining socio-economic development, and reducing its dependence and vulnerability vis-à-vis 'external nations' (Olivier, 2010).

This United Nations-led process was essential for salvaging the African integration initiative from the disintegrated African economic order of the immediate post-independence era. Although the LPA process was primarily an initiative of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), its implementation was only feasible with the backing of the United Nations (Hartzenberg, 2011, p. 5). It is important to note that the United Nations' involvement in Africa's integration endeavors predates the LPA. Through the Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the United Nations had, in fact, been among the pioneering entities promoting African integration subsequent to independence. During the 1960s, the ECA advocated the establishment of subregional groupings across Africa to address the continent's development challenges, specifically aiming to eliminate poverty, foster sustainable growth, and enhance good governance (UNECA, 2021).

The European Union, both collectively and through its individual member states, especially former colonial powers such as France, Britain, and Portugal, is also known for exerting significant influence on region-building and shaping the development of African regional organizations. The EU has invested considerable financial and technical resources in African integration efforts, supporting the creation of Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and strengthening the administrative and security capacities of the African Union (AU). Europe's involvement in Africa's integration can be traced back to long-standing preferential trade relationships established by the European Economic Community with its former colonies in Africa, as well as in the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP) (Fioramonti, 2014).

The EU's backing for regional integration in Africa is part of its broader development policy toward ACP countries, rooted in the Treaty of Rome of 1957 that founded the European Economic Community (EEC). This treaty included provisions for establishing the European Development Fund (EDF), which aimed to support European colonies and territories in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific (ACP), as well as other overseas territories under European control (Fioramonti, 2014). The African integration project has greatly benefited from the EDF. More recently, African integration initiatives have been further promoted through a specialized EU-Africa partnership—the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES)—created to foster cooperation and deepen political dialogue between Africa and Europe (European Commission, 2018). As the first EU initiative solely dedicated to Africa, the Joint Africa-EU Strategy has played a key role in channeling EU technical and financial support to advance regional integration in Africa.

The EU is notably credited with inspiring, shaping, and supporting the new wave of African regionalism that started in 1991 with the signing of the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community—the Abuja Treaty—and spread across the continent. This movement culminated in the transformation of the OAU into the AU in 2001 and strengthened the existing RECs as pillars of the African Economic Community (African Development Bank, 2016; El-Affendi, 2009). The EU's influence on the development of these organizations has grown increasingly, providing significant technical and material support to Africa's integration efforts. Analysts of African integration, especially EU scholars (Paterson, 2013; Kühnhardt, 2008; Piccolino & Minou, 2017; Piccolino, 2015), often credit the transformation of African regional organizations to the influence

and support of the EU. The EU is viewed either as promoting or hindering the growth of these organizations. This perspective does not attribute much agency to the African organizations for their own transformation.

On the other hand, the influence of African states, particularly regional hegemons such as Nigeria in West Africa, South Africa in Southern Africa, and potentially Ethiopia in the Horn of Africa, has been identified as a significant factor in transforming regional organizations in Africa. A study conducted by Byiers et al. (2019) has demonstrated how domestic interests, pressure groups, and general apathy among states towards collective action have collectively undermined efforts to reform Africa's regional organizations. The pivotal role of Nigeria in ECOWAS is frequently acknowledged as instrumental in the organization's development (Ojo, 1980, p. 572). Nigeria has historically supported several ECOWAS initiatives to manage conflicts in the region. Notably, the deployment of ECOMOG to Liberia in 1990 was initiated by Nigeria, and the mission's success largely depended on Nigeria's support (Yoroms, 1993). Consequently, many analysts argue that Nigeria has been the driving force behind the transformation of ECOWAS. Similarly, Ethiopia's influence in the establishment and governance of IGAD has been substantial and is a significant factor in IGAD's evolution.

Finally, some assert that the African integration project has also gained strength from the charisma and inspiration of individual African leaders. Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania are, for instance, recognized for uniting the continent around a pan-Africanist agenda and inspiring the initial wave of continental and sub-regional integration efforts in the immediate post-independence period. Nkrumah's dedication and contributions to the concept of African unity are thoroughly documented (Haynes, 1988; Olaosebikan, 2014; Makgetlaneng, 2021), and his passion and optimism for comprehensive political unification as the foundation for Africa's economic development, along with his vision of a single African government—the United States of Africa—significantly influenced the pursuit of African integration post-independence. Similarly, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania committed much of his political life to advocating for African unity as the basis for Africa's complete liberation from colonial rule, actively campaigning for the continent's integration (Kamata, 2019; Chacha, 2002).

Other leaders have also been recognized for advancing African integration efforts. Recent efforts to revive pan-African ideals, which led to the revitalization of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and its transformation into the African Union (AU) in the late 1990s, were driven by the enthusiasm and leadership of Muammar Gaddafi of Libya. Toward the end of his presidency, Gaddafi used Libya's substantial financial and petrochemical resources to gain support from African states for his vision of African unity (Ramutsindela, 2009; Isilow, 2021; Nolan, 2011). Notably, the summit where the Constitutive Act of the African Union—the treaty establishing the AU—was adopted took place in Sirte, Libya, under Gaddafi's leadership. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma of South Africa launched recent reform initiatives within the African Union during her tenure as Chairperson of the AU Commission, and has received strong backing from Paul Kagame of Rwanda, who, as President of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, has pushed a reform agenda (Vanheukelom, 2019).

Besides national leaders, bureaucrats have also played key roles in developing African regional organizations. One of the most influential figures in this group was Nigerian economist Adebayo Adedeji, credited with establishing ECOWAS and, as head of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), leading the revitalization of the African integration project (Adebajo, 2016). Under Adedeji's leadership, UNECA launched the Lagos Plan of Action in 1981 and the Final Act of Lagos in 1983, which served as two major blueprints for revitalizing various African integration initiatives.

Some have attributed the transformation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) into the African Union (AU), as well as the restructuring of most of Africa's regional organizations, to the leadership of Tanzanian diplomat Ahmed Salim Ahmed. He was the longest-serving and final Secretary-General of the OAU from 1989 until its dissolution in 2001. Lulie and Cilliers (2015, p. 71) recognized Salim's leadership and strategic vision in establishing the legal and structural foundations of a more proactive regional organization—the AU—that is equipped to confront "the contemporary challenges faced by the continent." However, as this study shows, even when individual leaders with considerable capabilities bear the burden of region-building, their initiatives have been more effective at uniting states around a regional agenda focused on peace and security than on other regional goals. Consequently, while Adedeji may rightly be credited

with inspiring the founding of ECOWAS in 1975 and for initiating the revival of Africa's regional integration efforts in the early 1980s (Adebajo, 2016), the current structures of ECOWAS, the African Union (AU), and other regional economic communities (RECs)—characterized by stronger administrative frameworks and expanded mandates—largely resulted from regional cooperation during the civil wars that have affected the continent since the late 1980s. In fact, nearly two decades after the Lagos conferences of 1981, the African regional integration initiative gained significant momentum; notably, it was not an economic crisis that spurred this development but rather the outbreak of violent conflicts and civil wars during the immediate post-Cold War period, which ignited a new wave of regionalism. As an economist, Adedeji viewed integration primarily through an economic lens, advocating that Africa pursue economic regionalism to foster economic development and expand regional markets for intra-regional trade (Adebajo, 2016). Still, West African leaders in the 1990s were more successful in mobilizing the region to strengthen ECOWAS as a mechanism for conflict transformation amid ongoing violence and instability. Similarly, leaders in the Horn of Africa succeeded in rallying IGADD member states to work together on conflict mitigation, eventually transforming IGADD into IGAD, an organization with a broader mandate that prominently included conflict transformation within the region. It is clear, therefore, that regional security has provided states with incentives and conditions conducive to pursuing rigorous regionalism—centered on building hierarchical institutions with significant claims to sovereignty.

Various factors can partly explain the rise of regional institutions as active participants in governance across Africa. However, the expansion of integration aims and the mandates of regional organizations to include conflict transformation have undoubtedly played a key role in establishing the region as a significant arena for regional actors.

This study posits that, although these factors have all contributed to the African region-building initiative, they do not sufficiently explain the persistence and evolution of regional organizations. It is based on the hypothesis that the objective of conflict transformation has served as perhaps the most significant incentive for enhanced regional cooperation and for the transformation of regional organizations within Africa. Alternative motivations for reform—including the pursuit of financial independence, exemplified by the recent African Union (AU) reform initiative led by President Paul Kagame of Rwanda (Turianskyi & Gruz, 2009), as well as influence and pressure from

external actors—have also been observed. Nonetheless, these reform efforts have generally proved less effective and comprehensive than the transformations initiated by organizations engaged in conflict transformation activities. Indeed, the involvement of these organizations in conflict transformation has, at times, underscored the risks associated with excessive reliance on external donors (Byiers, Woolfrey, Medinilla, & Vanheuke, 2019, p. 13). The exigencies of conflict transformation often necessitate swift mobilization and deployment of resources to prevent the outbreak or escalation of violent conflicts. The dependence of African organizations on external donor funding for peace and security initiatives has, in many instances, hindered their capacity to deploy peacekeeping or peacemaking missions promptly and effectively when required. Consequently, one of the motivations for reforming regional organizations has been to enhance their conflict transformation capabilities.

Therefore, it suffices to posit that conflict transformation has been vital for the resurgence of regional integration in Africa. It has become a key, if not the main, driver for regional development and serves as a core goal of integration efforts. Failure or apathy in responding to ongoing conflicts has often been seen as a significant factor in the disintegration of certain regional projects across the continent. For example, the hesitation of the original East African Cooperation (EAC) to intervene to stop the repressive regime of Idi Amin of Uganda is frequently cited as a significant reason for the organization's collapse in 1977 (Hughes, 1977). Tanzania, led by Julius Nyerere, which had unsuccessfully tried to persuade Kenya—another member of the bloc—to intervene in Uganda, independently launched a military attack against the Amin government. This action broke the previously sacred principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of member states. Nyerere later argued that there was little point in remaining part of an organization that watched helplessly as a member state oppressed its citizens. While other reasons have been proposed for member states' decision to disband the organization, its limited scope regarding political issues and especially its failure to resolve the Ugandan conflict significantly contributed to its collapse (Hughes, 1977). A similar argument applies to the case of the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), another African REC, which has essentially been a failed effort. Although various factors have slowed its development, its neglect and reluctance to engage in conflict transformation in North Africa have severely impacted its progress and credibility as a regional actor.

It is acknowledged that the member states of an organization play a pivotal role in the reform processes and transformation of regional entities. Indeed, the evolution of a regional organization often hinges upon the willingness and capacity of its member states to initiate and pursue organizational reforms. When commitment and action from the states are absent, the advancement of regional organizations is frequently hindered. Historically, African states have exhibited limited attention to the implementation of regional commitments related to issues such as trade and tariff barriers. Conversely, they have demonstrated a greater willingness to mobilize efforts towards enforcing commitments and overcoming domestic barriers that may otherwise impede their integration, especially when issues pertain to security and the prevention or mitigation of spill-over effects of conflict. In situations where security is compromised, it becomes comparatively easier to overcome domestic interests, pressure groups, and general apathy towards collective action, thereby facilitating regional cooperation and the potential reform of regional organizations. Even regional leaders, such as Nigeria and Ethiopia, tend to show a stronger inclination to participate decisively in regional security initiatives rather than in other areas such as regional trade. For example, Nigeria was hesitant to join the recently launched African Continental Free Trade Area (Ordu, 2019) and to adopt the new West African currency – ECO (NAN, 2022), whereas it more readily assumes leadership roles in regional conflict resolution initiatives within the West African sub-region. Ethiopia, a key actor within the security regionalism led by IGAD, is known to approach economic integration with skepticism and engages minimally with regional blocs that pursue economic integration. The African Regional Integration Index, a tool developed by the AU to evaluate the extent to which African nations fulfill their commitments under various Pan-African integration frameworks, ranks Ethiopia among the lower performers in accomplishing economic integration obligations (UNECA, 2022). Nevertheless, Ethiopia plays a pivotal role in the operations of the IGAD, which prioritizes security cooperation within the Horn of Africa. The transformation of regional conflicts, therefore, may serve as catalysts and motivators for national endeavors toward regional integration.

The crucial role of conflict transformation in establishing the legitimacy of African regional organizations is clearly shown by the three cases examined here — the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). Before taking on active conflict transformation roles, these

organizations were rarely seen as significant regional or global players. The Organization of African Unity (OAU), the precursor to the AU, was often described as a “toothless bulldog” or “an empty talk-shop” (Espegren, 1999; Ibrahim, 2016), with limited ability to provide practical solutions to African problems. Transforming this organization into the African Union in 1999 marked Africa’s decisive move toward taking responsibility for solving its own issues. The slogan “African Solutions to African Problems,” which reflects the desire for African agency, came from this shift. Ghanaian political economist George Ayittey (1994) coined this phrase in response to the international community's failure to stop the Somali civil war during the 1990s. Ayittey argued that because “outside attempts to resolve African problems have regularly proven ineffective and even counterproductive,” sustainable solutions can only come from Africans themselves (Ayittey, 1994). He emphasized the need for Africa to find internal solutions because external interventions are often unfeasible. Over time, the phrase became more widely used and served as the guiding principle for the continent’s approach to its issues and solutions. Additionally, it symbolized Africa’s hope for legitimacy as a global actor and a more powerful agent in tackling its challenges, including widespread conflicts. Importantly, it was also a call for the OAU to evolve and take control of Africa’s future. Since its founding, the AU’s active role in conflict transformation has helped it gain recognition as a legitimate global actor. Likewise, both ECOWAS and IGAD were relatively unknown before their pivotal roles in conflict transformation, notably in Liberia in 1990 and Sudan in 1996. Their ongoing involvement in regional conflict resolution boosted their legitimacy, received international recognition, and gave them renewed energy they lacked when their focus was only on narrow, non-political regional goals.

The Research Question

This thesis examines African regional organizations from the perspective of their performance in fulfilling the “latent” function of conflict transformation. The primary goal of this research is not to determine the impact of these organizations' interventions on conflict transformation but rather to explore how their involvement in conflict transformation has influenced their organizational development. As a result, this is essentially an effort to analyze how participation in conflict transformation affects the evolution of these organizations. The study investigates how conflict transformation initiatives within these organizations have affected their institutional and normative frameworks. Existing studies on Africa’s regional peace and security architecture have primarily

focused on narrow institutional changes implemented by regional organizations to facilitate effective conflict transformation (Vines, 2013; Williams, 2009, 2014). From these analyses, change within a regional organization is viewed as consisting of institutional adjustments in response to its efforts to transform conflict. However, this study aims to gain a broader understanding of change, including significant transformations in both organizational structures and normative foundations, through active involvement in conflict transformation. To accomplish this, I draw on insights from organizational learning theory to analyze the types of change and the mechanisms through which they occur within regional organizations.

Theoretical Framework: Organizational learning theory

Although primarily developed and utilized within the domain of management sciences, organizational learning theory offers valuable analytical tools for examining change within African regional organizations. Its strength lies in its capacity to scrutinize internal processes while accounting for the influence of environmental conditions and systemic factors that shape regional organizational change, as previously cited (Breul, 2005, p. 1). Of particular importance to this study is the way the organizational learning perspective defines organizational change in terms of "levels of learning" (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Hedberg, 1981). Organizational learning concepts delineate, on one hand, "lower-level learning" (Fiol & Lyles, 1985, p. 807) or "single-loop learning" (Argyris & Schön, 1978, pp. 2-3), which pertains to processes that enable an organization to identify and rectify errors within its rule system while maintaining its core features and facilitating the continuation of existing policies or the achievement of current objectives without altering foundational organizational norms. Conversely, the concept of "higher-level learning" (Fiol & Lyles, 1985, p. 808), also known as "double-loop learning" (Argyris & Schön, 1978, pp. 2-3), involves learning processes—error detection and correction—that necessitate the modification of an organization's fundamental norms, policies, and goals. As will be elaborated upon later in this study, the significance of organizational learning theory lies in its acknowledgment that organizations possess sufficient agency to engage in learning processes. In this research, it is hypothesized that learning serves as the mechanism through which organizational transformation occurs when the three regional organizations assume active conflict-management roles. The objective is to illustrate how conflict transformation established a foundation for collective learning, benefiting both external actors, such as the states, and fostering organizational learning and change. Consequently, conflict management is viewed as a catalyst for

organizational learning and transformation.

Methodology

The challenge of identifying change and learning within organizations lies in the difficulty of determining whether an observed incremental adjustment in the organizational structure constitutes change or rather constitutes "a response based on understanding the relationship of that response to environmental events and/or past actions" (Fiol & Lyles, 1985, p. 810). At times, changes or adjustments do not necessarily imply learning. Moreover, a common challenge is isolating instances of learning amidst multiple potential intervening variables and alternative explanations (Zito & Schout, 2009, p. 1104). This research proposes that process tracing can help isolate or eliminate competing or intervening variables and establish the causal mechanisms underlying the relationship between organizational transformation and regional conflict management. Consequently, this study employs process tracing and comparative methodologies to analyze the learning processes of the selected regional organizations. The investigation primarily adopts a qualitative approach based on a three-case comparison utilizing a most-similar-systems design, which offers analytical tools for examining cases within similar contexts—such as the three African regional organizations examined herein—while varying in the values of independent and dependent variables. The study compares regional organizations across Africa at a specific point in time.

Structure of Research

Following the Introduction Chapter, Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive overview of existing research on African regional integration and conflict transformation. It aims to identify the paucity of studies examining the transformative effects of conflict management efforts conducted by the AU, ECOWAS, and IGAD on their respective institutional and normative frameworks. In this chapter, several scholarly works concerning the conflict management activities of these three regional organizations are reviewed, with particular emphasis on the oversight of organizational behavior and transformation. The chapter elucidates that, despite considerable efforts to analyze the increased engagement of these organizations in conflict management and the extensive

institutional and normative reforms undertaken to enhance their capacity in these roles, the existing literature insufficiently explores how such conflict transformation engagements influence organizational transformation. Furthermore, the chapter underscores the tendency of discourse on the evolution of African organizations to neglect the potential of learning as a vital mechanism for fostering such transformation.

Chapter 3 delineates the theoretical and analytical frameworks pertinent to the research. It draws upon insights from organizational learning theory to underscore the relationship between regional conflict management and regional organizational transformation. It is argued that organizational learning theory furnishes the necessary tools to “integrate analysis of processes inside the organization and the influence of environmental conditions” (Breul, 2005, p. 1). This chapter aims to present a theoretical framework that elucidates the behavior and transformation of the three regional organizations as they engage with security politics, particularly in the context of conflict transformation. It is posited that organizational learning provides valuable insights into both internal processes and the influence of environmental factors on organizational behavior; subsequently, an analytical framework is proposed to examine change within these three organizations.

In chapter 4, I present the research design and tools employed for data collection and analysis. I conducted a qualitative case-study analysis using a three-case comparison with a most-different-systems approach. This method allows for analyzing cases in diverse contexts, such as the three African regional organizations examined, while highlighting similarities in the relationships between independent and dependent variables. I also clarify and justify my selection of the case-study method. Additionally, I endorse data triangulation, noting that leveraging multiple sources enhances the robustness of my hypotheses by verifying them across various types of evidence.

Chapter 5 offers an empirical examination of the transformative influence exerted by conflict management initiatives undertaken by various organizations on their developmental trajectories. This examination draws upon data collected through field research and a comprehensive review of pertinent literature. The empirical findings substantiate the following hypotheses: namely, that the participation of regional organizations in conflict transformation significantly contributed to the revision and enhancement of their objectives and mandates; that their engagement in conflict

transformation amplified the need for more comprehensive legal and institutional frameworks, resulting in the expansion of such structures; that regional organizations utilized their conflict transformation roles to strengthen their authority and legitimacy as regional and international actors; that involvement in conflict management promoted the development of innovative social and organizational practices; and that normative shifts mirror the lessons learned through conflict management initiatives. This chapter delineates empirical findings that corroborate each hypothesis by directly addressing the corresponding research questions.

In the concluding chapter—Chapter 6—I provide a comprehensive summary and finalize the research. The chapter confirms that the primary goal of the study, which was to examine how engagement by three prominent African regional organizations—the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)—in conflict management within Africa influenced their organizational transformation, has been successfully achieved. It also acknowledges that the core premise of this research—that conflict management has given these regional organizations a platform and opportunity for growth not easily available through other objectives of state cooperation—is supported by the analysis of the three organizations. Additionally, the chapter highlights that the main finding of the study—the existential threats posed to African states by ongoing violent conflicts and widespread insecurity—has been a strong motivation for regional integration across the continent. Furthermore, the involvement of these three regional organizations in conflict transformation has become their most defining purpose and a vital foundation for their organizational growth and change.

Chapter 2: State of the Art: Review of Literature on the Transformation of African Regional Organizations and Conflict Management

Introduction

Since the early 1990s, the region has emerged as a key player in conflict prevention, management, and resolution, and, especially, in peacekeeping efforts in Africa. Since deploying its first peace operation—the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG)—to intervene in the Liberian civil war in 1990, regional organizations have played crucial roles in promoting peace and security across Africa. The post-Cold War era has seen increased regional involvement in preventing, managing, and resolving conflicts within the continent. Since 1990, the African Union (AU), in collaboration with sub-regional bodies such as the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), has assumed significant responsibility for conflict prevention, management, and resolution, launching numerous peacekeeping and peacemaking missions throughout Africa. A growing body of scholarly work has accompanied the expansion of the AU and RECs' mandates and goals, like those of ECOWAS and IGAD, to include conflict prevention, management, resolution, and the overall maintenance of peace and security across Africa. Notable contributions include works by Aning (2000; 2008), Williams (2007; 2009; 2011), Williams & Jurgen (2008), Engel (2017), Porto & Engel (2010), Vines (2013), Bamidele (2016), Murithi (2009; 2008; 2012), and Bah, Choge-Nyandoro, Derso, Mofya & Murithi (2014), which collectively form the growing body of literature on how the AU's Peace and Security Architecture has evolved. Much of this research focuses on these organizations' capacities to manage security issues and their influence in transforming conflicts. A substantial amount of literature examines the African Peace and Security Architecture, primarily focusing on its development and the ability to effect change in conflict transformation across Africa. However, there has been an uneven focus on the transformative impact of regional organizations on conflicts, with limited discussion about whether and how regional engagement in conflict management and resolution can influence the broader transformation of these organizations.

This chapter reviews existing literature on African regional integration and conflict transformation, highlighting the scarcity of research on the transformative impacts of conflict management initiatives undertaken by the AU, ECOWAS, and IGAD on their respective institutional and

normative frameworks. It is noted that although numerous studies examine the increased involvement of these organizations in peace and security initiatives, as well as some analyses of the institutional and normative adaptations implemented to enhance their capacity for such responsibilities, limited research has been conducted to ascertain how these conflict management initiatives influence the transformation of the organizations themselves.

Regional Organizations and Conflict Transformation in Africa

While traditionally, the international community—primarily through the United Nations (UN)—had assumed almost exclusive responsibility for peacekeeping efforts on the African continent until the 1990s, the emerging pattern of regionalization of conflicts, coupled with the failure and weaknesses of the UN system to effectively prevent, manage and resolve disputes in Africa, exemplified by the inability to prevent the 1994 Rwandan genocide, compelled African states to increasingly rely on regional mechanisms for conflict transformation (Söderbaum & Tavares, 2009, p. 71). The expanded roles assumed by regional organizations in Africa, notably the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), over the past three decades have attracted significant scholarly attention to regionalism. Academic works examining the nexus between African regionalism and conflict transformation have addressed a range of topics, including the capacity of these organizations to effectively prevent, manage, and resolve violent conflicts and political disputes within and between African states, the influence of organizational engagement on conflict transformation, and the active agency of African organizations in conflict prevention, management and resolution. Researchers such as Söderbaum and Tavares (2009), Williams (2009), Coning (2017), and Carayannis and Fowlis (2017), among others, have conducted comparative analyses of the roles played by African regional and subregional organizations in security matters relative to other security mechanisms, such as UN peacekeeping operations, and the ability of regional bodies to provide adequate security through their peace initiatives.

Additionally, numerous analysts have provided compelling assessments of African regional organizations' roles in conflict transformation, with particular emphasis on peacekeeping. Scholars including Kasaija (2013), Franke and Gänzle (2012), Williams (2014), and Murithi (2008), have

examined the evolving roles of the African Union in conflict transformation, its efficacy in fulfilling these roles, and whether the organization has succeeded in realizing the principle of “African solutions to African problems,” which underpins the enhanced agency of the continent’s organizations.

The peacekeeping efforts by ECOWAS in West Africa have faced significant criticism, mainly over their effectiveness in resolving conflicts and ECOWAS's ability to carry out its various missions across the region. Ofuately-Kodjoe (1994) examined ECOWAS’s intervention during the early stages of the Liberian conflict and sought to draw lessons from that experience to guide future regional interventions in intrastate conflicts. Likewise, Obi (2009) and Rodriguez (2018) provided comparative analyses of ECOWAS’s peacekeeping operations in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, and Côte d’Ivoire, highlighting both the strengths and weaknesses of the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and stressing the development of ECOWAS’s Peace and Security architecture. Rodriguez (2018) concluded that ECOWAS’s ability to intervene effectively was limited and reduced by the hegemonic influence of certain member states, especially Nigeria, which mainly supplied the majority of funding and troops for missions in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Côte d’Ivoire, but not for those in Guinea and Guinea-Bissau.

Likewise, IGAD’s conflict transformation initiatives in the Horn of Africa region have increasingly attracted the attention of numerous analysts. Similar to the cases of the OAU/AU and ECOWAS, scholarship on IGAD’s involvement in conflict transformation has focused on evaluating the outcomes of these initiatives and, indeed, on assessing IGAD’s capacity to effect positive transformation in conflicts. In his recent study, Bereketeab (2019) analyzed IGAD’s performance in peace mediation and peacebuilding. Bereketeab (2019) has insightfully attempted to correlate IGAD’s performance with its institutional framework, as well as other factors such as overreliance on external funding, limited capacity, narrow national interests of member states, and, akin to ECOWAS, the dominance of a regional hegemon—Ethiopia. Kasaija (2015) has similarly observed that IGAD’s organizational structure, coupled with its diminished power relative to member states, has hindered its mediation efforts in the ongoing South Sudan conflict. Nevertheless, he concludes that IGAD’s greatest strength lies in its recognition by the international community, which has been cultivated over the years, particularly through its intervention in the protracted conflicts in Somalia and Sudan, establishing it as the sole acceptable and legitimate

actor in peace processes within the Horn of Africa. Back (2016) employed case studies of IGAD's engagement in transforming the conflicts in Sudan and South Sudan to offer an unusual yet commendatory evaluation of the organization's performance. He credits IGAD's mediation efforts, including the adoption of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the southern and northern regions of Sudan—culminating in South Sudan's declaration of independence in 2011—with demonstrating how proactive intervention and mediation by a regional organization can facilitate positive conflict transformation (2016, pp. 141-2). Murithi (2009), through a comparative analysis of IGAD's interventions in the protracted conflicts in Sudan and Somalia, sought to illustrate the challenges faced by African regional institutions in their peacebuilding endeavors. While acknowledging the success of the 2005 CPA as an instance of effective mediation by IGAD, Murithi (2009) noted that in the case of Somalia, IGAD's peace initiatives encountered setbacks, primarily due to weak governance structures and external interference exerting undue influence on the peace processes.

Conflict Management and the Transformation of African Regional Organizations

However, while substantial research exists on the transformative impact of regional organizations on conflicts, their operational behavior and the internal transformations they undergo during engagement in conflict transformation have largely remained underexplored in these analyses. Some scholars have emphasized how regional conflict dynamics influence the organizations responsible for conflict management. In contrast, others have addressed the institutional or administrative adjustments these organizations implement to enhance their effectiveness in conflict transformation. There have been limited, transient efforts to attribute the institutional and normative changes made by these organizations to their conflict interventions, viewing these changes as adaptations to the challenges inherent in peacemaking. For example, Iwilade and Agbo (2012) examined how the “internal dynamics of West Africa” have shaped ECOWAS and its peacekeeping initiatives within the “volatile and unpredictable” West African region. Conversely, Kwesi Aning, who arguably comes closest to establishing a link between ECOWAS's organizational transformation and its conflict transformation initiatives, has sought to demonstrate how the “epistemic partnerships” between the OAU and ECOWAS during ECOWAS's interventions in the Liberian civil wars of 1990 and 1997 facilitated the establishment of conflict management systems within both organizations (Aning, 2000, p. 50). Aning also sought to

challenge the notion that regional organizations may have been compelled to adopt conflict transformation strategies to uphold their credibility and legitimacy as regional and international actors (2000, p. 50). Murithi (2009) also recognizes the potential for conflict transformation experiences to serve as platforms for organizational learning, which could subsequently underpin the internal transformation of the organizations. He suggests that IGAD could, as part of “an ongoing process of institutional transformation and to renew its collective and regional security pact,” internalize lessons from its experiences in Sudan and Somalia (p. 155). However, these efforts have been sporadic and insufficiently attentive to the dynamics of organizational change that occur when such organizations participate in peace and security activities. Furthermore, none of these accounts explicitly links organizational transformation, when acknowledged, to their roles in conflict prevention, management, and resolution. These studies do not sufficiently analyze the organizations’ behaviors during conflict transformation, thereby overlooking how the organizations themselves are transformed through these processes.

Explaining the Neglect of the Transformative Impact of Conflict Transformation Initiatives

One explanation for the lack of observed impact of organizations’ conflict management initiatives on their transformation in most analyses is that, despite its increasing importance, conflict transformation has only recently been recognized as a significant objective within the African integration project. The fundamental aims of these organizations have historically been to deliver economic and trade benefits to member states; consequently, they are primarily regarded as “Regional Economic Institutions” (Rodriguez, 2018). Until recently, debates concerning African regional integration have predominantly centered on economic regionalism, with regional groupings essentially perceived as economic blocs whose primary mandate is to facilitate economic integration and regional trade liberalization among African nations (see, for example, Söderbaum (1996) and Bach (2016)). When African integration initiatives are analyzed through the lens of economic and trade regionalism, the perceived transformation of regional organizations is generally attributed to their economic and trade objectives. Therefore, although conflict management has become increasingly important and central for the three regional organizations, its transformative impact has been overshadowed mainly by economic considerations. The predominant economic perspective in the analysis of African organizations has thus contributed to the insufficient attention paid to engagement in conflict transformation as a key factor in the

organizations' transformation.

Existing Accounts of Change of African Regional Organizations

Conversely, the discourse regarding the transformation of African regional organizations has been underpinned, and arguably hamstrung, by prevailing theoretical accounts of change within international organizations as understood in the realm of International Relations. Conventional methodologies of regional integration in Africa predominantly endorse a central role for the state, often marginalizing the influence of other (non-state) actors. Scholars with a realist orientation, such as Igwe, Ochinanwata, and Madichie (2021), interpret regional integration in Africa primarily as comprising intergovernmental negotiation forums monopolized by sovereign states engaged in bargaining to protect national interests. From this vantage point, the inception and development of such organizations are contingent upon state actions or, indeed, inactions. Realism, in its various manifestations, asserts that states are the paramount actors within the international system; consequently, any alterations or transformations in international politics or the global order must be comprehended as outcomes emergent from the explicit or implicit actions of states. Notably, scholars like John Mearsheimer contend that states are chiefly driven to pursue integration due to shifts in the regional balance of power, specifically, that a state seeks integration only when there is a transformation in its relative power vis-à-vis other states and a desire to expand its influence over a geographic territory (Mearsheimer, 1995, p. 13). Furthermore, realists argue that state behavior can be understood through a preoccupation with survival within an anarchic international system, where cooperation is attainable only through self-help mechanisms and rational decision-making (Waltz, 1979).

The explanatory power of realism in the context of African regionalism appears diminished due to weaknesses inherent in African state structures. Several African states are characterized by fragile institutional and administrative arrangements, which impair their capacity to exercise sovereignty over their national territories and to project influence across borders (Mecea, 2014). Nonetheless, strands of a statist perspective on African regionalism have persisted, maintaining that the development of regional organizations in Africa reflects the evolution and capacity of the state system within the continent. Such perspectives posit that the regional collective foreign policy reflects domestic politics. Therefore, the growth of organizations such as ECOWAS, IGAD, and

the African Union (AU) is interpreted as indicative of the overall evolution of member states. Iwilade and Agbo (2012) have, for instance, pointed out how the internal dynamics of the West African region influenced ECOWAS's capacity for peacekeeping missions.

It is noteworthy that when ECOWAS and IGAD nations decided to send peacekeeping and mediation missions to Liberia and Sudan, respectively, neither organization had sufficient institutional capacity or normative power to support those missions. When Nigeria's military leader at the time, General Ibrahim Babangida, called a meeting of ECOWAS heads of state and government in 1990 to establish the ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee (SMC), the represented states, including Nigeria, were all under various forms of authoritarian rule (Adibe, 1997). At the time, the SMC, initiated by Nigeria, deployed ECOMOG to Liberia; all of Liberia's neighboring countries—Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Guinea—were also governed by military dictators (Adibe, 1997).

It has been argued that ECOWAS's notably weak normative framework arose from member states' notably weak adherence to the principles they were supposed to promote in Liberia—namely, democracy, good governance, and respect for human rights. The subsequent Nigerian-led intervention aimed at establishing democracy in Sierra Leone has been accused of serving primarily to improve Nigeria's tarnished domestic and international image, as well as that of its military leader, General Sani Abacha (Francis, 2009, p. 98). The military dictatorships of Generals Babangida and Abacha had undermined the democratic wishes of the Nigerian people by nullifying the results of the 1993 presidential elections and suppressing political activists advocating for democracy and good governance. The fact that the same Nigerian regime that denied democracy at home would lead a pro-democracy mission in Sierra Leone eroded ECOWAS's moral authority and compromised the mission's legitimacy. Similarly, when President Omar Al Bashir invited IGAD (then still known as IGADD) in 1993 to resolve the conflict in Sudan, IGAD was composed of member nations with troubled histories—Ethiopia, Djibouti, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, Eritrea, and Uganda—all experiencing military rule, internal conflicts, and intra-state disputes. IGADD also faced weak organizational structures, which have been attributed to the domestic politics of its member states. Healy (2011) described IGAD as “the very reverse of regional cooperation, involving an ‘internationalization of domestic politics.’”

Over the past three decades, the regions under ECOWAS and IGAD, as well as various African nations within the African Union, have experienced notable positive transformations and strengthened sovereignty. As Bizo (2017, p. 4) appropriately observes, the African continent has undergone substantial democratic shifts in recent decades, including the reinforcement of multi-party democracies and the development of robust continental and regional normative frameworks such as the African Union's African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance. This trend of democratization is evident across Africa. It encompasses not only regular electoral processes and the protection of civil and political rights but also significant social and economic reforms within states. Concurrently, the evolution of African regional organizations has paralleled these changes. Some scholars have suggested that the transformation of these organizations contributes to the broader evolution of Africa's state system. There is an argument that the increase in regional integration and the consolidation of the Westphalian nation-state system in Africa are mutually reinforcing processes. Unlike Western Europe, where regional integration has led to the transformation of traditional Westphalian states into "post-modern states"—states that recognize a new level of political authority capable of intervening in domestic affairs (Mattli, 2000, p. 149; Sørensen, 1997, p. 261)—and where some analysts have even projected that EU integration might render the nation-state obsolete (Hoffmann, 1966), in Africa, the development and expansion of regional integration have appeared to be bolstered by the strengthening of the nation-state system.

The debate over the relationship between regional integration and the nation-state in Africa is a prominent feature of the discourse on African regionalism, paralleling its significance in the broader new regionalism discourse. In the African context, the dominance of the Westphalian paradigm of state sovereignty—a remnant of colonial legacy—has frequently been criticized for constraining regional integration efforts to merely intergovernmental mechanisms. The enforcement of robust state sovereignty has repeatedly been identified as a contributing factor to the failure of regional integration initiatives in Africa to achieve the developmental and political benefits observed in other regions worldwide. As Oyugi (2012, p. 2) explicates, governments have historically preferred to perceive regionalism as a tool that either supplements, enhances, or safeguards the role of the nation-state. Conversely, the recent expansion of regional institutions in Africa is attributed to the strengthening of the national system, a development driven by the increasing adoption of more robust institutional and administrative frameworks by individual

states. Consequently, the normative evolution of ECOWAS, for instance, is viewed as both reflecting and stemming from the growing adoption and reinforcement of democracy and good governance by West African nations (Hartmann, 2017; Yaya, 2014), although the precise relationship between these organizational changes within ECOWAS and the democratic transformations of its member states remains to be conclusively established.

Existing research primarily highlights how regional organizations have influenced their member states. Williams (2007, p. 258), for example, aims to show how the AU's evolving security culture—including “the variety of interlocking beliefs that manifest themselves as behavioral norms,” where norms are defined as the “standards of right and wrong which proscribe certain activities and legitimate others”—has helped shape the identities and preferences of AU member states. Interestingly, Williams only partially attributes the origins of the AU's security culture to African states. He observes that because the African state is only partially autonomous—being, as it were, inextricably “embedded within a wider international society” that influences how it perceives sovereignty, statehood, and security—it can only be partly responsible for constructing its security culture (Williams P. D., 2007, pp. 259-60). He traces the roots of this security culture to the discourses of Pan-Africanism, articulated from the late nineteenth century, with its “constitutive elements” being refined in the “crucible of post-colonial international politics” (2007, p. 278). The processes of “norm socialization” and “norm localization” within the AU—the means through which the norms forming the security culture were developed and internalized—involved a mix of strategic bargaining among AU member states, “norm entrepreneurs,” including international financial institutions, other international organizations, several non-state actors, and Western society (2007, p. 261). Drawing from broader international discourses on democratization and human rights, these norm entrepreneurs have helped the AU support two key norms: condemnation of unconstitutional changes of government and the responsibility to protect (2007, p. 278). With assistance from these norm entrepreneurs, the AU has successfully institutionalized these norms as core elements of its security culture.

Ultimately, although Williams aims to show how the African Union (AU) has developed its norms and how these norms shape the behavior of African states, he downplays the AU's role in creating them. Instead, the AU is seen as a conduit for transmitting international norms imposed on it by

norm entrepreneurs from 'international society.' Similar to many other studies on the evolution of African regional normative and institutional security frameworks, Williams' work does not adequately explore the AU's agency in acquiring and internalizing norms, nor how these norms influence the identity of the regional organization—the AU itself.

The growing assertiveness of Africa's regional organizations and their role in conflict transformation exemplify how these efforts influence the evolution of the nation-state in Africa, as seen with IGAD in the Horn of Africa. IGAD has not only played a part in peace processes in Somalia and Sudan but has also driven significant changes within these countries. Its interventions resulted in the creation of the Republic of South Sudan and were crucial in the survival of the Somali state. Both South Sudan and the current Somali state are products of peace processes initiated and guided (despite substantial support from other actors) by IGAD. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), signed between North and South Sudan in 2005, and the formation of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in Somalia in 2004, can be attributed to IGAD's efforts (Back, 2020; 2016; Murithi, 2009).

Therefore, discussions about the development and evolution of regional integration in Africa mainly focus on the role of states, emphasizing their significant influence on how regional organizations fulfill their mandates. As mentioned earlier, there have also been references to how the transformation of these organizations relates to the development of post-colonial African nation-states, with positive changes in regional organizations often linked to the democratic growth of these states. These dominant narratives tend to view African regional organizations primarily as tools for advancing the interests of states and, sometimes, external actors. More conservative perspectives are usually cautious about recognizing the potential for change and learning within regional (or international) organizations, as doing so might be seen as conceding their independence and ability to act autonomously from states, along with their potential for dysfunction or harmful behavior. Supporters of this view argue that when an organization needs to change—indicating poor performance—states would simply disband the organization or withdraw. Barnett and Finnemore (1999, p. 699) have observed that this perspective considers the creation and ongoing existence of international organizations mainly as responses to issues like incomplete information, transaction costs, and other barriers to achieving Pareto efficiency and improving welfare for their members. Consequently, international organizations are seen as tools

for pursuing state interests; they are described as "structures of rules, principles, norms, and decision-making procedures through which actors—primarily states—operate" (2004, p. 2). Accordingly, states tend to oppose anything that deviates from expected efficiency levels.

The less robust iteration of this perspective would acknowledge the potential for organizational learning and change, albeit conditioned by state interests and capacities. This viewpoint predominantly influences both academic and policy discourses on region-building in Africa, in which the decision-making authority over the necessity for and adoption of change is vested in the member states of the respective organizations. Advocates would, for example, emphasize that recent reforms of the African Union have been proposed by states and overseen by the organization's intergovernmental body—the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, chaired by President Paul Kagame of Rwanda. Typically, this perspective overlooks the fundamental impact of factors such as conflicts, which are particularly instrumental in mediating change within these organizations. It is, for instance, clear that even though decisions to transform institutions such as the AU, ECOWAS, and IGAD were predominantly made by member states, the initial motivation for these reforms stemmed from the necessity for these institutions to address and transform conflicts within their respective regions effectively. In all three instances, it is evident that the emerging imperatives of conflict transformation significantly influenced the states' decisions to initiate changes within their organizations.

Associated with this state-centric perspective on change in international organizations is the assertion that, since regional organizations function as instruments for the pursuit of state interests, their organizational and normative structures are often influenced by those interests and are, indeed, subject to the transformation of the state system itself. The transformation of regional organizations is regarded as a contributing factor to the transformation of individual member states. Consequently, the normative transformation of ECOWAS, which has entailed the adoption of norms such as good governance, democracy, and the unacceptability of unconstitutional changes of governments, is said to reflect the broader normative transformation occurring within the states of the West African region. When ECOWAS deployed its first peacekeeping mission to Liberia in 1990, nearly every member state was under some form of dictatorship, and democratic principles such as free and fair elections had yet to be widely adopted across the region. ECOMOG, responsible for the mission to foster democratic change in Liberia, was initiated by Nigeria during

the military junta period and was led by the dictator, General Ibrahim Babangida. However, approximately three decades later, West African states have embraced these principles, and the region now boasts the highest “democratic density” within sub-Saharan Africa. Some scholars have sought to correlate ECOWAS's overall transformation with changes in the internal dynamics of West African states. For instance, Paul D. Williams (2007) has employed the concepts of security culture and norm localization to analyze the development of the African Union’s security policies in relation to the evolving security cultures of its member states.

Similarly, when President Omar Bashir of Sudan convened the IGAD Summit in 1993 to request member states to resolve the Sudan conflict, nearly all the member states of the organization were under different forms of authoritarian regimes. Over time, however, many of these member states have embraced principles of good governance and democracy, with elections and fair political competition increasingly accepted and adopted throughout the region, albeit in imperfect forms. Concurrently, IGAD has also adopted these norms. It is almost assumed that the transformation of IGAD is rooted in these national transformations. However, this assumption is evidently problematic. Ample evidence indicates that the transformation of regional organizations has often preceded that of the states in the Horn of Africa and has indeed served as the foundation for state transformation. It is the transformed ECOWAS and IGAD that have initiated and overseen the transformation processes within their respective regions.

Regional organizations in Africa have played a pivotal role in providing opportunities for collective learning among African states. Juma and Mangeni (2018, pp. 26-7) have noted that the African Union (AU) and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) serve as platforms for peer learning among heads of state, ministers, and other stakeholders, facilitating the exchange of valuable lessons and exemplifying models for others to emulate. Consequently, through these regional entities, states influence one another through knowledge sharing. Furthermore, regional organizations provide a mechanism for providing essential feedback on the adoption and implementation of norms and objectives to which member states have committed themselves (2018, pp. 26-7). However, the significant role played by these organizations in catalyzing the transformation of states- by fostering knowledge-sharing- has largely been overlooked in scholarly research on regional integration. The agency of regional organizations in their own transformation, as well as their contributions to the transformation of member states, has not been adequately

acknowledged within this scholarly perspective.

Most state-centered accounts of African regional integration have tended to focus on the processes of establishing organizations and on state bargaining that drives them. Discourses on African regional organizations, following this perspective, have been too preoccupied with the factors and reasons behind their creation and have been relatively silent on how these organizations behave after they are formed. As a result, research on African regionalism has not paid enough attention to the actual functioning and behavior of regional organizations after their formation.

Another perspective that shapes discourses on African integration is the functionalist school, which is probably more closely linked with scholars of EU integration. Functionalists propose a predictive model in which integration occurs gradually, driven by internal forces as states work together in limited functional, technical, or economic areas. Most African regional institutions have adopted the EU model, based on the belief that integration will naturally develop, and the institutional frameworks of regional organizations will grow in line with this functionalist approach.

External Factors Affecting the Transformation of Regional Organizations in Africa

The persistence and growth of Africa's regional institutions have puzzled many analysts who focus on regional integration. Research on African regionalism often shows a hopeful view about these organizations' ability to go beyond simple cooperation among governments—which is limited primarily to what the states allow—and to achieve their broader, though modest, goals despite limited resources and mandates. When some potential for integration is acknowledged, explanations usually attribute successful integration mainly to systemic factors, such as the influence of the European Union (EU). For example, most analysts connect the rise of African integration to the foreign policies of the EU and individual European countries—especially those with colonial ties to Africa, like Britain, France, and Portugal—and they blame the success or failure of African integration on the level of EU involvement (Bamfo, 2013). In fact, promoting regional integration has become a key part of the EU's external relations with Africa, as with its efforts elsewhere. The EU sees encouraging regional cooperation, alongside fostering interregional

collaboration, as a vital part of its overall external strategy (Bachmann & Sidaway, 2010, p. 1). Some scholars suggest that the EU's push for regionalism abroad is motivated by a desire for "self-replication"—aiming to "replicate its model to the rest of the world" (Smith, 2008). Manners (2002), Schmidt (2004), and Barbé et al. (2009) even suggest that the EU's engagement with other regions is driven by a need to legitimize its global role, both to its members and to the broader international community. On the other hand, Piccolino and Minou (2017, p. 125) argue that the main reason African countries try to copy the EU model is to gain international and domestic legitimacy, which they believe can be strengthened "by mimicking, albeit formally, a model that has elsewhere proven successful."

The influence of the European Union (EU) on African integration has been particularly evident in the strategic partnerships it has established with the continent. These include frameworks such as the EU-Africa, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) partnership agreements, as well as specific EU-Africa strategic collaborations (2008, p. 10). The EU is recognized for its contributions to African integration, primarily through resource allocation and the provision of models for regional institutions across Africa. Scholars who interpret African integration predominantly through the lens of EU foreign policy tend to view the development of Africa's regional institutions as contingent upon the EU's objective of promoting regional integration. Although the EU and Africa have traversed distinct historical paths of regional integration, the resemblance between the integration institutions adopted by the African Union (AU) and other regional organizations in Africa and those of the EU has been frequently interpreted as an effort by Africa to emulate the EU's integration framework and experience (Nubong, 2020, p. 1073). Despite differences in their historical trajectories, the EU is often regarded as a model for Africa's regional organizations, such as the AU. Additionally, several analysts have argued that the EU has influenced the development of African organizations through a process of model setting, which is evidenced by these organizations' emulation of the EU's institutional setup and their adoption of the EU's model of "functional step-by-step integration" (Babarinde, 2007; Pirozzi & Godsäter, 2014, p. 19; Paterson, 2013, p. 15).

The European Union (EU) has purportedly exerted substantial influence on Africa's regional integration initiative through mechanisms such as coercion, model setting, and social learning (Piccolino & Minou, 2017, p. 117; Kühnhardt, 2008, p. 10). It is asserted that the EU has

contributed to the reinforcement of the normative frameworks within African regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), particularly concerning peace, security, and governance, primarily via democratic conditionality embedded in its aid relationships with African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) states since 1995 (Piccolino & Minou, 2017, p. 120; Piccolino, 2016, p. 11). In specific instances, the EU has played a more direct role in the establishment and transformation of regional organizations in Africa. For instance, EU officials participated directly in drafting the treaty that established the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), and the EU has provided targeted financial and technical support to facilitate the creation of new regional entities across the continent (Piccolino & Minou, 2017, p. 121). Additionally, the EU has endeavored to influence African integration by fostering social learning processes through the promotion of institutionalized political dialogue and other emerging norms (p. 123).

However, the perspective that attributes the growth of African integration to the influence of the European Union has not remained uncontested. Haastrup (2013, p. 795) has noted, for instance, that the similarities between the institutional arrangements in the European Union and those of Africa's regional organizations could well be the result of policy transfers modeled around internationally accepted frameworks and practices, rather than a deliberate attempt by the organizations to adopt the EU model. Others have gone further, asserting that contrary to promoting regional integration in Africa, the policies of the European Union have had a disintegrative effect on the continent. They have accused the EU of exploiting existing power asymmetries in its relations with Africa to undermine regional integration through coercion; for example, during the negotiations of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), where the EU pressured regional organizations such as ECOWAS to implement regional trade agreements like customs unions, threatening to withdraw market access for African products if demands were not met (Piccolino & Minou, 2017, p. 120; Kühnhardt, 2008, p. 10; Fioramonti, 2014). The expansion of economic integration via these trade agreements and the development of centralized institutions to oversee them have been attributed to this pressure. Nevertheless, the EPAs have also been identified as undermining regional integration efforts in Africa (Stevens, 2006). The fragmentation of the EU's trade policy towards Africa has created a negative incentive for achieving trade policy coherence within Africa (Luke, Desta, & Mevel, 2021). The EPAs place African countries in a difficult position, forcing them to choose between fulfilling regional commitments and adhering

to the EU's trade regime. Fioramonti (2014) has observed that what are rhetorically termed "strategic partnerships," which purportedly "intimately link development, trade, and other mutually significant concerns such as migration and security," are often merely attempts to reinforce or reproduce "a historic relationship characterized by asymmetry and dependence."

The concept that the African integration project is heavily reliant on external contributions and support, particularly from the European Union, along with other systemic factors, remains widespread. By adopting the EU model as the benchmark for regional integration, analysts have been prompt to dismiss the African integration initiative as a 'failed enterprise' due to its failure to conform to EU standards. De Lombaerde, Söderbaum, and Van Langenhove (2010, p. 743) have noted that realist/intergovernmental and liberal/institutional scholarship, which highlight "Europe-centered generalizations," dominate the discourse, aiming to explain deviations from the "standard." This view frequently characterizes other regionalism models, such as those in Asia, as "loose and informal," or Africa's as "weak," reflecting an ideological bias rooted in the assumption that "progress in regional integration is defined in terms of EU-style institutionalization" (2010, p. 743).

While the influence of external actors on the development of the African region-building project cannot be overstated, this approach neglects African agency and the role other factors, such as violent conflicts, have played in mobilizing African states around a regionalist agenda. For instance, this perspective cannot sufficiently explain how ECOWAS survived the turbulent period of the 1980s and emerged stronger in the 1990s, despite receiving minimal external support and not being the European Union's preferred regional institution in West Africa. Indeed, several other analysts have conceded that the influence of the European Union on the (normative) transformation of Africa's regional organizations, particularly ECOWAS, has been overstated. As Piccolino and Minou (2017, p. 125) have remarked, "ECOWAS's normative evolution" can also be attributed to "normative changes at the global level and by the emergence of an epistemic community of practitioners of conflict prevention and resolution, with the European Union being only one of the actors." Therefore, the effect of the European Union's influence constitutes only a fraction of the factors that influence the transformation of African regional integration.

Nevertheless, numerous analysts attribute inadequate agency and independence to African regional

organizations, thereby failing to recognize their potential to influence their own transformation actively. From a statist perspective, which regards regional institutions merely as representations of aggregate national interests, scholarly explanations of regional institutional change—and indeed the very existence of such organizations—have traditionally been regarded as contingent upon the interests and whims of sovereign states. Consequently, most scholarly works assign responsibility for organizational change to political will, state interests, and state capacities. These perspectives contend that the reform and transformation of entities such as the African Union (AU), ECOWAS, and IGAD have been solely dependent on the political will—or absence thereof—of the states and their actors.

Account of Change in Regional Organizations from IR perspectives

The transformation of regional organizations in Africa has often gone unnoticed by existing analytical frameworks, either because they focus too much on state interests, the influence of integration projects, or external factors affecting Africa's integration development. Political scientists, concentrating on the state as the central unit of analysis, have paid little attention to the behavior of regional organizations outside these state-centric processes. This issue is not limited to African regional integration alone. As LaPalombara (2001, p. 137) has noted, political scientists tend to be skeptical of the idea that organizations within the public or political sector can change on their own without direct action from the state. This skepticism arises because such organizations typically have strong, central normative structures that guide their goals, and changing these structures often entails altering their fundamental objectives.

Political institutions also include organizational structures, internal processes, and operational norms that are so closely aligned with constitutions, laws, executive orders, administrative regulations, and other official expressions of the polities where they exist that any deviation from this alignment is seen as a political pathology (LaPalombara, 2001, p. 138; Barnett & Finnemore, 1999, p. 702). Therefore, the concept of “creative destruction”—the drive to replace existing organizational structures—is rare in the public and political sector (LaPalombara, 2001, p. 138). LaPalombara (2001, p. 137) and Barnett and Finnemore (1999) note that political organizations are established by public laws which, once enacted, and through agencies created or empowered

to administer them, give the organizations an aura of permanence. As a result, little organizational change can occur without prior modifications to these laws. Consequently, organizations often do not need to justify their existence based on performance, as they are protected by the laws on which they are founded. Public sector organizations thus face “homeostasis”—a condition where the organization's survival overrides its original purpose.

The perspective that institutions are “relatively enduring features” of political and social life—including rules, norms, and procedures—that shape behavior and are resistant to rapid or facile change—has been predominant within social sciences, especially within the sociological, rational-choice, and historical-institutional frameworks (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010, p. 5). Certain levels of persistence and stability are regarded as inherent to the very definition of institutions as posited by these approaches. Sociological institutionalism, for example, underscores the self-reproductive properties of institutions (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010, p. 5). For instance, Powell and DiMaggio (1991, p. 197) observe that “things that are institutionalized tend to be relatively inert, that is, they resist efforts at change,” while Jepperson (1991, p. 145) describes institutions as “those social patterns that, when chronically reproduced, owe their survival to relatively self-activating processes.” Kapur (1999, p. 5) offers an analogous view to LaPalombara's, characterizing international organizations as inherently “sticky.” Kapur notes that interstate bargaining, from which international and regional organizations originate, often entails substantial transaction costs—including time, financial expenditure, energy, and personnel—and consequently, few governments are willing to engage in continuous negotiations and renegotiations of agreements underpinning these institutions. Due to the high transaction costs associated with the formation of international organizations, these entities are regarded as “inherently sticky” (Kapur, 1999, p. 5).

One main reason for the slow pace of change in international and regional organizations, despite their subpar performance, is governments' reluctance to bear the transaction costs of renegotiating their founding treaties and agreements—these form the basis for any needed adjustments. As a result, the “stickiness” of these institutions means that change, if it happens at all, tends to be slow, gradual, and sometimes very slow (p. 6). Some sociological institutionalists argue that institutions are so routine and “taken for granted” that they go unnoticed (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). While sociological institutionalism offers strong tools for explaining why institutions endure, its

explanations for internal change are limited. As Mahoney and Thelen (2010, p. 5) note, these scholars mainly see institutional change as driven by external pressures, such as new interpretive frameworks from outside influences.

Rational-choice institutionalists also grapple with the ‘problem’ of institutional change. Although they provide a compelling explanation of how institutions are reproduced, they encounter difficulties in understanding and elucidating gradual, endogenous change processes. Greif and Laitin (2004, p. 633), for example, define “a self-enforcing institution” as one “in which each player’s behavior is a best response.” Accordingly, the transformation of a self-enforcing institution must originate from the outside (2004, p. 633). Conversely, historical institutionalists concentrate on continuity rather than change. They emphasize how timing, sequences, and path dependence influence institutions, shaping social, political, and economic behaviors and transformations (Voeten, 2019, p. 155).

Historical institutionalists have also grappled with the issue of institutional change. They have traditionally emphasized continuity over change. Much of the empirical research on path dependence, for example, has focused on explaining why institutional patterns or outcomes persist over long periods (see Mahoney 2000; Pierson 2004; Thelen 2004). While historical institutionalists recognize the cultural aspects of institutions and the coordinating roles they may serve, these scholars see institutions primarily as the political legacies of specific historical struggles. Therefore, most historical institutionalists adopt a power-political perspective that highlights their distributional effects, with many explaining institutional persistence through increasing returns to power. In terms of explaining change, these scholars often point to “critical junctures,” understood as periods of contingency when usual constraints on action are lifted or eased (Capoccia and Kelemen 2007). Explanations of change during these episodes are sometimes connected to debates about the relative influence of agency versus structure at different stages. For example, Ira Katznelson views institutions as mainly constraining during “stable” periods of politics but argues that critical junctures provide opportunities for influential agents to alter the developmental trajectory (Katznelson 2003). In the literature of historical institutionalism, scholars tend to rely on a model of change that is discontinuous, with lasting pathways being periodically interrupted by moments of agency and choice. These arguments often face similar limitations as other punctuated equilibrium models, as they obscure endogenous sources of change and tend to

think of change as the “breakdown” of one set of institutions and the emergence of another.

Despite prevailing skepticism in the field of political science about changes in public and political sector organizations, some political scientists have adopted alternative perspectives. Follet (1942), for example, as early as the early twentieth century, viewed public-administrative organizations as “organic, dynamically active and reactive systems that influence, and equally important, are influenced by environments in which they are situated” (LaPalombara, p. 139). Follet aimed to demonstrate that even organizations characterized by extreme hierarchy and governed by well-defined laws and executive orders remain profoundly influenced by norms, values, personality, and culture, rendering them susceptible to change (p. 139).

Recently, there has been growing interest in the behavior and change of international organizations within the subfield of International Relations. Barnett and Finnemore (Barnett & Finnemore, 1999, p. 707; Barnett & Finnemore, 2004), drawing from Weberian bureaucratic and sociological institutionalist perspectives on organizational behavior, aim to show how viewing international organizations as “bureaucracies” — which embody rational-legal authority — and thus possess power and independence from the state, helps us understand their behavior and development. As bureaucracies, IOs use rational-legal authority to create new tasks and procedures to achieve their goals, in response to changing global circumstances and expert knowledge, in ways that are not controlled by states (Barnett & Finnemore, 2004, p. 9). Conversely, IOs can also generate “their own mistakes, perversities, even disasters,” which cannot be blamed on states (p. 8). Barnett and Finnemore (2004, p. 8) refer to these dysfunctions originating from bureaucratic culture and processes as “pathologies,” which lead IOs to act in a manner that subverts their self-professed goals.” They further argue that contrary to traditional IR approaches that assume IO change results from the demands of powerful states, IOs often evolve in ways unpredictable or unaffected by states (p. 8). They highlight how organizational bureaucratic cultures shape the way external demands or shocks are absorbed and utilized. Additionally, they demonstrate how bureaucratic cultures make IO change highly path-dependent, since IOs encode experience into rules and standard procedures that determine which changes are allowed, filtering potential changes through a process of accumulation. Lastly, they note that, due to their bureaucratic nature, IOs can change through “mission creep”—the unintentional expansion of their mission as they execute their

original tasks and mandates. In other words, as IOs perform their responsibilities, they do so in ways that enable or even necessitate more intervention, either by themselves or through other IOs—they “define problems and appropriate solutions in ways that favor more technocratic impartial action, which of course, they are uniquely able to supply” (p. 9).

Using the cases of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the United Nations (UN), Barnett and Finnemore (2004, p. 13) have endeavored to demonstrate how international organizations (IOs) have employed rational-legal authority to reconfigure the global order and expand their influence and scope of missions. They illustrate how the IMF has utilized its expertise to extend its influence, particularly in developing countries, often recommending policies aimed not only at regulating member states’ domestic economies but also, “ultimately, to (re)constitute them.” Most significantly, they demonstrate how the IMF has exploited its expertise-based authority to expand its mandate, tasks, and organizational structures, using policy failures to justify its growth (2004, p. 13). They further depict how the UNHCR has leveraged its ‘moral authority’ to expand the category of refugees and its scope of action. From a modest European refugee agency established in 1951 with a three-year mandate, no autonomy, and providing legal (not material) assistance exclusively to individuals displaced by events in Europe prior to 1951, the agency has been able to “capitalize on refugee-producing events” and utilize its institutional position and moral authority to widen the refugee definition, enhance its assistance and protection activities, and extend its operational scope (2004, p. 13). Additionally, they demonstrate how UN peacekeeping missions in the 1990s were impeded by pathologies arising from the bureaucratic culture governing these missions.

Until 1989, UN peacekeeping missions adhered to principles of consent, impartiality, and neutrality (2004, p. 14). However, in the 1990s, peacekeeping operations involving humanitarian emergencies, domestic conflicts, and nation-building efforts rendered these principles unfeasible, prompting the UN to adopt more assertive rules to undertake “new, more ambitious missions” (2004, p. 14). The failure of these missions—particularly in Somalia, where deviations from consent-based rules and the use of force were introduced—generated fears within the UN that such deviations posed a threat to peacekeeping. Consequently, after 1993, the UN reaffirmed the traditional principles of neutrality and impartiality and restricted peacekeeping activities. This

decision proved costly when the UN, adhering to these principles, chose not to intervene during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. They conclude that Rwanda exemplified a pathology—the apparent willingness of the UN to subvert its own proclaimed objectives of humanitarianism and human rights protection to preserve its moral authority, which it believed was profoundly linked to the rules of consent and impartiality (2004, p. 155).

Several other analysts of the UN system have also tried to identify the origins of its shortcomings, particularly concerning its peacekeeping missions during the 1990s, attributing these failures to its internal organizational culture. They interpret subsequent United Nations reform initiatives as responses to crises of authority and legitimacy resulting from these failures. Breul (2005, pp. 82-3) ascribes the failures of UN missions in Rwanda—namely the UN Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR)—and in Bosnia—namely the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR)—to contain conflicts and prevent atrocities to the overall failure of the “UN system.” Breul observes that following the failures in Rwanda and Bosnia, UN peace operations experienced a significant loss of legitimacy, with member states increasingly turning to regional organizations for peacekeeping efforts (p. 85). Additionally, Durch (1997) highlights that during the 1990s, United States leaders began to perceive the UN as a tool to advance American security interests, much as NATO had during the Cold War. Nevertheless, setbacks in Somalia, Bosnia, and Rwanda diminished the organization's confidence.

Several scholars (Durch, 1997; Durch, Holt, Earle, & Shanahan, 2003; Breul, 2005) have observed that the significant failures of peacekeeping missions during the 1990s resulted in crises of authority and legitimacy for the United Nations, thereby triggering reforms. The commissioning of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to appraise shortcomings and propose reforms marked a pivotal moment. The Panel's report, known as the “Brahmini Report” after its chair, UN Under-Secretary-General Lakshmi Brahmini, offered an extensive critique of UN operational conduct and suggested specific reforms (Durch, Holt, Earle, & Shanahan, 2003, p. 5). This report played a foundational role in the comprehensive reform of the UN system. Consequently, Breul (2005, p. 87) emphasizes that the external shocks arising from the failures of peacekeeping missions in the 1990s, which precipitated crises of authority and legitimacy, conveyed a decisive message: “change was necessary.” Furthermore, the crisis initiated “unlearning processes within the UN Secretariat,” enhancing the organization's capacity to

assimilate essential information for reform (2005, p. 87).

If the functionalist view of integration grants the region some level of autonomy for self-generation, it still does not fully explain the mechanisms behind the transformation of organizations. From a functionalist perspective, it is possible to explain the deepening of integration—signified by the expansion of both the institutional structures and mandates of regional organizations—by suggesting that organizations engage in conflict management as functional responses to the demands of those activities. According to this view, these adaptations are unavoidable and occur automatically as regional organizations are compelled to adjust to external environments. However, experience demonstrates that the idea that organizations change automatically is not well supported by evidence. Several African regional organizations have experienced stagnated growth even in the presence of favorable external factors.

The role of learning in transforming regional organizations is missing from the literature on African regionalism. This is understandable; perspectives that are generally skeptical of regional organizations' ability to change are unlikely to recognize that they can learn. However, the idea of organizational learning has been gaining importance in the field of international organization, though its integration into discussions of African regionalism has been slow, as I will show.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

The main goal of this research is to analyze how regional organizations are reorganized at the intersection of regionalism and security politics. As noted earlier, the renewed engagement of African states with regionalism has primarily been driven by security concerns rather than other needs. Discussions about African integration, influenced by mainstream International Relations (IR) theories, have mostly failed to see regional organizations as separate units of analysis. As Lopez-Lucia (2020, p. 2) pointed out, the link between security and regionalism in IR theory still has many 'blind spots'. She highlights the lack of empirical research on how 'various actors' discourses, practices, and strategies interrelate within the complex social processes connecting regionalism to security.

Many analysts have primarily viewed regional integration in Africa as a process and network of state cooperation, with regional institutions perceived as mere nodal centers of coordination and moderation. Consequently, there is minimal attention to regional organizations as autonomous actors outside these state-centric processes, and to whether and how they are capable of change. When changes within regional organizations are acknowledged, they are typically regarded as originating externally, influenced by the interests of states and other actors. While IR scholars increasingly recognize that international organizations are capable of change, such acknowledgment is frequently accompanied by the caveat that change within international organizations depends on some degree of autonomy and independence from states, including the capacity to diverge from their foundational objectives. Studies on international organization (IO) change have accordingly tended to focus disproportionately on establishing conditions of autonomy and independent agency as prerequisites for organizational change. Scholars such as Barnett and Finnemore (2004), Barnett and Finnemore (1999), and Barnett and Duvall (2014) emphasized the importance of IO autonomy and power as foundational to their capacity for change. Drawing on Weberian bureaucratic approaches and sociological institutional perspectives, Barnett and Finnemore (2004; Barnett & Finnemore, 1999) argue that the rational-legal authority vested in IOs confers upon them a form of power and autonomy separate from the state, endowing them with independent agency. However, this independence also entails organizational dysfunction—behavior that undermines the organization's stated goals—and pathological behaviors rooted in

bureaucratic culture (1999, p. 707). According to them, it is ultimately the occurrence of dysfunctional and pathological behaviors that necessitates organizational change. The autonomy of IOs thus plays a dual role: it facilitates organizational dysfunction and pathologies while simultaneously creating the conditions for change. The pivotal role of ‘agency’ in defining organizational behavior and shaping the potential for organizational change is a dominant theme within IR literature on international organizations. Rational choice theorists, particularly proponents of principal-agent (PA) models, have focused on framing IOs as autonomous actors with independent interests and capabilities—examining how states delegate tasks to IOs and viewing IOs as proactive agents that influence the structure and dynamics of relationships among states, between states and IOs, and between IOs and other non-state actors (Tamm & Snidal, 2014, pp. 132-133; Hawkins et al., 2006).

This perspective on organizational behavior has significantly shaped much of the debate on African regionalism, with discussions often disproportionately emphasizing the “agency” of African organizations when discussing their actorness. It is a debate that has put many African scholars on the defensive and sparked ideology-driven movements, such as “African Solutions to African Problems.” However, as this study shows, the discourse on organizational autonomy and power does not fully explain changes within African regional organizations. Although these organizations are often viewed as having limited autonomy or agency, they have still experienced notable transformations since their founding and have endured. As demonstrated, organizational change is not solely dependent on regional organizations' autonomy from states but can also be initiated by states themselves. Furthermore, this study argues that such organizational transformations are not necessarily caused by dysfunctional or pathological behaviors rooted in entrenched bureaucratic cultures but may result from the interplay of various internal and external factors.

In this chapter, I propose a theoretical framework that emphasizes the behavior and transformation of regional organizations in their interactions with conflict management politics, particularly regarding their role in addressing conflicts in Africa. I support organizational learning theory as the best approach to help us distinguish regional organizations from the complex networks they are part of and to provide insights into their internal processes and how environmental factors

influence their activities. I argue that organizational learning theory can uncover the mechanisms through which regional organizations' involvement with security issues leads to their reordering and restructuring, even as they simultaneously adapt to security threats.

Primarily developed within the management sciences, organizational theory has gained recognition in political science and international relations. Zito and Schout (2009), for instance, highlighted the explanatory power of learning theory in the study of the European Union, while criticizing traditional integration theories such as functionalism and diffusion for their neglect of the micro-level of individuals and their social interactions, where exchanges generate changes in “information, goals, values, behaviors, structures, policies and outcomes” (2009, p. 1103). They contend that learning can shed light on the integration process and offer insights into the multi-level context of the EU and its resilience amidst numerous challenges (p. 1105). Breul (2005) applied this theory to analyze the transformation of UN Peace Operations, emphasizing how the UN’s “rigid and complex structures” hindered its capacity to learn and adapt during the early 1990s, until the policy failures in Bosnia (1994) and Rwanda (1994), which resulted in tragic setbacks for peacekeeping efforts, prompted a reform initiative—the Brahimi process—in 1999/2000, leading to organizational change.

Breul (2005, p. 1) observed that the utility of organizational learning theory for analyzing change within international organizations resides in its capacity to “integrate analysis of processes inside the organization and the influence of environmental conditions,” thereby offering a comprehensive account of the dynamics of change and the longevity of these organizations. The fundamental assertion of organizational learning theory is that organizations can learn and adapt through the process of learning itself. It delineates the mechanisms of knowledge acquisition within organizations. Fiol and Lyles (1985, p. 803) define organizational learning as the “process of improving actions through better knowledge and understanding.” Organizational learning is understood to occur “when members of the organization act as learning agents for the organization, responding to changes in the internal and external environment by detecting and correcting errors” in the organization’s theory of action (Argyris & Schön, 1978, p. 26; Fiol & Lyles, 1985).

Several perspectives of organizational change have been identified in modern organizational

theory. However, as Fiol and Lyles (1985, p. 803) observed several decades ago, there is no universally accepted theory or model of organizational learning. The term “organizational learning” is often used as a generic label encompassing various heterogeneous theoretical approaches to analyzing organizational change. Nevertheless, there are a few points of convergence among these approaches. Firstly, it is generally understood within the field that organizational learning is distinct from “selection and adaptation models” of organizational change (Breul, 2005, p. 5). Breul (2005, p. 5) notes that the defining characteristic of organizational learning is its central assertion that “system change” results not from “a selection of known characteristics or system-immanent driving forces,” but rather from “a reflective interaction with the environment.”

Another notable aspect of OL approaches is their shift of focus away from traditional systemic and contingency accounts of change towards emphasizing structural alterations within an organization and the processes involved in managing such change. Breul (2005, p. 5) identifies three primary features implicitly shared by all OL approaches. First, he states that OL perspectives are based on a “cognitive conception of learning in independent systems for action,” which posits that “relatively independent, self-governing belief systems established in the face of a quite problematic 'objective' world affect systematically what is learned” (2005, p. 5). Secondly, grounded in this premise, he notes that learning within OL theory is conceived as “a process of collective information processing through which social realities are created” (2005, p. 5). The third shared feature among OL approaches is the differentiation or grading of learning levels (2005, p. 5). Since these three features influence the model of learning I aim to develop, I will discuss each in turn in detail.

Learning and Cognitive Structure of an Organization

The fundamental premise of organizational learning theory is that an organization is typically founded upon a system of knowledge—a cognitive framework—and that this framework dictates its conduct and actions. Consequently, an organization perceives the world through its cognitive structure and assimilates only as much new knowledge as it can. Argyris and Schön (1978, pp. 16-17) have compared an organization to an “organism each of whose cells contains a specific, partial,

and evolving image of itself concerning the whole," images which collectively influence the organization's practices and behaviors. Therefore, organizational learning constitutes an active process of organizing, "which is, at its core, a cognitive endeavor" (Argyris & Schön, 1978, pp. 16-17).

Recognizing that all intentional actions are founded on a "cognitive basis" that reflects norms, strategies, and assumptions or models of the world with claims to universal validity, Argyris and Schön (1978, p. 6) contend that learning should not be viewed merely as 'reinforcement' or "extinction of patterns of behavior" but rather as "the construction, testing, and restructuring of a specific kind of knowledge." The organization's responses to environmental stimuli are influenced by its cognitive structures – the rules, procedures, conventions, strategies, and technologies that it embodies. Consequently, the cognitive framework functions as "a perceptual filter" through which the organization interprets information from its environment (Breul, 2005, p. 6). As perceptual filters, these cognitive structures regulate both the quantity and quality of information processed, aiding the organization in managing uncertainty by determining which information warrants attention, thereby shaping its interpretation of reality (Breul, 2005, p. 6).

This is not to imply that the organization can exercise complete control over its environment. Conversely, the organization's capacity to influence its environment is limited by various factors. Nevertheless, it is essential to recognize that, from a "cognitive" perspective, successful organizational learning involves a transformation of the organization's cognitive structures and an enhancement of its comprehension of reality, thereby enabling more effective problem-solving (Hedberg, 1981, p. 1). Learning becomes imperative when a discrepancy is identified between the organization's cognitive framework and the actual environment. Argyris and Schön (1978, p. 16) elucidate this point more explicitly, stating that organizational learning transpires when individuals—acting as agents of organizational action and consequently agents of organizational learning—operate based on their mental images and perceptual maps (filters), and perceive whether there is a match or mismatch between outcomes and expectations, which either confirms or disconfirms the organization's theory-in-use. An organization's "theory-in-use" constitutes its tacit "complex system of norms, strategies, and assumptions," which influences how it interprets its environment (1978, p. 15). An indicator of effective learning, therefore, is the organization's

ability to accurately assess its environment—specifically, when it rectifies discrepancies between its cognitive structures and reality. Learning facilitates organizations in developing a correct understanding and interpretation of their external context and in formulating appropriate, viable strategies (Fiol & Lyles, 1985, p. 804). Breul (2005, p. 6) asserts that organizational learning is consequently an endeavor by the organization to reconcile itself with reality. This process involves transforming cognitive structures in response to environmental stimuli, which, if successful, leads to a robust appraisal of the environment. To assert that an organization learns is consequently to state that it has reconfigured its cognitive foundation. The accumulation or modification of this cognitive structure through the acquisition of new information can induce various other transformations within the organization. For example, incorporating new knowledge about norms such as governance and democracy into the cognitive framework may lead to a comprehensive revision of the organization's normative and administrative structures, as new protocols, treaties, and institutions are adopted to embody this knowledge.

Secondly, as Breul (2005, p. 6) has noted, the assumption that organizational behavior is rooted in a cognitive structure is based on the idea that organizations operate under conditions of ambiguity – “that the information they receive about their actions can be interpreted in different and sometimes conflicting ways” (2005, p. 6). According to this perspective (see Hedberg 1981, p. 2; March & Olsen 1976, p. 147), organizations face diverse stimuli in an environment marked by instability, dysfunctional reward systems, and incomplete feedback. Therefore, the organization confronts multiple realities with various interpretations and shared meanings (Hedberg 1981: 5). As a result, an organization's reluctance or inability to adopt specific norms does not necessarily indicate its capacity to absorb new knowledge; instead, it may simply reflect the lack of a strong consensus coalition around the norm, making its application ambiguous. For example, the hesitance of African regional organizations to intervene in intra-state conflicts during the 1980s may have been more related to a lack of consensus on principles such as non-indifference and the responsibility to protect, rather than any dysfunction within the organizations themselves. When these organizations began intervening in conflicts within member states during the 1990s, the ambiguity surrounding the norms of non-indifference and the responsibility to protect had decreased.

As I will argue in later chapters, major events such as the eruption of violent conflicts across Africa

in the 1990s that threatened the stability of the entire continent often serve as catalysts for clarifying ambiguities and building consensus around critical information and norms, while simultaneously providing organizations with clear feedback on the need to incorporate such information. The existential threats posed by these conflicts, along with subsequent policy failures, significantly contributed to the adoption of the norm of non-indifference. Within the analytical framework used in this study, I examine how the quality of information available to organizations has varied over time to determine whether this affected their ability to learn and adapt. Additionally, I aim to show whether and how their involvement in conflict management helped improve information quality, for example, by incentivizing member states to reach consensus on specific norms.

Process of Organizational Learning: Organizational Learning as Collective Information-Processing

As previously discussed, from an organizational learning perspective, learning fundamentally entails the absorption and internalization of external knowledge. Böhling (2002, p. 8) emphasizes that for learning to be recognized, the organization must demonstrate that it has integrated knowledge from its environment. She asserts that “merely exposing organizations to relevant external knowledge without exerting efforts to internalize it is insufficient” (2002, p. 8). This assertion underscores a critical point: why some organizations can learn and adapt, whereas others cannot, despite being exposed to the same knowledge. While the quality of knowledge influences its absorption by the organization, the organization’s absorptive capacity is equally vital. Böhling establishes a relationship between the organization’s cognitive structure and its absorptive capacity (2002, p. 8). She observes that the organization’s ability to “evaluate and utilize outside knowledge” is primarily dependent on “the level of prior related knowledge, as such knowledge confers an ability to recognize the value of new information, assimilate it, and apply it” (2002, p. 8).

Consequently, existing knowledge structures play a significant role in determining how effectively organizations can learn. Maier et al. (2001, p. 24) contended that the quality of knowledge structure influences an organization’s capacity to acquire new knowledge and to access existing knowledge in pertinent situations. In essence, prior knowledge constitutes a vital component of an organization’s “absorptive capacity”—its capability to ‘transpose’ new knowledge into its policies

and strategies (p. 24). An organization's absorptive capacity, therefore, encompasses its ability to "exploit outside sources of knowledge' through the processes of interpretation, encoding, and application of the knowledge (2002, p. 8). The successful absorption of external knowledge relies on effective communication both between the organization and its environment and within the organization itself, including the quality and distribution of expertise (2002, p. 8).

Huber (1991, p. 90) has delineated four primary processes of organizational learning. He observes that organizational learning encompasses processes of knowledge acquisition—the process through which knowledge is procured from the environment; information dissemination—the procedure by which information from diverse sources is shared, thereby leading to new insights or understanding; information interpretation—the process whereby distributed information is endowed with meaning by the cognitive structures within the organization; and organizational memory—the mechanism by which knowledge is stored within collective meanings for future reference (1991, p. 90). Huber further notes that these four constructs do not suggest a linear phase model of learning; instead, they represent distinct stages that collectively constitute organizational learning (1991, p. 90). Consequently, learning is regarded as an internally driven process of collective information processing, in which information is ascribed new collective meanings and subsequently encoded in organizational memory for future use by the organization (Breul, 2005, p. 14).

Who Learns? How Organizations Acquire Knowledge

There is considerable debate within the literature on Organizational Learning (OL) regarding the distinction between individual and organizational learning, as well as the role of the individual within the learning process. Organizational learning fundamentally derives from an analogy, suggesting that "a goal-oriented social structure such as an organization is capable of learning like an organism" (Maier, Prange, & von Rosenstiel, 2001, p. 14). An essential feature of this debate concerns the learning subject—specifically, who the learner is. Theories of organizational learning frequently presume that the agents of organizational learning are the organization's members, rather than the organization itself (Dierkes, Antal, Child, & Nonaka, 2001, p. 5). Maier et al. (2001, p. 15) conceptualize organizational learning as an analogy to individual learning, utilizing the knowledge processes associated with individual learning to construct a hypothetical understanding of organizational learning.

Within the domain of management science, organizational learning is frequently employed as an analogy for individual learning, in which knowledge of individual learning processes is used to facilitate understanding of the hypothetical construction of organizational learning. The analogy postulates that individual learning constitutes the foundation of organizational learning, with increases in organizational knowledge—typically regarded as an indicator of organizational learning—being based on the expansion of knowledge acquired by individuals within the organization (Maier, Prange, & von Rosenstiel, 2001, p. 15). Individual learning is depicted as the substrate for organizational learning, with augmentations in organizational knowledge attributed to the growth of knowledge that individuals within the organization acquire (Maier, Prange, & von Rosenstiel, 2001, p. 15). According to this perspective, the agents responsible for organizational learning are the members of the organization, rather than the organization itself (Dierkes, Antal, Child, & Nonaka, 2001, p. 5). This viewpoint is perhaps more precisely articulated by Argyris and Schön (1978, p. 19), when they accentuate the individual’s “agency” within the context of organizational learning. They observe that “just as individuals are agents of organizational action, so they are agents for organizational learning” (p. 19). Furthermore, they assert that organizational learning transpires “when individuals, acting from their images and maps, detect a match or mismatch of outcome to expectation which confirms or disconfirms organizational theory-in-use” (p. 19). Learning occurs when the knowledge acquired by the learning agents is embedded into organizational memory and serves as the basis for organizational action (p. 19).

From an individual-driven learning perspective, learning is regarded as a multi-phased process that commences when “environmental feedback leads to individual learning”. Subsequently, this individual learning is transformed into individual action, which is then cumulatively translated into modified cognitive structures within the organization and its procedures, thereby generating new feedback from the environment (March & Olsen, 1976b, p. 55). March and Olsen observe:

Organizations learn: to assume that organizations go through the same processes of learning as individual human beings seems unnecessarily naïve, but organizations exhibit (as do other social institutions) adaptive behavior over time. Just as adaptations at the individual level depend upon phenomena of the human

physiology, organizational adaptation uses individual members of the organization as instruments. However, we believe it is possible to deal with adaptation at the aggregate level of the organization, in the same sense and for the same reasons that it is possible to deal with the concept of organizational decision making (p 66)

Conversely, some analysts have criticized the individual-centered learning perspective for neglecting the interactive nature of the learning process, as well as the organizational influences and constraints on individual learning. These analysts argue that the agency of individuals as learners and actors within an organization is generally limited by the cognitive structures of the organization and the set of collectively shared meanings (Breul, 2005, p. 10). Simon (1991, p. 125) notes that, in fact, what an individual learns within an organization is heavily dependent on the existing knowledge and information available in the organizational environment.

Hedberg (1981, p. 8) rejects the idea that organizational learning is simply the sum of individual learning and argues that learning is fundamentally a systemic process where the organization's cognitive structure influences the level of individual learning. Several scholars (Simon, 1991) have highlighted the concept of bounded rationality to demonstrate that human learning within an organization is affected by organizational factors and has implications “that extend beyond what can be inferred merely by observing learning processes in isolated individuals,” because human rationality “is highly approximate when confronted with the complexities of everyday organizational life” (Simon, 1991, p. 126). Therefore, certain aspects of organizational life are “more effectively described in terms of organizations and parts thereof than solely in terms of the individual human beings inhabiting those parts” (p. 126). He also contends that the organization functions as “a system of interrelated roles,” which governs how each member considers problems and decisions they face and determines the appropriate and legitimate courses of action (p. 126).

Within complex institutions like international organizations (including regional assemblies), which often feature a multi-layered network of members and policy influencers such as member states, bureaucrats, and external actors, the question becomes even more complicated: whose learning influences the organization's transformation? Returning to the question of whether regional hegemons like Nigeria and Ethiopia influence the transformation of ECOWAS and IGAD respectively, it is important to ask if learning within these organizations was primarily driven by

the regional hegemons or by a coalition of influential member states. Additionally, it is crucial to examine the role of external actors, such as the European Union and the United Nations, in the learning and transformation processes of the AU, ECOWAS, and IGAD. However, as previously noted, there are signs that these organizations—the AU, ECOWAS, and IGAD—have undergone transformation, and since transformation derives from learning, they demonstrated learning capabilities independent of their member states.

In all three cases, the organizations exhibited norms of democracy and good governance, for instance, long before several of their member states. Therefore, it can be argued that the learning within the organizations did not necessarily constitute an aggregation of the learning of individual member states. Notably, Gherardi and Nicolini (2001, p. 47) have characterized organizational learning as a “metaphor” that encompasses two concepts – learning and organization – which positions the organization as a subject that “learns, processes information, reflects on experience, and possesses a stock of knowledge, skills, and expertise.” Furthermore, organizations are regarded as active learning institutions capable of developing in line with the goals and intentions of their founders and members, and which also learn to transcend these original objectives (Pawlowsky, 2001, p. 63).

For my study, I propose a comprehensive analytical model that includes all actors contributing to learning processes within the three regional organizations. My organizational learning framework combines both individualist and systemic perspectives. It considers the influence of individual bureaucrats, such as the heads of the organizations’ secretariats, as well as influential political leaders whose initiatives have fostered learning within these organizations. Additionally, I examine how the learning of member states may have sparked organizational learning, for example, assessing whether a growing consensus among African states regarding norms such as non-indifference has enabled these organizations to adopt and internalize these norms. Most importantly, I will demonstrate that, regardless of the agents involved, the active engagement of regional organizations in conflict transformation has served as both the catalyst and the setting for learning. The core idea is that the existential threat posed by violent conflicts unites various factors and actors, thereby guiding the organizations on the necessary actions to transform conflicts. Nonetheless, the organization’s capacity to learn remains crucial for enabling effective

organizational change and conflict transformation.

The perspective of organizational learning highlights the importance of an organization's ability to process and adapt to new information. This ability is influenced by factors such as increased uncertainty in the learning environment, the emergence of new participants, new settings, and fresh challenges, as well as the organization's stress levels (Huber, 1991, p. 88). From a constructivist viewpoint, learning is seen as a social process in which knowledge shapes reality (Breul, 2005, p. 11). Knowledge is fundamentally considered "constructive." As a result, perceptual filters and communication structures that enable the flow of information into and out of the organization are critically important (2005, p. 11). Learning involves an internal effort to develop a new set of shared mental models. Constructivists emphasize intra-organizational conflict—the tension between sub-groups competing for dominance (Breul, 2005, p. 11). Therefore, effective learning depends not only on external actors reaching consensus on information but also on a strong internal coalition supporting the new knowledge. Additionally, for learning to happen, there must be consistency between the perspectives of internal and external coalitions.

Constructivists also accept the dominant idea in organizational learning that an organization perceives the world (reality) through its cognitive framework—that is, the social makeup of an organization shapes its perception of reality. They emphasize the impact of the external environment on organizational behavior and the view that “the experience of environmental responses might lead to unbridgeable performance gaps,” where the gap between expectations and outcomes becomes critically important (Breul, 2005, p. 11). Argyris and Schön (1978, p. 19) agree with this perspective, pointing out that the mismatch between results and expectations—indicating errors within the organization’s cognitive structures—serves as a key trigger for learning. As a result, social reality is seen as limiting the shared meanings within the organization. As Haas and Haas (1995, p. 256) note, constructivists focus on “shared beliefs that inform practices of institutions, thus increasing attention to the formal rules by which a set of values is officially established and applied.” Constructivists view learning as an intersubjective process, highlighting the social mechanisms through which knowledge “informs visions and contributes to organizational practices” (Haas & Haas, 1995, p. 256). Therefore, successful organizational learning relies on the organization’s ability to incorporate new knowledge, internal efforts to develop a shared understanding, and the quality of environmental signals. It has been argued that

learning in this context involves acquiring knowledge.

Determining Organizational Change after Learning

An important debate in organizational learning literature concerns how to identify the actual impact of learning on an organization's behavioral and cognitive structures; essentially, the indicators of learning. Many scholars in this field view learning as a process involving lasting changes “in behavioral potential as a result of experience” (Maier, Prange, & von Rosenstiel, 2001, p. 15; Anderson, 1995). This debate focuses on expected learning outcomes—the nature and quality of adjustments an organization makes as reflections of learning. Most organizational learning literature distinguishes between learning as an adjustment process that mainly influences an organization’s interpretation of events, and the development of shared understanding and conceptual schemes among members of the organization—closely related to the idea of deviation-reducing adaptation—and, organizational learning as the formation of new responses or actions based on these interpretations—deviation-amplifying adaptation (Fiol & Lyles, 1985, p. 806). Fiol and Lyles refer to the initial form of adjustment as “cognition development,” and the latter as “behavior development” (p. 806). Cognitive development involves learning that adjusts parameters within a “fixed organizational structure,” while behavioral development involves a complete redefinition of rules and a change in norms, values, and worldviews (p. 806).

However, cognition and behavior are neither the same phenomenon nor exact reflections of each other. Fiol and Lyles point out that changes in behavior can happen without any development in cognitive associations, and it is possible to gain knowledge without any corresponding change in behavior (p. 806). They mention that minor changes in organizational behavior “do not tend to induce cognitive development” because such a change might be too slow to create clear associations (p. 806). On the other hand, significant behavioral changes do not necessarily indicate equal progress in cognitive development; instead, they might be a response to an immediate need to “to do something” (p. 806). Therefore, successful learning is viewed either as leading to behavioral change resulting from a transformation in cognitive structures (Levy, 1994) or as a decision to keep the current state despite changed conditions (Böhling, 2002, p. 15).

Furthermore, not every type of behavioral change can be credited to the learning process. For a

change to be recognized as a result of learning, it must be relatively permanent. The effects of learning should be visible in individuals' or organizations' behavior, though it is important to note that not all learning processes necessarily lead to noticeable behavioral changes (Maier, Prange, & von Rosenstiel, 2001, p. 16). Additionally, not every behavioral change indicates learning. An organization's behavior can often be affected by various situational factors, such as unexpected funding shortages, which may cause organizational adjustments. These changes are not considered automatic results of learning, as the organization can revert to its original structure once the constraints are removed.

It is important to understand that this definition of learning does not explicitly mention performance. Learning does not necessarily lead to improved performance, as the results of learning processes are not the only factors affecting performance (Maier, Prange, & von Rosenstiel, 2001, p. 16). Maier et al. emphasize that, to conclude that learning causes better performance, one must also rule out other explanations, such as factors that influence behavior and performance (p. 16). An increase in production efficiency, often seen as a clear sign of learning, may also be due to other factors. As a result, learning does not always result in greater success or improved performance. Therefore, organizational learning cannot be defined solely by changes in performance; it is crucial to distinguish between successful learning and improved performance as distinct concepts.

While the attainment of efficient behavior through learning can lead to enhanced performance, it is important to acknowledge that various other factors also influence organizational performance. Maier et al. observe that, since an organization's behavior can be affected by different factors—such as successful learning and favorable economic conditions—either the corresponding components in the definition of learning “have to be operationalized in such a way that they cannot be explained by alternative constructs, or the alternative constructs have to be operationalized also” (p. 17). Only through this process can one effectively rule out the possibility that changes in organizational behavior are attributable to other factors, such as economic conditions, thereby allowing a definitive conclusion that the observed changes are outcomes of learning (p. 17). Analysts attempting to correlate behavioral changes with organizational learning are often confronted with “the illusion of validity”—“the unjustified confidence that there is a causal link between incoming information and the prediction of events” (p. 22). This phenomenon is

particularly prevalent when information about alternative assumptions is unavailable, primarily when actions are based on hypotheses (p. 22). In my analysis, I have identified as determinants of change those organizational transformations that directly result from reflections on organizational experiences during engagement in conflict transformation, as well as changes explicitly attributed by organizational communities to those experiences.

Levels of Learning

An important element of organizational learning approaches is the distinction and specification of different “levels of learning,” which are typically based on the existence of a hierarchy of cognitive structures and corresponding levels of organizational adaptation. These distinctions capture the level of organizational learning as demonstrated by observable organizational changes and are commonly classified as “lower-level” and “higher-level learning” (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Hedberg, 1981). Lower-level learning is said to occur within a specific organizational structure governed by a set of rules, with the outcome being short-term development of “rudimentary associations of behavior and outcomes” (Fiol & Lyles, 1985, p. 807).

Lower-level learning primarily results from repetition and routine, occurring within organizational contexts that are both understood and regulated (p. 807). Although lower-level learning may have a significant impact on an organization, its focus generally pertains to a specific activity or domain within the organization. This form of learning has occasionally been referred to as “functional rationality”—rationality rooted in acquiring knowledge of what has previously succeeded, with simple, well-defined problems—or as “behavioral-level learning,” which relates to “controlling the firm as it adapts to the environment” (p. 808). Argyris and Schön (1978, pp. 2-3) have characterized it as “single-loop learning”—a type of learning that maintains the fundamental features of an organization’s rule set and is limited to identifying and correcting errors within the system of rules. They note that single-loop learning occurs when error detection and correction enable the organization to operate with its current policies or achieve its existing objectives without modifying its fundamental organizational norms.

Higher-level learning, in contrast, refers to a form of organizational learning that seeks to modify overarching rules and norms, thereby producing associations with long-term effects and

influencing the organization (Fiol & Lyles, 1985, p. 808). This level of learning frequently involves heuristics, skill enhancement, and insights, thus constituting “a more cognitive process” than lower-level learning, which often results merely from repetitive behavior (Fiol & Lyles, 1985, p. 808). Such learning aligns with what Argyris and Schön refer to as “double-loop learning” – a process whereby error detection and correction involve modifying an organization’s fundamental norms, policies, and objectives (1978, pp. 2-3). Therefore, double-loop learning pertains to “those forms of organizational inquiry that resolve conflicting organizational norms by establishing new priorities and weightings of norms, or by restructuring the norms themselves along with related strategies and assumptions” (p. 24).

The most prevalent form of learning has, unsurprisingly, been identified as single-loop learning, whereas double-loop and deuterio-learning are comparatively infrequent (Argyris, 1999, p. 69). Double-loop learning has faced critique for its excessive ambiguity and is primarily regarded as an ideal-type, whereas single-loop learning is often deemed too superficial to effect substantial change. Consequently, many analysts specializing in organizational change tend to prefer an intermediate approach between single-loop and double-loop learning (see Breul, 2005). Breul (2005, p. 6) introduces a typology of learning termed “complex learning,” which exceeds the scope of single-loop learning but remains subordinate to double-loop learning. This form encompasses fundamental changes in core values, structures, and procedures, in which both means and ends are altered. For the purposes of my analysis, I adopt this classification of “complex learning.”

My hypothesis suggests that learning within the organization goes beyond the single-loop typology; it has caused more significant changes than simple adjustments or adaptations, even though the organization remains fundamentally unchanged. Furthermore, while these changes have led to notable shifts in the organization's cognitive structures and improved its environmental assessment, they have not been extensive enough to represent ideal cases of double-loop learning. Therefore, I see complex learning as similar to the learning my model aims to identify in organizations.

In summary, this section has underscored the cognitive nature of organizational learning, illustrating that, from the perspective of organizational learning, it is fundamentally an internal, cognitive process mediated by the organization’s cognitive structure, which functions as a

perceptual filter. This process involves the absorption of new knowledge into the organization, endowing it with new meanings and encoding it within the organization's memory. It has been clarified how the social constitution, specifically the cognitive structure of an organization, dictates its capacity to assimilate new knowledge. The primary aim of learning has been established as the enhancement of the organization's capacity to appraise reality accurately; in other words, learning facilitates the organization's ability to rectify the discrepancy between its theory of action and the actual conditions of its environment.

Factors Affecting Organizational Learning

In the subsequent section, I identify conditions and causal variables pertinent to learning. Some of these factors have been previously addressed within the conceptual analysis of Organizational Learning. Firstly, I delineate the environment in which organizational learning occurs. Hedberg (Hedberg, 1981) has usefully identified two contexts for conceptualizing organizational learning: the internal and external environments. I have adopted this framework for my analysis, aiming to identify how these environments, along with the causal factors particular to each, influence learning within organizations. Additionally, I will examine potential causes of organizational learning, highlighting crisis as a particularly significant trigger for organizational learning in international organizations, such as the regional organizations examined in my research.

The Significance of the Learning Environment for Organizational Learning

Most organizational learning perspectives highlight the importance of context for effective learning. Argote and Miron-Spektor (1999, p. 1123) note that learning occurs when organizational learning interacts with its environment. They observe that the environmental context influences the experience the organization gains (1999, p. 1125). However, they argue that context and knowledge are also mutually shaping. Knowledge is created through the interaction of context and experience, and the knowledge gained through learning is embedded in the organization's context, which in turn alters the context (p. 1125).

As previously discussed in the analysis of organizational learning, various perspectives emphasize different causal factors within the learning environment: behavioral perspectives highlight external

environmental influences, whereas constructivist and reflectionist approaches concentrate more on the social constitution of the organization and knowledge, emphasizing the organization's capacity to absorb and adapt to new knowledge. Conversely, the "experience school" focuses on organizational boundaries and the quality or "ambiguity" of information (Breul, 2005, p. 12). It can generally be inferred from these perspectives that the context (environment) significantly influences both the quantity and quality of information accessible to the organization, as well as its capacity to absorb, process, and adapt to this information (Breul, 2005, p. 12). For my analysis, I shall refer to the external learning environment as the context and environmental factors affecting learning. In contrast, the internal factors will be designated as the internal learning environment. As demonstrated, both contexts are essential for effective organizational learning.

External Learning Environment

The external learning environment refers to the elements outside the organization's boundaries. It is, as Hedberg (1981, p. 10) has pointed out, the "real world", which constitutes the "source of variation and provides potential learning inputs – information – to the learning organization. The external environment comprises several factors that can affect organizational learning, including institutional factors (norms), political conditions (state preferences and power), and problem-issues and technology (cognitive as well as material resources) (Breul, 2005, p. 13).

The quantity and quality of information both influence its absorptive capacity. High-quality information is characterized by a low level of ambiguity and exists within a relatively predictable environment, thereby facilitating easier absorption (Nonaka, 1994, p. 14). As Breul (2005, p. 14) observes, ambiguity in information can be identified when a "well-defined" standard for determining success and failure is established, along with a structure for controlled experiments to isolate competing variables, an "unambiguous instrument of measurement," and "unambiguous feedback regarding the correctness of one's predictions" (Breul, 2005, p. 14). The absence of these elements in the learning environment makes it challenging to achieve clarity of feedback. Consequently, the lack of clear feedback arises from "strategic ambiguity and scientific uncertainty," which diminishes the availability of high-quality information essential for effective learning (Nonaka, 1994, p. 15).

Conversely, the volume of new information available from the external environment is just as important as the quality of the information an organization is exposed to in the learning environment. Nonaka (1994, p. 23) emphasizes that for effective learning to occur, the organization must receive not only quality information but also an adequate amount—avoiding an excessive influx at once—since it has a limited capacity to manage and process the information load. Hedberg (1981, p. 12) indeed proposed that the optimal learning environment exists somewhere between "a stable and a turbulent environment." If the rate of change of causal factors in the environment is too stable, the organization may not see the need to learn or adapt. Conversely, if the rate of change is too fast, the organization risks information overload, as the influx of information exceeds its ability to absorb it. Therefore, an ideal learning environment features a moderate rate of change regarding environmental factors. Breul (2005, p. 12) further argues that a supportive learning environment should provide "clear, unambiguous signals for the organization and a medium level of stress caused by the environmental complexity," along with a modest rate of change.

Internal Learning Environment

As previously discussed, the cognitive structures of an organization play a pivotal role in the organizational learning process by providing perceptual filters that facilitate the absorption and interpretation of new knowledge. These cognitive structures constitute the internal learning environment, which pertains to organizational conditions and practices that influence the capacity to exploit external sources of knowledge. As noted by Child and Heavens (2001, p. 308), the way organizations are constituted impacts the extent of learning that can occur. They contend that organizations harbor "inherent tensions" affecting their capacity to learn. These tensions originate from the organizational features, including "(a) their historical embeddedness, which benefits from past experiences yet may hinder change; (b) their leadership and authority systems, which can both promote learning and impose controls that impede it; and (c) their internal and external boundaries, which can serve as channels for new information but also create barriers to its assimilation" (2001, p. 308). Consequently, organizations contain internal factors that may either facilitate or hinder learning. Additionally, organizational memory plays an essential role in the learning process. Most analysts agree that the entire learning cycle—acquisition, distribution, and interpretation—is

influenced by the organization's existing knowledge. Cohen and Levinthal (1990, p. 128) emphasize that an organization's absorptive capacity—the ability to recognize the value of external information, assimilate it, and utilize it—is primarily determined by its level of “prior related knowledge.” Therefore, a degree of path dependency exists in organizational learning, as the relevance of new information sources largely depends on their compatibility with existing beliefs and practices.

An essential characteristic of the internal environment is the existence of “boundary-spanning units,” which serve to enhance the permeability of the organization's boundaries to new sources of information. These boundary-spanning units are defined as “institutionalized boundary-spanning activities” that facilitate the transfer of external signals such as “expertise, demands, and expectations into the organization” (Breul, 2005, p. 14). Consequently, boundary-spanning activities establish a connection between the organization and its surrounding environment. They enable the organization to leverage its interactions with external partners to “adjust and innovate” and to ascertain whether the signals received should be regarded as disturbances to organizational routines and procedures (Böhling, 2002, p. 13).

In summary, the primary function of boundary-spanning activities is to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge. As Child and Heavens (2001, p. 320) have observed, “boundary spanners,” operating at the interface of the organization and the external environment, “play a critical role in the process of transferring information into an organization.” Huber (1991, p. 98) has proposed that “boundary-spanning personnel” contribute to organizational learning by acting as “sensors” of the learning environment and by aiding in the monitoring of the organization's performance. Similar to the cognitive structures discussed earlier, boundary spanners also serve as perceptual filters, assisting in aligning newly acquired knowledge with existing “political visions” or “consensual perspectives” (Böhling, 2002, p. 19). In his work on organizational change, Aldrich (1979) underscores the significant role played by boundary spanners in enabling organizational adaptation. He regards boundary spanners as “points of contact with the environment” for information monitoring and intelligence gathering, noting that they protect the “core of an organization” from information overload by absorbing uncertainty, and promote organizational “renewal and adjustments” to changing environmental conditions by importing new developments

into the organization (Aldrich, 1979, p. 251). They assist in identifying changes within the external environment and in buffering external disturbances to absorb uncertainty (Böhling, 2002, p. 14).

An additional significant factor influencing the internal organizational learning environment is the organization's capacity for 'absorbing' and 'unlearning' knowledge. Cohen and Levinthal (1990, p. 128) characterized an organization's absorptive capacity as the "abilities" that enable the organization to recognize, exploit, evaluate, and utilize external knowledge. They observed that accumulated prior knowledge enhances the organization's capacity to acquire, recall, and apply knowledge (1990, p. 129). An organization's absorptive capacity hinges on the communication structure between the external environment and the organization, as well as among its subunits, and on 'the character and distribution of expertise within the organization' (1990, p. 132). Although rigid routines and procedures may safeguard the organization from information overload and mitigate uncertainty, they can also impede organizational learning by obstructing the flow of new information (Child & Heavens, 2001, p. 308). Effective learning necessitates that the organization remains open, promoting communication channels. It also requires facile access to information and the availability of resources and knowledge (Nonaka, 1994, p. 28).

An organization's absorptive capacity is also influenced by its ability to unlearn. Hedberg (1981, p. 9) has asserted that an organization must be capable of 'unlearning' to facilitate the creation of new knowledge. Unlearning renders the organization receptive to novel ideas and causal beliefs. It involves the loosening of rigid cognitive maps to discard outdated knowledge acquired by the organization. Furthermore, it signifies that the organization remains open to change. Unlearning provides a break from the past, thereby creating opportunities and space for acquiring new knowledge that can foster organizational change (Breul, 2005, p. 15). Consequently, unlearning enhances an organization's absorptive capacity and supports learning and transformation. Breul (2005, p. 15) has proposed that organizations with high absorptive capacity are typically characterized by "non-hierarchical, flexible structures, open and pluralistic communication channels, visionary leadership, redundant resources, and a permissive external boundary."

In conclusion, this section has examined the concepts of external and internal environments within which organizational learning is purported to occur. As demonstrated, these contexts influence learning by affecting both the quality and quantity of information available to the organization, as

well as the organization's capacity to process and utilize this information from its environment to forge a consensus for organizational change. These concepts of external and internal learning environments will be incorporated into the development of my learning model. To complete this conceptual analysis of organizational learning, I now turn to the topic of “triggers of organizational learning”—those factors that impact the dynamics of the learning process and the formation of learning environments.

Crisis as a Trigger for Organizational Learning

A subject that engenders considerable debate within the discussed organizational perspectives pertains to the catalysts of successful learning. It is also a subject characterized by a lack of consensus, chiefly due to the myriad factors frequently cited as triggers for learning. The designation of a trigger for learning is often contingent upon the specific organizational learning perspective applied. What these perspectives concur on is that the nature and potency of the trigger necessary for learning depend on the level of learning involved. Low-level or single-loop learning can readily be activated by new information and typically occurs gradually and incrementally (Breul, 2005, p. 16). Conversely, high-level or double-loop learning necessitates conditions and triggers within both the internal and external environments that are sufficiently robust to induce “unlearning” of previous habits and “relearning” of new ones, or to foster the development of a new, consensual cognitive foundation for the organization (Breul, 2005, p. 16). Many analysts (see Levy, 1994; Nonaka, 1994; Fiol & Lyles, 1985) concur that some form of crisis is requisite to surmount inertia and stimulate the demand for learning.

Fiol and Lyles (1985, p. 808) have observed that “...some type of crisis is necessary for changes in higher-level learning.” The crisis may be an unforeseen and unpredictable event that occurs following traumatic experiences, exposing “unambiguous policy failure” (Breul, 2005, p. 17). Unambiguous policy failure denotes “a manifest anomaly” that contradicts the cognitive frameworks of the organization and provides the organization with high-quality feedback from the environment (Breul, 2005, p. 17). The crisis may pose an existential threat to the organization by causing a rapid decline in performance or persistent policy failure, which results in an “unbridgeable performance gap” when the discrepancy between expectations and actual outcomes

widens (Nonaka, 1994, p. 28). Haas (1992, p. 14) contends that ongoing failure and insurmountable performance gaps can create sufficient turbulence within the organization, leading to a “breakdown,” rendering institutions “unworkable,” and fostering a consensus for change. However, to facilitate learning, the organization must recognize that the recurrence of policy failures that led to the crisis stems from the inadequacy of its institutional structures to prevent them (Haas E. B., 1990, p. 87).

Nonaka (1994, p. 28) points out that crisis appears as “environmental fluctuation,” which creates “creative chaos” and stimulates the process of organizational knowledge creation. Creative chaos happens either “naturally when the organization faces a genuine ‘crisis,’” such as a sharp decline in performance, or intentionally when leaders seek to induce a ‘sense of crisis’ within the organization by setting challenging goals (1994, p. 28). This crisis, which triggers creative chaos, may stem from internal conflicts between parties holding differing beliefs from the organization’s theory of action or from conflicting political interests. Creative chaos heightens tensions inside the organization and helps to “focus attention on solving new problems” (1994, p. 28). Alternatively, a crisis can originate from external shocks to the organizational environment. However, these shocks must be sufficiently severe to prompt higher-level learning. Many scholars argue that accomplishing such advanced learning is often so difficult that it usually requires a crisis caused by major strategic failures to initiate the process (Levy, 1994, p. 286). Levy (1994, p. 305) emphasizes the importance of policy failures for effective learning, noting that while previous successes support policy continuity — which can hinder learning and change — “failure leads to policy change.”

The shock or crisis must be sufficiently potent to penetrate the organization’s cognitive frameworks or perceptual filters. It must also be robust enough to dismantle the organization’s defensive routines and to expose the shortcomings of the existing cognitive structures (Breul, 2005, p. 18). By “loosening” these ingrained structures and permeating the organization’s cognitive boundaries, the shock and ensuing crisis serve to prepare the organization for complex learning. Additionally, by facilitating the “unlearning” process, the crisis enables the organization to access “tacit” knowledge that has been suppressed by perceptual filters, transforming it into explicit knowledge that can then be integrated into the organization’s theory of action. As previously discussed, learning often involves uncovering knowledge already possessed by the organization;

what is learned frequently depends on pre-existing knowledge and information available within internal and external learning environments. A crisis serves as a catalyst, making this tacit knowledge accessible and observable. Furthermore, as I will elaborate, a crisis also stimulates learning by weakening bureaucratic structures within the organization, thereby enhancing its capacity to assimilate new knowledge.

However, there exists a significant caveat to the assertion that crises invariably lead to organizational learning. Some analysts posit that shocks and crises may hinder learning processes by generating information “overload,” as organizations struggle to acquire precise and controllable feedback from their environment. Breul (2005, p. 19) articulates that, in response to information overload, organizations might resort to “cognitive avoidance” and reinforce the rigidity of their cognitive and structural boundaries. In such circumstances, boundary-spanning units become essential in helping the organization manage the volume and quality of information generated by the crisis. These units facilitate information processing by narrowing its scope to align with the organization's absorptive capacity and existing cognitive frameworks (2005, p. 19).

In summary, this section explores the concept of learning as described by various perspectives within organizational learning. It is noted that disagreements exist over the precise nature of learning and organizational learning, as well as the factors that influence or cause learning. However, a consensus has been reached regarding the role of cognitive structures in the knowledge acquisition process within organizations. Moreover, the interpretation of “learning as collective information processing” (Breul, 2005, p. 20) goes beyond individual viewpoints. The discussion emphasizes causal factors for organizational learning, with particular focus on crisis as a key trigger.

A crisis triggered by an external shock can drive learning and organizational change through two main mechanisms. First, as shown earlier, crises can promote learning by providing clear feedback about policy failures and establishing new norms. Additionally, a crisis can help build consensus around norms, signaling to the organization what is acceptable. Crises also support learning by enhancing the organization's capacity to absorb new information and by making environmental data more transparent. Second, a crisis can lead to unlearning outdated practices and relaxing rigid mental frameworks that hinder learning. Lastly, boundary-spanning units are argued to play a

crucial role in helping the organization manage information overload.

Analytical Framework for Change in Regional Organizations

Building on the preceding discussion, I have drawn on insights from organizational learning theory to elucidate the dynamics of change within international or regional organizations in their engagement with security politics. The fundamental argument, from an organizational learning perspective, is that the mechanism mediating such change is learning, defined herein as the process of acquiring and internalizing knowledge. Organizational learning, as previously noted, is analogous to the notion that an organization can and does learn like an organism. I have observed that certain perspectives within organizational learning construe the learning subjects within an organization as its individual members, thereby positing that organizational learning is merely an aggregate of individual learning by these members. Conversely, some maintain that an organization possesses the capacity to learn independently of its subunits. However, I have also noted that this latter view faces challenges when applied to complex cases such as regional organizations, which encompass a multifaceted, layered membership structure—ranging from member states to political leaders and bureaucrats within the organization, as well as external actors who influence these organizations from the outside.

The organizations are also characterized by cognitive structures that function as their perceptual filters for evaluating reality. These cognitive structures often contain deeply ingrained knowledge systems that demonstrate resistance to new information, thereby potentially hindering organizational transformation. It has been demonstrated that, from an organizational learning perspective, effective learning also depends on the quality of information or feedback received from external sources. Learning and organizational transformation may encounter difficulties if the feedback is ambiguous, particularly when there is no strong coalition or consensus regarding the new information. Furthermore, the significance of crises, such as those experienced during the conflict transformation efforts involving the AU, ECOWAS, and IGAD, has been highlighted, as these events can serve as catalysts for organizational learning and transformation.

From this theoretical framework, I developed an analytical model of regional organizational

change grounded in learning, emphasizing the key elements of organizational learning discussed here. The proposed model captures both internal and external factors influencing organizational learning and is therefore divided into two parts: one focusing on external factors and the other on the internal environment. I argue, based on the previous discussion on organizational learning, that an ideal learning environment provides clear, high-quality, sufficient information, high absorptive capacity, and permeable cognitive boundaries. I further propose that crises act as important triggers for learning by enhancing the quality of feedback from the external environment, prompting unlearning of existing knowledge to facilitate relearning, and loosening rigid, entrenched cognitive structures to increase absorptive capacity. In the next part of the chapter, I introduce this analytical model for learning in regional organizations.

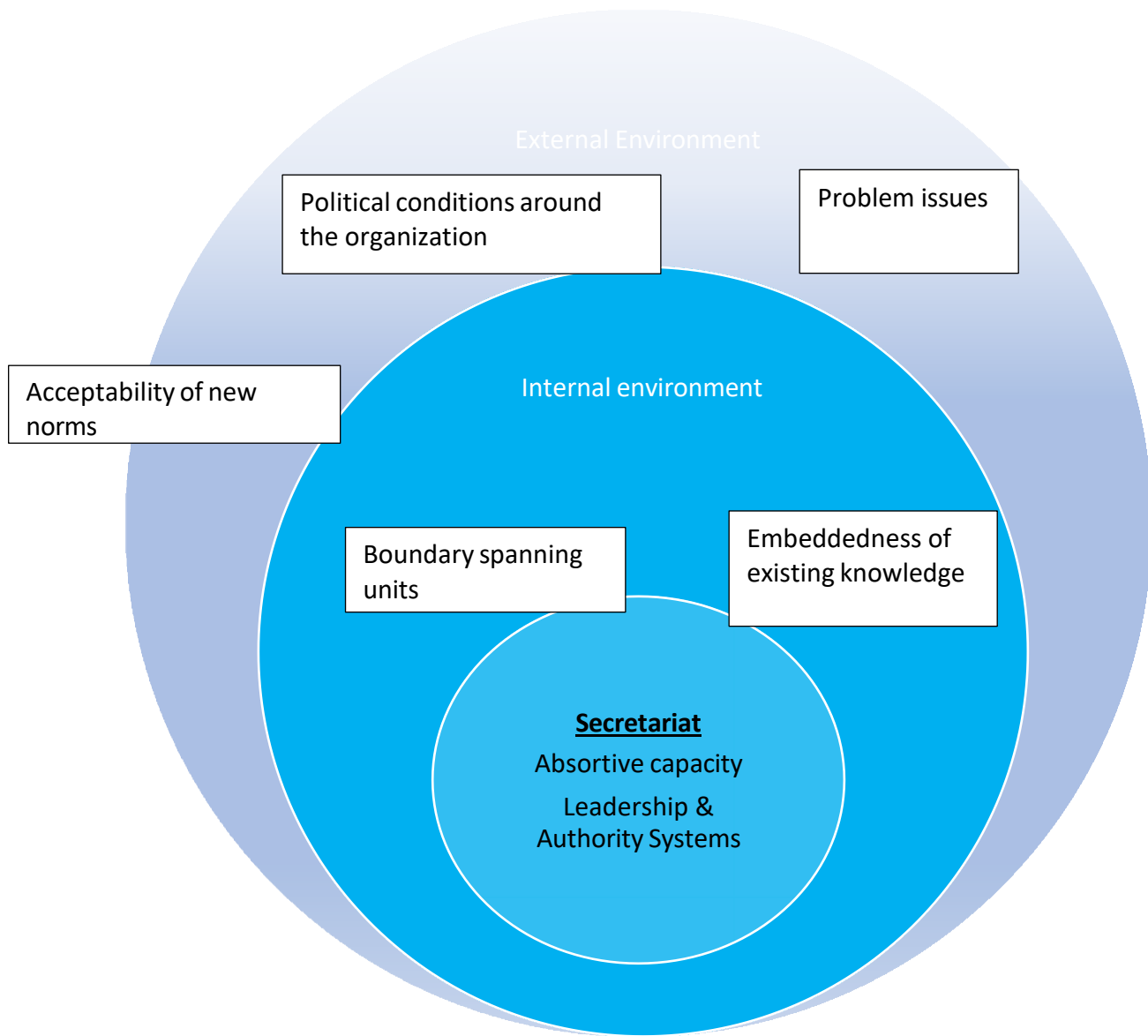
The initial part of the model concentrates on factors such as the origins of learning and specific changes, including who initiated the learning process and organizational transformation. In other words, it examines the agents of change within organizations. Here, I analyze the role of the network of members in regional organizations: member states, especially regional hegemons; influential political leaders; and external actors like international organizations, including the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU). Next, I evaluate whether and how conflict transformation efforts by the African Union (AU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) have influenced these external actors to “teach” the organizations. Second, I assess the quality of information available to regional organizations before and during their engagement in conflict management. This mainly involves examining whether the presence or absence of consensus on problematic issues and norms affected the clarity of feedback provided to these organizations, making it ambiguous and difficult to interpret. Additionally, I explore whether outbreaks of violence and the decision to deploy regional organizations for conflict resolution led to the development of a clear consensus on relevant issues and norms, resulting in unambiguous feedback that encouraged their adoption. Simultaneously, I identify the changes resulting from learning during these periods.

In the second part, I examine the “internal environment” of the organization to determine how it influences the organization's capacity for change through learning. Additionally, I investigate the role that the organization's involvement in conflict transformation may have played in the

adjustment of internal factors conducive to learning and change. I further analyze the learning agents within the organization—bureaucrats at various levels—aiming to determine whether they contribute to knowledge acquisition and organizational transformation. Subsequently, I shift focus to the ‘cognitive structures’ of the organization to assess whether these structures facilitate or hinder the ability to absorb new knowledge and adapt. Finally, I evaluate the impact of the organization's participation in conflict transformation on both the bureaucrats and the cognitive structures.

In Figure 1 presented below, I provide a summarized analytical model of regional organizational learning and change which captures both the internal and external factors affecting organizational learning and change.

Figure 1: Analytical Model for Regional Organizational Learning



Chapter Four: Methodology

In the previous discussion, I have noted how the changes observed in African regional organizations have aligned with their involvement in conflict transformation efforts within their respective regions. Based on this observation, the main goal of this study is to determine the nature of the relationship between the engagement of Africa's regional organizations in conflict transformation and their organizational transformation. Specifically, it examines whether the organizations' involvement in resolving conflicts has helped transform their institutional and normative frameworks. The key question for this research is:

- **What is the impact of regional organizations' involvement in conflict transformation on their own organizational development?**

Recognizing that the relationship between the two variables – regional organizational transformation and their engagement in conflict management – may be too distant to allow for immediate conclusions about causation, I hypothesize that this relationship is likely mediated by other variables, specifically learning. Therefore, I aim to explain the link between regional organizational transformation and their involvement in conflict management through the lens of organizational learning. I suggest that organizational learning serves as the mechanism through which engagement in conflict transformation facilitates change within regional organizations. In summary, the study relies on two main hypotheses.

- **The three organizations have experienced significant transformation through their involvement in regional conflict transformation.**
- **The transformations of the regional organizations consist of outcomes of learning induced by their engagement in conflict transformation.**

In this chapter, I delineate the research design and instruments employed in the analysis of my case study. The research predominantly employs a qualitative case-study methodology grounded in a three-case comparison using a most-different-systems design, as this approach provides analytical tools suitable for examining cases in diverse contexts, such as the three African regional organizations under investigation, which exhibit similarities in the values of independent and

dependent variables. The study will encompass an in-region (Africa) and a synchronic comparison of regional organizations. I commence by elucidating and justifying the selection of the case-study design, followed by an explanation of my case selection process and a discussion of why the most-different-systems-design is appropriate for this study.

Case-Study Methodology

To determine the nature of this relationship, I employ the case study methodology. Gerring (2007, p. 20) defines a case study as “the intensive examination of a single case where the purpose of that study is – at least in part – to shed light on a larger class of cases (a population).” Bennett and Elman (2007, p. 171) have emphasized that case study methods, particularly the combination of process tracing and typological theorizing, are significant in International Relations research due to their comparative advantages in analyzing complex, relatively unstructured, and infrequent phenomena central to the subfield. Conversely, Steinberg (2004, p. 4) has highlighted the limitations of experimental methods, noting that the “ontological foundations of correlational techniques are poorly suited to the study of these complex phenomena.” As will be elaborated subsequently, the strength of the case study research methodology lies in its capacity to provide tools for in-depth investigation and for identifying variations in outcomes. McKeown (1999, p. 175) further asserts that case studies are superior to other methods for theory-building, as they enable the researcher to determine “what exactly something is a case of precisely” and to comprehend the mechanisms of causation.

I employ the case study method to analyze three cases, as case study research can encompass multiple cases—multiple case studies—provided that it is feasible to conduct comprehensive investigations of those cases (Gerring, 2007, p. 20). The population under study may be small or large, and the method is synecdochic—meaning “it infers a larger whole from a smaller part” (Gerring, 2006, p. 709). The fundamental question pertains to what the selected case represents—what it exemplifies. In this research, the behavior—specifically, the transformation in response to conflict management activities—of three regional organizations, considered collectively as a single case study, is hypothesized to reflect the behavior of regional organizations in Africa more generally.

As Bennett (2004, p. 19) rightly observes, the advantages of case study methods lie in their ability to identify new or overlooked variables and hypotheses, and to examine “intervening variables in individual cases to make inferences about which causal mechanisms might be active.” Case study methodology can also aid us in advancing historical explanations of cases and achieving high levels of construct validity (Bennett, *Case Study Methods: Design, Use, and Comparative Advantages*, 2004, p. 19). They especially enable us to generate new hypotheses through both deduction and induction. Gerring (2007, p. 66) has summarized the strengths of the case study design, noting that case studies are, *ceteris paribus*, more useful for

hypothesis generating rather than hypothesis testing, when internal validity is given preference over external validity, when insight into causal mechanisms is prioritized over insight into causal effects, when propositional depth is prized over breadth, when population is heterogeneous rather than homogeneous, when causal relationships are strong rather than weak, when useful variation on key parameters is rare rather than common place, and when good-quality evidence is concentrated rather than dispersed (2007, p. 66)

The choice of a case study research design is mainly driven by the lack of both quality and quantity of information currently available or easily accessible regarding the transformation of African regional organizations. As a result, my research takes place within what Gerring (2007, pp. 57-58) has called “an evidence-poor environment”—an environment where not all relevant factors can be measured, measurement accuracy is lacking, comparing cases is difficult, and confidence in the data's reliability is limited. A case study is especially suitable when relevant data are concentrated within a single case or “if it is contained in incommensurable formats across a population of cases” (2007, p. 58). Additionally, as Gerring (2007, p. 58) notes, the case study approach allows for the collection of new data and the correction of existing data, given its focus on a small number of cases with limited data points.

The case study design allows the researcher to verify information, consult multiple sources, refer to primary materials, and address biases that could weaken the validity of secondary literature (2007, p. 59). Ultimately, the amount and quality of evidence that the researcher can practically

collect influence the choice of research design. A case study approach helps researchers overcome logistical and practical challenges, especially in environments with limited access to information.

In the study, I use existing empirical data to develop a concept of organizational learning that significantly influences the transformation of regional organizations. This learning is initiated by the organization's involvement in conflict transformation. To further support my hypothesis, I include a series of interviews conducted at the headquarters of the respective regional organizations in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and Abuja, Nigeria. These interviews complement the data gathered from a review of the existing literature on African regional integration, as well as on organizational learning and transformation.

Case Selection

The cases in this study are intentionally selected to maximize inferential leverage. Based on my initial understanding of how each potential case relates to the values of the dependent and independent variables—namely, organizational transformation and participation in conflict transformation, as outlined in the hypotheses—I have chosen to analyze the engagement of the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in conflict transformation. The goal is to evaluate the impact of this engagement on the organizational transformation of these three entities. The selection process ensured that the cases show significant variation in both the independent and dependent variables. Therefore, the three regional organizations were specifically chosen for their history of active involvement in conflict transformation and for observable organizational changes related to these efforts. The AU, ECOWAS, and IGAD have been more deeply engaged in conflict transformation than other African regional organizations, and they have developed distinct institutions and organizational structures dedicated to this purpose. Additionally, they have longer histories of involvement in conflict transformation than their counterparts, making them ideal examples for examining the relationship between regional conflict transformation and organizational change.

To understand transformation, I identify cases involving a period of relative stability followed by change, which I hypothesize are driven by a causal mechanism—learning processes triggered by organizations engaged in conflict management.

To generate inferential leverage, I use a research design that combines process tracing with cross-case and over-time comparisons of three cases—AU, ECOWAS, and IGAD. As Bennett and Elman (2007, p. 176) explain, this research design allows each case to be studied in two ways: “The before of case A at T0 can be compared to the after of case A at T1, whereas case A in one or both periods can also be compared to another case B,” and similarly, case B can be divided into two periods separated by the independent variable. As a result, the research design combines both within-case analysis for each case and comparative analysis across cases. First, I conduct a longitudinal analysis of each case at two points in time, separated by the independent variable, and then perform cross-case comparisons. This design aims to explore why regional organizations in Africa undergo changes after engaging in conflict management.

My preliminary understanding of regional integration in Africa has enabled me to select cases that offer the most significant analytical value for my research objective: establishing a causal relationship between regional organizational changes and regional conflict management. I pose questions designed to assess the significance of the independent and intervening variables regarding the primary hypothesis—that the organizations’ engagement in conflict resolution activities catalyzed organizational learning, subsequently leading to transformations within the regional organizations—and the case study's outcomes. I employ a combination of process tracing, cross-case, and longitudinal comparisons to account for and elucidate the variables associated with alternative explanations—diverse accounts of how regional organizations evolve—while clarifying the roles of the independent and intervening variables.

As previously noted, in selecting the cases for this study, I ensured that the cases chosen demonstrate sufficient variation in both the independent and dependent variables. The three cases selected—namely the African Union (AU), ECOWAS, and IGAD—meet this criterion. Furthermore, these cases share a common history of active involvement in conflict management, characterized by observable organizational changes that correspond with their periods of

engagement. They exhibit a pattern of stability after formation, followed by transformations during periods of engagement in conflict transformation.

The AU, initially founded as the Organization of African Unity (OAU), experienced a period of relative stability from its inception in 1963 until its restructuring in 2002. Afterward, it underwent numerous normative and organizational changes. As previously mentioned, these changes aligned with the time when the AU reemerged as a significant security player on the African continent. It is reasonable to suggest a link between its involvement in peace and security efforts and these organizational transformations.

Similarly, prior to adopting a more active role in conflict transformation within the West African sub-region in 1990, ECOWAS maintained a stable organizational structure from its founding in 1975. Starting in 1990, ECOWAS experienced considerable transformation, including the adoption of a revised treaty in 1993. Much of this transformation occurred during the period when ECOWAS was actively engaged in conflict transformation initiatives across West Africa.

Similar to the AU and ECOWAS, IGAD exemplifies a regional organization that has experienced organizational transformation concurrent with its conflict transformation initiatives. Following a relatively stable initial decade, during which it maintained its original organizational structure, IGAD enacted several organizational and normative modifications from the late 1980s onwards. This period of transformation coincided with heightened IGAD involvement in conflict transformation activities within the Horn of Africa.

As a result, all three selected regional organizations exhibit variation in both their dependent and independent variables. Their transformative paths include a relatively stable period with minimal changes, followed by turbulent phases marked by significant shifts in their organizational and normative structures. Additionally, in all three cases, these transformations occur during times when the organizations are involved in conflict transformation. Therefore, it is reasonable to hypothesize a link between their participation in conflict transformation efforts and the organizational changes they undergo.

Research Design and Analytical Framework

As previously specified, this research aims not only to delineate the hypothesized relationships between the engagement of the three regional organizations in conflict management and their corresponding organizational and normative transformations, but also to demonstrate that these relationships are causal rather than merely correlational or indicative of a constant conjunction. A three-stage analysis of the three cases was conducted.

In the initial phase, I rely on existing empirical data to infer a correlation between organizational transformation and participation in conflict management activities. To achieve this, I conduct within-case longitudinal comparisons across the three organizations. Specifically, I compare each organization during two distinct periods: a phase of relative stability, characterized by relatively unchanged organizational and normative structures (T0), and a phase of change (T1), separated by the independent variable—conflict management engagements. For the African Union (AU), T0 spans from its inception as the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 until 2002, when the Constitutive Act of the AU—the treaty establishing the AU—was adopted. T1 commences from 2002 and extends to the end of 2019. For ECOWAS, T0 covers the period from its establishment in 1975 until 1990, when it commissioned the peacekeeping mission ECOMOG to Liberia. T1 begins in 1990 and continues through 2019. Lastly, for IGAD, T0 spans its founding as IGADD in 1986 through 1996, when it was transformed into IGAD. T1 begins in 1996 and extends to 2019.

In the second step, I use process tracing to test and eliminate competing accounts of sources of transformations within Africa's regional organizations, as highlighted in the literature review. I evaluate the following five alternative hypotheses:

- The transformation of regional organizations is not unique to Africa but is part of the broader pattern of waves of regional integration observed globally.
- That transformation of African regional organizations can primarily be ascribed to the influence of external actors, namely the European Union, as well as other international entities such as the United Nations and the United States of America.
- That the transformations can be attributed to the inspiration and initiatives of charismatic political leaders and bureaucrats who championed African integration

and promoted reforms of regional organizations.

- That the transformations are a factor in the overall transformation of the African state.
- That the transformations result from the influence of regional powers such as Nigeria and Ethiopia.

In the final stage, I employ various system designs to compare the three cases across different contexts. By controlling for variables such as organizational size, age, and scope, I examine their common patterns in organizational change and conflict management involvement. The integration of process tracing with cross-case and longitudinal comparisons seeks to enhance the capacity to derive meaningful conclusions.

Data Sources

In this study, I employ data triangulation, which involves using multiple sources to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. Triangulation serves to validate my hypotheses by cross-verifying information obtained from diverse sources. My primary reliance is on three data sources. Firstly, I examine secondary literature, including policy documents, academic journals, and books pertinent to the transformation of African regional organizations and their roles in conflict transformation in Africa. Although scholarly publications on this topic are relatively limited, there are many policy papers produced by think tanks and organizations advocating for African integration.

Secondly, I examine primary sources, including official documents, protocols, reports, speeches, and communiqués, obtained from the archives of regional organizations during field visits to their respective offices in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and Abuja, Nigeria. Thirdly, I conduct interviews to address gaps in existing literature. These interviews were conducted during research trips to the organizational offices in Addis Ababa and Abuja, Nigeria. The selection of the headquarters of the three organizations for these interviews is based on the understanding that knowledge regarding African integration is often limited to those directly involved in the integration process, either as policymakers or researchers. Regrettably, this results in the integration project—and by extension, my research—being primarily an elite endeavor. I interviewed selected bureaucrats and officials

at the African Union (AU) and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) offices in Addis Ababa, as well as at the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) offices in Abuja, and diplomatic representatives of member states at these organizations. Additionally, I interviewed members of think tanks and external organizations such as the GIZ support office for the operationalization of the African Union's Peace and Security Architecture, and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) in Addis Ababa. Experts specializing in African regional integration and security, based in Addis Ababa, were also interviewed.

The use of multiple data sources enhances the plausibility and construct validity of my theoretical framework. The snowball or chain-referral sampling technique was employed to identify interviewees. In each organization where interviews were conducted, I identified officials or personnel willing to engage in direct conversation, subsequently requesting that they nominate other potential interviewees and provide their contact information, both within their organizations and externally. In numerous instances, primary interviewees facilitated introductions to additional respondents. This approach proved to be quite effective, as it allowed access to senior officials within the organizations who would otherwise have been difficult to contact directly. The guiding questions for the research were as follows:

- Have the objectives, principles, and institutional frameworks of the organizations expanded during the period in which the organizations have been involved in conflict transformation?
- Do elements of the mandates of the organizations incorporate feedback from their engagement in conflict transformation?
- Did the organizations invoke their conflict transformation engagement as justification for the expansion of their mandates?
- Are there occasions when the organizations explicitly or implicitly referred to a state of insecurity caused by civil conflicts to justify expanding their mandates beyond the provisions of their foundational legal frameworks?
- What are the effects of the organizations' engagement in conflict transformation on the evolution of their legal and institutional structures?
- What are the impacts of regional organizations' participation in conflict transformation on

the development of their authority and legitimacy?

- What are the impacts of regional organizations' involvement in conflict transformation on the evolution of their social and organizational practices?

For data analysis, I employed a combination of narrative analysis and discourse analysis methodologies. These approaches facilitated the development of a more comprehensive interpretation of the interview results, emphasizing not merely the respondents' verbal expressions but also their personal, social contexts, and individual experiences. This approach partially addressed the issue of bias, as most respondents' perspectives reflected their personal experiences. In some instances, respondents played a direct role in effecting changes within the organizations and were consequently often biased in their evaluations of these events. The use of narrative and discourse analysis enabled me to elucidate how interviewees constructed their narratives and to examine the language they employed to describe phenomena related to organizational evolution.

Chapter Five: Empirical Evaluation

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from my empirical research aimed at addressing the hypotheses outlined in the study. As previously stated, the principal hypotheses are: that the engagement of regional organizations in conflict management significantly contributed to the review and expansion of their objectives and mandates; that such involvement necessitated the development of more robust legal and institutional frameworks, leading to the expansion of their legal and institutional structures; that regional organizations utilized their conflict management roles to bolster their authority and legitimacy as regional and global actors; that participation in conflict management provided a discursive platform for the transformation of their social and organizational practices; and, that this normative transformation reflects lessons learned from conflict management experiences. The empirical findings discussed herein systematically address each of the five hypotheses by exploring the corresponding research questions. Consequently, each hypothesis is discussed in a dedicated subsection of this chapter.

The notion in management sciences that an organization is primarily based on a cognitive structure – a system of knowledge – which influences its behavior and actions, offers valuable insights into the dynamics of organizational change. From an organizational learning perspective, an organization perceives the world through its cognitive structure and assimilates only as much new knowledge as its cognitive framework can accommodate. Breul (2005, p. 6) defines cognitive structure as the amalgamation of rules, procedures, conventions, strategies, and technologies that an organization encompasses. Typically, an organization's cognitive structure is reflected in its objectives, principles, and institutional framework, which embody its mandate—the authority and competencies invested in it to perform its functions. Therefore, an organization's cognitive structure functions as its “perceptual filter,” through which it responds to environmental stimuli and interprets information from its surroundings.

From the perspective of organizational learning, the objectives, principles, and institutional framework—components of the organization's cognitive structure—regulate the quantity and

quality of information the organization can process, thereby facilitating the management of uncertainty. The organization perceives and interprets reality through the interplay of these objectives and principles. Organizational learning and change become imperative when there exists a disparity between the organization's cognitive structure and the actual environment. In essence, an organization cannot achieve Pareto efficiency if its objectives, principles, and institutional frameworks do not accurately reflect the realities of its operational context. When such a mismatch occurs between the organization's objectives, principles, and institutional framework (as elements of its cognitive structure) and external reality, it is necessary to realign these components to better correspond with reality, thereby enabling more efficient functioning (Hedberg, 1981, p. 1). Consequently, organizational learning and the associated process of transformation manifest when an organization enhances its capacity for a realistic assessment of its environment, that is, when it rectifies the discrepancy between its cognitive structures and external reality.

The objectives, principles, and institutions, along with the mandates—powers, and competencies—imposed on regional organizations, also reflect the level of sovereignty that states are willing to give up to these entities. These objectives, principles, and mandates form the core of the international organization; they embody and mirror the agreements reached, as well as the concessions made by states during negotiations to establish the international or regional entity. Additionally, they define the scope of actions allowed for these organizations by the states, effectively setting the operational boundaries within which they operate. The process of defining objectives, principles, and mandates often involves careful interstate negotiations, which incur significant transaction costs in terms of time, money, effort, and personnel. As a result, governments are usually hesitant to renegotiate these agreements. Devesh Kapur (1999, pp. 5-6) has observed that the high transaction costs involved in creating international institutions make them “inherently sticky” and discourage governments from continually renegotiating the agreements that support these institutions, even when they are not functioning optimally. He further notes that, due to this “stickiness,” institutional change within international organizations, if it occurs at all, tends to be gradual, incremental, and sometimes very slow (1999, p. 6).

Often, a significant event is required to instigate change in the objectives, principles, and mandates of international or regional organizations. It is important to recognize that even minor

modifications to these elements can have profound, transformative effects across the entire organization. Adjustments, whether contraction or expansion, in the organization's objectives, principles, and mandates, may reflect or catalyze substantial transformation within the international organization.

One hypothesis supporting this research posits that the involvement of three regional organizations in conflict transformation in Africa has played a crucial role in their development, affecting their goals, principles, and structures. It was argued that crises resulting from policy failures and legitimacy issues—experienced by these organizations due to the rising number of inter-state and intra-state violent conflicts across Africa during the 1980s and 1990s—led to the breakdown of their cognitive frameworks, including organizational mandates, and provided important feedback that revealed significant gaps between their perceived roles and the realities they faced. Additionally, I proposed that the organizations' participation in conflict management served as a learning experience for both the organizations and their founding member states, and as a platform for coalitions of transnational epistemic communities to reach consensus on the need to transform the organizations' often-narrow principles and mandates. Therefore, the feedback obtained from the deployment of the organizations in conflict management has strengthened their capacity to acquire new knowledge necessary to adjust their objectives, principles, and mandates, as well as their institutional frameworks. It also mitigated resistance from states that had previously been hesitant to endorse and invest in the organizations' transformation, and it fostered consensus among epistemic communities to guide the organizations towards change and renewal. The fundamental assertion here is that the organizations' engagement in conflict transformation has instigated their own transformation. The study aims to establish this connection. Accordingly, it has conducted longitudinal analyses of each organization's mandates—specifically, their functions, powers, and competences as delineated in their founding treaties—and has differentiated between periods when the organizations played limited or no role in conflict management (T0) and periods when they undertook active conflict transformation responsibilities.

Subsequently, I have also conducted a comparative study of the three organizations to determine whether the findings can be generalized across the entire case study. The aim is to ascertain whether the transformations of the normative and institutional structures of the organizations can be linked to their deployment in conflict transformation initiatives in Africa. I have examined

treaties, foundational agreements, and protocols to identify these transformations. Additionally, through discourse analysis, I have sought to establish whether the organizations' self-understanding of their mandates and objectives has ever transcended the provisions of their legal frameworks.

Case Study 1: Conflict Transformation and the Organizational Transformation of the African Union (AU)

The African Union (AU), established in 2002, is an evolved iteration of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), founded in 1963. Consequently, the AU exemplifies the transformation of African regional organizations. While the AU is a successor to the OAU, the two entities reflect distinct norms and ideological principles. The AU, in essence, embodies the evolution of the ideological principles and norms established by its predecessor. In response to a common critique that the OAU was a “toothless bulldog,” perpetually ineffective in confronting the numerous challenges faced by the newly independent African states, a respondent at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, remarked that the OAU has often been assessed against objectives and standards it never set for itself (Interview, 2019a). According to this respondent, the OAU was endowed with a limited mandate, articulated through a small set of objectives and founded upon equally restrictive principles, thereby limiting its agency. As long as the OAU operated within its mandate and in accordance with its foundational principles, it cannot be deemed to have failed (Interview, 2019a).

The objectives and principles delineated in the OAU Charter of 1963 resulted from an arduous process of political negotiation and embodied significant compromises made by the Organization's founding fathers. This subsection aims to examine the evolution of the OAU from its inception in 1963, upon the adoption of the Charter, to the year 2002, when the African Union (AU) was founded with the enactment of the Constitutive Act of the African Union. This analysis examines the transformation by evaluating changes in the OAU's objectives, purposes, and principles.

OAU's Encrusted Cognitive Structure: Narrow and inflexible Mandate.

As Makinda and Okumu (2008, p. 9) have observed, the dual imperatives that underpinned the foundation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU)—namely, the pursuit of Africa's liberation from remnants of European imperialism and the promotion of African integration under the banner of Pan-Africanism—significantly diverged from the idealism that characterized the initial calls for a comprehensive African integration project under grand slogans such as Pan-Africanism (Olivier, 2010). The establishment of the OAU in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on May 25, 1963, by 31 political leaders of independent African nations (African Union, 2020), represented a successful compromise among diverse ideological factions that had dominated discussions regarding the development and integration pathways of newly independent African states. Several factors and events preceding the OAU Summit of 1963—including the Pan-Africanist Movement, the consolidation of independent African countries along three informal political associations—the Brazzaville, Casablanca, and Monrovia groups—which shared a vision for a united Africa yet differed on objectives and strategies—along with the Algerian War, the United Nations' intervention in the Congo-Kinshasa conflict, Decolonization, Cold War tensions, and the assassination of Togolese President Sylvanus Olympio a few months prior to the summit—set the stage for the formation of the OAU and influenced the subsequent development of the organization.

Pan-Africanist Roots of the OAU

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) represented, to a considerable degree, the culmination of an extensive history of efforts to address the pervasive experience of racial discrimination and the alienation of Africans, articulated through the Pan-Africanist movement. Fundamentally, Pan-Africanism sought to deconstruct Eurocentric ideologies that underpinned the subjugation of African peoples. The movement maintained that slavery and colonialism were rooted in and perpetuated the negative and unfounded categorization of the race, culture, and values of African individuals, thereby fostering heightened forms of racism manifested within governance systems in Western countries (Adejumobi, 2008). As a broader conceptual framework, Pan-Africanism was grounded in the collective experiences of African descendants in the New World. It originated in the United States during the late 19th century as a movement aimed at voicing the grievances of

Black individuals of African descent against the injustices they endured collectively within racially stratified American society, and to protest European colonization and exploitation of the African continent. Adejumobi (2008) traces the origin of the concept to two key developments among Blacks in the New World: first, the concession by American Blacks that their campaigns for equality in the US were futile, which led them to demand voluntary repatriation to Africa; and second, the growing pride with which the term 'Africans,' often used derogatorily by racists, was viewed by early Black nationalists. By consciously promoting pride in being Black and elevating African identity, Black activists in America and other parts of the world began rallying Blacks across the globe to reclaim their rights and dignity, which Western societies had denied.

In essence, the Pan-African movement embodied the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist impulses of African and Black American intellectuals. The movement aimed to facilitate a form of “psycho-cultural renaissance” for Africans (Harshé, 1988, p. 373) and to provide the Black races with a platform to articulate “the distinctness of their culture and identity” (Makinda & Okumu, 2008, p. 15). As Makinda and Okumu have observed, the primary concern of the Pan-African movement was the cessation of the “exploitation and humiliation of Blacks in the United States, the condemnation of Black natives as barbaric by European colonialists, and brutal treatment by the apartheid regime in South Africa” (p. 15). Colin Legum (1962, p. 1) summarized the objectives of the movement as a “protest against the “otherliness” of Black men: the universal perception of their inferiority.” He characterizes Pan-Africanism as fundamentally “a belief in the uniqueness and spiritual unity of Black people; an acknowledgment of their right to self-determination in Africa; and their entitlement to be treated with dignity as equals across the globe” (Legum, 1962, p. 1). Accordingly, the principal aims of Pan-Africanism can be summarized as the pursuit of reconstructing a collective identity for individuals of African descent, the quest for human dignity and equality for Blacks worldwide, and the advocacy for the self-governance of African nations under colonial rule.

Pan-Africanism emerged as the rallying slogan for both the struggle for African independence from colonial rule and the continent's integration. The fundamental objectives of Pan-Africanism served as the foundational and unifying principles embraced by the African leaders leading the anti-colonial struggle. Consequently, the initial movement advocating for the liberation and unity of Africa drew inspiration from the Pan-African movement. The issues of interest and identity that

occupied the Pan-African movement—namely, liberation and integration—ultimately became the guiding objectives for African leaders proposing the formation of a continental organization.

Nevertheless, on the eve of independence for African nations, there was a consensus that liberation and integration were the primary objectives of the independence movement. However, this consensus was not without substantial debate concerning the precise meaning of liberation and integration. Some individuals associated liberation with principles of self-determination, sovereignty, and the dignity of African peoples, advocating solely for African nations to achieve the right to sovereign statehood. Conversely, leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana regarded liberation as fundamentally intertwined with the complete unification of the African continent. Nkrumah contended that the African identity could only be fully realized and meaningful “when the liberation and unification of Africa are achieved...” (Nkrumah, 1973, p. 206).

In the years immediately preceding the formation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), significant divisions had emerged within the movement for African integration. Parties were willing to surrender sovereignty of their states to the new continental organization, with some harboring aspirations for a United States of Africa. Conversely, a robust faction was resolutely opposed to relinquishing the sovereignty recently acquired. This ideological contest gave rise to three distinct political factions of African leaders, each advocating different perspectives on African liberation and unity. These factions have been identified as Brazzaville, Casablanca, and Monrovia. As will be demonstrated, the objectives, principles, and structure of the continental organization—the OAU—were ultimately shaped through a compromise among these groups.

The Establishment of the Organization of African Unity (OAU)

In May 1963, thirty-two Heads of independent African States convened in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, at the invitation of Emperor Haile Selassie I, to discuss the liberation of the remaining African nations under colonial rule and to foster African unity. The conference, commonly known as the Addis Conference by its participants, symbolized the culmination of aspirations and hopes associated with the Pan-Africanist movement. Many attending leaders were influenced by Pan-Africanist ideology, with some having previously participated in the series of Pan-African Congresses held in Europe over the preceding six decades. However, on the eve of the OAU Summit, as previously discussed, divisions had arisen among African States regarding, among

other issues, the nature of African unity to be pursued and the methods for its attainment. Some factions, such as the Casablanca Group, advocated for deeper integration in the form of a single United African Government. In contrast, others, represented by the Monrovia Group, recommended a cautious and gradual approach, rejecting the idea of a political federation altogether.

At the Summit, these divisions were clearly expressed in the speeches delivered by each leader. The two main goals of the Summit were to discuss the liberation of African nations still under colonial rule and to debate African unity. President Julius Nyerere of Tanganyika summarized the Summit's agenda as the “finding of a common denominator,” aimed at guiding efforts to eliminate the last remnants of colonialism and to promote a unified voice for Africa (Nyerere, 1963, p. 116).

The Summit participants quickly reached consensus on liberating African states, with unanimous agreement on the need to allocate both moral and material resources to those African nations still under colonial rule. The convenor and host of the Summit, Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia, set the tone by stating that the primary goal of the gathering was “the final liberation of those Africans still under foreign exploitation and control” (Selassie, 1963, p. 7). The Emperor emphasized that “it would be a betrayal if we merely paid lip service to their liberation and failed to support our words with action” (Selassie, 1963, p. 7). Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana declared that independence was just a prelude for African states to engage in a new struggle against “oppressive and degrading neo-colonial control and interference” (Nkrumah, 1963, p. 44). The radical leader, Nkrumah, along with Youlou of Congo-Brazzaville, proposed creating a “Monroe Doctrine” for Africa to protect the continent “against any direct interference by a non-African power, in the same way North and South America have acted concerning their own regions” (Nkrumah, 1963, p. 44; Youlou, 1963). Several other leaders reiterated that the idea of African unity depended on the complete liberation of all African countries from colonialism: Ahmadou Ahidjo of Cameroon said the plan for “African construction” could not be realized as long as some African countries “are still suffering under the yoke of the most backward form of colonialism” (Ahidjo, 1963, p. 20).

The Adoption of doctrines of non-interference and equality of states

The leaders also unanimously endorsed a set of dual principles intricately linked to the matter of independence: specifically, the principles of non-interference by states in the internal affairs of other nations and the principle of equality among all states. The principle of non-interference was predominantly invoked concerning the involvement of former colonial powers in the affairs of their former colonies, such as the French presence in Algeria and the intervention of the United Nations in the Congo conflict; however, it increasingly gained prominence in relation to disputes arising from border conflicts between African nations, such as Morocco's contestation of Mauritanian sovereignty and Ethiopia's attempts to annex parts of Somalia. These disputes constituted a significant portion of the deliberations during the Summit. Haile Selassie reminded participants that tribalism among African states had facilitated external interventions, including the United Nations' intervention in Congo, which had yielded adverse consequences (Selassie, 1963, p. 8). He expressed concern regarding foreign intervention in African affairs. Consequently, he urged the leaders to ensure that Africa resolves its disagreements independently, "quarantined from the contamination of non-African interference" (Selassie, 1963, p. 10). He also proposed that the Summit establish permanent mechanisms and procedures for the peaceful resolution of disputes, thereby avoiding reliance on external intervention.

As a leader who successfully led his nation in resisting the colonial power of Italy, Haile Selassie perceived the threat to African states as primarily emanating from external forces. Consequently, he advocated that Africa must develop appropriate military arrangements to safeguard its sovereignty (Selassie, 1963, p. 10). He regarded international intervention as unwarranted interference in the internal affairs of African nations, which they should collectively oppose. Likewise, President Houphouet-Boigny of the Ivory Coast shared this perspective. Referencing the assassination of Togo's first president, Sylvanus Olympio—marked as the inaugural political assassination in independent Africa—merely four months prior to the Addis Ababa Summit, Houphouet-Boigny urged the Assembly to condemn such acts "energetically and in unison" as illegitimate methods of governance or gaining power (Houphouet-Boigny, 1963, p. 66). He discerned in the assassination of the Togolese President evidence of "subversive intrigues" involving African states acting as proxies or accomplices for foreign nations hostile to African unity (Houphouet-Boigny, 1963, p. 66). Houphouet-Boigny viewed political assassinations or

murders as initiatives orchestrated by foreign powers seeking to overturn governments or regimes that did not serve their interests. Therefore, the initial conception of the principle of non-interference pertained primarily to international intervention.

However, many other leaders emphasized the principle of non-interference concerning peaceful coexistence among independent African nations. Ahidjo of Cameroon urged the summit to acknowledge the equality and sovereignty of all states, affirming their right to exist regardless of their size or population, and called for respect for each state while prohibiting intervention in the internal affairs of other nations (Ahidjo, 1963, p. 22). Similarly, the Chad delegation urged the summit to oppose “the devouring or annexationist tendencies and ambitions in favor of African unity,” asserting that African unity should be founded on “the policy of non-interference in the domestic affairs of sovereign countries” (Tombalbaye, 1963, p. 30). Diori proposed an “inter-African Charter” grounded in the fundamental principles of “respect for the sovereignty of each State and non-interference in the domestic affairs of other independent States” (Diori, 1963, p. 93). President Tsiranana of Madagascar advocated for the integrity and inalienable right of each State to independent existence, emphasizing principles of “mutual non-aggression, non-interference in the internal affairs of other States,” and the prohibition of sheltering subversive elements or supporting subversion in another state (Tsiranana, 1963, p. 80). President Modibo Keita of Mali called for a framework that would ensure respect for territorial sovereignty and the integrity of each state, proposing the adoption of “a multilateral non-aggression pact” aimed at reducing external interference and fostering greater prospects for African cooperation in matters of defense and security (Keita, 1963, p. 85). Although the leaders acknowledged the imperfections of the borders delineated by colonial powers, they recognized that efforts to redraw them could escalate into conflict. Ultimately, with the signing of the Charter of the Organization of African Unity (O.A.U) at the conclusion of the summit, a robust coalition of nations was formed around the principles of non-interference and equality among states. As will be further discussed, these principles served as the normative foundation of the new continental organization established following the Summit.

Disagreement on the nature of African Unity

Nevertheless, if there had been a complete consensus on the liberation of the remaining states as a

preliminary step towards African unity and on the twin principles of non-interference and equality of states, the debate over the nature and manner of pursuing actual African unity would have been starkly characterized by ideological divisions. These divisions reflected the distinct ideological groupings that existed prior to the Summit and with which the leaders were affiliated: the Casablanca and Monrovia groups. As previously discussed, the primary contention among the blocs concerned African integration and unity. It has been noted that leaders aligned with the Casablanca bloc aspired to establish a United States of Africa. In contrast, the Monrovia group maintained that independent African states should not be compelled to relinquish their newly acquired sovereignty in favor of a continental government.

Despite the arduous negotiations for its establishment, by the conclusion of the Summit on 25 May 1963, the 31 leaders signed the Charter establishing the Organization of African Unity (O.A.U). This organization was the culmination of the aspirations of the Pan-Africanism movement, whose ideologies influenced the leaders at the Summit regarding issues of black identity and emancipation. More significantly, the OAU was a product of compromises among African leaders representing the three ideological blocs discussed earlier. The OAU Charter embodied these compromises; it primarily reflected what Nyerere termed the “highest common denominator” for African unity. The Charter comprised 33 articles that delineated the objectives, principles, and organs of the OAU. It articulated five purposes (mandate) and specified the areas in which the Organization was anticipated to operate. Furthermore, the Charter outlined the principles that would underpin the Organization. The purposes and principles of the OAU encapsulated the diluted hopes of the opposing blocs at the inaugural Summit of the Organization (see Table 1 below).

Table 1: Objectives and Principles of the OAU as outlined in the Founding Charter

Objectives of the OAU	Principles of the OAU
To promote the unity and solidarity of the African States	The sovereign equality of all Member States.
To coordinate and intensify their cooperation and efforts to achieve a better life for the people of Africa	Non-interference in the internal affairs of States.
To defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity, and independence;	Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each State and its inalienable right to independent existence.
To eradicate all forms of colonialism from Africa	Peaceful settlement of disputes by negotiation, mediation, conciliation, or arbitration.
To promote international cooperation, having due regard to the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.	Unreserved condemnation, in all its forms, of political assassination as well as of subversive activities on the part of neighbouring States or any other States.
	Absolute dedication to the total emancipation of the African territories that are still dependent.
	Affirmation of a policy of non-alignment concerning all blocs.

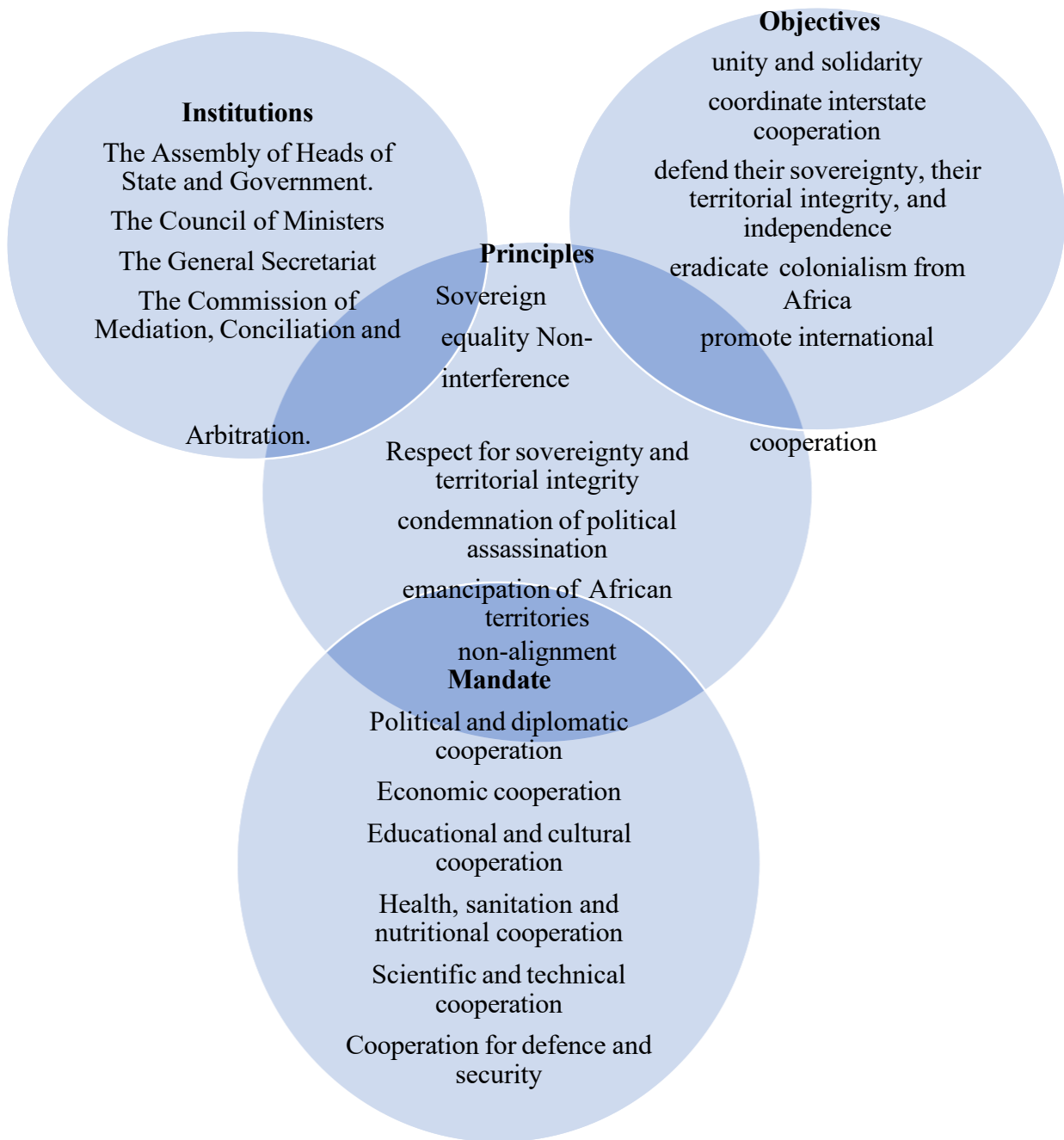
Source: African Union (2013). *OAU Charter (1963)*. *Online:* https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/7759-file-oau_charter_1963.pdf. Accessed on 17 February 2019.

The purposes and principles of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) were evidently focused on issues that received near-unanimous support at the First Summit. The Organization was entrusted with the primary mandate to safeguard the sovereignty of already independent African states against threats from foreign entities, notably former colonial powers, and to coordinate efforts and provide support to nations still engaged in the struggle for independence. The motivation behind the establishment of the Organization ultimately originated from the self-preservation of independent states and their leaders. The leaders sought an institution that would legitimize their authority and secure their legitimacy as leaders. Consequently, sovereign equality among member states, non-interference in internal affairs, respect for each state's sovereignty and territorial integrity, along with the inalienable right to independence, became fundamental

principles.

Many analysts have observed that the most limiting factor for the Organization of African Unity's (OAU) effectiveness was the set of statist principles it adopted at its founding. These included sovereign equality among all states, non-interference in internal affairs, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the inalienable right to independence. These principles shaped how the OAU viewed international relations and processed information from its external environment. Internally, the organization had a cognitive framework that hindered its ability to absorb ideas that might have challenged its statist worldview. As one expert at the United Nations University Peace in Addis noted, the OAU's indifference and stubbornness in the face of alternative perspectives—any knowledge questioning the primacy of the state in international affairs—were reinforced by the consensus in its external environment regarding non-interference and sovereign equality of states. Each member state of the OAU strictly adhered to these principles.

Figure 2: Normative and Institutional Structure of the OAU



OAU and peace and security

The pursuit of peace and security was not explicitly stated as an objective of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Nevertheless, "cooperation for defense and security" is listed among the mandates given to the OAU (African Union, 1963, p. Article 11 (2f)). However, the OAU only lightly anticipated the possibility of disputes between or within states; it did not seem to expect that such disputes could escalate to the point of requiring significant intervention by the OAU or its member states. The organization anticipated conflicts that could be resolved through negotiation, mediation, conciliation, or arbitration. Therefore, it adopted the principles of "peaceful settlement of disputes by negotiation, mediation, conciliation, or arbitration" (African Union, 1963, p. Article III (4)), and created an institution known as the "Commission of Mediation, Conciliation, and Arbitration" (African Union, 1963, p. Article VII (4)). It was understood that the organization's role in conflict resolution would not involve interventions beyond mediation, conciliation, and arbitration.

Conflict transformation requiring significant intervention within sovereign states was not anticipated within the objectives endorsed by the Organization. Indeed, the expert at the UN University for Peace remarked that the primary reason for the OAU's adoption of the principles of non-interference was precisely to prevent such interventions (Interview, 2019b).

Liberation Struggles and OAU Transformation

Nothing defined the Organization of African Unity (OAU) more than its unwavering dedication to the emancipation of African nations from colonial rule. Rooted in its foundational principles articulated in Article III of the Charter (African Union, 1963), the OAU regarded its core mission as the liberation of African countries from colonial domination, as well as the consolidation of the newly gained sovereignty and national independence within Africa. From its inception, the OAU was deeply concerned with liberation efforts in nations still under colonial control. The organization was actively engaged in supporting the independence movements of more than eleven African countries, including Rhodesia, which was under white minority rule; Namibia, under the apartheid regime of South Africa; and Portuguese colonies such as Angola and Mozambique. The theme of liberation consistently guided the OAU's discourse and decisions, featuring prominently in its declarations, policies, and resolutions enacted by its principal organs throughout its existence.

Although the liberation struggles were not classified as wars by the Organization of African Unity (OAU), they still represented a significant category of conflicts and were among the first crises demanding the Organization's attention. Consequently, the primary goal of the OAU—namely, fostering African unity—was often secondary to the goal of liberation. An interviewee at the AU Commission in Addis Ababa attributed the OAU's focus on liberation causes and the effectiveness of its support efforts to a shared consensus among the newly independent African states regarding liberation and decolonization. The complete independence of all states was the only issue on which the founding fathers of the OAU unanimously agreed at its inception. Therefore, it was comparatively more straightforward for the OAU to gain support from its member states for its liberation efforts than for other goals. Moreover, the interviewee noted, the organization's somewhat disproportionate focus on liberation reflected a tacit acknowledgment that the pursuit of independence was less likely to receive genuine or substantial support from the United Nations, especially considering that some of the states from which African nations sought independence—such as France, Great Britain, and Portugal—were influential actors within the multilateral organization.

Several officials from the African Union (AU) in Addis Ababa, who were interviewed for this study, observed that the objective of liberation had extensive transformative impacts on the norms and institutions of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), not solely at its founding but throughout its existence. An expert from the United Nations University for Peace in Addis Ababa noted that the OAU's liberation activities also served as a significant source of legitimacy and authority for the Organisation (Interview, 2019b). The newly independent African states, comprising the membership of the Organisation, increasingly relied on the OAU for managing the liberation struggles, reflecting a corresponding rise in confidence in the Organisation as a regional and global actor (Interview, 2019b). The expert further indicated that it was precisely in the management of liberation struggles that the OAU first demonstrated its capacity and potential as a global actor (Interview, 2019b). As the OAU proved its effectiveness in managing liberation struggles, member states were consequently willing to delegate more competencies to it across various policy areas, including foreign affairs and international trade (Interview, 2019b).

OAU Agency in Search of Liberation

The Organization of African Unity's (OAU) engagement in managing liberation wars was facilitated through the establishment of ad hoc support committees, comprising delegations of government officials from selected independent states. These committees evolved into a formalized institution known as the Coordinating Committee for the Liberation of Africa (also referred to as the OAU Liberation Committee - *Comité de coordination pour la libération de l'Afrique*). This specialized committee, along with its regional office, was constituted during the inaugural Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU in 1963. Its primary objectives included coordinating international assistance to support the African liberation struggle, managing the Special Fund dedicated to practical and financial aid, aiding liberation movements in unifying their efforts, and mediating conflicts among various liberation organizations (Union of International Associations (UIA), 1999).

The Liberation Committee was essentially the first institution created by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) for security purposes. It played a key role in fostering organizational learning within the OAU. It served as the main source of information and knowledge about various issues related to the well-being of African states. The creation and deployment of the Liberation Committee to support liberation struggles marked the OAU's initial effort in conflict transformation. Additionally, the Committee acted as an important learning agent, offering the organization insights and feedback on conflict situations and the effectiveness of its interventions. Using this feedback, the OAU was able to develop frameworks for working with other actors whose support was needed for liberation efforts, and to understand the limits of what could be expected from the international community. The OAU's involvement in liberation struggles also resulted in the formation of another institution—the African Group at the United Nations in 1964, which promoted and mobilized support for liberation movements across Africa. Overall, the African Group and the Liberation Committee were products of the OAU's initial efforts to address fragility and conflicts on the continent, especially those linked to liberation.

At its inception, the OAU's agency was persistently limited by a lack of technical and material resources necessary to achieve its goals. As a result, its ability to influence liberation wars was also restricted. Aside from deploying ad hoc delegations and later the Liberation Committee and

the African Group at the United Nations, the OAU's efforts mainly involved rallying independent African states and the international community to support Africa's liberation efforts. This support included measures such as imposing economic sanctions against colonial powers and mobilizing financial and military resources for liberation movements. For example, the Organization repeatedly called for sanctions against the apartheid regime in South Africa, as seen in the reports of the sessions of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government from 1965 onward. Though generally opposed to military interventions within sovereign states, considering such actions a violation of the principle of non-interference, the OAU nonetheless acknowledged the legitimacy of intervention against colonialism, including the use of military force. It affirmed the right of liberation movements to take up arms in their fight for independence and explicitly supported liberation wars (Assembly, 1984). The organization's primary tools for engagement included not just persuasion, but also coercion.

By the time the Organization of African Unity (OAU) determined that the Committee had fulfilled its purpose and subsequently dissolved it in 1994, the process of decolonization had been effectively completed. Of the twenty-two nations that achieved independence following the establishment of the OAU in May 1963, eleven credited their achievements of self-determination and independence to the direct assistance provided by the Liberation Committee (African Union, 1994).

The OAU and the Pursuit of Other Objectives

The goal of deeper continental integration, embodied in the ultimate creation of a continental Union Government, featured in various OAU discourses from its founding in 1963. In 1972, the OAU even established a special committee to explore ways to achieve political union across the continent and to form the United States of Africa government. However, the OAU's mandate to promote continental unity was never emphasized as much as the goal of liberation. Interestingly, the OAU chose to use the term "Unity" rather than "Union," which would have implied pursuing a much deeper level of integration than the Organization's founders were reluctant to consider. The decision to adopt principles of non-interference, sovereign equality of states, and stronger sovereignty itself significantly limited the objective of Unity. Ultimately, the founding states were hesitant to cede powers to the OAU that might weaken their hard-won sovereignty and newly

gained independence. Therefore, the OAU's mandate to pursue continental Unity was narrowly understood as providing a platform for collective problem-solving for the newly independent African nations and coordinating responses to socio-economic and political challenges at both continental and global levels.

In the initial decades following its establishment, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) demonstrated a comparatively limited capacity to address complex African issues, such as violent conflicts and socio-economic challenges, necessitating actions that could be construed as violations of the principles of non-interference. The OAU initially identified itself primarily as a conduit or platform for coordinating the efforts of African states—either collectively or individually—and the international community in devising solutions to shared African problems. Its primary function was seen as alerting states and pertinent international organizations, notably the United Nations, to challenges faced by African nations, including insecurity, the outbreak of health epidemics such as HIV/AIDS and Ebola, as well as socio-economic issues like the debt crisis of the 1980s and 1990s, and the severe drought and famine of the 1980s. Frequently, the OAU responded to crises by elevating their profile to necessitate international intervention, thereby interpreting local African issues as having international implications and framing their resolution as a collective responsibility of the global community. Additionally, the OAU often referred disputes between states to international mechanisms for arbitration, including the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), particularly regarding the management of liberation wars. For example, it referred the case of Namibian independence from apartheid South Africa to the United Nations, and the case of Western Sahara to the ICJ (African Union, 1978).

The OAU and Interstate Conflicts, Civil Wars, and Ethnic Conflicts

Apart from its involvement in managing liberation struggles, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) was also compelled to address interstate and intrastate conflicts across various regions of Africa. Furthermore, it found itself mediating disputes between African and non-African states, as well as conflicts solely among non-African states. Initially, the OAU predominantly confronted inter-state conflicts between African nations. These conflicts often originated from disputes over borders inherited from colonial rule or over resources that transcended borders, subsequently escalating into full-scale wars between independent states. Some conflicts between nations were

brief and resolved expeditiously before escalation, including the border dispute between Ghana and Upper Volta (1964-1965); conflicts between Guinea and Ivory Coast, and Guinea and Senegal (1978); the territorial disagreement between Somalia and Ethiopia over French Somaliland (Djibouti) (1977); the Ethiopia-Sudan border dispute during the 1970s; and the Mauritania–Senegal border conflict of 1989-1991. Conversely, there were disputes managed by the OAU that were as prolonged as they were difficult to resolve. These included the Libya-Chad border conflict from 1978 to 1987, the Ethiopia–Eritrea conflict from 1998 to 2000, and the Morocco-Algeria dispute during the 1960s.

Since interstate conflicts easily fell into the category of international conflicts and, therefore, by nature, posed clear threats to international peace and security, the OAU's initial response was always to bring these conflicts to the attention of the United Nations Security Council. Thus, the first efforts to deploy OAU peacebuilding missions were often carried out with the authorization and support of, and sometimes in cooperation with, the UN Security Council. Nevertheless, the OAU's influence in managing and resolving interstate conflicts was always evident in the missions. The OAU primarily responded by deploying peacebuilding and conflict management initiatives, mainly through ad hoc mediation committees, to restore law and order by negotiating peace with the conflicting parties. Overall, the OAU's interventions in resolving these conflicts have generally been considered adequate, given its capabilities at the time. An AU bureaucrat interviewed in Addis Ababa (Interview, 2019c) noted that it was easier for the OAU to intervene in interstate conflicts when they did not violate the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of any state.

On the other hand, several reasons have been advanced to explain why the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) paid less attention to other conflicts faced by African states, such as intra-state conflicts, than to liberation struggles. Indeed, the OAU's disproportionate focus on the liberation of states still under colonial rule has been attributed as a factor contributing to its inability to prevent the outbreak and spread of interstate and intrastate conflicts across the continent immediately following its inception and throughout its existence. Nevertheless, numerous experts interviewed in Addis Ababa were quick to assert that the OAU could not be faulted for these conflicts, as conflict transformation was never its primary objective. An interviewee at the African Union offices (Interview, 2019cc) highlighted that the core objective of the OAU was solely the

establishment and preservation of the African state. Therefore, it assessed security strictly in terms of the nation-state security. Its primary concern was with consolidating statehood and sovereignty, as well as protecting the integrity of national borders from foreign infringement.

An interviewee observed that, according to the understanding of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security lay with the United Nations (UN), specifically the UN Security Council (Interview, 2019cc). Because conflicts are inherently international in nature, the OAU was inclined to delegate the responsibility for resolving interstate disputes and conflicts to the UN Security Council. The OAU saw its main role as bringing any conflicts on the continent to the attention of the international community. Therefore, the organization's immediate response to conflicts was to defer to international interventions, especially those established by the International Court of Justice, the UN, and the Security Council. An expert from the United Nations University for Peace in Addis Ababa attributed what seems to be the OAU's indifference toward continental conflicts to its belief that such issues fell under the authority of the UN Security Council (Interview, 2019bb). Since the OAU deferred to the UN on matters of international peace instead of building its own capacity for conflict resolution, it chose to call for reform within the UN, particularly targeting the Security Council (Interview, 2019bb).

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) operated under the conviction that a reformed and sufficiently empowered United Nations Security Council was all that was necessary for the preservation of international peace and security. In its Algiers Declaration of 1999, the OAU expressed concern about the increasing marginalization of the United Nations and its role under the Charter in maintaining international peace, security, and development (African Union, 1999). It condemned the escalating inclination towards unilateral use of force in international relations, outside "the duly conferred mandate of the UN Security Council," as opening the way to "practices inimical to world peace and security" (African Union, 1999). While reaffirming its respect for the role and responsibilities of the United Nations and the Security Council in maintaining international peace and security, the OAU maintained that its commitment to these bodies was conditioned upon the democratization of multilateral institutions and the enhanced recognition of Africa's legitimate position and role within these organizations, as well as in other international

institutions including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (African Union, 1999).

During the 1990s, the OAU joined other states in advocating for the reform of the Security Council, calling for periodic reviews of its structure and functions to “enable it to respond better and more effectively to the new challenges in international relations, especially concerning international peace and security” (African Union, 1997). This initiative was notably motivated by the OAU’s concern that the UN Security Council had not sufficiently addressed the challenges of peace and security in Africa. In its Lomé Declaration of 2000, the OAU expressed regret that the proposed reforms of the Security Council, aimed at “aligning its membership and functioning to new exigencies,” had not been implemented (African Union, 2000). The OAU also notably voiced its frustration that the international community had not given adequate attention to conflict management in Africa, “as it has consistently done in other regions of the world” (African Union, 2000).

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) specifically attributed the escalation of violence and the subsequent genocide in Rwanda in 1994 to the United Nations (UN). The OAU generally expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of commitment and the clear insufficiency of the UN Security Council's ability to help contain conflicts across Africa. Moreover, the OAU was disappointed that the peacekeeping missions launched and deployed by African nations under Chapter VII of the UN Charter did not receive enough funding and logistical support from the UN and the Security Council. This perception—that international mechanisms for maintaining peace and security were ineffective, especially in Africa—partly led the OAU to consider creating its own African mechanisms and institutions for conflict resolution. An interviewee from the GIZ Office, supporting the African Union in operationalizing the African Peace and Security Architecture in Addis Ababa, noted that the decision by the OAU (and later the AU) to build its own infrastructure for peace and security stemmed from frustration with the international community’s failure to resolve violent conflicts in Africa. The official pointed out multiple instances where the UN Security Council and the international community refused to accept responsibility for preventing, managing, and resolving conflicts, despite appeals from the OAU/AU.

The United Nations Security Council, for example, was observed to respond cautiously in situations involving Rwanda and Somalia, which later contributed to the escalation of these conflicts. Regarding Somalia, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) expected that the Security Council would support the OAU peacekeeping initiative—known as the African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)—and eventually take full responsibility for peacekeeping operations in Somalia. However, this expectation was not fully met by the United Nations. The perceived unreliability of UN support in conflict management in Africa led the OAU to seriously consider taking full responsibility for maintaining peace and security across the continent.

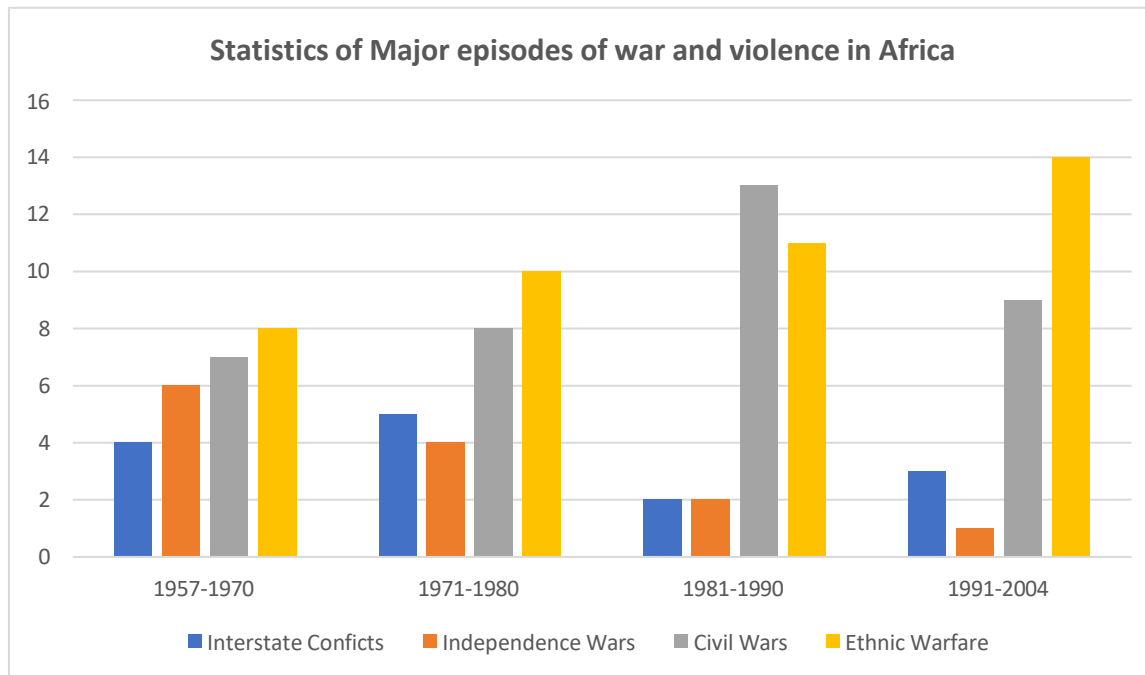
Conversely, the Organisation of African Unity/African Union (OAU/AU) drew considerable inspiration and valuable lessons from its engagement in joint peacekeeping missions with the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and other international entities. These include the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), initiated in 2007 by both the UN and the AU; the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), which evolved from the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) established by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the OAU; and the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), which developed from the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic (MISCA), among others (Interview, 2019d).

These missions were crucial opportunities for learning and provided essential knowledge and feedback for the OAU. The GIZ respondent noted that the OAU/AU gained insights into civilian aspects of peacekeeping through joint missions with the UNSC and the European Union (EU) (Interview, 2019d). She also mentioned that participating in these joint missions helped establish peacekeeping standards for the OAU/AU. The skills acquired are considered vital for developing the OAU/AU's own conflict transformation mechanisms and the broader peace and security framework. As a result, engaging in joint peace operations enabled the OAU/AU to collaborate with and learn from various global actors. The insights from these missions played a significant role in the organizational, normative, and operational evolution of the organization (Interview, 2019d).

As conflicts across the continent escalated and support from the international community proved unreliable, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was compelled to consider expanding its mandate to include conflict transformation. As early as 1965, just two years after its founding, the OAU faced mounting pressure to mediate several conflicts throughout Africa. An expert interviewee at the African Union headquarters noted that, although the organization's normative framework limited its ability to intervene in conflicts, the severity of these disputes—threatening the stability of the sovereign state system that the OAU aimed to protect—necessitated at least a declarative stance on their transformation. Two years after its establishment, the OAU began assuming responsibility for transforming specific conflicts emerging across the continent. After initially hesitating to intervene in conflicts beyond liberation wars, the organization decided to accept a limited level of responsibility in conflict transformation, while still acknowledging that the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security rested with the United Nations and the Security Council.

The OAU would henceforth be responsible for addressing each inter-state conflict that occurred in Africa. With every intervention, the OAU not only gained confidence to take on more responsibility for conflict prevention but also expanded its knowledge and capacity for peacebuilding and conflict transformation. Its efforts in conflict transformation led to the creation of new institutions and the strengthening of existing ones. Consequently, this engagement fostered learning within the OAU, facilitated by the OAU Secretariat, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, the Council of Ministers, and most importantly, the various ad hoc mediation committees and peacebuilding and peacekeeping missions it deployed in conflict zones.

Figure 3: Statistics of Major episodes of war and violence in Africa



Adapted from Monty G. Marshall (2019). 'Major Episodes of Political Violence 1946-2019'.

Online: <https://www.systemicpeace.org/warlist/warlist.htm>. Accessed on 20 November 2019.

The OAU and Intra-State Conflicts

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) also began to cautiously attend to intrastate conflicts such as civil wars, ethnic clashes, insurgencies, terrorism, and violent extremism that were rapidly proliferating across the continent. Unlike its established role in overseeing and resolving liberation wars and interstate disputes previously mentioned, the OAU often showed reluctance to manage internal conflicts within its member states. This general reluctance and inaction towards internal disputes primarily stemmed from its strict commitment to the principles of non-interference in the domestic affairs of member states and the sovereign equality of nations. In the initial decade following its establishment, the OAU was notably hesitant to intervene in conflicts within member states, fearing contravention of the non-interference doctrine. On occasion, the organization employed provisional measures, such as mediation teams aimed at fostering peace within conflict zones and deploying monitoring and fact-finding missions to collate information regarding disputes and prevent their escalation into violence. Nonetheless, these measures remained temporary and were not adopted as enduring policies. Overall, the OAU's strategy was to refer

disputes and conflicts to the United Nations and the broader international community. However, with the advent of intrastate conflicts in the 1970s and 1980s—particularly following the Nigerian civil war of 1967–1970 and during the early stages of the Angolan civil war—the OAU encountered increasing challenges in limiting its involvement in the prevention and resolution of intrastate conflicts.

The OAU responded to these conflicts by formalizing the ad hoc mediation committees and establishing peacekeeping and monitoring missions for deployment in conflict zones across the continent. This movement toward greater institutionalization was also paired with a gradual transformation and growth of the OAU’s institutional, normative, and operational structures. New mechanisms for conflict prevention, management, and resolution were introduced, along with protocols that promote democracy, good governance, respect for human rights, the rule of law, and prohibit unconstitutional changes in government. These changes can be directly or indirectly linked to the OAU’s increased assertiveness in conflict management. Several experts interviewed acknowledged that the OAU’s growing influence in conflict transformation significantly contributed to the development of its organizational and normative framework. An expert at the AUC (Interview, 2019ab) noted that the increasing recognition by the OAU that conflicts in Africa posed an existential threat to states was key in building a consensus among member states on the need for new normative approaches to governance and institutional and operational reforms within the OAU. Feedback from outside sources revealed a substantial disconnect between how the OAU perceives itself and the reality surrounding it, underscoring the need for the Organization to enhance its capacity to accurately assess the situation.

Furthermore, the ad hoc mediation committees, including the OAU Liberation Committee and the peacekeeping missions established and deployed by the Organization, served as an epistemic community, providing it with valuable knowledge and promoting learning within the Organization. The AUC expert (Interview, 2019ac) also argued that the OAU had gained knowledge about conflict transformation through its participation in joint peacekeeping missions with the United Nations and other international actors. The partnership with these actors during peacekeeping missions provided the OAU with opportunities to develop its capacity for conflict transformation. Over time, the OAU applied this knowledge to its initiatives and began to assume responsibility

for conflict transformation in Africa, as well as the management of African affairs, independently of international actors. As one AUC bureaucrat (Interview, 2019ad) noted, the active involvement of the OAU in conflict transformation also significantly enhanced its legitimacy and authority as a regional and global actor. This was evidenced by the increased willingness of Member States and international entities such as the United Nations to delegate to the OAU the authority to manage Africa's political and external affairs, particularly in maintaining peace and security across the continent. Moreover, Member States and the international community demonstrated their confidence in the OAU by allocating additional resources to its peace and security initiatives. Records from the OAU Secretariat indicate a notable rise in the organization's expenditure on peace and security efforts. Next, the formal language adopted underscores the organization's evolving role and prestige in regional and international contexts, reflecting its growing capacity and credibility.

Throughout its existence, the Organization endeavored to resolve intrastate disputes and violent conflicts across more than a dozen nations. In addition to its efforts to oversee liberation struggles, its initiatives to intervene in intrastate conflicts arguably exerted the most profound influence on the Organization's perception of itself as a regional and global actor, as well as on its organizational evolution. The Organization's endeavors to transform intrastate conflicts were markedly more limited—both in quantity and intensity—across the continent, particularly when compared to its involvement in wars of independence and interstate conflicts. An expert from the United Nations University for Peace in Addis Ababa (Interview, 2019b) observed that, unlike its interventions in other conflicts, the Organization's capacity to engage in intrastate conflicts was fundamentally constrained by its strict adherence to the core principles of non-interference, sovereignty, and the equality of states. The Organization faced difficulties in reconciling its founding treaty's prohibition on interfering in internal affairs with its objective of maintaining peace and security within the continent. Furthermore, there was limited consensus regarding the appropriateness and legitimacy of such interventions (Interview, 2019 b).

Negotiations over resolutions for interventions aimed at transforming intrastate conflicts were frequently protracted. They ultimately culminated in compromises that rendered the initiatives insufficiently robust to be effective in most instances. Nevertheless, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) consistently demonstrated an interest in transforming these conflicts, as evidenced

by its authorization of certain peacemaking and peacekeeping initiatives across several conflict-affected nations. It established a Consultative Committee on Nigeria to address the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) and formed ad hoc fact-finding and mediation committees to intervene in disputes in various countries, including Chad (1965-1979), Equatorial Guinea (1968), Angola (1975-2002), Burundi (1993-2005), and during major conflict outbreaks in 2000 in Zimbabwe, Niger, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Comoros, Ivory Coast, and Algeria, among others. In the majority of cases, the efforts undertaken by the OAU complemented those of other entities, such as regional organizations—namely ECOWAS, IGAD, SADC, and ECCAS—as well as the United Nations Security Council. The initiatives undertaken by the OAU varied from raising awareness regarding conflicts to assuming a leading role in their management.

In the early stages after its founding, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) mainly focused on preventing, managing, and resolving conflicts through mediation and negotiation. The OAU deployed provisional mediation teams to negotiate ceasefires between conflicting parties. As mentioned earlier, prioritizing conflict prevention was not feasible at that time. In its initial phases, the OAU lacked the capacity to deploy missions capable of effectively de-escalating conflicts. Over time, as it improved its institutional and operational capabilities, the OAU expanded its focus to include conflict management and resolution. Additionally, as will be shown, the OAU extended its efforts to post-conflict reconstruction and the development of states emerging from conflicts. The intervention in the Chad conflict of 1965 highlights the OAU's early attempt at post-conflict reconstruction. The organization had been involved in resolving the Chadian civil conflict since it began in 1965. This was the first civil conflict the OAU explicitly addressed.

The impact of OAU engagement in Conflict Management on Its normative Transformation

The Organisation of African Unity (OAU)'s decision to take an active role in conflict transformation not only initiated a process of institutional and normative change but also prompted a shift in the OAU's self-image as a regional actor. The organization's willingness to intervene in conflict resolution led to a reevaluation of its security approach, moving from a solely state-centered view to recognizing non-state security actors. Although the principle of state primacy remained, the organization expressed readiness to acknowledge the importance of individual security and other security factors, such as environmental issues. An interviewee at the African

Union Commission (AUC) in Addis Ababa noted that early on, the OAU saw the need to protect individual rights, especially during war, and adopted various legal frameworks aimed at promoting human rights (Interview, 2019cc). The AUC official clarified that implementing these legal instruments implicitly demonstrated the OAU's intention to safeguard individuals from state excesses, including violence and conflicts caused by the state. Because of its limited ability to intervene directly to protect individuals during conflicts due to its constrained mandate, the organization decided to develop legal tools to limit state power and hold violators accountable for human rights violations.

Although it could not directly protect civilians and vulnerable populations from the effects of war, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) endeavored to establish legal frameworks for safeguarding their rights. It is noteworthy that one of the earliest legal instruments related to human rights adopted by the OAU was the OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (also known as the OAU Refugee Convention). Enacted in 1969 and enforced in 1974, the Convention aimed to provide robust legal protection for victims of war, particularly during the period of internal political and military uprisings that followed independence. In 1994, the OAU issued the Tunis Declaration on the 1969 Convention, acknowledging the issues faced by refugees and displaced persons as outcomes of strife, conflict, and political instability that characterized the process of nation-building, democracy, national unity, and social and economic development in post-independence Africa (African Union, 1994). The adoption of this continent-specific refugee regime signaled a normative shift within the OAU and demonstrated a greater openness to acquiring new knowledge. It reflected an enhancement in the organization's capacity to assess situations accurately and signaled the OAU's growing receptiveness to addressing human security concerns and internal conflicts across Africa. The OAU Refugee Convention subsequently led to the institutionalization of asylum practices throughout Africa and expanded the organization's mandate to encompass humanitarian governance.

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) also adopted additional legal instruments to safeguard human rights, including the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (also known as the Banjul Charter) (1979), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) (1990), and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003). The adoption of the Banjul Charter was particularly noteworthy in the

OAU's transition towards normative reform. It facilitated the establishment of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, founded in Banjul in 1987 to "give expression and promote and protect human rights and collective rights on the African continent," and subsequently the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights. Fundamentally, the Charter emerged from lessons learned through experimentation with the principle of sovereignty in its absolute form. After observing the detrimental consequences of unqualified sovereignty, the OAU, by adopting the Charter, acknowledged that individual rights hold equal importance to those of the state and should no longer be regarded merely as "internal affairs of the state."

The AUC official linked the adoption of these human rights instruments to the Organization of African Unity's (OAU) experience in conflict transformation—the three treaties aimed to protect individuals from State overreach. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), for example, addressed the issue of child soldiers, which was widespread in the 1990s, and sought to establish a strong ban on the conscription of children as soldiers. This was a tacit acknowledgment by the OAU of the need to protect children, especially from the impacts of war, reflecting lessons learned from Africa's devastating conflicts. The Protocol on the Rights of Women also aims to protect women from the adverse effects of war. The interviewed AUC official noted that these instruments were created during a period when the continent was experiencing severe violations of the rights of children and women, particularly in conflict zones (Interview, 2019ad). The OAU recognized that national stability and security are closely connected to the security of individuals (Interview, 2019ad). Enacting these legal tools is also seen as a key step in shifting from the principle of non-interference to the principle of non-indifference, as outlined in the Constitutive Act of the African Union.

The adoption of these human rights instruments represented a significant normative shift for the OAU. It reflected a gradual move away from an exclusive focus on state security toward prioritizing both individual security and rights. Initially, the OAU was solely dedicated to protecting the state, but over time, it expanded its mandate to include safeguarding human rights and human security. By the late 20th century, the organization had established norms and created institutions to uphold these principles. It also allocated resources to expanding freedoms and building democratic institutions that better represent the population. The organization emphasized the importance of the rule of law, respect for fundamental rights, and democratic governance as

essential for social stability. The AUC official also viewed the adoption of these human rights instruments as a stepping stone toward the later AU principle of non-indifference, which would significantly diminish sovereignty while enhancing individual rights and security (Interview, 2019). In the 1994 Declaration on a Code of Conduct, the Assembly committed to avoiding excessive force “as the threat thereof, or aggression” and instead adopting effective measures to prevent and resolve conflicts diplomatically, such as seeking peaceful resolution of disputes before they escalate. However, the adoption of these instruments also signaled a shift from an excessive focus on Africa’s external affairs to its internal issues and challenges.

Table 2: Evolution of OAU Legal and Institutional Framework for Human Rights

Instrument	Nature	Year of adoption/ Establishment
OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (also known as the OAU Refugee Convention)	Charter	1969
African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights	Charter	1979
African Commission on Human and People's Rights	Organization	1987
Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Establishment of an African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights	Protocol	1998
The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC)	Charter	1990
Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa	Protocol	2003

The Governance Transformation of the OAU

The ad hoc Committees established by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to mediate various conflicts across the continent represented a significant body of epistemic communities. These committees facilitated organizational learning, transmitted essential norms from the OAU to stabilize fragile states, and provided the Organization with feedback on necessary transformations to enhance its institutional and operational capacities, as well as its legitimacy and authority as a regional actor. One of the most vital lessons the OAU appears to have derived from its conflict transformation initiatives is the close relationship between peace, security, and stability with democracy and development. During the 1980s, particularly following the adoption of the

Lagos Plan of Action in 1980, the OAU commenced efforts to promote the principles of good governance and democratic accountability as fundamental prerequisites for State stability. This ‘democratic turn’ was marked by a normative shift from an exclusive focus on principles aimed at the preservation of the State to emphasizing human security. Alongside the human rights regime adopted by the OAU—including the Refugee Convention, ACRWC, and the Protocol on the Rights of Women—the Organization also began to underscore the necessity of democratic transformation and the development of democratic institutions to ensure State stability and security. In 1995 and 1998, the OAU issued Declarations on African Economic and Social Development and the Cairo Agenda for Action, respectively, in which it established a strong correlation between peace and development, reiterating the importance of democracy, good governance, peace, security, and justice for Africa’s socio-economic progress. The OAU observed that “without democracy and peace, development is not possible, and without development, peace is not durable” (African Union, 1995). Consequently, the OAU called upon States to prioritize promoting national unity “through politics of inclusion and a culture of tolerance,” grounded in “the principles of respect for human rights and dignity, free and fair elections, as well as the freedom of the press, speech, association, and conscience” (African Union, 1994). Furthermore, the OAU urged member States to expedite the promotion of good governance principles, including accountability, probity, transparency, the equal application of the rule of law, and a clear separation of powers, as essential objectives and conditions for rapid and sustainable development in Africa (African Union, 1994).

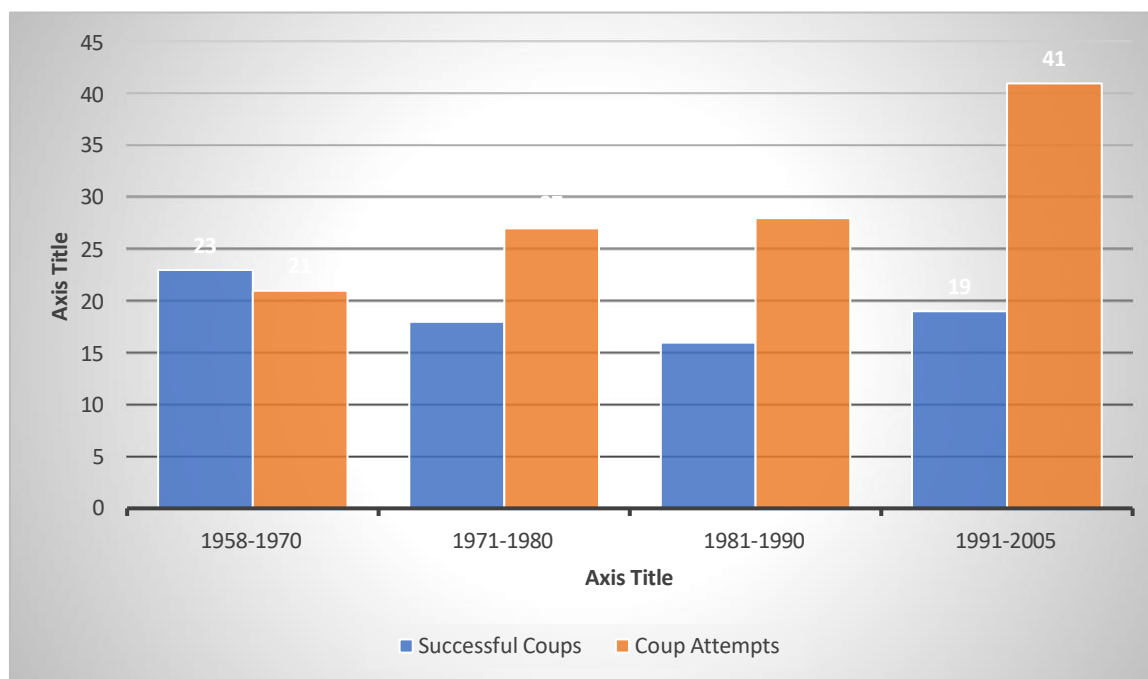
Several respondents in this study attributed the OAU's ‘democratic and human rights turn’ to its experience in transforming conflicts during the 1980s and 1990s. It is, indeed, instructive that the declaration on the importance of democracy, good governance, respect for the rule of law, and human rights was made following the eruption of unconstitutional changes of government and violent conflicts across the continent. These events posed existential threats to the states and led to severe human rights violations. The emphasis on these principles was also made after the 1994 Rwandan genocide, which severely damaged the OAU’s legitimacy and weakened its authority as a regional actor. An official at the AU Commission noted that the OAU saw the policy failure during the genocide as the biggest critique of its normative and operational shortcomings. The failure to intervene and reduce the impact of the genocide, along with managing multiple conflicts in the 1990s, triggered a legitimacy crisis, which in turn, precipitated learning and transformation

in the Organization (Interview, 2019ae). This normative shift would be marked by the adoption of several legal frameworks on governance, including the Declaration on the Framework for OAU Response to Unconstitutional Changes in Government (Lomé Declaration) (2000) which was the precursor to the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ADC) adopted by the AU in 2007.

OAU Response to Unconstitutional Changes of Government

Another development that marked a significant milestone in the transformation of the OAU was its change in attitude toward unconstitutional government changes, which became more common in Africa during the 1980s and 1990s. Figure 4 below displays the number of coups d'état and attempted coups in Africa from 1958 to 2005. In 1997, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU adopted a decision in which it “unequivocally condemned and rejected any unconstitutional change of government”—the strongest statement yet from the organization on the internal affairs of member states (African Union, 1997). The Assembly declared unconstitutional changes of government to be “an unacceptable and anachronistic act,” which contravened democratic principles and hampered the process of democratization on the continent (African Union, 2000). In 1999, the OAU adopted the Harare Decision on Unconstitutional Change of Governments, emphasizing the importance of promoting principles of good governance, transparency, and human rights as essential elements for establishing representative and stable governments (African Union, 1997). At its assembly of heads of state and government in 2000, the OAU adopted the Framework for OAU Response to Unconstitutional Changes of Government, outlining its strategy and commitment to addressing the issue (African Union, 2000).

Figure 4: Number of Successful Coups and Coup Attempts in Africa from 1958-2005



Source: Center for Systemic Peace (2014). 'Coups d'états in Africa, 1946-2004' Online: <https://www.systemicpeace.org/africa/ACPPAnnex2b.pdf>. Accessed on 19 October 2019.

To underscore the gravity of the threat posed by the proliferation of coups in Africa, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) escalated its appeals for support in combating coups to the United Nations and the Millennium Summit. It implored global leaders to collectively reject all forms of unconstitutional governmental changes and to implement appropriate measures against the instigators. An interviewee in Addis Ababa (Interview, 2019e) observed that it was not lost on observers that a substantial proportion of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government had ascended to power through unconstitutional means, and that several African states represented in the Assembly were under military dictatorships. Indeed, until the late 1990s, the OAU was recognized for its indifference to the phenomenon of coups, often accepting, and even celebrating within its ranks, those Heads of State and Government who had seized power through military intervention. Consequently, several analysts contended that the OAU lacked the moral authority

to pronounce on unconstitutional changes of government, viewing its prohibitions against such actions as acts of self-preservation by the heads of state and government. Furthermore, an expert at ECOWAS headquarters in Abuja remarked that, beyond serving as acts of self-preservation, African governments had been subjected to intense international pressure to establish principles of good governance, democracy, transparency, and respect for human rights and the rule of law, as well as to adopt democratic elections as the sole legitimate means of governmental selection (Interview, 2019i).

The institution and promotion of these principles were incorporated into the criteria for eligibility for assistance from international financial institutions, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. However, some respondents also attributed the shift in stance concerning unconstitutional changes of government to the broader wave of normative transformation occurring within the Organization, particularly in response to the decline in its legitimacy resulting from its inadequate management of conflicts across the continent. An interviewee at the African Union Commission headquarters noted that the Organization of African Unity's (OAU) stance on unconstitutional changes indicated that the OAU was increasingly cultivating independence from member states, thereby strengthening its own authority and influence (Interview, 2019af). The respondent further emphasized that the OAU was acting based on the technical expertise it had accumulated over the years through its initiatives aimed at conflict transformation across Africa.

Thus, although the heads of state issued the Decision condemning unconstitutional changes of government, the motivation for democratization originated from peace and security initiatives initiated by numerous institutions mandated by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). Furthermore, the interviewee observed that the adoption of a unified stance against unconstitutional regime changes further demonstrated the OAU's increasing willingness to acquire and incorporate new knowledge from its external environment (Interview, 2019af). The period during which the OAU issued declarations condemning coups and unconstitutional changes of government coincided with a growing consensus on democratic principles, good governance, and the rejection of unconstitutional modifications of government. Consequently, the OAU received explicit feedback emphasizing the significance of democratization and the rejection of coups d'état.

An official from the African Union explained that the OAU's stance on unconstitutional regime changes was driven by concerns about the high costs of interventions needed to resolve conflicts and political crises resulting from such changes. The OAU had been forced to allocate large amounts of resources—resources it scarcely had—for deploying peacekeeping and peacemaking missions to manage or resolve conflicts originating from attempts at or actual unconstitutional regime changes across Africa. Other respondents also linked the OAU's near-universal rejection of unconstitutional governments to the organization's peace and security initiatives. The AU bureaucrat noted that this decision was mainly based on feedback from conflict zones received through the OAU's peacekeeping missions. To better address the challenges posed by coups, the OAU decided to establish election monitoring and observation missions as a key part of its peacekeeping efforts. In fact, the importance of preventing unconstitutional changes of government and coups was also a key factor in the AU's decision to establish the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) within the framework of the AU's Peace and Security Council in 2006.

Thus, the adoption of the decision against unconstitutional changes of government signified both learning and transformation within the OAU, especially in the late 1990s. This transformation was more explicitly reflected in the institutionalization of democracy, good governance, respect for human rights, and the rule of law as norms of the OAU and its successor, the AU.

Transformation of OAU Infrastructure for Conflict Transformation

As the OAU became more assertive in its conflict transformation activities, its conflict mitigation initiatives also began to trigger institutional and operational transformations within the Organization. An expert at GIZ Support Office for the Operationalization of APSA in Addis Ababa noted that as the OAU and later the AU gradually took on responsibility for maintaining peace and security in Africa from international actors such as the UN Security Council and the EU, it started to feel the need to overhaul its institutional and operational structures and practices to handle that responsibility (Interview, 2019da). As mentioned, the OAU had developed an effective mechanism for intervention in liberation wars—exemplified by the Committee on Liberation and the African Group, which supported liberation movements in Africa. However, peace and security, as well as

conflict transformation on the continent, were not originally intended as primary objectives—no provisions were included in the OAU Charter for an institutional framework for conflict transformation. When the OAU began paying serious attention to the interstate and intrastate conflicts that characterized much of post-independence Africa, it had to create ad hoc mechanisms to manage them. Often, the OAU relied on ad hoc mediation committees composed of prominent individuals from member states to negotiate truces and restore peace. The organization deployed such committees to mediate conflicts, including the Ethiopia-Sudan border dispute (1969-1985)⁴, the Libya-Chad conflict⁵, the Western Sahara-Morocco dispute⁶, and the Guinea-Senegal conflict⁷. During its intervention in the Angolan Civil War (1975-2002), the OAU sent a Fact-Finding Commission of Inquiry and Conciliation to Angola (African Union, 1975).

Gradually, as the OAU's engagement in conflict transformation became more frequent and complex, the ad hoc mediation committees evolved into formal institutions. These committees served as important sources of knowledge for the OAU. The feedback from missions in conflict zones relayed by the committees informed most of the OAU's policymaking and laid the foundation for several institutional and normative changes implemented by the organization. The OAU also became increasingly receptive to learning, with its capacity to absorb new knowledge enhanced by a willingness to adopt a more proactive role in transforming conflicts on the African continent.

Its increased involvement in conflict transformation also contributed to the loosening of its once-rigid cognitive framework, which had been firmly rooted in the principles of non-interference and respect for sovereign borders. An expert at the GIZ Support Office for the Operationalization of APSA noted that recognizing the connection between peace, security, and sustainable development

⁴ At its 14th Summit in July 1977, the OAU formed an ad Hoc Mediation Committee composed of foreign ministers of 9 member states (Algeria, Cameroon, Gabon, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo, Zambia and Zaire to investigate the causes of the conflict (Yihun, 2016, pp. 78-79)

⁵ A special ad hoc Medication Commission presided over by President Diori of Niger helped broker peace and re-establish relations between Chad and Libya in 1971 (Červenka, 1974, p. 125).

⁶ At its 15th Summit held in Khartoum in July 1978, the OAU established an Ad Hoc Committee (also known as the “Committee of Wise Men”) composed of the Heads of State of Sudan, Nigeria, Guinea, Mali and Tanzania to study the Western Sahara dispute and recommend solution At its 18th Summit it established an Implementation Committee for the resolution of the conflict, composed of Guinea, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Tanzania (Naldi, 1982, p. 159).

⁷ Ad hoc Special Mediation Commission of the OAU presided by Emperor Haile Selassie led to reconciliation between Guinea and Senegal in 1972 (Červenka, 1974, p. 125).

was a key learning outcome of the Organization of African Unity's (OAU) ongoing efforts to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts over the years (Interview, 2019da). The OAU Assembly's resolution to urge the United Nations to establish a "Regional Center for Peace and Disarmament in Africa" to be hosted in Togo, with the mandate to "conduct and promote objectives of peace, disarmament and development," was one of the earliest signs that the OAU was beginning to understand the importance of learning (African Union, 1986). In 1985, the OAU adopted the Lomé Declaration on Security, Disarmament, and Development in Africa, along with the Program of Action on Peace, Security, and Cooperation in Africa, highlighting the links among peace, security, disarmament, and development—insights gained from its experience in conflict transformation.

In 1980, amidst the escalation of the civil war in Chad (1977-1982), the OAU, in its effort to find an 'Africa Solution' to the crisis, resolved to experiment with the concept of a "Neutral OAU Peace-keeping Forces." This marked the first time the Organization considered the possibility of military intervention in intrastate conflicts. This initiative followed an earlier unsuccessful attempt by the OAU to resolve the conflict through a mediatory process initiated in 1977. The OAU's intervention in this conflict was unprecedented, as it represented the first instance of a regional organization deploying substantial forces with the consent of a conflicting state in an internal conflict. This action contravenes the systemic norm and organizational principles of non-interference in the domestic affairs of member states (Amoo, 2003, p. 1). Recognizing that the decision to resort to military action was extraordinary and not anticipated or provided for in the founding Charter, the OAU included a disclaimer stating that the responsibility for the expenses of the Forces rested with the member states contributing the Forces, and that the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) would be invited to intervene only if the OAU initiative failed (African Union, 1977).

The Burundi civil war from 1993 to 2005 notably marked an important phase in transforming the OAU into a peace and security organization. Coming in the aftermath of the genocide in nearby Rwanda, which caused the OAU to face a severe legitimacy crisis due to its failure to intervene, the Burundi conflict served as a real test of the OAU's commitment to conflict management. It also tested the organization's ability to learn from its experiences. The OAU's decision to take a more proactive role in resolving the Burundi conflict demonstrated that it had learned important

lessons from the Rwandan crisis about the dangers of inaction and indifference in conflicts. In a bold and unprecedented move, the OAU stated that its efforts to peacefully resolve the Burundi conflict and the attempts by intervening countries “can in no way be considered as interference in the internal affairs of that country, but flow from a fraternal and genuine desire to prevent yet another African tragedy of epic proportions, and similar to those witnessed in Rwanda in 1994” (African Union, 1996). This was an important step toward recognizing the tragic consequences of strictly applying the principle of non-interference and acknowledging the principle of non-indifference. For the first time, the OAU explicitly declared its jurisdiction and responsibility over internal conflicts within states. This marked a major transformation of the organization and prompted active engagement by the OAU in conflict transformation across Africa.

The justification for intervention in the Burundi Civil War was also, in effect, a culmination of the gradual, albeit tacit, concession by the OAU that the security of the state was inextricably linked to human security. This realization led to the adoption of several legal instruments and frameworks by the OAU aimed at protecting and promoting human rights and related norms such as good governance, democracy, and respect for the rule of law. Notably, in its Resolution on Burundi, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government emphasized the importance of grounding and integrating the principles of “sustainable democracy and security for all people of Burundi” into an “all-inclusive negotiation process” (African Union, 1996). Subsequently, the OAU required that the deployment of peacekeeping missions be based on the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, along with other human rights instruments. Moreover, the OAU committed to upholding the principles of good governance and democracy, including free elections, and rejecting unconstitutional changes of government, viewing these as the foundation for lasting peace, security, and stability. The organization also declared that promoting these principles is central to its peacekeeping efforts.

Expansion of OAU Mandate for Peace and Security

Small Arms and Light Weapons

In a move reflecting the growing understanding of the root causes of conflicts in Africa, the OAU supported the ECOWAS Declaration on the Moratorium on the Import, Export, and Manufacture of Light Weapons, adopted in Abuja on October 31, 1998. The OAU also voiced its support for

the ongoing work of the UN's Group of Experts on Small Arms and the draft Protocol on the Illicit Manufacturing, Circulation, and Proliferation, as well as illicit trafficking in firearms, ammunition, and related materials—an auxiliary treaty to the Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime—and other initiatives by organizations such as the EU's Joint Action on Small Arms, the Organization of American States' (OAS) Convention Against Illicit Manufacturing, Trafficking, Circulation, and Proliferation of Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials (African Union, 1999). The OAU particularly recognized how the illicit proliferation, circulation, and trafficking of light weapons led to increased recruitment of child soldiers and the psychosocial trauma they endured. The OAU's focus on light weapons was, in essence, a response to feedback from its peacekeeping missions across several conflict zones on the continent, where peacekeepers encountered child soldiers and realized how the proliferation of cheap small arms and light weapons fueled and sustained wars, making them intractable.

Disarmament and Denuclearization

The OAU also adopted the “Pelindaba Treaty,” establishing an African Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (1996), which aimed to support Africa's disarmament and denuclearization efforts, especially in limiting and reducing the proliferation of conventional arms across the continent. The OAU commissioned an in-depth study on reducing the “armament burden” – the proliferation and clandestine trafficking of low-caliber weapons in conflict zones (African Union, 1996). The Pelindaba Treaty demonstrated the OAU's growing capacity for, and commitment to, conflict management in Africa, as well as its resolve to address the root causes of conflicts. To emphasize this, the OAU successfully campaigned for the establishment of the UN Regional Center for Peace and Disarmament (UNREC) in Africa, positioning disarmament as a solution to violent conflicts on the continent (African Union, 1986). The Center was tasked with promoting dialogue at regional and subregional levels and disseminating information on peace, security, and disarmament. In its Algiers Declaration of 1999, the OAU reiterated its support for denuclearization and the elimination of other weapons of mass destruction and committed to finding solutions for illegal movement, proliferation, and trafficking of light weapons, as well as addressing emerging threats such as terrorism, drug trafficking, and organized crime, all of which threaten Africa's stability (African Union, 1999). Additionally, the OAU urged states to ratify the UN Convention on the Prohibition of Use, Stockpiling, Production, and Transfer of Anti-Personnel

Mines and their Destruction.

Illicit Drug Trafficking and Organized Crime

The OAU also expanded its mandate and institutional framework to address the issues of illicit drug trafficking and organized crime. In 1996, it issued a Declaration on Drug Control, Abuse, and Illicit Drug Trafficking, which emphasized the strong connection between illicit drug trafficking, organized crime, and political instability (African Union, 1996). The Declaration also reflected the OAU's growing recognition of human security alongside national security. It marked the expansion of the OAU's mandate for preserving peace and security to include combating illicit drug trafficking.

Terrorism

In the late 1990s, the OAU also began to pay attention to the emerging threat of terrorism, as Africa became increasingly vulnerable to terrorist attacks, and most African States became breeding and hideout cells for terrorist groups. The OAU declared terrorism to be a “transnational phenomenon” that constitutes a serious challenge to “the values of civilization and flagrant violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms” and a threat to the stability and security of states and the international community (African Union, 1999). Thus, it supported the adoption of a Global International Convention for the Prevention and Control of Terrorism, while pledging to make an exceptional African contribution to the fight against terrorism by adopting an African Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism (African Union, 1999).

The adoption of these various legal and institutional frameworks addressing a wide range of security threats, from illicit drug trafficking to disarmament, denuclearization, proliferation, and trafficking of small and light weapons, as well as terrorism and anti-personnel mines, not only reflected a significant transformation in the OAU's understanding and assessment of security but also demonstrated its growing openness and capacity for organizational learning and assimilating new knowledge. An AU expert at the UNU pointed out that the urgency and promptness with which the OAU adopted these frameworks also indicated a rising consensus about what constitutes threats, objects, and referents of security (Interview, 2019b). The expert also attributed the adoption of these instruments to successful lobbying by an increasing number of epistemic

communities, including civil society organizations and various non-state actors, which provided clear feedback to the OAU on these threats. More importantly, the expert highlighted the OAU's initiatives in transforming conflicts across the continent. He suggested that these transformations were responses to the feedback received from many initiatives the OAU had commissioned to preserve peace and security in Africa and restore stability in conflict zones.

The Transformation of the OAU/AU Peace and Security Architecture

In 1990, the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government launched a Declaration on the Political and Socio-Economic Situation in Africa and the Fundamental Changes Taking Place in the World, which was based on a "Report of the Secretary General of the OAU on the Fundamental Changes Taking Place in the World and their Implications for Africa: Proposals for an African Response" (African Union, 1990). The Declaration highlighted the challenges Africa faced after the end of the Cold War. The Cold War's conclusion led to a shift from confrontation to cooperation in East-West relations and sparked unprecedented socio-economic and political changes in Europe and worldwide. The Fall of the Berlin Wall especially accelerated the political and economic integration of Western Europe, inspiring regional integration efforts and the formation of global trading and economic blocs. However, the end of the Cold War also brought about significant challenges, particularly in the Global South. During the Cold War, African states enjoyed a degree of stability as superpowers competed to outdo each other by providing security support to their allies in Africa, preventing them from falling into enemy hands. Therefore, although African states experienced a few conflicts and civil wars, it was generally manageable with the support of the superpowers. The conclusion of the Cold War, which diminished the superpowers' incentives to support African nations, revealed the vulnerability and instability of African States. Previously suppressed irredentist, secessionist, and subversive elements within these nations became more assertive, initiating military efforts to overthrow governments or pursue secession. Prior to the conclusion of the Cold War, the African continent experienced numerous intrastate conflicts and a rapid proliferation of coups and unconstitutional regime changes. In light of the outbreak of multiple civil wars across the continent and the African Union's recognition that Africa could no longer rely on the support of the superpowers, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government issued this Declaration.

On the other hand, as an AU Commission bureaucrat observed, the OAU's transformations occurred following the end of its last liberation commitments, with the independence of South Africa and Namibia. These causes had received disproportionate attention and resources (Interview, 2019af). The end of the apartheid system in South Africa and Namibia's independence freed the OAU to focus on other issues facing African states. Until then, the OAU, blinded by its singular commitment to liberation wars, saw the pursuit of African independence as its core mission. With the last two states gaining independence, this mandate was effectively fulfilled, and the OAU needed to reinvent itself to stay relevant.

More importantly, the OAU was now able to recognize the other challenges facing Africa clearly. One issue that required the Organization's attention was the widespread violent conflicts across the continent in the 1990s. The Declaration on the Political and Socio-Economic Situation in Africa emphasized this reality, stating that the “the possibilities of achieving the objectives we have set will be constrained as long as an atmosphere of lasting peace and stability does not prevail in Africa” and urging the member States “to work together towards peaceful and speedy resolution of all conflicts” on the continent (African Union, 1990). The Assembly also declared that the continent's socio-economic progress depended on peace and stability and that “the resolution of conflicts will be conducive to the creation of peace and stability in the continent and will also have the effect of reducing expenditures on defense and security,” thus freeing resources for economic development.

The Adoption of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution

In 1993, the OAU adopted the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution, representing the organization's most robust commitment to conflict transformation in Africa to date. The decision to establish this Mechanism explicitly acknowledged the threat posed by the escalating number of conflicts in Africa to the continent's stability and socio-economic development. It also reflected decades of incremental learning by the Organization from numerous conflict transformation initiatives undertaken since its inception in 1963. In the 1993 Declaration on the Establishment of a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution, the OAU stated that no single internal factor had contributed more to the continent's socio-economic

problems than “the scourge of conflicts in and among African countries” (African Union, 1993). Consequently, the adoption of the Mechanism reaffirmed the commitment outlined in the Declaration on the Political and Socio-Economic Situation in Africa, issued at the 26th Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, to pursue peaceful resolutions to conflicts as a foundation for Africa’s socio-economic growth. The creation of the Mechanism also aimed to introduce “a new institutional dynamic” to the conflict transformation efforts that the OAU had developed over the years (African Union, 1993). Furthermore, it marked a noteworthy milestone in transforming the OAU from a peace and security organization into one also dedicated to the continent’s socio-economic and political development. This transition clearly indicated that the OAU had gained valuable insights from its prior conflict-transformation efforts and acknowledged the necessity of normative and institutional reforms.

While the Mechanism was initially founded on the principles of non-interference, respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member States, peaceful settlement of disputes, and the inviolability of borders inherited from colonialism—principles that the OAU had adopted to preserve the State—the Mechanism would proceed to adopt new principles aimed at safeguarding human security and individual rights. The Mechanism embodied a synthesis of the principles enshrined in the OAU Charter and the norms developed over time, as reflected in the OAU’s corpus of legal human and political rights instruments, such as the OAU Refugee Convention, the Banjul Charter, the Protocol on Women’s Rights, the ACRWC, and the Declarations on Political and Socio-Economic Situations in Africa, as well as on Elections and Democracy. The Mechanism has extended the OAU’s mandate to include peacemaking and peacebuilding functions, including the deployment of civilian missions alongside traditional military peacekeeping operations. Additionally, it established a framework for OAU engagement in conflict transformation, encompassing prevention, management, and resolution of conflicts.

The adoption of the Mechanism would occasion a robust reemergence of the OAU as a regional and global actor. It would enhance the Organization’s capacity to prevent conflicts and sustain peace. Most importantly, it signified the transformation of the OAU from an organization that merely served as a conduit for international interventions in Africa into an organization entirely entrusted with the responsibility of finding “African solutions to African Problems”. Previously, before the establishment of the Mechanism, the OAU had perceived its role as primarily

interpreting the international implications of local peace and security threats to render them suitable for international intervention. Henceforth, the Organization began to assume full jurisdiction over and responsibility for transforming conflicts across the continent. The OAU still acknowledged that primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security resides with the UNSC. However, with the creation of the Mechanism, its mandate and capacity for conflict transformation were substantially expanded.

The adoption of the Mechanism was accompanied by significant internal changes within the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The Mechanism was to become a permanent part of the OAU and integrate into the Organization. Plans were made to establish several institutions to support the Mechanism, including a Central Organ and a Secretariat. The Mechanism's components included an Early Warning System (EWS), designed to assist the OAU with preventive diplomacy by enhancing its ability to take early action through data collection and analysis, thereby identifying threats and determining appropriate responses (African Union, 1996). Additionally, the OAU established a Panel of the Wise, reflecting the OAU's goal to formalize and incorporate traditional conflict resolution methods and include civilian approaches, such as systematically relying on the mediation skills of respected African leaders (African Union, 1996).

To strengthen the Mechanism, the OAU adopted a Declaration on a Code of Conduct for Inter-African Relations. This declaration aimed to prevent tensions, divisions, and confrontations among states, while asserting human and moral values, "based on tolerance and the rejection of all forms of discrimination, injustice, extremism, and terrorism." Furthermore, it sought to intensify political consultations and expand "cooperation in the resolution of economic, social, environmental, cultural, and humanitarian issues" (African Union, 1994). The Declaration recognized not only threats to the state's security and stability but also to the individual's security and welfare. It invoked both the statist norms adopted by the OAU and the rights of individuals embedded within the human and political rights regime it had developed and incorporated into its system over time. Additionally, it acknowledged the reaffirmation by the United Nations Charter of the international community's faith in fundamental human rights, dignity, and the sanctity of the human person, as well as the equality of rights for men and women, and for nations regardless of size (African Union, 1994). The Declaration also emphasized Article 29 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that "in the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such

limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing the due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others, and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order, and the general welfare in a democratic society" (African Union, 1994).

Stock-taking of the Transformation of OAU Peace and Security Architecture

In 1998, the OAU issued the Ouagadougou Declaration, which reviewed its peace and security activities since the end of the Cold War. Possibly the most significant document since the 1993 Cairo Declaration of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution, the Ouagadougou Declaration offered a thorough assessment of the OAU's peace and security efforts in the post-Cold War period. It emphasized the changes the OAU had undergone in response to its conflict-transformation initiatives. In the Declaration, the OAU reaffirmed its dedication to promoting the ideals of solidarity, unity, freedom, and justice as the pillars of a peaceful society (African Union, 1998). The OAU expressed concern that violent conflicts still hindered development and identified poverty, along with the harmful exploitation of cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity, as significant factors contributing to the ongoing conflicts in Africa (African Union, 1998).

The Declaration also highlighted other factors, such as the debt burden, which weakened African economies, and health crises like malnutrition, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, malaria, and inadequate health and educational infrastructure. These issues contributed to the instability of the state, making it vulnerable to violent conflicts (African Union, 1998). It emphasized the importance of justice, respect for human rights, and the fight against impunity, exclusion, and discrimination in managing public affairs to achieve political stability. Most importantly, the Declaration called for institutionalizing the OAU's peace and security efforts by developing robust organs and structures. The Ouagadougou Declaration proposed strengthening the Central Organ, which was established to activate the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution, and expanding OAU structures to address the evolving dynamics in our societies and worldwide (African Union, 1998). Therefore, the Declaration reflected the push for institutional change within the OAU in the context of its peace and security activities. It highlights the gradual formalization of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution and the resulting establishment of institutions such as the Central Organ.

In the 1999 Algiers Declaration, the OAU affirmed its commitment to promoting peace and stability across Africa, strengthening national sovereignty, supporting the development of stable state institutions, and ensuring fair and equitable economic and social progress in member states (African Union, 1999). The Declaration recognized the vital role the OAU played in establishing the political identity of African countries and achieving continental unity. The Assembly pledged to make the OAU “the essential instrument of our collective action both within Africa and in our relations with the rest of the world” (African Union, 1999). It reaffirmed the OAU’s principles of sovereign equality of states, non-interference in internal affairs, rejection of threats or use of force, and respect for independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. It also emphasized its dedication to the value and agency of individuals and the importance of human security in fostering an environment “which conduces toward a culture of peace and tolerance” (African Union, 1999). Consequently, it underscored the need to protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as the indivisibility, universality, and interdependence of human rights—whether political, civil, economic, social, cultural, individual, or collective (African Union, 1999). The Assembly discussed the development of the human rights regime in the decades after independence and how, through liberation struggles and the determination and efforts of African States and the OAU to codify and implement human rights, as well as the dynamic processes of democratization in Africa, results have begun to emerge (African Union, 1999).

In May 2000, the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government issued the Lomé Solemn Declaration on the Conference on Security, Stability, Development, and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA), in which it reviewed all the decisions it had made in the post-Cold War era as part of its efforts to promote socio-economic and political development on the continent (African Union, 2000). Among the initiatives it had previously undertaken for security and stability in Africa were the adoption of the African Charter for Participation in Development and Transformation (1990); the Declaration on the Political and Socio-economic Situation in Africa and the Fundamental Changes Taking Place in the World (1990); the Cairo Declaration Establishing the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution (1993), which provided “a new dynamism for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflicts;” the Protocol on the Establishment of the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights (1998), adopted to guarantee the promotion, protection, and observance of human rights within the framework of promoting collective security

for durable peace and sustainable development; and the Algiers Decision on Unconstitutional Change of Governments (1999), which aimed to promote principles of democracy, the rule of law, and good governance to ensure stability (African Union, 2000).

The CSSDCA process, which captured the transformation of the OAU in the decade following the end of the Cold War, aimed to establish a new agenda for the continent's development in the following decade. It was launched to mitigate the negative impact of insecurity and political instability on states' ability to achieve the necessary intra-African cooperation for integration and socioeconomic transformation (African Union, 2000). The Declaration on CSSDCA emphasized the connection between peace, stability, development, integration, and cooperation, seeking to reinforce the OAU's mandate for peace, security, stability, development, and collaboration (African Union, 2000). While reaffirming the OAU principles of respecting sovereignty and territorial integrity, it stressed the interdependence of security, stability, and development in states. CSSDCA asserts that democracy, good governance, respect for human and peoples' rights, and the rule of law are essential for Africa's security and development. It also recognizes the "organic link" between the collective security of member states and the security of each individual state, based on their history, culture, geography, and shared destiny (African Union, 2000). CSSDCA was key in expanding the OAU's concept of security to include all societal elements, covering the "economic, political and social dimensions of individual, family, community, local, and national life" (African Union, 2000). Most notably, it connects state security with human security, emphasizing the right of individuals to live in peace, meet basic needs, participate fully in societal affairs, and enjoy freedom and fundamental human rights. Consequently, both human security and state security are seen as vital for Africa's stability and development (African Union, 2000). Moreover, CSSDCA states that the pursuit of security must be conducted within the framework of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and other relevant human rights instruments (African Union, 2000). An AU official highlighted the link between state stability and the rule of law, good governance, and respect for human rights and freedom as the most important point raised by the declaration (Interview, 2019af). According to the AUC official, this connection signified a major normative shift within the OAU. It reflected the organization's growing understanding and experience in conflict transformation over the years on the continent.

Finally, it highlighted the importance of peaceful dispute resolution, emphasizing that the positive transformation of conflicts is essential for fostering peace, security, and development (African Union, 2000). It recommends strengthening Africa's OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution by enhancing the OAU's structures and mechanisms for negotiation, mediation, and conciliation, and encouraging the involvement of African statesmen and prominent personalities. Additionally, it stresses the importance of establishing effective cooperation, coordination, and harmonization of partnerships between the OAU and the UN in peacebuilding, peacemaking, and peacekeeping operations (African Union, 2000). While reaffirming that the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security belongs to the UNSC, CSSDCA declares that the OAU, whether alone or with other actors, is the "premier organization for promoting security, stability, development, and cooperation in Africa" (African Union, 2000). Consequently, the leading agency responsible for peace and security in Africa is the OAU. It also emphasizes the need to strengthen Africa's capacity for peace support operations, emergency relief, and natural disaster response at both the sub-regional and continental levels, while opposing foreign intervention in the internal affairs of African states, particularly in managing disputes and conflicts. Indeed, there is growing concern among African states that foreign intervention in conflict resolution often escalates rather than de-escalates, as seen in Somalia. The AUC bureaucrat noted that, in many cases, foreign powers claiming to resolve conflicts have actually sparked disputes and fueled wars in Africa (Interview, 2019ae).

The Transformation of the OAU into the AU

The most significant development in the evolution of African integration has been the transformation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) into the African Union (AU), marked by the signing of the Constitutive Act of the African Union on 11 July 2000, in Lomé, Togo. The first session of the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the AU, held in Durban, South Africa, on July 9, 2002, effectively ended the OAU and inaugurated its successor, the AU. The creation of the AU resulted from more than three decades of gradual, sometimes sporadic, transformation of the OAU. While this transformation was slow and involved minor changes, focusing on incremental adjustments to the OAU's normative, institutional, and operational structures and practices, its transition into the African Union was groundbreaking, marked by significant discontinuities in several areas.

Several developments preceded the transformation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) into the African Union (AU), each serving as a precursor to the restructured organization. These included the adoption of the OAU's Declaration on the Political and Socio-economic Situation in Africa and the Fundamental Changes Taking Place in the World in 1990. This document reflected the OAU's evolving understanding and the feedback from its peacekeeping efforts over previous decades. The Declaration underscored the OAU's preparedness to address threats to peace and security in Africa and acknowledged the interconnectedness of peace and security. The Cairo Declaration on the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution (1993), one of the organization's most significant legacies, formalized its commitment to a comprehensive approach to peace and security in Africa. This strategy involved adopting and promoting principles of democracy, good governance, respect for the rule of law, and human rights, among others, as fundamental conditions for a peaceful and stable society that Africa notably aspires to attain.

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) was initially endowed with a limited mandate at its inception, which was subsequently constrained by a set of principles—including non-interference in the internal affairs of member states, sovereign equality among member states, and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each nation, along with its inalienable right to independence. These principles restricted the organization's focus to several key objectives: the liberation of colonies, the unification of the continent, the peaceful resolution of disputes through negotiations and mediation, and the enhancement of Africa's external relations. Collectively, these principles and objectives established a cognitive framework that was resistant to learning and adaptation to emerging realities, leading the Organization to perceive the world through narrow, statist perspectives. By adhering rigidly to these principles in the years immediately following its founding, the OAU remained unaware of and unmoved by issues beyond its primary aims of liberation, unity, or representing a unified African stance internationally—particularly when addressing solutions that necessitated challenging or dismantling its foundational principles of non-interference and the inviolability of sovereignty and borders. The founders were of the view that conferring authority upon the Organization to resolve intra-state conflicts would merely invite external interference in internal affairs.

Several explanations have been proposed for the OAU's stability throughout its existence. Many analysts have noted the painstaking, costly negotiations involved in reaching consensus on the organization's foundational objectives, principles, and structure when it was established in 1963. The final OAU Charter resulted from difficult compromises made by the member states and ultimately reflected what Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere called the "highest common denominator" of interests and demands of each independent African state represented at the inaugural Assembly of Heads of State and Governments. These challenging origins made the OAU difficult to change and gave it a rigid structure resistant to reform. An AUC official in Addis Ababa observed that, following the intense bargaining that led to its creation, the heads of state would have feared undertaking a similar task to renegotiate the OAU Charter (Interview, 2019a).

An expert at the UNU Peace observed that the OAU agency, especially regarding the transformation of conflicts, was also hindered by a lack of sufficient consensus within Africa, and even at the global level, on whether the doctrines of non-interference and sanctity of state borders could be breached, even in the interest of peace and security (Interview, 2019b). Therefore, the OAU was denied clear feedback on the legitimacy of intervention in intrastate conflicts. The organization's hesitance to engage in civil and sometimes even interstate conflicts has been linked to this uncertainty about the legitimacy of such interventions. The OAU's limited agency was further worsened by its lack of capacity and resources for conflict transformation, along with the international community's unreliable support for its efforts. The OAU also faced a lack of consensus among member states and globally regarding the legitimacy of violating the doctrine of non-interference, even for conflict prevention, management, and resolution. As I have extensively argued, the OAU was left with only minimal, gradual adjustments to its norms, institutions, and operations as it sought to address the continent's peace and security challenges.

The OAU's approaches to conflict transformation also implicitly recognized the importance of other security referents, such as human, economic, and environmental security. This is demonstrated by the gradual adoption of legal and institutional frameworks focused on human security and human rights, including the OAU Refugee Convention, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Grand Bay Declaration and Plan of Action on Human Rights, the African Charter on the Rights of the Child, and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women, among others. The OAU also established several legal instruments

and policy declarations aimed at creating an environment conducive to realizing individual rights and protecting human security by strengthening state stability and reducing the excesses of state sovereignty. These instruments include the Algiers Decision on Unconstitutional Changes of Government, the Lomé Declaration on the Framework for an OAU Response to Unconstitutional Changes of Government, the OAU Declaration on the Political and Socio-economic Situation in Africa and Fundamental Changes Taking Place in the World, the Solemn Declaration on the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation, and the African Charter on Popular Participation in Development and Transformation adopted in 1990 in response to the “yearning of the African people for greater political freedoms inherent in democratic government” (African Union, 1990). These instruments provided frameworks for OAU efforts to preserve peace and security in Africa and to strengthen democratization processes across the continent. They outlined core principles to guide the OAU’s pursuit of security and development, along with the promotion of democracy and good governance.

In its Solemn Declaration on the 50th Anniversary of the OAU/AU, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government highlighted how the OAU overcame internal and external challenges, persisted in the pursuit of continental unity and solidarity, actively contributed to Africa's liberation from colonialism and apartheid, provided a political and diplomatic platform for generations of leaders on regional and global issues, and established frameworks for Africa’s development and integration agenda (African Union, 2013). The AU would take over some of these responsibilities, continuing the fight for self-determination and the drive for development and unity. However, the AU developed a clearer vision for integration, stating that the Union's goal “is the construction of a united and integrated Africa” (African Union, 2013). Most importantly, while maintaining the OAU’s core principles of non-interference and sovereign equality of states, the AU moved further by adopting a new doctrine of “non-indifference” regarding human rights abuses. This doctrine authorized the Union to intervene in member states in accordance with the Constitutive Act and laid the foundation for strengthening the rule of law, democracy, respect for human rights, solidarity, gender equality, and empowerment of women and youth (African Union, 2013).

The transformation of the OAU’s governance and peace and security structures culminated in the adoption of the Cairo Declaration, which established the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution, perhaps the OAU’s most significant legacy to the AU. This

Mechanism provides the legal and institutional framework for the OAU's role in conflict transformation across Africa. It also expressed the OAU's commitment to building an African society governed by democracy and of governments originating from the will of the people, "expressed through free and fair elections" (African Union, 2002).

All the changes within the OAU, solidified through its legal frameworks, are attributed mainly to the organization's political involvement—initially in liberation struggles and later in resolving conflicts over the following decades.

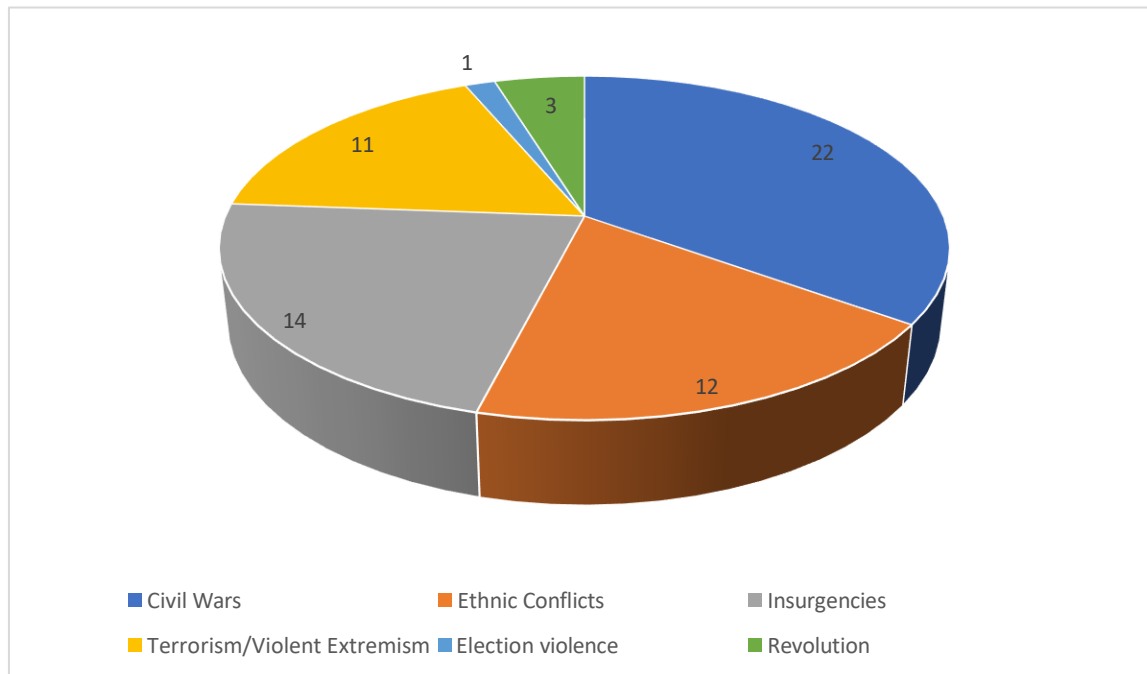
The AU and Conflict Transformation

The African Union was more actively engaged in transforming conflicts – both intrastate and interstate – across Africa. Indeed, the AU was established during several civil wars across Africa. As the heads of State convened the inaugural Assembly in Durban in July 2002 to launch the AU as a successor to the OAU, civil wars were raging in Algeria, Madagascar, Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Darfur, and Somalia. The AU strategy for transforming the conflicts involved working in concert with Regional Economic Communities like the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) in the Horn of Africa, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in West Africa, and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in Central Africa, and in partnership with international actors, notably the UNSC and the EU. However, unlike the OAU, the AU was more assertive and its agency more robust in its efforts to transform conflicts in Africa. It deployed several mediation missions led by special envoys to resolve disputes before they escalated into violent conflicts and negotiated ceasefires where violent conflicts had erupted. It also commissioned peacekeeping missions in several conflict regions across the continent.

The AU also expanded its conflict transformation mandate to include implementing peacebuilding programs and rebuilding in post-conflict societies. To highlight the importance of post-conflict rebuilding, it adopted the Framework Document on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) in 2006 in Banjul and later created an AU Policy Framework on Security Sector Reform (SSR) in 2013 in Addis Ababa to help restore and strengthen the capacity of security institutions in countries coming out of civil wars. An AUC expert noted that the adoption

of the PCRD and SSR frameworks was influenced by lessons the AU learned from its conflict transformation efforts, emphasizing the importance of post-conflict rebuilding in preventing the recurrence of conflict and promoting long-lasting, sustainable peace in countries affected by war (Interview, 2019ab).

Figure 5: Statistics of Conflict Trends in Africa from 2000 to 2017



Source: Bakken, Ingrid Vik & Siri Aas Rustad (2018) Conflict Trends in Africa, 1989–2017, Conflict Trends, 6. Oslo: PRIO

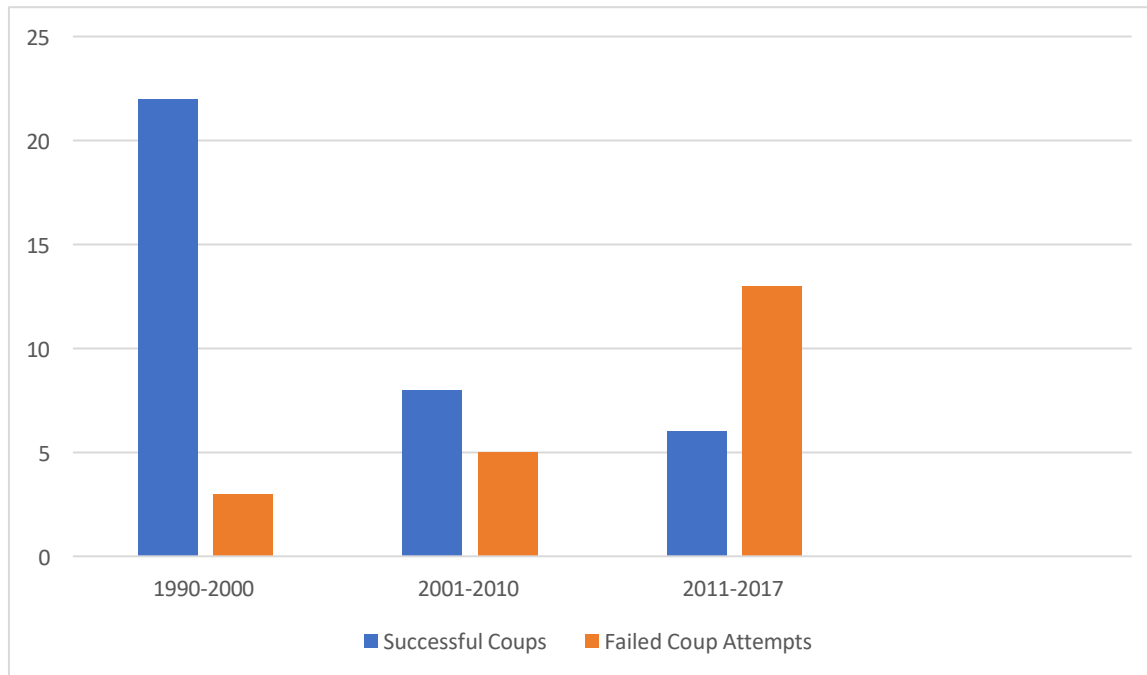
The African Union and the ‘Scourge’ of Unconstitutional Changes of Government.

Like the OAU, the AU also faced challenges related to coups d’état and unconstitutional changes of government. Building on the legal frameworks previously established by the OAU to address coups d’état, including the Algiers Declaration of 1999 and the Lomé Declaration on Unconstitutional Changes of Government (2000), as well as the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance adopted by the AU in 2007, the AU aimed to strengthen its institutional and operational structures for anticipating and preventing unconstitutional changes of government.

This included improving its early warning systems and enhancing capacities for good offices and mediation. Additionally, the AU issued the Decision on the Prevention of Unconstitutional Changes of Government and the Strengthening of the Capacity of the AU to Manage Such Situations (2010), which declared unconstitutional changes of government a threat to peace and security in Africa. The decision also emphasized the importance of states adhering to the rule of law and promoting democratic practices, good governance, human rights, and fundamental freedoms as key elements in preventing unconstitutional changes of government (African Union, 2010). The AU resolved to strengthen its role in preventing, managing, and resolving election-related disputes and conflicts.

The Charter on Elections underscored the significance of free and fair democratic elections as fundamental components of conflict transformation and peacebuilding endeavors. This was a direct recommendation from the Panel of the Wise, which was commissioned by the African Union (AU) to produce a report on conflict prevention and peacebuilding based on its field experience (African Union, 2009). Consequently, the Declaration on Elections and the subsequent transformation of the AU emerged from the AU's learning process through the Panel of the Wise, which offered feedback derived from its engagement in conflict transformation and peacebuilding initiatives across the continent. The AUC expert observed that the establishment of the Panel of the Wise within the APSA framework was primarily motivated by the objective of preventing unconstitutional changes of government (Interview, 2019ab). Similarly, the Continental Early Warning System (EWS) and the African Standby Force (ASF) were established as instruments to prevent unconstitutional changes of government (Interview, 2019ab).

Figure 6: Statistics on Unconstitutional Changes of Government from 2000 to 2017



Source: Center for Systemic Peace (2014). 'Coups d'état in Africa, 1946-2004' Online: <https://www.systemicpeace.org/africa/ACPPAnnex2b.pdf>. Accessed on 19 October 2019.

The Development and Transformation of the African Peace and Security Architecture

The African Union (AU) pursued a comprehensive and systematic methodology for conflict transformation. This included implementing instruments on human rights, the rule of law, democracy, elections, and good governance. To facilitate this, the AU adopted the Protocol on the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) in 2004, superseding the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution. The creation of the PSC symbolized a significant evolution in the AU's institutional and normative framework, reflecting its expanded mandate for conflict transformation. The Peace and Security Council was established as one of the AU's Organs, signifying the maturation of the organizational transition from the OAU to the AU in the field of peace and security. The PSC Protocol and the decision on the operationalization of the Peace and Security Council envisaged the creation of additional institutions, including the African Standby Force (ASF), the Military Staff Committee (MSC), the Regional Economic Communities (RECs)/Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Management, and the Early Warning

System. Furthermore, a 'Pan-Wise" network comprising a Panel of the Wise (PoW) was established to assist in peacemaking through preventive diplomacy and mediation (African Union, 2002).

Both the Panel of the Wise and the Early Warning System symbolized the institutionalization of the ad hoc mediation committees and monitoring and fact-finding missions that the OAU/AU had regularly deployed, respectively. Within the framework of APSA, the African Union also launched the African Union Police Cooperation Mechanism (AFRIPOL) as an independent platform for police cooperation among AU Member States, aiming to facilitate cooperation at strategic, operational, and tactical levels between their police institutions. In 2004, the African Union adopted the Solemn Declaration on the Common Defense and Security Policy for the African Continent (CADSP), which emphasized human security, identified common security threats facing the continent, and aimed to establish a framework for reviewing and monitoring the implementation of the AU's instruments for peace and security promotion (African Union, 2004). The African Union also established the Committee of the Intelligence and Security Service of Africa (CISSA) to support the existing framework addressing Africa's security, stability, and development challenges. Additionally, it adopted the African Union Non-Aggression and Common Defense Pact in 2005, thereby establishing a framework for interstate cooperation in defense and security intended to complement and strengthen the Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution.

In 2007, the OAU decided to unify all its peace and security institutions that had developed during its era, including the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Resolution, and Management, and the Peace and Security Council into an African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). When implementing APSA, the AU also adopted instruments on democracy, human rights, and good governance that had been developed during the OAU period. These instruments provided a comprehensive framework of norms and principles focused on "structural prevention of conflicts, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding" (African Union, 2013b). Through APSA, the AU aimed to reduce conflicts, insecurity, and instability across the continent, and to counter the resurgence of unconstitutional changes of government, frequent armed rebellions driven by political claims, terrorism threats, hostage-taking, ransom payments, illicit arms proliferation, transnational

organized crime, drug trafficking, piracy, and illegal exploitation of natural resources fueling conflicts (African Union, 2013b). The transformation of the AU's organizational framework for political affairs and peace and security also included establishing the Pan-African Parliament, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). These initiatives were significantly inspired by the AU's focus on peace and security and emerged from the lessons learned during its conflict transformation efforts.

Figure 7: Structure of the African Peace and Security Architecture



Adapted from Desmidt, S. (2016). Peacebuilding, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Monitoring in the African Peace and Security Architecture. ECDPM Background Note, 1(1), 1-16.

The Development and Transformation of the African Governance Architecture

The African Union's transformation is most evident in its increased emphasis on human security and human rights, particularly its dedication to safeguarding civilians from the devastating consequences of violent conflicts (African Union, 2016). To convey its commitment to prioritizing human security and the promotion and protection of human rights, the AU has adopted the normative and governance structures established by the Organization of African Unity (OAU), including the legal and institutional frameworks for human rights. A notable decision made by the AU immediately following its establishment was the adoption of the Declaration on OAU/AU Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa (African Union, 2002), which signified a substantial normative shift underscoring the AU's evolving identity. This development marked the culmination of decades of discourse on political rights, democracy, and good governance initiated by the OAU.

The OAU adopted the Lomé Declaration on Unconstitutional Changes of Government (2000) and initiated the process for the development and consolidation of norms pertaining to democracy and respect for the rule of law, serving as foundational principles for human rights. Furthermore, it cultivated a perspective on human rights that included political, economic, and cultural dimensions. Additionally, it articulated the view that respect for human rights, rooted in democratic governance, is a prerequisite for peace, security, and stability in Africa. The organization explicitly maintained that democratic elections conducted within the constitutional frameworks of states are the sole legitimate basis for government authority. Consequently, it promulgated legal instruments that de-legitimized both unconstitutional alterations of government and governments established through such means. The AU reaffirmed the OAU's stance on the vital role that elections play in fostering democratic governance. In 2007, it adopted the African Charter on Democracy, Election and Governance.

In 2002, the African Union (AU) adopted the NEPAD Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic, and Corporate Governance, along with a resolution establishing the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) (African Union, 2002). The APRM was entrusted with the mandate to ensure that States adhered to "... political, economic, and corporate governance values, codes,

and standards” and to achieve mutually agreed-upon objectives in socio-economic development outlined in the Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance, as well as the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance, among several other treaties, conventions, and instruments ratified by AU Member States. The APRM was conceptualized as “a self-monitoring instrument” designed to serve as “an African-owned and African-led platform for self-assessment, peer learning, and experience sharing in democracy and good governance,” in accordance with democratic principles, human rights, and the rule of law (African Union, 2008). Furthermore, the APRM aimed to promote the adoption of policies, standards, and practices necessary for political stability and economic development through the exchange of experiences and the reinforcement of successful and exemplary practices. It was also established to function as an early warning mechanism for conflict prevention, in harmony and synergy with the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the African Governance Architecture (AGA). The APRM represents the most evident indication of the AU’s openness to knowledge acquisition and learning for its transformative agenda.

The African Union (AU) consistently references the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, highlighting that democracy and the rule of law are essential to achieving sustainable peace, stability, and socio-economic development across the continent. Consequently, the AU acknowledged a significant complementarity between the African Governance Architecture (AGA) and the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) (African Union, 2015). The Organization of African Unity’s (OAU) stance on the principles of democracy and good governance was the result of an extensive organizational learning process, initiated by its efforts to restore constitutional order in several African states through peacekeeping missions. However, the OAU did not fully institutionalize these norms, primarily because of its persistent adherence to the principle of non-interference, which hindered its transformative capacity. For the OAU to implement meaningful modifications to its normative framework, a comprehensive overhaul of its foundational norms would have been necessary.

The institutionalization of norms that permitted intervention in the internal affairs of States proved to be challenging due to the lack of a clear consensus both within the Organization and among Member States regarding the appropriateness and legitimacy of interventions within Member States, even for the purposes of securing peace, security, and protecting civilians during civil wars.

An expert at the UNU for Peace noted that these principles so fundamentally constrained the OAU that it would require a significant crisis to generate a consensus on alternative principles, such as the doctrine of non-indifference (Interview, 2019b). The UNU expert further indicated that the intensity of conflicts in the final years of the OAU's existence, combined with numerous conflict transformation initiatives undertaken by the organization, served to reveal its institutional, operational, and normative weaknesses, thereby precipitating a legitimacy crisis as the organization's *raison d'être* came under scrutiny (Interview, 2019b). This crisis notably contributed to the development of a consensus supporting the OAU's intervention in civil conflicts, beginning with the Burundi Civil War of 1993-2005, during which the organization, for the first time, explicitly recognized the appropriateness of engaging in conflict transformation within a Member State's borders, primarily to protect civilians from the brutality of war (African Union, 1996). The legitimacy crisis was particularly exacerbated by the AU's failure to effectively manage the conflict that escalated into the Rwandan genocide of 1994, resulting in the organization receiving considerable criticism.

The proliferation of civil wars and unconstitutional changes of government, coupled with failures to effectively resolve conflicts and the consequent erosion of the Organization's legitimacy and authority as a global actor, provided unequivocal feedback to Member States that the Organization required radical organizational and normative reforms to ensure its survival. Notably, numerous reports from within the AU organs, including officials such as Secretary General Salim Ahmed Salim, indicated that the AU faced an existential threat unless such transformations were undertaken. The transformation of the OAU into the AU was a response to these challenges and exemplified the OAU's institutional learning. Consequently, the "Constitutive Act of the AU"—the treaty establishing the AU—established explicit foundational norms that distinguished the new Organization from its predecessor, the OAU. Additionally, the AU was endowed with an expanded mandate, reflected in a substantially broader set of objectives and principles. These objectives and principles, articulated in Articles 3 and 4 of the Constitutive Act, symbolize both continuity with the OAU and a conscious move beyond its narrowly focused mandate to preserve the nation-state.

Therefore, the list encompasses all the objectives and principles of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), while also advancing beyond them. The OAU articulated only five objectives:

promoting unity and solidarity among African states; coordinating and intensifying interstate cooperation; defending sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence of states; ending colonialism in Africa; and fostering international cooperation within the framework of the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The African Union (AU) incorporated all but one of the OAU's objectives—the eradication of colonialism from Africa—since, by the time it was established, every African state had achieved independence. Nonetheless, the Constitutive Act further delineated ten additional objectives for the AU. Notably, the set of objectives adopted underscores a renewed emphasis on promoting peace, security, and stability, as well as on advancing democratic principles and institutions, encouraging popular participation and good governance, and safeguarding human and peoples' rights (African Union, 2000). This comprehensive list of objectives reflects the substantial learning and knowledge accumulated by the AU since its inception as the OAU in 1963.

While the OAU objectives focused exclusively on state-building and the preservation of the State, the AU objectives also encompass issues not directly related to the State. Indeed, it suffices to state that the AU has been as focused on the rights, security, and the general socio-economic and political welfare of the individual as the State. This is even more clearly illustrated in the principles of the Organization set out in Article 4 of the Constitutive Act (African Union, 2000). Whereas all the seven principles of the OAU – the sovereign equality of Member States; non-interference in the internal affairs of States; respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each State and for its inalienable right to independent existence; peaceful settlement of disputes; condemnation of political assassinations and subversive activities of States; dedication to total emancipation of African territories; and affirmation of a policy of non-alignment (African Union, 1963)– focused on the State, none touched on the security or welfare of the individual.

The Constitutive Act of the AU, on the other hand, outlines a broader list of principles that includes all the objectives of the OAU except the one on liberation. It also provides for additional principles that address the security, rights, and welfare of individuals alongside those of the state. The AU adopted principles authorizing intervention within member states regarding crimes against humanity (African Union, 2000). It states the “right of the Union to intervene in a member state pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely: war crimes,

genocide, and crimes against humanity”—a concept known as the doctrine of “non-indifference”—and recognizes “the right of Member States to request intervention from the Union to restore peace and security.” It also condemns and rejects unconstitutional changes of government (African Union, 2000, pp. Article 4 (h-j)).

The three principles establish and justify the permissibility of intervention in the affairs of states. Along with other principles focused on human security and human rights—the promotion of gender equality (Constitutive Act, Article 4 (l)), respect for democratic principles, human rights, the rule of law, and good governance (Constitutive Act, Article 4 (m)), promotion of social justice to ensure balanced economic development (Constitutive Act, Article 4 (n)), and respect for the sanctity of human life, condemnation and rejection of impunity and political assassination, acts of terrorism, and subversive activities (Constitutive Act, Article 4 (o))—the principles of non-indifference authorize intervention in member states foundations.

As already noted, the fall of civil conflicts and the emergence and spread of other security threats, including terrorism and violent extremism, along with the resurgence of the problem of unconstitutional changes of government, all contributed to a strong consensus among Member States and other actors on the need to transform the AU. This transformation aims to improve its legitimacy and authority as both a regional and global player. An official at the AUC stated that by the late 1990s, the OAU/AU had come under increasing criticism for failing to contain conflicts and reduce their impact on the stability and security of African states (Interview, 2019ag). Especially after the catastrophe that resulted in the 1994 Rwandan genocide, the OAU/AU struggled to justify its existence (Interview, 2019ag). The AUC official noted that the OAU also faced intense pressure to relax its strict stance on the doctrines of non-interference and the full sovereignty of states, as well as its intense focus on state security at the expense of human security and other security concerns. At the start of the 21st century, there was a widespread agreement among many actors, including Member States, that the OAU needed a significant overhaul to prevent its collapse.

The AUC official noted that the OAU’s decision to focus on human security was also driven by its experience in peacebuilding and conflict transformation over the years. This shift toward human

security would not only transform the OAU's peace and security architecture but also lead to significant changes across other sectors of the Organization. Unlike the OAU, the AU would be concerned not only with the preservation of the state but also with the protection of human rights and human security. Therefore, the AU adopted a broader set of objectives and principles, along with an even broader scope mandate.

The Role of External Actors in the Transformation of the AU

While the AU sought to assert its influence in transforming African conflicts and managing African affairs, it still relied on the United Nations for the primacy in maintaining international peace and security. The AU remains aware of the important role the UN continues to play in maintaining peace and security, even within Africa. Therefore, the AU emphasized the need to seek support from the UN, especially the UNSC, for its peace operations across Africa. It also often turned to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to settle disputes in Africa. Since the AU, like the OAU before it, still regarded the UN mechanisms as essential for peace and security in Africa, it continued the OAU's efforts to reform the UN—particularly the UNSC—making it more responsive to Africa's security needs and more effective in resolving conflicts on the continent.

In 2005, the AU issued the Ezulwini Consensus, expressing the common African stance on the need to reform the UN system and the UNSC to deliver better sustainable development, collective security, and more effective conflict resolution. In the Ezulwini Consensus, the AU outlined conditions for the use of force and called for reforms in the UN, including "the allocation of two (2) permanent seats to Africa with all the privileges, including the right to veto, and five (5) non-permanent seats in the Security Council," as well as strengthening the UN General Assembly and the UN General Secretariat by increasing their efficiency and Africa's representation.

The AU also called for the creation of a Peacebuilding Commission, the elevation of ECOSOC to serve as the central coordination mechanism for the UN system, the formation of a new Human Rights body to replace the Human Rights Commission, and the democratization of the Bretton Woods Institutions. This push by the AU for UN reform reflected a growing concern about the shortcomings of international mechanisms in maintaining peace in Africa. An AUC official noted

that the AU and its predecessor, the OAU, were increasingly frustrated with the UN's failures in managing and resolving conflicts in Africa (Interview, 2019a). The AU has, in fact, blamed the UNSC significantly for the escalation of the Rwanda conflict, which resulted in genocide, as well as the broader increase in conflicts across the continent.

Additionally, the AU was concerned about the UN's lack of support for AU-led peacebuilding missions. The AU partly blamed this on the inadequate representation of African states in the UN's top decision-making bodies and the monopolization of the UNSC by a few powerful states that were not particularly concerned with Africa's welfare after the Cold War ended. Therefore, the AU sought to reform the UN to increase African representation and the UNC to ensure African interests were better represented in decision-making organs (Interview, 2019a). The AU also called for "innovative, flexible, action-oriented, and balanced partnerships with international actors, specifically the UN, to ensure adequate representation of African concerns and voices at the UNSC in decisions on 'matters of fundamental interest to Africa' (African Union, 2013).

Alongside its campaign for UNSC reform, the AU's efforts also aligned with a broader international movement to reform institutions responsible for maintaining international peace and security. Furthermore, the reforms undertaken by the AU reflected lessons learned from ongoing violent conflicts and security challenges on the continent. The AU's stated goal was transformation, and a reform agenda was a key part of many discussions at various decision-making bodies. The AU even created a task force to explore and gather information on the organization's transformation (African Union, 2013). It also appealed to the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) for support in strengthening the AUC and other AU structures to help achieve this transformation.

Thus, even as the AU maintained its commitment to international mechanisms for dispute resolution and conflict transformation, it increasingly sought to establish itself as the legitimate actor in managing Africa's affairs. The OAU had previously initiated the campaign to claim responsibility and jurisdiction over disputes and conflicts on the continent. For example, it vigorously advocated for jurisdiction over the trial of former Chadian warlord Hissene Habré in the 1980s. The AU continued this effort by pushing to have Hissene Habré tried on African soil

by an African-initiated tribunal. It later declared that the political nature and misuse of the principle of universal jurisdiction by the ICC and other international criminal tribunals regarding African leaders, including those involved in the Rwandan genocide such as Rose Kabuye—former Chief of Protocol to the Rwandan President—President Omar Al Bashir of Sudan, and Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto—Kenya’s President and Deputy President—constituted clear violations of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of African states, as well as threats to international law, order, and security (2008).

The African Union proposed establishing local African mechanisms or expanding the mandate of the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights to handle such cases (African Union, 2011). An official from the African Union Commission noted that, instead of protecting perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity and supporting impunity, the AU’s stance was shaped by its experience in resolving conflicts within Africa (Interview, 2019c). It was also argued that indicting current African leaders could worsen conflicts in their regions and destabilize already fragile states (Interview, 2019c).

The AU also recognized the importance of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in conflict transformation and relied on the support of RECs like ECOWAS and IGAD, along with the international community, to resolve conflicts in West Africa (Côte d’Ivoire) and Eastern Africa (Somalia, Sudan, and South Sudan). For example, the AU depended on the Multinational Force of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC), later transferred to the Economic Community of Central African States, to address the Central African conflict (African Union, 2008). It also worked through the EAC, deploying a team of prominent African leaders led by a former UN Secretary-General, to address Kenya’s post-election violence in 2008. The AU invoked Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which authorizes regional organizations to maintain international peace and security with UN approval and in partnership.

Therefore, the AU campaigned for UN funding through assessed contributions for peacekeeping operations led and undertaken by the AU, under its authority and with UN consent (African Union, 2007). The AU also conducted joint peace operations with the UN. It deployed several envoys alongside UN envoys to mediate in conflict-resolution efforts in places like Darfur (2008) and

launched joint AU-UN hybrid operations, such as UNAMID.

Many analysts have attributed much of the transformation of the AU's institutional and operational capacity for conflict resolution to the support of external actors. An expert at the AUC highlighted the EU's support for the AU's peace and security agenda (Interview, 2019). However, the expert also noted that even the increased involvement of external actors in transforming the AU was primarily driven by the AU's own initiatives, especially in response to its escalating peace and security needs (Interview, 2019ag). For example, the establishment of the EU's Peace and Support Operation Facility (PSOF) to fund AU peace support and peacekeeping missions was a direct response to a need identified by the AU and requested explicitly by the AU. Support from other international partners, such as the G8 and the UN, for establishing and operationalizing the African Standby Force (ASF) and the Military Staff Committee (MSC), was also provided at the AU's behest (African Union, 2003).

Nevertheless, the AU was also concerned about its resource capabilities and its dependence on external actors for financial and technical support for many of its operations. It started emphasizing the importance of mobilizing its own resources, especially in peace and security initiatives, to ensure the success of its efforts. The AU believed that its conflict transformation efforts had been hindered by resource shortages and an over-reliance on external support (interview, 2019ag). It recognized that mobilizing resources internally was crucial to asserting Africa's ownership and leadership of its operations (African Union, 2013). As a result, it urged member states to increase contributions to the Peace Fund for Africa, aiming "to truly own the efforts to promote peace, security, and stability on the continent" (African Union, 2013). Later, the AU created the Africa Capacity for Immediate Responses to Crises, encouraging member states to contribute military and police capabilities, force enablers and multipliers, equipment, and other resources for rapid deployment to respond effectively to emergencies within the APSA framework (African Union, 2013). It also launched the African Solidarity Initiative to support countries emerging from conflict, assist with peace consolidation, and protect post-conflict societies from relapsing into conflict (African Union, 2013).

The adoption of the slogan "African Solutions to African Problems" was essentially an

acknowledgment by the AU of the limits imposed on its ability to resolve African issues due to its heavy reliance on external funding. The AU understood that increasing its own funding and reducing dependence on external actors were key to strengthening its agency and independence in maintaining peace and security across Africa. However, nothing has attracted more financial and technical support for the AU's transformation than its increased involvement in conflict resolution throughout Africa (Interview, 2019ag). As international actors delegated more conflict management responsibilities to the AU, they also became more willing to contribute toward building the AU's capacity for those efforts.

The strong resurgence of the AU as a key player in conflict transformation, driven by its revamped institutions and norms, has increased its legitimacy and credibility, as evidenced by the rising number of conflict transformation missions it has carried out across Africa. By 2006, just four years after its founding, the AU was involved in resolving disputes and conflicts in more than 15 African countries. The AU was establishing itself as a legitimate actor, and both African states and international organizations like the UN and the EU were growing more confident in the AU's ability to manage conflict transformation in Africa. As a result, states and international organizations were more willing to assign greater responsibilities to the AU in peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

Case Study 2: Regional Conflict Transformation and Transformation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

Background: The West African sub-region

West Africa consists of 16 “geographically proximate and contiguous states,” situated between the Sahara Desert's border and the Gulf of Guinea (Piccolino & Minou, 2017). Countries in the region share a common history of European colonization and are among the world's poorest, despite recent economic growth. Since the end of the Cold War, the region has experienced political instability, with numerous intra-state conflicts and security crises. Some conflicts, such as those in Liberia (1989 and 1999) and Sierra Leone (1991), have involved extreme violence and high casualties, while others, like the Casamance conflict in Senegal, the Dagbon crisis in Ghana, and the Niger Delta conflict in Nigeria, have been less violent (2017). These conflicts arise from socio-

cultural, political, and economic issues, including “weak governance structures and corruption, economic inequality and poverty, youth unemployment, and religious and ethnic marginalization” (2017).

Although these conflicts initially stem from internal struggles for power and control over resources, they have increasingly become more regionalized, especially with the spread of small arms and light weapons. The emergence of ‘non-conventional threats’ such as terrorism and maritime piracy, private armies of warlords, mercenaries, dispossessed youths, and bandits illegally exploiting natural resources, along with trafficking in arms, drugs, and people, has worsened these issues (ECOWAS, 2008; Piccolino & Minou, 2017). Sometimes, these conflicts are sustained through regional networks and have spillover effects beyond their borders. Consequently, internal conflicts generate ripple effects that extend far beyond the borders of states, often resulting in refugee flows, severe decline in livelihoods, health, and nutrition standards, disrupted infrastructure, and the spread of weapons, violence, and transnational crime.

Insurgencies within a country often receive support from networks in neighboring nations. These networks supply arms, rear bases, and sometimes even direct military assistance, as seen in Sierra Leone, where Liberia’s president, Charles Taylor, supported the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels, and in Senegal’s Casamance conflict, which involved Guinea-Bissau and the Gambia (Piccolino & Minou, 2017). The porous nature of West African borders facilitates this support, allowing for the spread of Small Arms and light weapons, as well as the movement of militias and mercenaries. Former Sierra Leonean RUF rebels are also reported to have joined fighters in conflicts in Liberia, Guinea, and western Côte d’Ivoire, often disguising themselves as refugees and using border refugee camps as military sanctuaries.

Regionalism in West Africa

West Africa has experienced, more than any other part of Africa, the most institutionalized forms of regional integration. The West African integration initiatives date back to the colonial era and have been heavily shaped by former colonial powers, especially France. The development of strong linguistic and cultural ties has facilitated the creation of regional organizations such as ECOWAS and the Union Économique et monétaire ouest-africaine (UEMOA) (Fioramonti, 2017). Regionalism in West Africa has been relatively advanced, showing evident progress. Regional

institutions have successfully established regional standards for good governance, enhanced diplomatic capacity, and advanced migration protocols and monetary integration (2017). In a recent study assessing the impact of the EU's promotion of regional integration on regionalism in West Africa, Fioramonti noted that the EU's (led by France) exertion of pressure has resulted in a system of monetary integration led by UEMOA and inspired by "norms-based regional processes" (Fioramonti, 2017). Conversely, he observes that the EU's attempt to promote economic-driven integration in West Africa has not been as successful as ECOWAS-driven cooperation, which has focused on security and political issues (Fioramonti, 2017).

West Africa features two major regional integration initiatives: the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), recognized by the African Union (AU) as the Regional Economic Community for West Africa, and the Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine (UEMOA), also known in English as the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU). All sixteen West African countries are members of the AU. UEMOA includes a subgroup of eight francophone West African countries. Established in 1994, UEMOA is described as being "more advanced economically but less promising politically" (Diez, Tocci, Faleg, & Scherwitz, 2017). It has a higher level of economic integration, having established both a monetary union—featuring a common currency and a Central Bank based in Dakar—and an operational customs union since 2000.

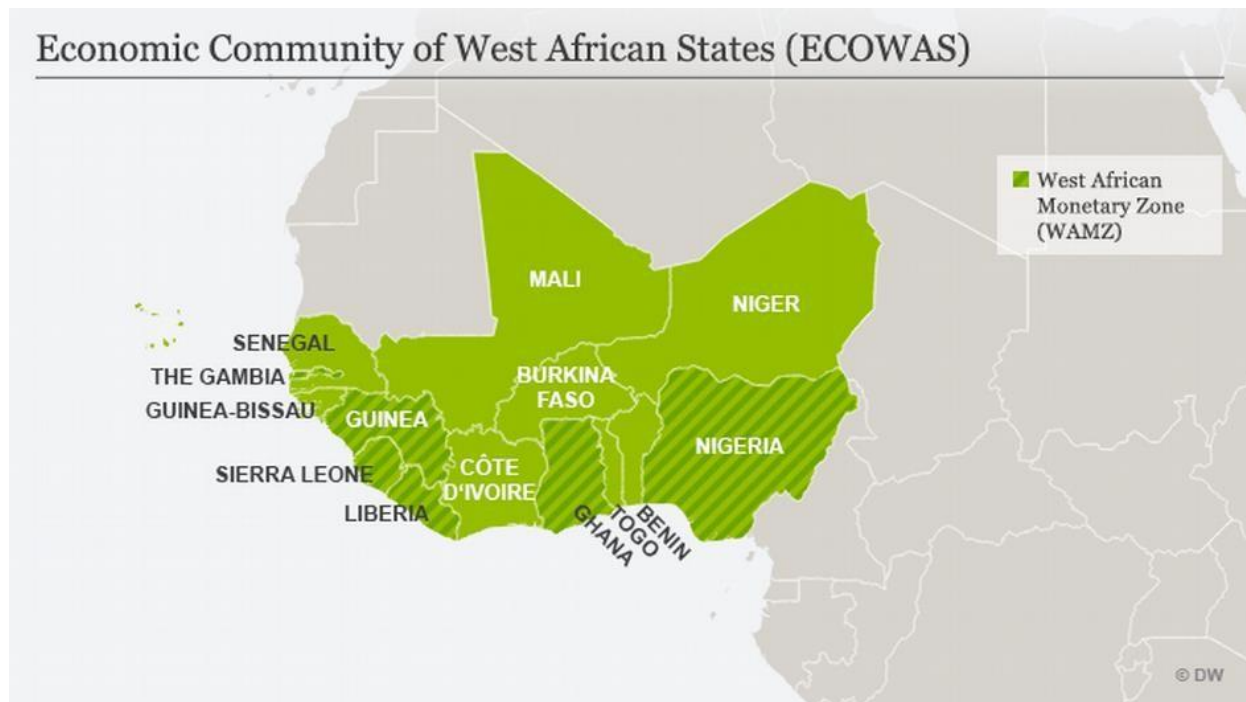
The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

ECOWAS is the oldest of the eight Regional Economic Communities (RECs) recognized under the Abuja Treaty, which establishes the African Economic Community (AEC), as the foundational building blocks of the AEC. It is perhaps the most dynamic of the RECs and, over its more than four decades of existence, has developed numerous institutions, organs, systems, policies, and organizational practices and procedures to advance its regional integration agenda in West Africa.

ECOWAS has implemented revisions to treaties and several organizational changes as it pursued its ever-expanding integration agenda. Like the AU, ECOWAS is an evolved version of a predecessor, though with a similar name. ECOWAS illustrates an African regional organization that is best known for its "latent functions" in maintaining peace and transforming conflicts, rather

than its official goals of economic development. ECOWAS includes all sixteen West African states except Mauritania (see Figure 1 below). It has a population of over 300 million. Founded in 1975 and later reformed with the revision of its treaty in 1993, ECOWAS is among the most advanced regional institutions in Africa. It was established to help countries in the West African sub-region address the specific challenge of economic development.

Figure 8: Map of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)



Source: Deutsche Welle (2020). Mali: West African states to send delegation 'immediately'.

Online: https://www.dw.com/en/mali-coup-ecowas-delegation/a-54640262?maca=en-rss_en_allafrica_southafrica-10071-xml-mrss. Accessed on 22 February 2022.

Thus, it was initially created to address issues of economic integration “as the basis for self-reliance” (Jaye & Amadi, 2011). However, the organization has made progress in “functional integration” (Diez, Tocci, Faleg, & Scherwitz, 2017; Piccolino & Minou, 2017) in many areas. Since the 2000s, it has removed visa requirements for its members. It has attempted to eliminate barriers to the movement of people and the rights of residence and establishment, even though these freedoms are often hindered by persistent sentiments of “nationalism and xenophobia”

across the region (Diez, Tocci, Faleg, & Scherwitz, 2017). The ECOWAS Common External Tariff went into effect in 2016, and plans for a West African Monetary Zone are underway. ECOWAS is also the only REC in Africa with a functioning Community levy, which funds its operational costs and programs.

Nigeria's Influence in ECOWAS

ECOWAS emerged from multiple attempts by the Anglo-French nations in West Africa to create an economic bloc. In 1964, Liberian president William Tubman proposed establishing an economic union for West Africa, leading to the signing of an agreement for a free trade area in 1965 by the four states of Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone (ECOWAS, 2016). Nigeria, the regional hegemon of West Africa, played a crucial role in founding ECOWAS. Several sources (Zagari, 1978; Aworawo, 2016; Ojo, 1980), supported by interviews at the ECOWAS Commission Headquarters in Abuja, highlight Nigeria's dominant role in shaping the idea of a West African subregional organization. Two Nigerian leaders—Prime Minister Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and President Yakubu Gowon—are especially credited with initiating the concept of ECOWAS. The Balewa government proposed the idea in 1964, and the Gowon administration built on this effort with a cooperation agreement between Nigeria and Guinea in 1969, laying the groundwork for a broader West African organization.

Ironically, even though Nigeria and other founding states opposed the idea of an organization involved in the security affairs of member states, Nigeria's initial interest in the organization stemmed mainly from its desire for security and stability in West Africa. Nigeria had just come out of a civil war in which its immediate neighbors, Francophone countries influenced by France, supported the secessionist Biafran State. During the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970), Cote d'Ivoire recognized Biafra, while Benin Republic and Chad, encouraged by France, assisted the Biafran secessionists (Aworawo, 2016; Ojo, 1980). France's ongoing presence in its former West African colonies drove Nigeria to pursue the creation of ECOWAS. In 1972, the Nigerian head of state, General Yakubu Gowon, teamed up with his counterpart, General Gnassingbe Eyadema of Togo, to promote the idea of a West African regional trade agreement, mainly to counter the influence of France's proxy bloc formed by former French colonies in West Africa—the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU). These efforts led to the signing, in 1972, of a

treaty between Nigeria and Togo, often called the “Embryo of the West African Economic Community.” These efforts culminated in the signing of the Treaty of Lagos, which established the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975 (ECOWAS, 2016).

The robust involvement of Nigeria in the conceptualization and establishment of ECOWAS, and its position as a hegemon that wields substantial power in the West African subregion, have led several analysts to argue that ECOWAS is heavily dependent on Nigeria for its development. However, as will be shown here, the subsequent organizational transformations that ECOWAS would experience were, to a large extent, attributable to the organization’s involvement in transforming conflicts in West Africa.

The Political Transformation of ECOWAS

This study demonstrates that ECOWAS has undergone numerous changes since its founding in 1975. ECOWAS has undergone significant political transformation, evident in the expansion and creation of new political institutions, the overhaul and adoption of new (primarily political) norms and practices, and growth. Unlike other African Regional Economic Communities (RECs), ECOWAS has followed a more aggressive transformative path, evolving from a solely economic integration scheme in 1975 to an entirely political organization in the post-Cold War era. Central to these developments has been West African countries' concerns with governance, peace, and security. The main argument of this research is that increased awareness and consensus about the seriousness of these issues strengthened the drive for collective efforts to find solutions to both interstate and internal conflicts, which are viewed as threats to the region's peace, stability, and security. This also fueled West African states' sustained commitment to enhancing regional cooperation through ECOWAS, not just for economic goals but also for collective security.

Like all international organizations, ECOWAS was created to reflect the lowest common denominators of the diverse and competing interests of its founding states. Similar to the founders of the OAU, the 16 heads of state who established ECOWAS had to dilute the organization's objectives and goals to focus on economic cooperation and integration, despite several of them wishing for deeper integration. The negotiations and bargaining among states that led to the

organization's formation were, as expected, lengthy and arduous. As already mentioned, Nigeria played a leading role in uniting the member states around the regional agenda and bore a larger share of the negotiation costs for establishing the organization. However, many other states were also convinced of the potential economic benefits of cooperation and committed to its realization.

The shared hatred and fear of the French presence in the region also strengthened Nigeria and its allies' resolve to establish ECOWAS. Some analysts have tried to place the creation of ECOWAS within the wave of economic regionalism that swept across the world in the 1970s and 1980s. It is clear that ECOWAS, like other state-centered regional groups, was created as a tool to pursue a mix of national interests, with a mandate and institutional structure limited to what those interests required. From a realist perspective, the organization was designed to be inherently "sticky"—states would be reluctant to push for its transformation, aware of the high costs and tough negotiations involved. Therefore, ECOWAS's willingness to adapt—such as its readiness to deviate from its original economic goals and consider expanding its mandate to address conflicts (even if only interstate)—shortly after its founding presents an important puzzle. As this study shows, this transformation can be explained by a combination of a cognitive structure with a high capacity for absorbing new knowledge; the presence in the external environment of a growing consensus on the legitimacy and legality of intervening in interstate and, under certain conditions, internal conflicts; and learning driven by the organization's decision to explore conflict transformation. The following sections present findings related to each of these factors.

Organizational Transformation of ECOWAS and Conflict Transformation

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was created with a mandate solely focused on promoting economic cooperation among West African nations, supported by a streamlined institutional structure to implement it. The Lagos Treaty, which established the Community, defined its primary goals as fostering cooperation and economic growth to improve living standards across West Africa by enhancing economic stability and strengthening relationships among member states (Dapaah-Agyemang, 2003, p. 11). In the Treaty of Lagos, the Community committed to encouraging cooperation and development across key economic sectors, including industry, transport, telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, and

trade, as well as the monetary and financial sectors (ECOWAS, 1975). These objectives were to be achieved through trade liberalization and harmonization, which involved removing tariffs and non-tariff barriers to trade among member states, with the ultimate goal of establishing a standard external tariff; removing obstacles to free movement of people, services, and capital; and harmonizing agricultural infrastructure, industrial policies, monetary systems, and economic policies among members (ECOWAS, 1975). To support these goals, the Treaty outlined a minimal institutional framework for the organization. It established the Authority of Heads of State and Government as the main governing body; the Council of Ministers, which includes two representatives from each member state and is responsible for overseeing the organization's operations and development; an Executive Secretariat serving as the administrative body; the Tribunal of the Community, ensuring law and justice through treaty interpretation; and four Technical and Specialized Commissions—covering Trade, Customs, Immigration, and Monetary and Payments; Industry, Agriculture, and Natural Resources; Transport, Telecommunications, and Energy; and Social and Cultural Affairs—to address regional trade and economic issues (ECOWAS, 1975). Table 3 below illustrates the structure of ECOWAS under the 1975 Treaty.

Conspicuously absent from the mandate and list of ECOWAS's aims and objectives was the pursuit of peace and security in the region. The lack of an explicit provision for peace and security in the Community's mandate was especially glaring given the rising number of conflicts in West Africa at the time of its founding. However, as an interviewee at the ECOWAS Commission in Abuja noted (Interview, 2019ia), although the organization's original objectives were limited to economic development, ECOWAS has consistently recognized the importance of security for achieving its goals. In fact, even though the organization was initially created to establish a regional economic market and promote trade among member states, its most active roles have been in political and security cooperation, especially in conflict transformation. Faced with a region marked by political instability and numerous internal conflicts and tensions among member states, ECOWAS had no choice but to prioritize peace and security. While the early sessions of the Authority of Heads of State and Government mainly focused on economic concerns, the increasing number of conflicts—primarily interstate but also intrastate—in and among member states forced leaders to start considering security as a key organizational priority.

Table 3: Major Organs of the Economic Community of West African States before the review of the Founding

Organ/institution	Functions
The Authority of Heads of State and Government;	• Serve as the principal governing institution of the Community. • Responsible for the general direction and control of the performance of the executive functions of the Community
The Council of Ministers, consisting of two representatives of each Member State	• Review the functioning and development of the Community. • Make recommendations to the Authority on matters of policy. • Coordinate all subordinate institutions of the Community.
The Executive Secretariat, headed by an Executive Secretary appointed by the Authority	• Service and assist the institutions of the Community in the performance of their functions. • Monitor the functioning of the Community. • Provide reports of activities of the Council of Ministers and the Authority.
The External Auditor – recommended by the Council of Ministers and appointed by the Authority	• Role undefined
The Tribunal of the Community	• Ensure the observance of law and justice in the interpretation of the provisions of the Treaty. • Settle disputes referred to it.
Technical and specialized commissions established by the Authority. Each commission consisted of representatives designated by each Member State. • The Trade, Customs, Immigration, Monetary and Payments Commission. • The Industry, Agriculture, and Natural Resources Commission. • The Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Commission. • The Social and Cultural Affairs Commission.	• Provide reports and recommendations through the Executive Secretary to the Council of Ministers, either on their own initiative or upon the request of the Council of Ministers or the Executive Secretary.

Adapted from ECOWAS (1975). Treaty of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Concluded at Lagos on 28 May 1975.

ECOWAS and Conflict Transformation

An official at the ECOWAS Commission in Abuja observed that, unlike other Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in Africa, ECOWAS was founded with a flexible cognitive framework and a greater ability to absorb new knowledge and experiences (Interview 21). The communiqués from the first fifteen sessions of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS show that the organization was open to learning. While initially focusing on its economic objectives, the heads of state and government soon began to consider how the organization could address security challenges in the region. Therefore, in each session, the Authority set aside time to discuss conflicts, especially between member states. From its founding in 1975 until 1990, ECOWAS mainly addressed interstate conflicts caused by numerous border disputes among member states. These included the 1974/75 border conflicts between Mali and Upper Volta (Burkina Faso), which resulted in several casualties; border tensions between Ghana and Togo from 1975-77; and the 1978 disagreement between Senegal and Guinea-Bissau over their maritime border, believed to contain oil deposits (Okolo, 1983). ECOWAS also attempted to de-escalate political disputes, such as the 1977 accusation by the Republic of Benin against Gabon, Morocco, and three ECOWAS states—the Ivory Coast, Senegal, and Togo—alleging their involvement in a mercenary attack on its capital, Cotonou (Okolo, 1983). Guinea also accused Senegal, the Ivory Coast, and Guinea-Bissau of supporting subversive activities against Guinea. At the same time, political tensions arose between Nigeria and Togo after Togo granted asylum to General Yakubu Gowon following his overthrow in a military coup in February 1976. Nigeria was also viewed with suspicion throughout the region, particularly by Francophone West African states. These interstate conflicts and border disputes were worsened by suspicions of externally supported subversion and aggression, especially after the 1963 assassination of Togolese President Sylvanus Olympio, which Togo blamed on Ghana. Many countries in West Africa, and across Africa broadly, feared that former colonial powers, aided by their proxy African states, aimed to weaken the independence of the new African nations. These political intrigues and interstate conflicts became the main security concerns for the newly formed ECOWAS.

However, ECOWAS's disproportionate focus on inter-territorial and border conflicts is also tied to its strict adherence to the principles of non-interference. In its two defense protocols—the Protocol Relating to Non-Aggression and the Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance on

Defense—ECOWAS highlighted mutual respect between states and non-interference in internal affairs, while also calling for a regional mechanism for mutual defense assistance. Although the protocols allow some forms of legitimate intervention in the internal affairs of member states, such provisions are quite limited.

ECOWAS and the “Defense Pacts”

Conflict transformation in the region began to dominate the Community's agenda, influencing its development into a political organization. The Organization's security needs became evident, especially in its evolving policies on conflict transformation mechanisms. By 1978, the Community was already responsible for transforming conflicts among three member states—namely Guinea, Ivory Coast, and Senegal (ECOWAS, 1978). During the 1978 session, the Authority deployed mediation efforts to resolve disputes between Guinea and the Ivory Coast and between Guinea and Senegal (ECOWAS, 1978). In 1979, the focus shifted to the crisis in Chad; in 1981, it addressed conflicts between Cameroon and Nigeria, as well as Cameroon and Gabon; in 1983, attention was on Chad and the Central African Republic; and in 1986, efforts aimed to transform conflicts between Liberia and Sierra Leone. In 1991, the Organization addressed the conflict in Liberia and Liberia's aggression against Sierra Leone.

ECOWAS established the ECOWAS Observer Group for the Liberian Elections to “guarantee free and fair elections” in Liberia (ECOWAS, 1991). Subsequently, ECOWAS began developing its legal framework and strategies to transform conflicts in the region. The heads of state and government then resolved to draft a “Common Defense Pact” for the Community (ECOWAS, 1978). As a result, in 1978, just three years after its founding, ECOWAS adopted the Protocol Relating to Non-Aggression (PNA) in Lagos, Nigeria (Bamfo, 2013). This Protocol was not envisioned at the adoption of the Lagos Treaty of 1975, which established ECOWAS. As Osadolor (2011, p. 89) noted, ECOWAS's pursuit of peaceful dispute settlement, which led to the Protocol on Non-Aggression, reflected the Organization's commitment to the principle of non-use of force, as outlined in Article 2 (4) of the United Nations Charter. The Protocol prohibited member states from using threats or force of aggression against each other and aimed to foster cooperation by creating a “friendly atmosphere, free of any fear of attack or aggression of one state by another”

(Okolo, 1983). Under this Protocol, all member states agreed to recognize their borders as inviolable.

Okolo (1983) has argued that while non-aggression pacts often lack meaningful value—since historically, no non-aggression treaty has prevented military offensives—this ECOWAS Protocol on non-aggression was a "valuable statement of intent and a demonstration of the goodwill" among the states. It marked ECOWAS's first truly political decision, reflecting both the Organization's transformative engagement in conflict transformation within the region and its capacity to learn and adapt. Recognizing this, ECOWAS soon realized that while the Non-aggression Protocol helped build trust among member countries, it did not provide sufficient "insurance against external aggression and externally supported domestic insurrection and revolt within the Community" (Okolo, 1983). In 1981, ECOWAS signed a Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance on Defense (PMAD) in Freetown, Sierra Leone, which became effective five years later (Bamfo, 2013). The Protocol on Mutual Assistance on Defense called for the formation of an Allied Forces of the Community (AFC), composed of national armies of ECOWAS countries, operating under a Force Commander. Under this Protocol, ECOWAS committed to handling (i) aggression from a non-member state upon request from a member; (ii) conflicts between member states through mediation and, if necessary, deploying a peacekeeping force; and (iii) internal conflicts within any member state that are actively supported or engineered from outside and are deemed likely to threaten security and peace in the Community (Okolo 1983).

ECOWAS has demonstrated its ability to effectively carry out conflict prevention, peacemaking, and conflict resolution, achieving significant success in efforts to contain violent conflicts and implement conflict prevention strategies through preventive diplomacy. This approach combines fact-finding missions with quiet diplomacy, diplomatic pressure, and mediation (ECOWAS, 2008). Although primary responsibility for peace and security lies with member states, ECOWAS has developed a new 'ECOWAS Strategic Vision' that aims to transform the organization from an "ECOWAS of States" to an "ECOWAS of the Peoples" (ECOWAS, 2008). In this strategy, ECOWAS commits to resolving the tension between 'sovereignty and supranationality' and between 'regime security and human security,' while involving civil society and other non-state actors alongside member states in promoting peace and security. Consequently, ECOWAS

reserves its role as a facilitator of “creative conflict transformation by member states and civil society” (ECOWAS, 2008).

The Importance of Defense Pacts in Transforming ECOWAS

The importance of the ECOWAS Defense pacts lies in the timing of their adoption. African regional blocs had adopted a collective policy of indifference and apathy toward conflicts raging across the continent in the 1970s and 1980s. The prevailing view at the time was that the primary responsibility for maintaining global peace and security rested with the United Nations, especially the UN Security Council. The role of African regional organizations was often limited to alerting the international community and the UN to conflicts they considered threats to global peace and security. In cases where this connection was less clear, they interpreted and emphasized the global implications of local conflicts to justify international and UN interventions. Additionally, Cold War bipolar security politics greatly contributed to Africa’s complacency regarding peace and security. During this period, the West maintained a significant military presence in Africa through large troop deployments and several military bases or temporary interventions. During the Cold War, most African conflicts were seen as opportunities to advance Western geopolitical interests. Viewing conflicts through this lens, Africa believed that their resolution was the West's responsibility.

Conversely, in situations where African action was both permissible and necessary, African organizations and states often invoked the principle of non-interference to absolve themselves from responsibility for resolving conflicts. The lack of consensus on the legality of intervention further increased the organizations’ indifference toward peace and security issues. Against this background, the decision of ECOWAS to adopt security-related treaties—the Treaty of Non-Recourse to Aggression (1976), the Protocol on Non-Aggression (1978), and the Protocol on Mutual Assistance on Defense (1981)—only a few years after its founding, was both significant and bold. The adoption of the Defense Pact demonstrated ECOWAS’s willingness to explore uncharted territory in crisis resolution.

Empirical findings from this study show that signing the Protocols of non-aggression and mutual

assistance on defense represented a key turning point in ECOWAS's development. It led to numerous normative and institutional changes and gave the organization a more political character. It was the first time a provision was introduced for an organization's legitimate intervention in the internal affairs of member states, albeit in a limited way. ECOWAS was the first international organization to set aside the principle of non-interference and to suggest that some conflicts could justify intervention in member states.

The Adoption of the Defense Pacts as a Learning Moment

The signing of the two Protocols, both emerging in the wake of ECOWAS's efforts to address the rising number of interstate conflicts within the region, demonstrated the Organization's willingness to respond to conflict challenges across West Africa at the time. An official at the ECOWAS Commission in Abuja (Interview, 2019ia) noted that ECOWAS's bravery in even considering minimal intervention in internal conflicts was remarkable, especially given how sensitive debates on non-intervention were in the 1970s. Meanwhile, on the other side of the continent, another regional economic community, the East African Community, founded earlier and considered the strongest regional organization at the time, was collapsing, partly due to Tanzania's decision to intervene in a conflict within another member state, Uganda. The disagreement over the legality and appropriateness of intervention in a member state reportedly played a significant role in the EAC's collapse in 1977, when Tanzania, angered by Kenya's indifference to the Ugandan civil war, unilaterally decided to wage war against Idi Amin's regime (Bar, 2018). Against this backdrop, ECOWAS's decision to sign security treaties, which indicated its willingness to engage in conflict transformation, was bold, to say the least. Why did ECOWAS choose to adopt the Defense Pact, and what were the implications of this decision for ECOWAS as an organization? Did adopting these security agreements influence ECOWAS's approach to conflict transformation?

Factors Influencing the Political Transformation of ECOWAS

This study demonstrates that two primary considerations influenced ECOWAS's decision to accept responsibility for maintaining peace and security in West Africa: first, the instinct for self-

preservation among states and governments amid the increasing number of coups and acts of subversion orchestrated by external forces; and second, the growing consensus among states for collective responsibility to uphold peace and security in the region, aiming to protect the independence and sovereignty of the new states, especially from threats posed by former colonial powers and their proxies. As will be shown, these two factors sent clear signals to ECOWAS about the acceptability, if not the legality, of intervening in the political and security affairs of member states at a time when the principle of non-interference was still considered sacrosanct internationally. Internally, ECOWAS had relatively weak organizational and normative structures that were open to new knowledge and therefore susceptible to transformation.

Several individuals interviewed for this study at the ECOWAS Commission in Abuja confirmed that the “instinct of self-preservation” was central to the decision of ECOWAS member states to 'adopt the Protocols on Non-Aggression in 1978 and, subsequently, the Protocols on Mutual Assistance on Defense in 1981 (Interview, 2019ia).

Thus, in 1978, just three years after its founding, ECOWAS adopted the Protocol Relating to Non-Aggression (PNA) in Lagos, Nigeria (Bamfo, 2013). The Protocol on Non-Aggression was not anticipated when the Lagos Treaty of 1975, which established ECOWAS, was created. As Osadolor (2011, p. 89) correctly pointed out, ECOWAS's goal of peacefully settling disputes motivated the Protocol on Non-Aggression, reflecting the organization's commitment to the principle of non-use of force, as outlined in Article 2 (4) of the United Nations Charter. The protocol prohibited member states from threatening or using force against one another and aimed to promote cooperation by fostering a “friendly atmosphere, free of any fear of attack or aggression of one state by another” (Okolo, 1983). All member states also agreed to recognize their borders as inviolable. Okolo (1983) argued that, although non-aggression pacts usually lack significant value—and historically, no non-aggression treaty has prevented a military offensive—this ECOWAS protocol on non-aggression served as “a valuable statement of intent and a demonstration of the goodwill” among the states. The protocol represented ECOWAS's first truly political decision. It reflected both the transformative impact of the organization's involvement in conflict resolution across the region and its ability to learn and adapt. As previously mentioned, West Africa was already entangled in several interstate conflicts and civil wars when member

states decided to establish ECOWAS. Nigeria, the main force behind its creation, had just emerged from the Biafra War of 1967-1970. Nigeria accused neighboring Côte d'Ivoire of supporting subversive groups within Nigeria, with backing from France. France had openly supported Biafra, and Côte d'Ivoire had recognized Biafra (Dapaah-Agyemang, 2003, p. 11). While Nigeria, like other founders, initially focused on economic integration, it was clear that security concerns also influenced its involvement in ECOWAS's founding. Nigeria wanted an organization that could act as a buffer against threats from France and its regional allies.

However, these security concerns extended beyond Nigeria. From the start, ECOWAS engaged in mediation efforts to resolve conflicts among member states: Guinea versus Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal; border disputes between Cameroon and Nigeria, Cameroon and Gabon, Chad and the Central African Republic, among others (ECOWAS, 1978). ECOWAS also began contemplating intervention in member states immediately after its founding. For example, it addressed the crisis in Chad during its 1979 Heads of State summit (ECOWAS, 1978). Member states grew increasingly concerned about conflicts threatening their emerging sovereignty and independence. They aimed to defend themselves against both internal and external threats, including subversion. Consequently, the signing of two defense protocols—both promoting a policy of non-aggression and emphasizing mutual aid and assistance against armed threats—was driven mainly by the desire to preserve territorial integrity.

Indeed, protecting borders was valued more highly than internal affairs (Osadolor, 2011, p. 90). While each member state retained primary responsibility for national security, the protocol allowed for intervention “in case of internal armed conflict within any member state engineered and supported from outside likely to endanger the security and peace of the entire Community” (ECOWAS 1978). An ECOWAS official noted that fears of each other and external influences led heads of state to include security and defense issues on their agendas (ECOWAS Interview 5). Thus, unlike other African regions, such as East Africa, a growing consensus existed within ECOWAS on the acceptability of intervention in conflict transformation, especially interstate conflicts —though even tighter restrictions applied to intrastate conflicts. This limited consensus allowed ECOWAS to broaden its mandate to include some responsibility for conflict transformation.

The Impact of the Adoption of the Defense Pact on the Transformation of ECOWAS

As an official at the ECOWAS Commission mentioned during an interview for this study, while the adoption of the ECOWAS protocols on non-aggression and mutual assistance on defense was not exactly a “big bang” moment in terms of the organization's transformation, it nevertheless triggered significant adjustments in its institutional, normative, and operational structures (Interview, 2019ib). The adoption of these protocols signaled the emergence of ECOWAS as a security actor within the region and across the continent. From a cautious organization hesitant to go beyond its safe, non-political goal of economic welfare, ECOWAS has now become assertive in pursuing security, taking primary responsibility for transforming interstate conflicts in West Africa. As conflict transformation became a core goal of ECOWAS, it also prompted an expansion of the organization’s mandate and organizational structures. Originally founded to promote economic development, the organization has now adopted a broader mandate that includes conflict transformation in the region. For example, the adoption of the protocols sparked a political transformation within ECOWAS by giving it a clear security and defense policy (Interview, 2019ib). The signing of the protocols laid the groundwork for expanding the organization’s institutional framework to include new defense and security institutions, such as a Defense Council comprising defense and foreign affairs ministers from member states, a Defense Commission made up of army chiefs of staff from each country, and a deputy executive secretary for military matters. After ratifying the Defense Pact, the founding ECOWAS Treaty was amended to incorporate the newly formed Defense Council into the organization’s institutional framework, alongside the existing four Technical and Specialized Commissions (ECOWAS Document A/SP2/5/81, 1981). The protocol on mutual assistance in defense also called for the creation of an Allied Armed Forces of the Community (AAFC), led by a force commander, to prevent and manage any externally supported internal armed conflict (ECOWAS Document A/SP2/5/81, 1981).

Thus, the adoption of non-aggression and mutual assistance protocols in defense triggered the first institutional and organizational changes within ECOWAS and expanded its mandate to include maintaining peace and security. Notably, members of the organization approved transforming the original organization rather than creating a new entity to pursue its new defense and security goals.

ECOWAS Conflict Transformation Initiatives from 1990 and Their Transformative Impact

ECOWAS's emergence as a significant political and security player became evident in the 1990s, when it started taking a more active role in transforming conflicts across West Africa. Starting with the Liberian conflict in the 1990s and a basic, limited mandate, ECOWAS's security structure and authority for conflict resolution gradually expanded as it engaged in transregional conflicts. The conflicts ECOWAS intervened in were mainly driven by power struggles and resource competition. Its intervention efforts primarily involved mediation, peacekeeping, and the threat of military action (Atuobi, 2010-2011). For this study, I examined ECOWAS's interventions in three member states—Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau—to illustrate how ECOWAS underwent both institutional and organizational changes during the conflict-resolution process.

ECOWAS Intervention in Liberia (1990-1997; 1999-2003)

The First Liberian civil war of 1989-1997 is uniquely known for shaping the principle of intervention within a state more than any other conflict. It was sparked in 1989 by Charles Taylor's insurgency against Samuel Doe's government. In mid-1990, the fighting worsened when remnants of Doe's troops clashed with the combined forces of Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) and Prince Johnson's Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL). By August 1990, the conflict had resulted in over five thousand deaths and displaced more than one million Liberians (Ogbonnaya, 2013). To address the worsening crisis, ECOWAS, responding to an appeal from President Doe for assistance against the NPFL insurgents, decided to intervene in Liberia. They cited their mandate to promote peace and stability within member states, prevent regional conflict spread, lessen human suffering, and protect civilians (Atuobi, 2010-2011; Obi, 2009). ECOWAS's involvement in the conflict was initiated by Nigeria's military leader at the time, General Babangida.

ECOWAS aimed to restore legitimate authority in the country first and then prevent the regional spread of the conflict through direct political and military intervention. It established a Standing Mediation Committee (SMC) comprising Gambia, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, and Togo in August 1990 to facilitate mediation in the conflict. The SMC proposed forming the ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to intervene militarily as peacekeepers (Atuobi, 2010-2011; Obi,

2009). Initially created as an ad hoc multinational effort for peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peace enforcement, ECOMOG was the first military alliance of its kind formed by a sub-regional organization. Nigeria, under General Babangida, played a key role in rallying ECOWAS to establish ECOMOG as a platform for monitoring and enforcing a ceasefire in Liberia, aiming to restore law and order, set up an interim government, and prepare for elections (Obi, 2009). Troops from Nigeria, Guinea, Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Gambia contributed to ECOMOG.

ECOWAS's efforts to transform the Liberian conflict bore mixed results. It resulted in the signing of several peace agreements that offered relief from the fighting, even if only briefly in some cases. The first of these was the Lomé Peace Agreement, created under the ECOWAS Peace Plan in Liberia in December 1990 and signed in February 1991, which called for the formation of an Interim Government of National Unity (Atuobi, 2010-2011, p. 33). However, the implementation of the Lomé Agreement failed when the faction led by Taylor refused to cooperate with the interim government, as Taylor believed that his National Patriotic Front of Liberia—the largest rebel group—had the chance to seize power through military force (Atuobi, 2010-2011, p. 33). ECOWAS launched four additional rounds of mediation to try to save the peace process, led by Côte d'Ivoire's President Félix Houphouët-Boigny, which culminated in the signing of the Yamoussoukro IV Accord in October 1991.

The implementation of the Yamoussoukro IV Accord was undermined by the selection of Cote d'Ivoire's President Houphouët-Boigny as the lead mediator, despite accusations from the Liberian government that he supported Charles Taylor's faction. Doubts about the impartiality of both the Accord and ECOMOG rendered both efforts ineffective in preventing fighting among the various Liberian factions, leading to calls for other actors to join the peace efforts. In 1992, the OAU and the UN joined with ECOWAS to restart mediation talks in Cotonou, Benin, and Accra, Ghana, in September and October 1994, respectively. Once again, the agreements from these negotiations failed to resolve the conflicts, as the main factions showed little commitment to the peace process, and ECOWAS lacked the capacity to enforce and support their implementation.

In a last-ditch effort to salvage the peace process, ECOWAS convened another round of negotiations in 1995 in Abuja, which culminated in the signing of the Abuja Peace Agreement. This agreement has been credited for the fragile peace Liberia enjoyed between 1995 and 1997,

even though some have pointed out that the agreement only held because Taylor believed he had a high chance of coming to power through elections – which proved to be true because the ECOWAS mediations resulted in elections in 1997 that Taylor won, becoming the president of Liberia (Atuobi, 2010-2011; Obi, 2009).

However, the newly elected government of Charles Taylor failed to fulfill its promises, and within a year of ECOMOG's departure from Liberia in 1998, the country slipped back into civil war. The second civil war began with the formation of new rebel groups – the Liberia United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) – which aimed to overthrow what they saw as the “undemocratic” government of Charles Taylor. This second civil war had regional spillovers: Taylor's government supported the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel group in neighboring Sierra Leone and also assisted some rebels in Guinea, while Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea provided support to the two rebel groups in Liberia, MODEL and LURD, respectively, which were fighting against the Taylor regime (Atuobi, 2010-2011). By 2003, the two rebel groups – MODEL and LURD – had taken control of large parts of Liberia and were approaching Monrovia. In this capital, Taylor was rapidly losing his grip on power. This situation was further complicated by his indictment by the Sierra Leone Special War Crimes Court for war crimes committed during Sierra Leone's civil war.

In August 2003, ECOWAS, supported by the United States and the international community, decided to deploy the ECOWAS Mission to Liberia (ECOMIL) with troop contributions from Nigeria, Mali, and Senegal (Obi, 2009). As his position became increasingly untenable, Taylor resigned and accepted an asylum offer in Nigeria as part of an ECOWAS-brokered peace deal, going into exile. With the deployment of ECOMIL, ECOWAS launched another round of peace efforts and military intervention in Liberia, including a mediation hosted in Accra that led to the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2003 between the Liberian government, LURD, MODEL, and several political parties (Atuobi, 2010-2011; Obi, 2009). The CPA laid the groundwork for establishing a Transitional Government of Liberia (TGL) to oversee demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration (DDR) processes in Liberia and to prepare the country for elections. In October 2003, ECOWAS transferred the peacekeeping responsibilities of ECOMIL to the United Nations mission in Liberia, effectively reassigning the ECOMIL troops to the UN (Obi, 2009). The transitional government led Liberia until the general elections held in

October 2005. The success of the CPA has been attributed to consensus among West African leaders regarding ECOWAS's role in regional peace processes.

As the first effort by an intergovernmental organization to intervene in an internal conflict, the ECOWAS initiative faced multiple challenges, especially concerning the legal and political grounds for the intervention. Disputes over its legality arose from member states and warring factions. Some member states considered the intervention a breach of the principles of non-interference and respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Nigeria, which led the mission to Liberia, responded to these claims by emphasizing that the conflict in Liberia was caused by external support to insurgents from Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, and Libya, which justified ECOWAS's intervention (Osadolor, 2011, p. 91). They referenced the ECOWAS Protocol on Mutual Assistance on Defense, which permits intervention “in case of internal armed conflict within any member state engineered and supported actively from outside likely to endanger the security and peace in the Community” (ECOWAS Document A/SP3//5/81, 1981).

Although the ECOWAS intervention in Liberia did not fully meet its goals—leading the United Nations to become involved in 1992 and 2003 to help seek peace after ECOWAS failed to resolve the conflict—its role in conflict transformation was innovative in many ways. There is broad agreement that involvement in transforming conflicts expanded ECOWAS's mandate and functions, shifting away from the norm of non-intervention toward developing a collective regional security culture and regime for West Africa (Obi, 2009). It also marked the first time a regional organization deployed a peacekeeping mission to intervene within a state without explicit authorization from the United Nations Security Council. Additionally, it laid the groundwork for debates on the principles of non-intervention and non-indifference.

For ECOWAS, the intervention in the Liberian conflict marked a significant milestone in its evolution as both a political organization and a security actor in the region. While the adoption of the Defense Pacts a decade earlier had begun ECOWAS's political transformation, the decision to send peacekeeping and mediation missions to Liberia in 1990 prompted even deeper institutional and organizational changes as the organization learned from its experience managing the conflict. In fact, the revision of the Lagos Treaty of 1975 (the founding treaty) three years later is often associated with this pivotal moment. The intervention in Liberia thus became a key period of

learning and reflection for ECOWAS.

ECOWAS and the Conflict in Sierra Leone (1991-2002)

The Sierra Leone civil war broke out in 1991, just as ECOWAS was trying to resolve the conflict in neighboring Liberia. The conflict involved a rebel group known as the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), led by Foday Sankoh and supported by Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), against the government of President Joseph Momoh. The civil war lasted until January 2002, claiming more than 70,000 lives and displacing over 2.6 million people (Atuobi, 2010-2011, p. 33). The long war included military coups in 1992, 1996, and 1997, led by hardline military leaders opposed to political negotiations. However, negotiations became possible when the government of Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, elected democratically in 1996, initiated dialogue with warring factions, leading to the signing of the Abidjan Peace Accord in November 1996.

ECOWAS's role in the negotiations was initially limited, with the entire process hosted by the government of Côte d'Ivoire and facilitated by the OAU (Lord, 2000, p. 23). When a military coup in March 1997, led by Major Johnny Paul Koromah, overthrew Tejan Kabbah and effectively halted the implementation of the Abidjan Peace Accord, ECOWAS decided to become more actively involved in resolving the Sierra Leone conflict. At a meeting in Conakry, Guinea, ECOWAS signed an agreement with Sierra Leone's military leadership for a six-month peace plan, which included ending hostilities and restoring Kabbah's government. However, when the Sierra Leone junta refused to comply with the peace plan, ECOWAS was compelled to deploy ECOMOG to Sierra Leone in 1998 to remove the military junta and reinstate Kabbah's government. Responding to Kabbah's appeal for help, Nigeria, under the leadership of General Abacha (who was seeking to avoid international isolation of his regime), took the lead in regional efforts to restore Kabbah's government (Lord, 2000; Obi, 2009). The ECOMOG force in Sierra Leone was led by Nigeria and supported by a 50-member UN Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOSIL). However, UN observers did not participate directly in military combat (Obi, 2009). The military presence of ECOMOG in Sierra Leone created a fragile peace, paving the way for new peace talks in May 1999 in Lomé, led by Togolese President Gnassingbé Eyadéma, who was serving as the chairman of ECOWAS Assembly of heads of state and Government.

Because ECOWAS had experience from Liberia, it could leverage that when deploying ECOMOG for its peace intervention in Sierra Leone. However, like in Liberia, ECOMOG still faced many organizational and operational weaknesses, which were worsened by ECOWAS states' involvement in fueling the insurgency in Sierra Leone. ECOWAS efforts were also hampered by internal disagreements on how to respond to the Sierra Leone crisis. A particularly problematic view was that Nigeria was dominating ECOMOG operations, which was somewhat justified. Nigeria reportedly supplied at least eighty percent of ECOMOG troops (12,000 of 16,000 in Liberia and 12,000 of 13,000 in Sierra Leone) and ninety percent of the funding for the interventions in both countries (Obi, 2009). Rebel factions exploited ECOMOG's weaknesses and launched constant attacks against ECOMOG forces in Freetown, Sierra Leone's capital. Unable to bear the burden of peacekeeping in Sierra Leone alone, Nigeria, under President Obasanjo, decided to withdraw from ECOMOG in 1999, effectively paralyzing the operation. ECOMOG was eventually replaced by the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission to Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), with some of the ECOMOG troops re-hatted into UNAMSIL (Obi, 2009; Atuobi, 2010-2011).

ECOWAS's role in the Sierra Leone conflict was to facilitate an agreement between the Kabbah government and the AFRC-RUF rebels. ECOWAS initiated a round of peace talks in Lomé in July 1999, which led to the adoption of an agreement granting amnesty and some concessions of political positions to the RUF leadership – RUF leader Foday Sankoh was offered the vice presidency and the position of minister for the country's minerals (Atuobi, 2010-2011). However, the ceasefire under the agreement did not hold for long, as the rebels, seizing the vacuum left by the exit of ECOMOG forces, launched attacks on Freetown and took several UNAMSIL peacekeepers hostage. It took reinforcements and support from the United Kingdom and the international community for UNAMSIL to restore order, complete disarmament, and create a conducive environment for elections. Elections, overseen by UNAMSIL, were held in May 2002 and won again by Tejan Kabbah, effectively ending the war. The peace in post-conflict Sierra Leone was largely due to the presence of the UN peacekeeping force, which had a strong mandate and the resources to enforce the peace agreement.

The Sierra Leone civil war revealed the weaknesses in the still-evolving ECOWAS security framework, especially its operational arm – ECOMOG. The absence of a neutral peacekeeping force, which left ECOWAS dependent on a few states, mainly Nigeria, eroded the confidence of

conflict parties in ECOWAS's regional peacekeeping efforts. Some ECOWAS member states dismissed ECOMOG's military goals as mere reflections of Nigeria's hegemonic ambitions. The war also exposed ECOWAS's limitations in mediating effectively for conflict resolution; its peacekeeping efforts in Sierra Leone failed, forcing it to shift from diplomacy to military intervention through ECOMOG (Osadolor, 2011, p. 93). Additionally, the war revealed the fragility of the legal foundation of ECOWAS's emerging peace and security framework. As a result, ECOWAS was ultimately forced to transfer peacekeeping responsibilities in Sierra Leone to external actors, highlighting the inadequacy of ECOWAS's collective security infrastructure policy.

Despite all the challenges it faced, the Sierra Leone peacekeeping initiatives offered an important learning opportunity for ECOWAS. They would significantly contribute to building consensus for transforming ECOWAS's organizational, institutional, and operational structures (Interview with Kale, 2019).

ECOWAS and Guinea-Bissau Conflict (1998-1999)

Guinea-Bissau is the third country where ECOWAS deployed its peacekeeping and mediation mission to resolve a conflict. The civil war of 1998 was rooted in the power struggle between President Joao "Nino" Vieira and his Armed Forces Chief, Ansumane Mane, but was also influenced by external subregional dynamics. Some attribute the conflict to Guinea-Bissau's shift in international relations from its colonial ties to Portugal toward France and neighboring Francophone West African states, such as Senegal and Guinea, exemplified by its decision to join the West African Francophone CFA monetary zone (Obi, 2009). President Vieira suspended Ansumane Mane as the chief of the armed forces, accusing him of involvement in illegally supplying arms to the rebel movement Mouvement des forces démocratiques de la Casamance (MFDC), operating in southern Senegal's Casamance region (Obi, 2009). Since the people of Casamance share cultural and historical ties with the Diolas of northern Guinea-Bissau, Senegal suspected that MFDC rebels fighting against the Senegalese government sourced their weapons from illicit arms trade in Guinea-Bissau (Rudebeck, 2001, p. 23). Therefore, Senegal kept a close watch on rebel activities operating across its porous borders with Guinea-Bissau and Gambia (Rudebeck, 2001, p. 23). On June 8, 1998, a day after Mane's suspension, he led a coup attempt against Vieira's government, prompting Vieira to seek help. In response, Senegal and Guinea

quickly deployed 1,300 and 400 troops, respectively, to Guinea-Bissau, invoking the ECOWAS Protocol on Mutual Assistance on Defense (Rudebeck, 2001, p. 23). Vieira also received support from Sierra Leone's government. Senegal's involvement was driven by its interest in preventing a regime allied with MFDC rebels from taking power in Guinea-Bissau. At the same time, Guinea's President Lansana Conte claimed he was acting out of friendship with Vieira (Adebajo, 2002, p. 116). Sierra Leone's Kabbah aimed to prevent the conflict from increasing refugee pressures in his already beleaguered country, which was burdened by large numbers of Liberian refugees (Adebajo, 2002, p. 116).

ECOWAS, exhausted and stretched thin by long-term peacekeeping and mediation efforts in Liberia and Sierra Leone and weakened by internal competition among member states, was reluctant to become involved again in Guinea-Bissau. After some fighting, Vieira appealed to the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries—Comunidade de Países de Língua Portuguesa (CPLP), which includes Portugal, Angola, Brazil, East Timor, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Sao Tome, and Principe—to help negotiate a truce with Mane (Adebajo, 2002, p. 117). CPLP was eager to lead the peace process, seeing it as an opportunity to counter French and possibly Nigerian influence in Guinea-Bissau. When CPLP was unable to end the conflict alone, ECOWAS was forced to step in, especially after Vieira requested deployment of ECOMOG in his country. ECOWAS quickly assembled a committee of seven states—Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Guinea, Ghana, Nigeria, and Senegal—to oversee the mediation of the conflict (Obi 2009).

After overcoming initial mutual misgivings, ECOWAS and CPLP, with the support of OAU and the UN, joined forces to persuade Vieira and Mane to sign a ceasefire agreement in Cape Verde on August 26, 1998 (Rudebeck, 2001). However, the peace did not last long, as Vieira and Mane resumed fighting shortly after. Another ECOWAS-led negotiation brokered a second peace agreement between the factions led by Vieira and Mane in Abuja in November 1998. Senegal and Guinea were convinced to withdraw their forces from Guinea-Bissau, replaced by ECOMOG peacekeepers (Rudebeck, 2001). The Abuja Agreement also called for the creation of a transitional government to oversee the transition and prepare for elections. Unlike Liberia and Sierra Leone, Nigeria did not send troops to this ECOMOG mission, limiting its role to mediation (Obi, 2009). The ECOMOG force consisted of 712 troops from Benin, Mali, Niger, Togo, and Gambia (Obi,

2009). However, ECOMOG's intervention was insufficient to end the conflict, as Mane's forces launched a successful attack against Vieira's forces in May 1999, capturing power. Vieira was forced into exile, and ECOMOG forces withdrew immediately after their failed peacekeeping effort. Nigeria's decision to withhold support for the mission is seen as a factor in the failure of ECOMOG in Guinea-Bissau, highlighting how much ECOWAS peace interventions depend on West Africa's swing state. Nonetheless, ECOWAS's involvement is still credited with helping prevent the conflict from escalating, as seen in the Sierra Leone and Liberia conflicts (Ajibewa Interview 2019).

ECOWAS and Côte d'Ivoire Conflict (2002-2010; 2010-2013)

The fourth country where ECOWAS intervened to resolve a conflict is Côte d'Ivoire. The civil war in Côte d'Ivoire was triggered by a failed coup attempt by part of the military on September 19, 2002, which divided the country into the rebel-held north and the government-controlled south (Atuobi, 2010-2011, p. 35). ECOWAS responded immediately by initiating crisis meetings between the rebels and the government, leading to a preliminary peace agreement signed in September 2002 and a ceasefire agreement in Bouake, Côte d'Ivoire, in October 2002. These agreements paved the way for substantive peace talks in Lomé in November 2002. On December 18, 2002, ECOWAS held an extraordinary summit in Dakar, Senegal, to address the Ivorian conflict. The summit affirmed the legitimacy of the democratically elected Ivorian President Gbagbo and condemned the attempted coup (Osadolor, 2011, pp. 94-95). ECOWAS also oversaw the signing of an accord between President Gbagbo and the insurgents, which included provisions for providing a safe haven for the insurgents under ECOWAS supervision in a neutral country (Osadolor, 2011, p. 95). Subsequently, the ECOWAS Defense Commission convened on December 24, 2002, to discuss the deployment of a West African force to Côte d'Ivoire (Osadolor, 2011, p. 95). Following this meeting, ECOWAS resolved to deploy the ECOMOG peacekeeping mission to Côte d'Ivoire, led by Senegal, which contributed over 1,200 troops (p. 95). The mission was further complicated by France's unilateral decision to send 2,500 troops to enforce the ceasefire between President Gbagbo's government and the rebels.

When the Lomé peace talks collapsed, ECOWAS and the AU initiated another round of talks in

Accra, Ghana, chaired by Ghanaian President John Kufour. The talks led to the signing of the Accra II and III Peace Accords, which aimed at compelling the warring factions to engage in peace negotiations.

The Côte d'Ivoire peace process, like previous cases, involved multiple mediation efforts supported by peacekeeping missions, resulting in ten peace agreements overall. It also involved various other actors. Although ECOWAS initiated and led the peace process, other actors, such as France, the AU, and the UN, participated at different stages, with each intervention yielding different outcomes. France's involvement led to the signing of the Linas-Marcoussis Peace Agreement in January 2003, which established a Government of National Reconciliation responsible for preparing credible and transparent national elections, rebuilding security forces, and disarming all armed groups (United Nations Peacemaker, 2003). After the collapse of the Lomé peace talks, ECOWAS and the AU launched another round of negotiations in Accra, Ghana, chaired by Ghanaian President John Kufuor. These talks led to the signing of the Accra II and III Peace Accords, which aimed to compel warring factions to negotiate peace and to follow the Linas-Marcoussis Peace Agreement (Kode, 2016, p. 16). The AU's additional contribution, led by President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, produced the Pretoria I and II Agreements in 2005—providing a plan for implementing the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement, as well as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), and security sector reforms (SSR) (United Nations Peacemaker, 2005). When these efforts failed to resolve the conflict, ECOWAS resumed leadership of the mediation in 2007, with ECOWAS chairman Blaise Compaoré acting as the primary mediator. This led to the Ouagadougou Peace Accord in March 2007, which outlined a power-sharing plan between President Gbagbo and rebel leader Guillaume Soro, who was appointed prime minister under the agreement (Osadolor, 2011, p. 97).

The signing of the Ouagadougou Peace Agreement in 2007 marked ECOWAS's greatest achievement in its efforts to transform the first Ivorian conflict (2002-2010). It brokered a peace deal between President Gbagbo and the rebels and provided both a framework and a roadmap for resolving disputed issues in the war, such as the question of nationality (Kode, 2016, p. 17). The Peace Agreement also expanded ECOWAS's role in the peace process by authorizing its Permanent Consultative Committee to lead negotiations when negotiations reached a stalemate in implementing the peace plan (Kode, 2016, p. 17). This agreement reinforced the growing

influence, legitimacy, and credibility of ECOWAS as a security actor in the West African region.

Unfortunately, the progress made after signing the Agreement proved unsustainable. The elections of November/December 2010, which were supposed to mark the final stage of the peace process under the Ouagadougou Peace Agreement, were not as peaceful as expected. The fragile peace established under the Agreement nearly collapsed when violence erupted over disputed election results between incumbent Laurent Gbagbo and opposition candidate Alassane Ouattara. Gbagbo's refusal to concede defeat after the runoff results in November 2010, which declared Ouattara the winner, plunged the country into a new war. The ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government convened an extraordinary session on December 7, 2010, endorsing Ouattara as the winner of the elections and recognizing him as the legitimately elected president of Côte d'Ivoire (Kode, 2016, p. 19). The AU and representatives of the UN, along with other international actors, became involved in resolving the conflict as the world rushed to prevent further escalation of the war. On December 9, 2010, the AU's Peace and Security Council responded to ECOWAS's call by suspending Côte d'Ivoire from all AU activities until stability was restored and the legitimately elected president was inaugurated (Kode, 2016, p. 19).

Instead of deploying ECOMOG to Côte d'Ivoire, ECOWAS relied on the already existing United Nations Operations in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), appealing to the UN to strengthen its presence in the country to protect citizens and facilitate the transfer of power to Ouattara (Kode, 2016, p. 19). Although sidelined by ECOWAS, the AU, and much of the international community, Gbagbo persisted and, on December 8, 2010, called on UNOCI and French forces to leave Côte d'Ivoire, claiming they were no longer impartial. However, as ECOWAS, the AU, the UN, France, and the USA recognized Ouattara as the President of Côte d'Ivoire, Gbagbo was left isolated.

Although ECOWAS's role in resolving the Côte d'Ivoire conflict in 2010 was limited, as it had to collaborate with other actors, it still played the leading role in the country's peace process. The crises in Ivory Coast, like those in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau, showed ECOWAS's growing commitment to regional peace. Like its involvement in previous conflicts, the Ivorian crisis also helped reinforce ECOWAS's claim to be a legitimate regional player. Additionally, the conflict offered valuable learning opportunities for the organization.

Since its involvement in the transformation of the Ivorian conflict, ECOWAS has continued to intervene in several other conflicts across the West African region, including Niger (2009-2010) and Guinea (2009-2010). However, ECOWAS's engagement in transforming conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, and Côte d'Ivoire laid the groundwork for its future role in conflict transformation within the region. These efforts also coincided with a period during which ECOWAS was evolving its peace and security architecture and its organizational and institutional structure. ECOWAS's involvement in transforming these initial four conflicts significantly influenced subsequent changes within the organization. The next section describes the transformations ECOWAS implemented as it worked to transform these conflicts.

The establishment of Mediation as an institution and a norm in ECOWAS

The ECOWAS mandate for mediation in conflicts within member states has developed over time and is documented in several texts and protocols. ECOWAS adopted mediation as its main approach for conflict resolution as early as 1981. In its Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance on Defense (1981), it declared mediation to be its primary method for resolving conflicts between member states (ECOWAS Document A/SP2/5/81, 1981). In 1990, the Community formalized its mediation efforts by creating a Standing Mediation Committee. Before this, ECOWAS had used ad hoc mediation committees, mainly composed of heads of state and government, to negotiate settlements of disputes or conflicts between and within member states. For example, it sent a team including Presidents William Tolbert of Liberia, Dawda Jawara of The Gambia, and Gnassingbe Eyadema of Togo to mediate the conflict between Guinea, Ivory Coast, and Senegal (ECOWAS, 1978), and representatives from neighboring countries such as Nigeria and Niger to negotiate peace in the Chad conflict (ECOWAS, 1979).

An official at the ECOWAS Commission in Abuja noted that the formal establishment of ECOWAS's mediation efforts was the result of a long-standing tradition of deploying ad hoc mediation teams to resolve conflicts in the region (Interview 25, ECOWAS). Mediation became a key approach through which ECOWAS worked to transform conflicts. The institutionalization of these mediation efforts into a permanent Standing Mediation Committee marked a significant organizational change driven by ECOWAS's conflict transformation initiatives. The creation of

the SMC was itself a consequence of ECOWAS's involvement in resolving the Liberian conflict in 1990. ECOWAS formed the SMC on May 30, 1990, under the leadership and at the urging of Nigerian President Babangida, in response to the Liberian civil war (Nte, 2021, p. 18). The founding committee included members from Nigeria, Mali, Ghana, Togo, and Gambia. The committee mainly focused on the Nigerian conflict and was tasked with developing a consensus on a ceasefire framework for Liberia.

The establishment of the SMC underscored the significance of mediation as a method of conflict transformation by ECOWAS. Since its role in resolving the Liberian conflict in 1990, mediation has become the focus of every ECOWAS effort and a crucial part of its peace and security strategy. An ECOWAS official remarked that mediation is at the core of ECOWAS's Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution. Even when ECOWAS deploys ECOMOG, its military force, for peacekeeping, the aim is always to foster a supportive environment that facilitates mediation (Interview, 2019ib). The conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, and Côte d'Ivoire offered ECOWAS the opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of mediation as a tool for conflict transformation. Through its efforts to develop its mediation program, ECOWAS gained valuable lessons about the importance of mediation from these experiences.

Political and Governance Transformation of ECOWAS

Declaration of Political Principles

Another significant milestone in the transformation of ECOWAS, directly linked to its initial efforts at conflict transformation, is the adoption of the Declaration of Political Principles of ECOWAS at the 14th Session of the Authority of Heads of State in Abuja in 1991. Adopted as ECOWAS grappled with the Liberian war, the Declaration signaled the organization's commitment to addressing issues of governance, the rule of law, and human rights (Interview 21, ECOWAS). ECOWAS's shift towards a regional political and governance agenda has been mainly attributed to a series of intractable intrastate conflicts and violent political transitions in West Africa (Aggad & Miyandazi, 2017 (b)). Between 1965 and 2000, every West African state except Cape Verde and Senegal experienced a coup d'état. ECOWAS responded to these developments

by developing a framework for conflict transformation and, subsequently, for conflict prevention. Its efforts to address geopolitical crises and contain the spread of intrastate conflicts in the late 1980s and early 1990s led ECOWAS to establish legal frameworks, standards, and protocols on democratic governance and human rights. It developed standards to prevent unconstitutional changes of government and to promote governance, the rule of law, and human rights (Aggad & Miyandazi, 2017). ECOWAS adopted an iterative approach in shaping its political and governance agenda, addressing regional issues as they arose. The two-page Declaration of Political Principles embodied this agenda. While reaffirming the Community's resolution—outlined in the two protocols on Defense—to refrain from any threat or use of force against the sovereignty or political independence of member states, the Declaration also expressed its commitment to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to promote free and democratic processes in each member state (UN-OHCHR, 1996). In the Declaration, the States affirmed their dedication to eight principles—respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the peaceful settlement of disputes and non-aggression, and the promotion of democracy based on political pluralism and respect for fundamental human rights (UN-OHCHR, 1996).

A recurring feature of ECOWAS's early interventions in conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire, and Niger was the focus on democracy, elections, and rejection of unconstitutional changes of government. This was paradoxical given that Nigeria, the leading player in ECOWAS missions, was itself under a long spell of military dictatorship. An expert in Addis Ababa noted that ECOWAS's audacity even to propose adopting the Declaration at that time shows that the organization was developing its own independence from the member states (Interview, 2019b). ECOWAS's involvement in conflict zones provided clear feedback on the importance of establishing standards to evaluate the effectiveness of its interventions (Interview, 2019b). The rapid spread of internal conflicts, their escalation and spillover across the region, along with the organizational and operational challenges ECOWAS faced in managing these conflicts, helped build a coalition of supporters for good governance, democracy, and the value of elections—including civil society organizations, human rights activists, and others—and conveyed to ECOWAS a clear message about the importance of these principles (Interview, 2019b). The expert observed that deploying ECOMOG and other ECOWAS peacekeeping efforts, especially in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, and Côte d'Ivoire, allowed ECOWAS and its member states to observe firsthand the consequences of weak governance structures (Interview, 2019b).

An interesting point made by an observer at the ECOWAS Commission was that even Nigeria—the regional hegemon, which faced serious governance problems—acknowledged the importance of these political principles for regional stability after experiencing the costs of war during efforts to contain conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea (Interview, 2019ic). Nigeria bore the largest share of the costs in personnel and funding and, having learned from these experiences, believed that building democratic institutions and promoting democratic principles and elections were far cheaper than managing ongoing conflicts. This was why Nigeria supported the adoption of the Declaration of Political Principles (Interview, 2019ic).

ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG)

The adoption of the two protocols on Non-Aggression and Mutual Assistance in Defense, along with the Declaration of Political Principles, laid the foundation for ECOWAS's engagement in conflict transformation. Based on these frameworks, ECOWAS tasked the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) with supporting peace operations during the Liberian civil war in 1990. Formed initially as an ad hoc multinational peacekeeping and enforcement force, ECOMOG was mainly responsible for restoring peace in Liberia but was later deployed to other conflict zones, such as Guinea-Bissau (1999) to end civil war there, and Sierra Leone (1997) to halt the rebellion by the dissident group RUF. Although the ECOMOG mission to Liberia was controversial and yielded mixed results, it served as a catalyst for ECOWAS's involvement in regional security. Subsequently, ECOWAS developed a more structured framework for conflict management and resolution, including the 1999 Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security; the 2005 Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (PDGG); and the 2008 ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) (ECOWAS, 2008). These documents reflected ECOWAS's efforts to connect peace and democracy and to adopt a broader concept of security that also encompasses human security. They laid out the legal frameworks within which ECOWAS responds to security threats.

Institutionalization of ECOWAS's Peace and Security Initiatives

Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution

The Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security, signed in 1999, established a Mediation and Security Council, a Council of Elders, and an Early Warning System to be integrated into the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) launched by the AU in 2002 (ECOWAS, 2008). Although the protocol mirrored the OAU's 1993 Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution, the ECOWAS initiative was the result of ECOWAS's longstanding involvement in conflict transformation. ECOWAS's Mechanism also built upon earlier agreements and institutions it had created for security purposes. An ECOWAS official noted that ECOWAS has been a leader in regional conflict transformation (Interview, 2019ib). The official pointed out that ECOWAS contributed significantly to developing the principle of non-indifference and frameworks for political interventions by regional organizations within states (Interview, 2019ib). (ECOWAS's deployment of ECOMOG to Liberia in 1990 was the first time an organization sent an intervention mission without prior approval from the United Nations Security Council and laid the foundation for the AU's own framework for engagement in conflict prevention and management (Interview, 2019ib). Since its mission to the first Liberian war, ECOWAS has undertaken peace operations in Sierra Leone (1997), Guinea-Bissau (1998), Côte d'Ivoire (2002), Liberia (2003), and was involved in the 2013 AU-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) (ECOWAS, 2008; Piccolino & Minou, 2017). The Protocol on the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention provides a normative framework for achieving sustainable peace and security in West Africa, outlining measures to strengthen ECOWAS's capacity to "pre-empt potential outbreaks of violence, resolve conflicts when they occur, and engage more effectively in post-conflict reconstruction where peace has been restored" (ECOWAS, 2008).

The consolidation of ECOWAS's peace and security efforts under the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution highlights the political transformation the organization has undergone through its conflict transformation initiatives. Since the adoption of the Non-Aggression Protocol in 1978, conflict transformation has become a major focus for ECOWAS, leading to changes in its norms, organization, and administration. An ECOWAS official at headquarters noted that while the organization has kept its core goals of economic development, it is its work on security and conflict transformation that it is most known for (Interview, 2019ib).

ECOWAS has also steadily created standards, policies, and institutions that go beyond immediate peace and security issues. This includes standards on democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and good governance (Aggad & Miyandazi, 2017 (b)). The organization has also established a Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, which highlights the importance of free and fair elections.

The Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance was adopted in 2001 as Supplement to the Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution of 1999. It provides a framework for effectively commissioning ECOWAS Election Observer missions and was already invoked when the missions were deployed to Guinea Conakry (2009), Niger (2010), Côte d'Ivoire (2011), and Mali (2012) (Diez, Tocci, Faleg, & Scherwitz, 2017). The Protocol outlines a “constitutional convergence criteria” based on principles of good governance (respect for the rule of law, separation of powers, independence of the judiciary, promotion of a non-partisan and responsible press, and the control of the armed forces) that member states must follow (ECOWAS, 2008). Diez and Tocci have noted that ECOWAS's focus on governance and elections has played a significant role in strengthening its conflict prevention efforts (Diez, Tocci, Faleg, & Scherwitz, 2017). The Protocol prohibits coups, declaring zero tolerance for power “gained or kept by unconstitutional means.” It calls for full adherence to the principle of separation of powers among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches within states, and for upholding the principle of “accession to power through free, fair, and transparent elections” (Bamfo, 2013; Williams & Haacke, 2008).

The Protocol also outlines rules for conducting elections and defines ECOWAS's role in the process, including serving as an observer. It calls for armed forces to remain neutral, apolitical, and under the command of “legally set up political authority” (ECOWAS, 2008). It also highlights factors that are important for achieving a peaceful democracy—such as “poverty alleviation, education, respect for human rights, religious tolerance, the rule of law, and efforts to promote societal dialogue” (ECOWAS, 2008). It provides for the suspension of ECOWAS members who violate these principles. For example, in 2005, when the Togolese president Faure Gnassingbé unconstitutionally seized power after the death of his father, Togo's long-serving president, with the help of the Togolese army, ECOWAS quickly joined the international community in

condemning the act (Bamfo, 2013). The AU threatened to impose sanctions on Togo and barred the Gnassingbé-led government from future AU meetings. Similarly, ECOWAS rejected Guinea's coup in December 2008 following the death of President Lansana Conté, and in January 2009, suspended Guinea's membership in the organization (Bamfo, 2013). A month later, in February 2009, the African Union invoked the Lome Accord, "which calls for suspending AU states that allow changes of government through a military junta," to warn Guinea's military government that if it did not commit to holding democratic presidential elections before the end of 2009, it would be suspended from the AU. ECOWAS also condemned Guinea-Bissau's 2012 coup, calling it irresponsible, and sent a delegation to negotiate with the military for a quick return to civilian rule (Bamfo, 2013).

ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF)

ECOWAS's governance transformation was further reflected in the adoption of the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF). Adopted by the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council (MSC) in January 2008, ECPF serves as a guide for ECOWAS and member states in addressing human security specifically. It outlines measures needed for effective and sustainable cooperation in preventing both interstate and intrastate conflicts, as well as for peacebuilding in post-conflict settings. ECPF defines human security as "the creation of conditions to eliminate pervasive threats to peoples' and individuals' rights, livelihoods, safety, and life; the protection of human and democratic rights and the promotion of human development to ensure freedom from fear and freedom from want" (ECOWAS, 2008). The framework advocates for a broader peace and security architecture that extends beyond military intervention and conflict management to include prevention and peacebuilding, linking the likelihood of conflict with sustainable development, good governance, and democracy.

The Adoption of the Revised ECOWAS Treaty

The most significant transformation of ECOWAS took place in 1993 with the adoption of the Revised ECOWAS Treaty, which introduced changes to the organization's objectives and institutional arrangements (see table 4 below for the post-2007 structure of ECOWAS). The adoption of the revised treaty marked a rebirth for ECOWAS. It consolidated the transformations the organization had accumulated over the years, primarily through its engagement in conflict transformation. Several analysts have linked the adoption of the Revised Treaty directly to its conflict transformation efforts. ECOWAS was motivated to develop new governance norms based on its experiences managing conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone, where it deployed both ECOMOG and ECOWAS Elections Observer missions (Aggad & Miyandazi, 2017 (b)).

The primary reason for revising the treaty was ECOWAS's involvement in handling violent conflicts in the region (Interview, 2019ib). Consequently, the Revised Treaty included several provisions on peace and security, as well as norms on democracy, governance, and elections, thereby establishing new standards in these areas. Article 4 of the Treaty specifies measures for “non-aggression between Member States”; “maintenance of regional peace, stability, and security through the promotion and strengthening of good neighborliness”; “peaceful settlement of disputes among Member States, active cooperation between neighboring countries, and fostering a peaceful environment for economic development”; and “recognition, promotion, and protection of human and peoples’ rights in accordance with the provisions of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights” (ECOWAS, 2010).

These normative changes were accompanied by significant institutional adjustments within the organization. The Revised Treaty transformed the ECOWAS Secretariat into a Commission with an expanded mandate and greater powers, converted the ECOWAS Tribunal into the Court of Justice, and established a Community Parliament (ECOWAS, 2010). It also increased the authority of the Heads of State, granting them the power to impose a range of sanctions on member states if they fail to comply with ECOWAS law (Aggad & Miyandazi, 2017, p. 7). Additionally, following the mission to Liberia in 1990, ECOWAS developed a more structured conflict management and resolution system, adopting the 1999 Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security; the 2005 Protocol on Democracy and Good

Governance (PDGG); and the 2008 ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (EDPF) (ECOWAS, 2008). These documents reflect ECOWAS's efforts to link peace with all its other objectives.

Table 4: Structure and Institutions of the Economic Commission of West African States after 2007

Organ/Institution	Function
ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State the supreme institution of the Community and is composed of Heads of State and/or Government of Member States.	- Responsible for the general direction and control of the Community and takes all measures to ensure its progressive development and the realization of its objectives. - Responsible for the determination of the general policy and major guidelines of the Community,
The Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS Commission) - transformed from the ECOWAS Secretariat in 2007 - headed by the President, assisted by a Vice President and five Commissioners. - Departments of the ECOWAS Commission include: ✓ Office of the President ✓ Office of the Vice President ✓ Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Digitalization. ✓ Department of Economic Affairs and Agriculture. ✓ Department of Internal Affairs. ✓ Department of Human Development and Social Affairs. ✓ Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security.	- Implements the vision, mission, and objectives of ECOWAS. - Executes decisions taken by the Authority and the Regulations of the Council. - Responsible for the promotion of Community development programmes and projects, as well as multinational enterprises of the region. - Convenes meetings of sectoral Ministers to examine sectoral issues which promote the achievement of the objectives of the Community. - Prepares draft budgets and programmes of activity of the Community. - Supervises implementation of budgets and programmes approved by the Council. - Provides reports on Community activities to all meetings of the Authority and Council.
The ECOWAS Parliament - composed of one hundred and fifteen (115) seats. - Each Member State has minimum of five (5) seats. The remaining forty (40) seats shared based on population.	- Serve as a forum for dialogue, consultation and consensus for Representatives of the people of West Africa with the aim of promoting integration. - Strengthen representative democracy in the Community. - Contribute to the promotion of peace, security, and stability on the West African Region.

The Community Court of Justice composed of five (5) independent Judges appointed by the Authority of Heads of State of Government, from nationals of Member States, for a four-year term of office, on recommendation of the Community Judicial Council.	- Monitor compliance of Member States with obligations under the Community Law. - adjudicate on any dispute relating to the interpretation and application of acts of the Community.
The ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council - Established by the provision of the Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Peacekeeping and Security - Supported by the Council of the Wise, the Defense and Security Commission, and the ECOWAS Standby Force.	- Decide on matters relating to peace and security. - Decide and implement policies relating to conflict prevention, management, resolution, peacekeeping, and security. - Authorize all forms of interventions and make decisions on deployment of political and military missions.
The ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID)	- Promote private sector activities and fund the development of the public sector. - Financing of intra-regional trade in order to enhance trade among Community member States
The West African Health Organization (WAHO)	safeguarding health through initiation and harmonization of the policies of Member States, and pooling of resources, for a collective and strategic combat against the health problems of the sub-region.
The Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA)	- Protect West African economies and financial systems against Money Laundering. - Combat the laundering of proceeds from crime and financing of terrorism
The Office of the Auditor General	Monitor expenditure in Community Institutions
The ECOWAS Specialized Agencies: - Regional Centre for Surveillance and Disease Control (RCSDC) - The West African Power Pool (WAPP) - ECOWAS Regional Competition Authority (ERCA) - Regional Animal Health Centre (RAHC) - Water Resources Coordination Centre - West African Monetary Agency (WAMA)	Provide reports and recommendations through the Executive Secretary to the Council of Ministers, either on their own initiative or upon the request of the Council of Ministers or the President of the Commission.

• West African Monetary Institute (WAMI) • ECOWAS Youth & Sports Development Centre (EYSDC) • ECOWAS Gender Development Centre (EGDC) • ECOWAS Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE) • ECOWAS Regional Electricity Regulatory Authority (ERERA) • Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food (RAAF) • Project Preparation and Development Unit (PPDU)	
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Accounting for the political transformation of ECOWAS

As discussed earlier, ECOWAS has experienced many changes since its founding in 1975. It has undergone significant political transformation, including the expansion and creation of new political institutions, the revision and adoption of new (especially political) norms and practices, and growth. Unlike other African Regional Economic Communities (RECs), ECOWAS has taken a more proactive transformative approach, evolving from a purely economic integration scheme in 1975 to a political organization in the post-Cold War era. Central to these developments within ECOWAS has been West African countries' concern with governance, peace, and security issues. The main argument of this research is that increased awareness and consensus on the seriousness of these issues helped strengthen efforts to find solutions to both inter-state and internal conflicts, which threaten regional peace, stability, and security. This also motivated West African states to commit to enhancing regional cooperation through ECOWAS, not only for economic reasons but also for collective security.

Like all international organizations, ECOWAS was formed by embodying the least common denominator of the diverse and competing interests of its founding states. The negotiations and bargaining among these states that led to the organization's creation were, as expected, lengthy and arduous. As previously noted, Nigeria played a dominant role in rallying the eventual member states around the regional agenda and bore a larger share of the costs during the organization's formation. However, several other states were also convinced of the (at least economic) benefits of cooperation that could be achieved through this organization and committed to its realization. The shared disdain and fear of the French presence in the region also strengthened Nigeria and its allies' resolve to establish ECOWAS.

Some analysts have attempted to place the creation of ECOWAS within the wave of economic regionalism that spread across the world in the 1970s and 1980s. What is clear is that ECOWAS, like other state-led regional groups, was created as a tool to serve a mixture of national interests, with a mandate and institutional setup limited to what those interests required. From a realist point of view, the organization was intended to be inherently "sticky"—states would be reluctant to

approve its transformation, knowing the high transaction costs and tough negotiations involved. Therefore, it is notable that ECOWAS was open to changes, showing a willingness to diverge from its original (economic) goals and to expand its mandate to include managing (though only interstate) conflicts shortly after its founding. This presents an interesting puzzle. As this study reveals, the transformation of ECOWAS can be explained by a combination of factors: a cognitive structure with a high capacity for absorbing new knowledge; the emergence in the external environment of a growing consensus on the acceptability and legality of (at least some forms of) intervention in interstate, and under certain conditions, internal conflicts; and a process of learning spurred by the organization's decision to explore conflict management. I will now discuss each of these factors.

Organizational Transformation of ECOWAS and Conflict Transformation

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was created with a narrow mandate focused solely on promoting economic cooperation among West African countries, supported by a leaner institutional structure to carry out that mandate. The Lagos Treaty, which established the Community, outlined the core goals of the new organization as fostering cooperation and economic growth to improve the living standards of West African people, by strengthening economic stability and encouraging closer ties among member states (Dapaah-Agyemang, 2003, p. 11). These goals would be reached through trade liberalization and harmonization, including removing tariffs and non-tariff barriers to trade among member states, and eventually creating a common external tariff; removing obstacles to the free movement of people, services, and capital between member states; and aligning agricultural infrastructure, industrial, monetary, and economic policies of member states (ECOWAS, 1975).

To help achieve these objectives, the Treaty established a simple institutional framework for the Organization. It created the Authority of Heads of State and Government as the main governing body of the Community; the Council of Ministers, which includes two representatives from each Member State and is responsible for monitoring the functioning and development of the Community; an Executive Secretariat to serve as the administrative arm; the Tribunal of the Community to ensure the observance of “law and justice” in interpreting the Treaty; and four

Technical and Specialized Commissions (Trade, Customs, Immigration, Monetary and Payments Commission; Industry, Agriculture, and Natural Resources Commission; Transport, Telecommunications, and Energy Commission; and Social and Cultural Affairs Commission) to mainly handle regional trade and economic development issues (ECOWAS, 1975).

Conspicuously absent from the mandate and list of ECOWAS's aims and objectives was the pursuit of peace and security in the region. The lack of an explicit provision for peace and security in the Community's mandate was especially obvious given the increasing number of conflicts in West Africa at the time of ECOWAS's founding.

Conclusion

Thus, the internal dynamics of the West African region have resulted in the transformation of ECOWAS's focus from preoccupation with economic integration and market expansion to conflict management. While ECOWAS's conflict management initiatives have led to the resolution of various conflicts, its active engagement has also visibly aligned with its organizational and normative structures. The growth and evolution of ECOWAS have been iterative, characterized by incremental functional adjustments, which clearly reflect feedback from its conflict management efforts. These initiatives have been accompanied by numerous organizational reforms, as evidenced by the adoption of several norms, protocols, decrees, and institutions. A defining moment in ECOWAS's transformation was the adoption of a revised Treaty in 1993, which entailed a comprehensive overhaul of the organization's objectives and institutional framework. Evidence from the study indicates a strong correlation between the revision of the ECOWAS Treaty and its involvement in managing violent conflicts within the region. The revised Treaty codified legally binding norms concerning democracy and governance, partly in response to the immediate prior engagement in the Liberian conflict in 1990. Moreover, the Treaty facilitated the creation of various organizational mechanisms and institutions vested with greater authority and expanded mandates, including the establishment of an ECOWAS Commission replacing the ECOWAS Secretariat, the transformation of the ECOWAS Tribunal into a Court of Justice, and the establishment of an ECOWAS Parliament.

Case Study 3: Conflict Transformation and the Transformation of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

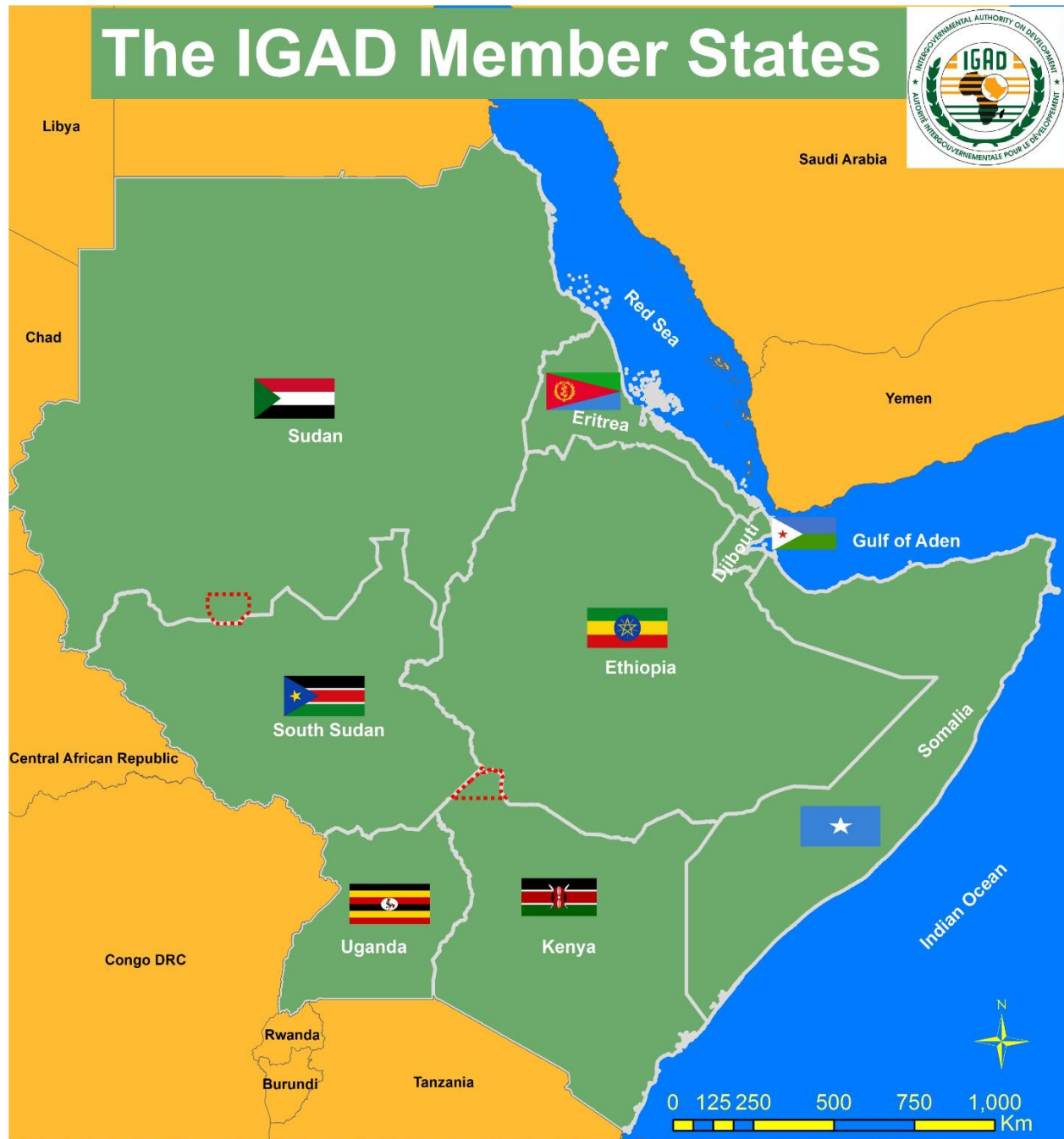
Background: Historical Overview of IGAD

This section examines the history of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) by exploring its evolution from its predecessor, the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Desertification (IGADD). It traces the origins of IGADD, established in 1986, including an analysis of the records from the meeting held in Djibouti in January 1986, where the Agreement Establishing the Inter-governmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD) in Eastern Africa was signed by six East African nations. The discussion also includes the role of the United Nations in the organization's formation, aimed at addressing recurrent droughts and natural disasters that had caused famine, ecological decline, and economic hardship in the East African region. The choice by leaders to focus on non-political objectives is emphasized; all six founding member states were under military rule or authoritarian regimes. According to interviews conducted in Addis Ababa, these political contexts may have prompted leaders to avoid engaging in political issues. It is argued that, given the contested legitimacy of these leaders, they lacked the genuine authority needed to negotiate political agreements. Conversely, it is noted that the United Nations, aware of the legitimacy concerns surrounding the leaders, elected to maintain the organization as non-political. The narrative proceeds to examine political developments in the IGAD region between 1986 and 1995, during which IGADD transitioned to IGAD. Particular attention is given to how IGADD responded to regional conflicts, especially in Somalia and Sudan, including South Sudan, and how international failures to resolve these conflicts created opportunities for IGADD to assume conflict management responsibilities. The analysis highlights the reluctance of regional conflict parties to accept external interventions, prompting them to seek IGADD as a neutral mediator. It is further argued that prior to adopting conflict management activities and adopting the name IGAD, the organization lacked genuine authority as a regional actor and primarily functioned as a conduit for international relief aid to the drought-stricken Horn of Africa.

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) is among Africa's most recently

established and recognized Regional Economic Communities (RECs). It was established in 1996 to replace its predecessor, the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD), which was founded by six nations in the Horn of Africa—namely Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Somalia—as well as in the Nile Valley with Sudan, and in the African Great Lakes region comprising Uganda and Kenya (see figure 4 below). This organization was initially created in 1986 to address ongoing droughts and other natural disasters that, during the 1970s and 1980s, caused widespread famine across Eastern Africa. Following its independence from Ethiopia, Eritrea joined IGADD as a seventh member during the fourth Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Addis Ababa in September 1993. However, due to the civil war, Somalia was rendered dysfunctional, limiting IGADD’s effective membership to six and consequently making it one of the smallest sub-regional organizations in Africa.

Figure 9: Map of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)



Source: IGAD (2022). IGAD Member States. Online: <https://geonode.igad.int/documents/77>. Accessed on 23 September 2022.

IGADD was primarily tasked with coordinating efforts to manage drought and development across the Eastern Africa sub-region, as well as developing strategies to ensure food security (Weldesellassie, 2011, p. 1). While the push to create regional organizations in post-independence Africa often stemmed from a non-functional goal of promoting Pan-Africanism and fostering a sense of brotherhood, the motivation behind IGADD's formation was clearly functional. In response to severe famine caused by persistent droughts and natural disasters in the 1970s and early 1980s, countries in Eastern Africa held a series of talks between 1983 and 1986 to establish a regional partnership to address recurrent drought and ecological degradation. The organization that emerged from these discussions, IGADD, was mainly tasked with combating desertification and promoting efforts to mitigate drought and its impacts. In 1990, IGADD formed and adopted a framework strategy to pursue food and environmental security, including intervention programs for each goal. As Healy (2009, p. 4) noted, the reason for establishing IGAD was not overtly political. The organization's name indicates that it lacked political ambitions for greater regional integration. Instead, its goals were limited to functional coordination on environmental protection, food security strategies, and natural resource management (Healy, 2009, p. 4). The drive to create IGADD primarily came from UN agencies seeking to establish a regional coordination agency to address famine and drought issues that had particularly impacted Ethiopia and Somalia in 1984 and 1985.

Thus, IGADD was given a modest, non-political mandate and a lean institutional infrastructure to carry it out. It was mainly seen as a forum for the countries in the Horn of Africa to institutionalize their interactions as they sought solutions to their socioeconomic challenges. It had a small secretariat with only 12 professionals based in Djibouti, responsible for coordinating the activities of the member states. IGADD focused on a non-political set of objectives, responding with indifference even to the political dynamics that seemed to make the region vulnerable to severe droughts. The common reason for excluding political issues from IGADD's agenda was that the partner states, like many African countries at the time, viewed political cooperation as too risky, potentially jeopardizing their fragile sovereignty. In the Greater Horn region from which IGADD emerged, suspicion of any regional political project was even higher, largely due to ongoing intrastate and interstate conflicts and the overall fragility of the states. At IGADD's founding in 1986, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda were all embroiled in civil wars, while tensions

simmered between Ethiopia and Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea, Ethiopia and Sudan, and Sudan and Uganda. IGADD largely ignored or was indifferent to the violent conflicts within and between these states. Each country was also under some form of dictatorship. The leaders who spearheaded IGADD's formation were hardly focused on regional conflicts friends.

Before the formation of IGADD, political relations among the six states were very limited. Tensions persisted between Ethiopia and Somalia even after the Ogaden War ended in 1978. In the early 1980s, Ethiopia, Sudan, Uganda, and Somalia were all affected by violent conflicts that resulted in hundreds of deaths. Governments in the region, adopting a “zero-sum approach to security,” regularly tried to destabilize each other: Ethiopia supported rebel groups in Sudan and Somalia, while Sudan and Somalia backed rebels in Ethiopia (Healy, 2009, p. 3). The regional states paid little attention to the OAU principle of “non-interference” and were deeply involved in each other’s internal wars. In fact, leaders like Museveni of Uganda, Meles of Ethiopia, and Issayas of Eritrea had come to power by overthrowing existing regimes in their countries. They took pride in saving their nations from oppressive governments. The leaders rejected the “stagnant kind of stability” represented by the OAU and saw the organization’s silence and indifference during civil wars in their countries as a betrayal. They argued that protecting human life was more important than upholding the sanctity of the state (Interview, 2019ii).

Therefore, the region was too fragile for institution-building. This explains why, until the mid-1980s, there had been no sub-regional organization for the Horn of Africa (Interview, 2019ii). The inaugural summit of IGADD in 1986 provided the occasion for the first meeting between President Siad Barre of Somalia and President Mengistu Haile Mariam of Ethiopia and laid the groundwork for the signing of a peace agreement between Somalia and Ethiopia in April 1988, during which both sides agreed to stop supporting rebel groups based in each other’s countries. Considering the situation in the region, it was remarkable that the countries managed to establish a forum for cooperation, even if only a modest one.

The United Nations, the International Community, and the Establishment of IGADD/IGAD

Several analysts have attributed the establishment of IGADD to the initiative of the international

community, particularly the United Nations, which aimed to intervene to lessen the devastating effects of drought and famine in the Horn of Africa in 1980 (Healy, 2009; Murithi, 2009; WeldeSELLASSIE, 2011). Therefore, IGADD is considered a somewhat unconventional international organization: although it is interstate in nature, it was primarily managed as an effort by the United Nations and international development partners. When IGADD was founded, all member states, except perhaps Kenya, were so impoverished that they could not sustain an international organization. Furthermore, these states were also engaged in internal consolidation following periods of instability and were too preoccupied with their own issues to prioritize regional cooperation.

Similarly, it has been argued that IGADD only lasted ten years due to international support. However, Angoma stated that IGADD was not solely an initiative of the international community (Interview, 2019iia). The founding heads of state of IGADD also needed an organization that could support their nation-building efforts and lend legitimacy to their governments—all of them, except Kenya's President, had come to power through military means and therefore faced legitimacy issues both domestically and globally (Interview, 2019iia). As a result, it was in the political interests of these states to establish some kind of regional organization to promote cooperation. While the international community provided financial and technical support, the agenda-setting and political direction of the organization were always controlled by the heads of state (Interview, 2019iia).

The success of the negotiations related to establishing IGADD has been credited to the involvement of the United Nations in the process. The UN aimed to rally countries in the Eastern Africa region to adopt a regional approach that would supplement national efforts to combat famine, ecological degradation, and the economic hardships these states face. El-Affendi (2001, p. 582) argued that the formation of IGADD was influenced less by a locally developed spirit of cooperation and more by pressure from aid donors and international agencies. After the success of the Comité Permanent interétat de La Lutte contre la Sécheresse dans la Sahel (CILSS) in the 1970s, the UN General Assembly passed several resolutions, starting with Resolution 35/90 of December 1980, urging the Horn of Africa nations to create an intergovernmental authority to coordinate drought and famine relief efforts.

The presence of the UN in negotiations for a regional cooperation framework, along with the financial and technical assistance provided, helped reduce transaction costs related to negotiations and aided in containing rivalries and diverging interests among Eastern African states (Interview, 2019iia). The organization thus became mainly dependent on funding and technical support from the UN and the international community. Angoma (2019) noted that IGADD, and later IGAD, stood out as the only African regional organizations explicitly created to address clearly defined problems. As a result, IGADD garnered support from various entities, including the UN, the World Bank, and foreign nations, especially due to the severe famine conditions in the region during the mid-1980s. Donors saw their assistance as contributing to efforts to mitigate the effects of drought and desertification, with support channeled through IGADD serving as a way to address these specific issues.

As will be noted, external influence played a significant role in its establishment, making IGADD—and later IGAD—particularly receptive to outside interventions in its management. It was this external support that sustained the organization and helped it grow in the early years after its founding, despite the fragility and minimal economic growth of its initial states, and even when the organization performed below expectations. For example, IGADD failed in implementing its proposed five-year program (1992-1996). El-Affendi (2001, p. 582) noted that it took five years of negotiation to establish IGADD, and another five years before it began to achieve some level of functionality. Aside from creating a forum for dialogue aimed at restoring relations between Ethiopia and Somalia, IGADD made limited progress in promoting effective regional cooperation and struggled to fulfill its modest goal of combating drought and famine.

By the mid-1990s, it became clear that there was a gap between IGADD's organizational capacity, its normative framework, and the emerging sub-regional challenges. Therefore, at an extraordinary summit on April 18, 1995, in Addis Ababa, the heads of state and government of IGADD decided to sign a declaration to revitalize and expand IGADD's mandate to better align with the realities of the post-Cold War era. After a series of meetings and consultations among representatives from member states, the heads of state and government held another extraordinary summit on March 21, 1996, in Nairobi, Kenya, where they signed the "Letter of Instrument to Amend the IGADD

Charter/Agreement” and adopted the “Agreement Establishing the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).”

This revised legal framework elevated the organization's legal status, strengthened its governance structure, expanded its organizational and normative components, and broadened its and more ambitious mandate that includes cooperation across various social, political, and environmental areas. The updated framework also gave IGAD a political element, opening the door for its involvement in political issues, especially in managing peace and security within the region. Like when IGADD was first created, several external actors helped transform it into IGAD. In 1997, donor governments—including Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States—and international organizations like the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the European Union (EU), which supported IGAD's revitalization, agreed to create the IGAD Partners Forum (IPF) for Development. The goal of this forum was to help IGAD achieve its objectives and carry out its mandate by providing financial and technical support.

These transformations, in fact, represent the culmination of a gradual evolution that has been occurring since 1990. Weldesellassie (2011, p. 2) attributes the transformation of IGADD into IGAD in 1996 to three major preceding events: the signing of the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community (AEC) in June 1991—the Abuja Treaty—which acknowledged the vital role of existing economic communities in establishing the AEC and emphasized the importance of political stability for Africa’s development in the post-Cold War era; the 1992 Rio UN Summit, where the UN Convention to Combat Desertification was adopted, emphasizing sub-regional groupings as agents for implementing the convention; and the conclusion of the three-decade conflict between the Eritrean liberation movement and Ethiopia in 1991, coupled with the establishment of bilateral relationships and cooperation agreements between the two nations, fostering an environment conducive to peace and the pursuit of economic cooperation and regional integration. Healy (pp. 4-5) also highlights the period from 1991 to 1993, during which the region experienced reduced conflicts among IGADD member states, as an opportunity for these nations not only to consolidate their sovereignty but also to pursue regional cooperation. During this

period, each country focused on internal affairs: Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Sudan were consolidating their states following prolonged instability; Kenya and Djibouti were undergoing political transitions; Uganda and Kenya restored their diplomatic relations; and Uganda concentrated on the unfolding crisis in its neighbor, Rwanda. Somalia appeared to receive adequate international support from the United States and the United Nations for the reconstruction of its collapsed state and did not pose any specific threat to regional security (Healy, 2009, p. 5). These developments established a favorable environment for the member states to explore a more expansive regional cooperation framework.

While the initial formation of the predecessor organization – IGADD – mainly stemmed from the international community, the motivation for re-establishing the organization as IGAD was primarily driven by the member states themselves, even with financial support from international partners under the umbrella of the IPF. The rebirth of IGADD as IGAD was thus the result of a reflective and learning process. The member states recognized that there were more reasons for regional cooperation beyond just the economic and environmental needs that originally prompted the creation of IGADD. They highlighted factors such as shared ethnic and geographic characteristics, abundant natural resource complementarities, and the interdependence among member states as the basis and justification for economic cooperation and integration (Tadesse, 2021, p. 8). Most importantly, the member states emphasized promoting peace, security, and stability in the region as the main goal of regional cooperation.

As already noted, IGADD mainly focused on non-political objectives, largely ignoring peace and security issues in the sub-region. The member states were governed by authoritarian and military regimes. However, the outbreak of violent conflicts in Somalia and Sudan in the mid-1990s prompted IGADD member states to take action, leading to efforts to strengthen the organization to address security threats in the Horn of Africa. Although member states recognized that peace and security were essential for the success of their efforts to address economic, social, environmental, and humanitarian problems in the sub-region, it was only after IGADD was restructured as IGAD that the organization began to prioritize the promotion and maintenance of peace and security as its main goals.

IGAD was prompted to assume responsibility for conflict management in the Horn of Africa owing to the widespread violence experienced in the region during the 1980s and 1990s. The nations in this region recognized that pursuing economic development and regional integration would be futile without first establishing an effective mechanism to resolve and manage the numerous conflicts within the subregion. The Horn of Africa had been plagued by persistent insecurity, notably civil wars, which resulted in instability and hindered efforts to promote economic growth and democratic governance. The rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War exacerbated hostilities and intensified conflicts in the region (Murithi, 2009, p. 137). Regional leaders exploited the Cold War context to consolidate their control, shifting alliances as it suited their interests. Two of the civil wars that IGAD would be charged with managing were residues of Cold War-era dynamics in the region. As Murithi (Murithi, 2009, p. 140) observed, the conflicts in Somalia and Sudan, where IGAD has long intervened, were both legacies of misrule driven by Cold War influences. Both Somalia and Sudan were engaged in the Cold War superpower rivalry. The dictator Siad Barre leveraged superpower politics to govern Somalia from 1969 until his overthrow in 1991, alternating allegiance between the USSR and the US as circumstances dictated.

The complex legacies of the Cold War and colonialism made conflicts in the two countries difficult to resolve. IGADD, with its minimal infrastructure and limited mandate, was poorly equipped to handle these conflicts. In 1996, there was an unusual period of peaceful relations among states in the Horn of Africa, even as civil conflicts persisted. It was this brief pause in interstate conflicts that gave the Member States of IGADD a chance to reorganize the organization. Healy (2009, p. 1) has noted that IGAD was conceived of “during an exceptional (and brief) interlude of good relations among all its member states”.

The spread of conflicts—both interstate and intrastate—led IGAD to prioritize conflict management as a key goal. The organization has developed its own peace and security structure that reflects the models of the African Union (AU) and the UN (Murithi, 2009, p. 139). Murithi (2009, p. 139) observes that, in theory, IGAD is meant to be subordinate to the mandates of the UN and AU for dispute resolution. However, in practice, it has taken the lead in peacemaking whenever and wherever it has a comparative advantage, such as in the conflicts in Somalia, Sudan,

and later South Sudan. Over time, the AU and the UN have increasingly recognized IGAD's legitimacy as a security actor, acknowledging that "they must at the very least consult, if not work with or delegate to IGAD the task of advancing peace and security in the Horn of Africa" (2009, pp. 139-140). As a result, IGAD's mandate has expanded to include managing political, peace, and security issues within the region.

The Agreement Establishing IGAD, Article 7 (g), emphasizes promoting peace through political dialogue as a key goal of the organization (IGAD, 1996). In October 2005, during a conference held in Khartoum, IGAD introduced a Strategy on Peace and Security, aimed at facilitating the development of suitable national mechanisms to promote peace and security at the national level, and reviewing structures and systems for early warning, management, and resolution of conflicts within the region and beyond (Intergovernmental Authority on Development, 2005). While IGAD assigns the responsibility for peace and security to its member states, it also implicitly commits to intervening in its member countries to promote peace. After its reconstitution in 1996, IGAD was immediately called upon to address conflicts in two member states—Somalia and Sudan. The organization's involvement in managing these conflicts would significantly influence IGAD's development.

IGAD and the Sudan Conflict

IGAD's decision to engage in conflict transformation was primarily motivated by the conflict in Sudan. As will be elucidated below, the conflicts in Sudan and, subsequently, in South Sudan have markedly influenced the development and organizational evolution of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). According to an interviewee from IGAD's Center of Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN) in Addis Ababa, there existed a co-evolutionary relationship between IGAD and its conflict transformation initiatives in Sudan, South Sudan, and Somalia (Interview, 2019iib). Specifically, while managing these three conflicts, IGAD has experienced significant institutional and normative changes. The conflict that exerted the most profound transformative effect on IGAD was the Sudan conflict: IGAD was formerly known as IGADD until the President of Sudan invited it to intervene to prevent further escalation.

The Sudan conflict was one of Africa's longest-running conflicts, originating from hostilities between the northern and southern regions of Sudan after independence in 1956. A peace agreement signed in 1972 in Addis Ababa led to a cessation of hostilities and provided some degree of autonomy for South Sudan. The agreement allowed for the creation of separate legislative and executive bodies for the region and the integration of ex-combatants from the South into the Sudanese army and police. However, the Addis Ababa Agreement only offered a temporary respite, as it failed to address the core causes of the civil war. The Sudanese government also reneged on the commitments it had made in the agreement.

Thus, in 1983, a decade after the signing of the Addis Ababa Agreement, Sudan once again descended into civil war when the southern constituency, led by Dr. John Garang, established the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement and Army (SPLM/A) to advocate for democracy and a non-sectarian government of national unity. By the mid-1990s, the conflict persisted, and the situation had become so critical that the international community sought to intervene. Nigerian President Ibrahim Babangida decided to facilitate peace negotiations between the SPLM/A and the Government of Sudan in Abuja, conducted between May and June 1992. Following the failure of Nigeria-led negotiations to broker peace, Sudanese President Omar El-Bashir invited the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), then known as IGADD, to intervene and assist in resolving the conflict (Murithi, 2009, p. 140; Healy, 2011, p. 110). Bashir was prompted to call for IGAD's intervention after the easing of tensions between Khartoum and its neighboring countries—Ethiopia and Eritrea. Ethiopia and Eritrea, who had resolved their mutual hostilities following Eritrea's independence in 1991, had recently withdrawn their support for the SPLM/A (Murithi, 2009, p. 141; Healy, 2011, p. 110). Bashir believed that the SPLM/A would accept IGAD's intervention, considering that two other prominent member states—Uganda and Kenya—had previously supported the SPLM/A against the Khartoum government.

However, Bashir also aimed to prevent foreign intervention in internal Sudanese affairs. While advocating for IGAD intervention, he emphasized that he regarded the organization as a neutral entity “without loopholes through which colonialism could penetrate under the pretext of humanitarianism” (Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 1993). Nevertheless, SPLM/A harbored suspicions regarding Bashir's motives and was doubtful about IGAD's capacity to serve as a neutral mediator in the peace negotiations. SPLM/A was particularly concerned that IGAD,

by its very nature as an intergovernmental organization—and unlike a subnational non-state entity—would be more inclined to favor the interests of its member states, prioritizing state security over human security (Murithi, 2009, p. 141).

In 1994, IGADD established a Standing Committee on Peace in Sudan to recommence peace negotiations in Nairobi, Kenya. The Committee was chaired by then-President Daniel Arap Moi of Kenya and included Presidents Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia, Isaias Afewerki of Eritrea, and Yoweri Museveni of Uganda. The initial round of discussions facilitated by the Committee quickly collapsed as both parties maintained their respective positions. The southern region articulated demands for secession and self-determination, which were unequivocally rejected by the Government of Sudan. However, progress was made during the second set of negotiations when IGADD successfully unified the conflicting parties to sign a Declaration of Principles (DoP), which addressed issues previously in dispute, including human rights, the unity of Sudan, the aspiration for a secular and democratic social and political system, and an equitable distribution of resources (Murithi, 2009, p. 141). The Declaration explicitly provided for the right of the South to self-determination through a referendum should the Government of Sudan fail to meet these demands.

The Declaration was accepted, predictably, by the SPLM/A, particularly due to its inclusion of the demand for a secular democratic system and the right of the South to a referendum on self-determination. Khartoum, once again predictably, rejected the Declaration because of its provisions on secularism and the referendum on self-determination. The subsequent stalemate resulted in a swift collapse of the negotiations. The beneficiary of this process was IGADD. Several interviewees for this study highlighted that although the initial negotiations did not yield significant success, the perception held by both belligerent parties that the Standing Committee demonstrated impartiality during the negotiation process would substantially enhance IGADD's credibility as a mediator in the conflict (Interview, 2019iia). These preliminary efforts by IGADD toward conflict resolution laid the foundation for its emergence as a credible actor in peace and security within the region. As the dust settled on the Declaration and hostilities resumed in Sudan, IGADD redirected its focus towards garnering material and political support from the international community to strengthen its conflict management mechanisms and to secure recognition as the sole legitimate actor in the Horn of Africa. It campaigned to prevent foreign intervention in

regional affairs and sought to delegitimize other actors attempting to influence conflict management in the Horn of Africa.

Meanwhile, owing to the deadlock in the IGAD-initiated peace process caused by the southern demands for a referendum on self-determination and a secular government—both conditions strongly opposed by the northern region—several entities intervened to attempt to salvage the process from collapse. The Carter Center, Iran, Libya, Malawi, and South Africa all initiated new mediation efforts, albeit with limited success. Notably, the most significant of these efforts was led by Egypt and Libya, who aimed to conduct a parallel mediation process alongside IGAD after their attempts to be included in IGAD's initiative were rejected (Healy, 2009; Murithi, 2009; Weldesellassie, 2011). Egypt's involvement was primarily motivated by a desire to prevent the IGAD process from endorsing South Sudan's self-determination. Additionally, Egypt sought to support northern Sudan as a counterbalance to the backing the southern parties received from other IGAD member states. The southern faction, SPLM/A, declined to participate in the Egypt-Libya initiative as it was not founded upon the Declaration of Principles (DOP) established by IGAD. The ensuing tension and competition between IGAD and the Egypt-Libya alliance presented IGAD with an opportunity to reaffirm its legitimacy as a regional actor. IGAD leveraged Egypt and Libya's efforts to marginalize its initiative by establishing the IGAD Partners Forum, which expanded its scope and capacity by earning international recognition and material support for its post-conflict reconstruction activities (Murithi, 2009, p. 144).

Therefore, in opposition to external intervention and with the backing of its international partners, IGAD became the only legitimate actor in the Horn of Africa. During an IGAD summit in July 1997, President Moi of Kenya sought to strengthen the IGAD-led mediation process by persuading President Bashir of Sudan to reopen negotiations on the declaration of principles (DoP). Once again, international actors, through the IGAD Partners Forum (IPF), supported the IGAD process. With the backing of IPF and the UN, IGAD succeeded in getting the Sudanese government to sign the DoP (Healy, 2011, p. 111; 2009, p. 7). Experts have noted that Bashir agreed to resume negotiations not because of IGAD's influence but because his government was growing increasingly weakened and isolated as the SPLM/A received substantial military backing from Ethiopia and Uganda, while Eritrea supported opposition and armed resistance groups in Somalia. This was different from 1993, when Bashir relied on IGAD's intervention: at that time, the

SPLM/A was comparatively weaker.

In 1998, IGAD's engagement with the Sudan peace process led to the creation of another institution – the political negotiation committee, tasked with addressing governance issues of the two parties and establishing a transitional issues committee. The political negotiation committee was formed by an IGAD secretariat established by Kenya within its foreign ministry to coordinate the peace process in Sudan. Both sides had made significant concessions and were close to reaching a peace deal when the process was disrupted by the outbreak of conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea in May 1998. This conflict was triggered when a poorly managed border incident escalated, heightening the tensions that had been building up between the two nations (Negash & Tronvoll, 2000, pp. 2-3). The war diverted Ethiopia and Eritrea's attention away from IGAD's peace efforts. Egypt and Tripoli viewed the conflict and IGAD's inactivity as opportunities to challenge IGAD's mediatory role. However, IGAD partners, through the International Peace Fund (IPF) led by the US, Norway, and the UK, quickly intervened to support IGAD and prevent Egypt-Libya interference (Healy, 2009, p. 8). The IPF secured funding for IGAD's Sudan peace initiative in 1999. Additionally, President George W. Bush's administration grew increasingly concerned about the situation in Sudan and sought to pressure Khartoum into accelerating the peace process. President Bush appointed Senator Danforth as a special envoy to Sudan, marking the start of a more active US role in advancing IGAD's peace efforts (Healy, 2009, p. 8).

In October 2002, the US initiated the US and Sudan Peace Pact, which laid out a list of strong sanctions against the Sudanese government. The peace process, now led by Kenya—specifically Kenya's retired General Sumbeiywo—resulted in the signing of the Machakos Protocol in July 2002. This protocol proposed a “one country, two systems” compromise, where the North would be governed by Sharia Law, while the South would have a secular administration. Most importantly, the Protocol included a provision for a referendum on South Sudan's self-determination, to be held six years after the signing of the peace agreement. The negotiations also addressed security arrangements, power-sharing, and wealth distribution in the interim, culminating in the signing of Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) on January 9, 2005. The CPA was signed by the Sudanese government and the SPLM/A from the southern region, ending a two-decade civil war in Sudan. This was the result of several years of peace negotiations and mediation initiatives led by IGAD, in partnership with the United Kingdom, Norway, the

United States, and Italy, aiming to find a comprehensive and lasting solution to the conflict. IGAD played a vital role in the peace process by providing an institutional framework for negotiations, framing the issue as a “north-south” problem, and ensuring continuity in the peace process.

There is a consensus that IGAD’s sustained involvement in the peace process created a platform for the parties to negotiate a consensus. The CPA provided for the equitable sharing of power and revenue from oil resources between the north and the south (Ottaway & Hamzawy, 2011). The CPA stipulated the conduct of a referendum on independence in January 2011, six years after its signing, thereby offering South Sudan the opportunity to either uphold the power-sharing arrangement or pursue complete independence through secession from the north (Ottaway & Hamzawy, 2011). The inhabitants of the Abyei region were given the option to determine, via a separate referendum, whether they wished to be included in the north or the south.

IGAD and the Transformation of the Conflict in South Sudan

Sudan held the referendum from January 9 to 15, 2011, six years after signing the CPA. The South Sudanese voted overwhelmingly (98.83%) in favor of independence from the Republic of Sudan. The Sudanese government conceded defeat, and on July 9, 2011, the Republic of South Sudan was established as Africa’s 54th state. IGAD claimed significant credit for this new nation, mediating it through more than a decade of peace efforts and fragile negotiations. However, as was soon evident, the CPA—the foundation of South Sudan’s independence—lacked a sufficient framework to protect the new state's sovereignty and support internal nation-building. This became clear when, at the end of 2013, shortly after its independence, the young country descended into turmoil and chaos. The tensions that had been simmering since independence between the two main ethnic groups in South Sudan—the Dinka, the larger group, and the Nuer—eventually erupted into violent clashes between militias aligned with each group in December 2013.

What would become one of Africa’s worst modern civil wars was triggered by killings at the end of 2013 by the Dinka militias, targeting the Nuer in Juba, the capital of South Sudan (Mamdani, 2016). The conflict was sparked by protests from the Nuer elites within the ruling party, SPLM, against President Salva Kiir, accused of monopolizing power. The Transitional Constitution of

South Sudan had failed to provide enough checks and balances on the executive power held by the presidency (Biel, 2021, p. 87). A faction emerged in the SPLM Political Bureau, led by Vice President Riek Machar and composed of Nuer elites, challenging President Salva Kiir and his Dinka faction in the government. Kiir responded by dissolving the government and expelling Machar, and ordered the disarmament of his bodyguards (Biel, 2021, p. 87). Fighting broke out when, following this order, the Dinka military attempted to disarm Nuer soldiers within its ranks. The situation escalated as the Dinka launched attacks on Nuer civilians in Juba. Over 20,000 civilians lost their lives in a short period (Biel, 2021, p. 87). Nuer soldiers in other parts of the country decided to desert the national army—the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA)—to form their own movement, the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement in Opposition (SPLM-IO). The SPLM-IO then launched retaliatory attacks against the now Dinka-dominated government of South Sudan.

The resulting war triggered a major humanitarian and security crisis, requiring international intervention. IGAD and its member states decided to get involved immediately after the outbreak of hostilities, with the support of the African Union and three Western nations – the United States, United Kingdom, and Norway (the Troika) – which had supported South Sudan's independence in 2011 (Biel, 2021, p. 87). However, the involvement of the Troika in the new initiative was contested by African states, particularly Ethiopia and South Africa, which felt it had undermined them during the negotiations for the CPA that ended the Sudan conflict in 2005 (Cosmas, 2015). Nonetheless, IGAD was accepted by all parties as a legitimate actor in the peace process. On January 2, 2014, IGAD launched a mediation effort to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

The IGAD-led mediation process resulted in brokering peace between the Government of the Republic of South Sudan (GRSS) and the SPLM-IO, evidenced by the signing of Agreements on Cessation of Hostilities and the Question of Detainees in Addis Ababa on January 23, 2014 (Reliefweb, 2014). The signing of these agreements gave IGAD the chance to initiate a long-term mediation process to find a sustainable solution to the conflict. Over the next fifteen months, IGAD managed a peace-mediation effort led by special envoys from Ethiopia, Kenya, and Sudan (Uganda was not involved because it had unilaterally authorized a military operation in support of the South Sudanese government). However, IGAD faced difficulties in overcoming internal divisions and

the warring parties' reluctance to reach an agreement. The process was especially hindered by regional rivalries and power struggles among various factions in South Sudan.

In March 2015, IGAD postponed negotiations and announced a new configuration that included the African Union (AU), UN, China, U.S., UK, European Union (EU), Norway, and the IGAD Partners Forum (IPF) to help overcome challenges and break the deadlock in the mediation process (International Crisis Group, 2015). Although the initiative failed to gain the broad support of the international community due to disillusionment with IGAD and South Sudan, it represented the best chance to rally the warring parties to sign a peace agreement. The IGAD-PLUS initiative led to the signing of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCSS) on August 17, 2015, which temporarily ended civil war and helped keep the warring parties apart for nearly a year (Vhumbunu, 2019). When the civil war resumed on July 7, 2016, IGAD called for an Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government on South Sudan on June 12, 2017. At this summit, it established the High-level Revitalization Forum (HLRF), consisting of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda, to facilitate negotiations between President Salva Kiir's government, Riek Machar's SPLM-IO, and other opposition parties (Vhumbunu, 2019). The effort resulted in the signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) on September 12, 2018, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, by the warring parties. This agreement has been credited with significantly helping to de-escalate the conflict.

IGAD and the Transformation of the Somali Conflict

The conflict in Somalia is the second conflict in which IGAD has been extensively involved, and it has significantly contributed to the transformation of the organization both organizationally and normatively. The Somali conflict originated from the complete collapse of Somalia's state institutions in 1991, following the fall of President Mohamed Siad Barré and three years of civil war. Siad Barré had ruled Somalia since 1969. The overthrow of his government sparked violent fighting over control of the capital, Mogadishu, which escalated into a fierce conflict among various clan-based factions. The civil war's impact was felt in neighboring countries. All IGAD member states were either affected by or involved in the conflict. The war expanded regionally, with significant implications for Ethiopia and Kenya, which have large Somali communities within

their borders. The rise of Islamism as a political ideology attracted international attention, especially from the US and other Western powers, due to the threat of international terrorism.

The UN attempted to intervene to resolve the conflict by deploying the UN Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) in May 1992. However, the effectiveness of UNOSOM was undermined by factionalism among Somali clans, which led the UN to deploy a stronger mission—invoking Chapter VII of its charter—called the Unified Task Force (UNITAF), led by the United States, and named “Operation Restore Hope” (Murithi, 2009, p. 146). UNITAF aimed to restore order and lay the groundwork for UN peacekeepers. After UNITAF, the UN deployed UNOSOM II to disarm warring factions and oversee peacebuilding in Somalia. Like UNOSOM I, UNOSOM II faced challenges from Somalia’s complex factional political system. UNOSOM II ended unsuccessfully in 1995, leaving Somalia to fend for itself.

In 1999, after five years of fighting, President Ismael Omar Guelleh of Djibouti convened a National Reconciliation Conference in Arta, Djibouti, to resolve the conflict. IGAD wanted to intervene, but since Somalia was a failed state without a government, it was unable to exercise its membership in IGAD and other international forums. Therefore, IGAD faced the challenge of legitimately managing the Somali conflict. President Guelleh's decision allowed IGAD to become involved in Somalia's peace process. The Guelleh-led negotiations concluded in August 2000 with the signing of the Arta Agreement, which established a Transitional National Government (TNG) led by Abdulgasim Salat Hassan. Initially, it was supported by IGAD, other African countries, Arab states, and even the Islamists and some members of the business community in Mogadishu. However, Ethiopia’s support for a separate initiative—the Somalia Reconciliation and Restoration Council—effectively undermined peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts in Somalia, including the Arta Agreement (International Crisis Group, 2002).

Ethiopia opposed the Transitional National Government (TNG) because of its links to Islamists and the Arab world's backing. The TNG also excluded Ethiopia’s longstanding allies among the warlords. The Ethiopian-supported Somalia Reconciliation and Restoration Council worked hard to undermine the TNG. Although endorsed by neighboring countries like Yemen, the Arta Agreement was rejected by several other nations and within Somalia itself. The northern region of

Somalia (Somaliland) and the eastern region (Puntland) issued declarations of autonomy (International Crisis Group, 2002). Ethiopia, which had its own interests in Somalia, also aimed to influence the IGAD peace initiative. Meanwhile, the Arab League launched a parallel diplomatic effort focused on establishing a Government of National Unity in Somalia.

The situation in Somalia created a difficult dilemma for IGAD. Two of its member states, Ethiopia and Djibouti, who had generally good relations, were aligned with opposing factions in Somalia. Djibouti supported the Transitional National Government (TNG), while Ethiopia backed the Somali Reconciliation and Restoration Council. Until this point, IGAD had only sought limited influence over the peace process in Somalia. Now, it was compelled to get involved to prevent a conflict between Djibouti and Ethiopia. Consequently, in January 2002, the IGAD summit decided to launch a joint peace process with Ethiopia and Djibouti to facilitate negotiations between the Somali Reconciliation and Restoration Council (SRRC) and the TNG. Kenya was assigned the role of mediator. The negotiation process, known as the Somalia National Reconciliation Conference, began on October 27, 2002, in Eldoret, Kenya.

Although an IGAD initiative, the peace process was led by Kenya, with support from European development funds. External partners, such as the US and Western powers, were excluded from the mediation process (Healy, 2011). Despite several challenges, including tensions among Somali factions and a lack of political support, the meeting reached an agreement to establish the Somalia Transitional Federal Institutions (TFIs) and the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) (International Crisis Group, 2002b). IGAD helped the TFG draft a Transitional Federal Charter (TFC), which was adopted in February 2004, and organized the election of President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed as head of the TFG in October 2004 by members of the Transitional Federal Parliament. Because of IGAD's role in its election, IGAD's Western partners recognized the TFG. However, the TFG failed to gain support across all of Somalia, mainly due to Ethiopia's significant involvement in the process. Ethiopia had been accused of contributing to the collapse of the Arta Process by encouraging Puntland's autonomy and later establishing the Somalia Reconciliation and Restoration Council as a rival peace process (Murithi, 2009, p. 147).

With the collapse of the IGAD-led initiative, fighting resumed seriously in Somalia, endangering peace throughout the Horn of Africa region. In January 2005, the AU Peace and Security Council

began considering deploying a regional force in Somalia in response to a request from President Yusuf in October 2004 (African Union Peace and Security Council, 2005). The AU authorized IGAD to send a peace mission to Somalia in February 2005. In April 2005, IGAD agreed to deploy 10,000 peacekeepers to help disarm the militias, protect the TFIs, and set the stage for an AU force to take over nine months later. IGAD initially decided to send a fact-finding mission to Somalia to evaluate the feasibility of its peacekeeping operation. However, due to a lack of political will, capacity, and a clear framework for deploying peace missions, the plan approved by the IGAD Council of Ministers and forwarded to the AU PSC was never carried out.

The impact of IGAD on transforming the conflicts in Sudan, South Sudan, and Somalia cannot be overstated. As previously noted, IGAD's involvement in managing these conflicts was key in framing them as a "north-south" issue. As shown, IGAD launched several peace initiatives that not only resulted in the signing of the famous Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in Sudan, the Arta Agreement in Somalia, and the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCSS), but also led to the creation of a new state – the Republic of South Sudan in 2011, a new government in Somalia – the Transitional National Government of Somalia (TNG) along with a new transitional charter, and a coalition government in South Sudan.

Some have challenged IGAD's role in addressing conflicts. For example, Healy (2011, pp. 119-20) argued that the peace initiatives were essentially political efforts, largely designed and carried out by member states either independently or collectively. Critics claim that IGAD lacked the capacity and authority to manage the peace processes it is credited with having effectively managed. In fact, Healy noted that when IGAD was asked to intervene in the Sudanese processes in 1993, it had no mandate to address peace and security issues and lacked even the basic institutional infrastructure needed to pursue a conflict-resolution role (2011, p. 120). Early on, IGAD's small secretariat in Djibouti lacked the resources to organize and support peace talks and therefore depended heavily on member states' support, especially Kenya's. However, as one IGAD official pointed out, IGAD's role in peace processes cannot simply be dismissed (Interview, 2019iia). Though initially a modest organization with a limited mandate, IGAD grew over the years as it became involved in conflicts and underwent major transformations. The influence of IGAD's engagement is reflected in changes to its mandates and objectives, its legal and institutional structures, its authority and legitimacy as a regional actor, its organizational practices

and operational procedures, and its normative foundations.

Effects of the engagement of the IGAD in conflict management on the transformation of the IGAD mandate

The Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Desertification (IGADD), from which IGAD evolved, was originally tasked with a narrow mandate to coordinate efforts to manage drought and famine, and to provide solutions to food insecurity caused by these issues in the East African region during the 1970s and 1980s. According to that mandate, IGADD aimed to combat desertification and promote initiatives to mitigate drought and its impacts. Therefore, IGADD's mandate was limited to non-political objectives. It had no ambitions for broader regional integration. The founding members—Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, and Somalia—were primarily focused on internal consolidation, leaving little room for regional political projects. While they had some influence over the agenda, IGADD depended heavily on external donors, who had sponsored its creation, for its survival. When IGADD was invited in 1993 by Sudanese President Omar al Bashir to help resolve the Sudanese conflict, it lacked a mandate for peace and security management among member states. As a result, IGADD entered Sudan without explicit conflict management authority and without the necessary institutional infrastructure, as will be seen. The political crisis in Sudan offered justification for IGADD to extend its mandate beyond its original legal framework.

IGADD/IGAD's mandate for peace and security was acquired during the civil war in Sudan and was strengthened through its interventions in Somalia and South Sudan conflicts. It was only in 1995, two years after IGADD had been managing the peace process in Sudan, that member states started to consider institutionalizing IGADD's peace and security efforts into a permanent mandate and expanding its scope to address emerging sub-regional challenges (Weldesellassie, 2011). The decision to broaden IGADD's mandate to include maintaining peace and security in the Horn of Africa was largely a result of organizational learning during the two years IGAD was involved in managing the Sudanese conflict. As Sudan and Somalia suffered from devastating civil wars, countries recognized that the limited original mandate of IGADD was restricting its ability to intervene effectively in these conflicts.

Angoma (2019) notes that IGADD member states learned many lessons from the collapse of the Nigerian-led mediation process, initiated by President Ibrahim Babangida in Abuja in 1992 to secure the SPLM/A and the Sudanese government's signing of a peace agreement. IGADD leaders saw the failure of the Abuja process as an opportunity to take responsibility for maintaining peace and security in the region. The rejection of the joint Libya-Egypt initiative by some warring parties in Sudan also helped reinforce IGADD's role as the legitimate mediator in the conflict and as a regional actor. IGADD gained important insights from participating in the Abuja process (Interview, 2019iia). As a result, the IGADD heads of state and government held an extraordinary summit on April 18, 1995, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to consider not only IGADD's potential role in managing the conflict in Sudan but also to address regional challenges in Eastern Africa (Murithi, 2009, p. 151). During the summit, the leaders signed a declaration to revitalize and expand IGADD's mandate to include promoting political stability and development throughout the region. Between 1995 and 1996, officials from member states—including foreign ministers, delegates, and experts—held intensive meetings and consultations to share lessons learned from their involvement in peace processes in Sudan. These discussions led to a second extraordinary summit of heads of state and government in Nairobi, Kenya, on March 21, 1996. There, they signed the 'Letter of Instrument to Amend the IGADD Charter/Agreement,' adopted a new Agreement Establishing the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and renamed IGADD as IGAD, featuring a new and expanded governance structure, an increased mandate, and upgraded legal status (Murithi, 2009, p. 151).

While many analysts have quickly attributed these developments to the support IGAD received from Western donors, especially from the IGAD Partnership Forum (IPF), the decision to expand the organization's mandate was an initiative of the member states. It was triggered by the civil wars in Sudan and Somalia and was influenced by lessons learned from previous attempts to intervene in these conflicts. In fact, as an official from Kenya's Office of the Permanent Representative to IGAD in Addis Ababa noted, it was only possible to mobilize the political will of the states and gain donor support for transforming IGAD because of the political crises in Sudan and Somalia.

Effects of engagement of IGAD in conflict management on the transformation of its governance and organizational structures

Another clear result of IGAD's involvement in transforming the conflict in Sudan was the evolution of its organizational structures, evidenced by the establishment of several organs and institutions within the organization. When the original IGADD, at the invitation of Sudan's President, decided to participate in managing conflicts in the region, it had only a minimal organizational framework. By 1993, IGADD consisted of a small secretariat with fewer than 20 staff members, based in Djibouti. The only visible body was the Assembly of heads of state and government, which made all decisions for the organization. The organization's agenda was carried out by member states, either individually or collectively. Kenya, for example, assumed responsibility for managing conflicts in Sudan, Somalia, and later South Sudan during the early stages of these conflicts. It established a separate IGAD secretariat under its Ministry of Foreign Affairs and provided the resources necessary for mediation efforts. Occasionally, member states made unilateral decisions to intervene in other member states, often running parallel initiatives alongside IGAD's efforts. For instance, when Uganda deployed military forces to support the Juba government during the South Sudanese conflict in 2014, or when Ethiopia initiated a separate mediation process in Somalia while IGAD was engaged in the Arta process. These unilateral actions by member states were often linked to IGAD's weak legal and institutional framework and capacity. IGAD's involvement in transforming the Sudan conflict allowed it to address these shortcomings.

Taking advantage of the strong political will among member states and support from its international partners, as everyone hurried to find a solution to the political crisis, IGAD moved to strengthen its governance and organizational structures. It not only expanded its mandate but also introduced new structures to implement it. IGADD initially developed a set of ad hoc mediation and peace and security institutions and committees to help find lasting solutions to conflicts it intervened in. However, in 1996, the new Agreement that transformed the organization into IGAD also included provisions for a complete overhaul of its organizational structure. The new Agreement called for the creation of a secretariat equipped with sufficient technical and material resources, a Council of Ministers, and a Committee of Ambassadors.

To achieve its objectives and implement its Strategy, IGAD has established mechanisms, networks, processes, specialized institutions, and partnerships. These can be categorized into two: internal and external capacities. IGAD's internal capacity is derived from the Secretariat, which includes its professional staff, resources, management systems, skills, methods, and technology. The external capacity comprises the three hierarchical policy organs of its operational structure: an Assembly of Heads of State and Government, a Council of Ministers, and a Committee of Ambassadors, along with the Assembly of Heads of State and Government carried over from the IGADD dispensation. Additionally, IGAD has established other institutions to advance its objectives, including the Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN), the East African Standby Brigade (EASBRIG), and the IGAD Sectoral Committees.

As previously mentioned, these transformations positioned peace and security at the core of IGAD's mandate. The need to manage conflicts and address political crises in the region highlighted the organization's expansion. The Agreement establishing IGAD explicitly requires the organization to implement effective collective measures to eliminate threats to peace and stability and to promote regional cooperation. It also recognizes that peace and security are fundamental prerequisites for achieving its other objectives. Consequently, IGAD has developed a comprehensive peace and security framework, including a Peace and Security Division (PSD) that coordinates its peace, security, and humanitarian efforts. The PSD consists of three divisions—Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution; Political Affairs; and Humanitarian Affairs—each focused on peace, security, and humanitarian issues, respectively (Tadesse, 2021, p. 13).

IGAD made these changes while engaging in conflict transformation in Sudan, Somalia, and South Sudan. The urgent political crises and the threat to regional peace caused by these conflicts helped garner political support and backing from external actors to reform the organization and enhance its capacity to confront these new challenges. Several international actors provided support for IGAD's initiatives, especially those related to conflict management. Data shows that external funding and support peaked when IGAD was handling the conflicts in Sudan. IGAD used this support to strengthen its governance and organizational structures. Therefore, although external partners helped fund and expand IGAD, the main driver of this growth was the organization's active involvement in conflict resolution in Sudan and later in Somalia and South Sudan. An

official at the GIZ support office for the implementation of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) noted that, although organizations like GIZ and the UN have assisted regional bodies like IGAD in building conflict transformation capacities, this support usually occurs at the request of the African organizations themselves (Interview, 2019da). In short, IGAD's role in resolving conflicts in Sudan, Somalia, and South Sudan fueled the effort to overhaul its organizational structures.

The effect of the engagement of regional organizations in conflict management on the transformation of IGAD's authority and legitimacy

While there has been some debate about the exact impact of IGAD's efforts to transform its mandate and organizational structures, there has been little question about the role its conflict transformation efforts played in increasing the organization's authority and legitimacy as a regional actor. It should be noted that among the original member states of IGAD, the legitimacy of regional interventions in the internal affairs of other states in the Horn of Africa was never a significant issue. As mentioned earlier, five of the six founding members of IGADD—Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda—were under different forms of military dictatorship. While in other parts of Africa the norms of non-interference upheld by the OAU were seen as inviolable, most IGAD heads of state—many of whom had gained power through military means—believed that some forms of intervention were necessary, if only to protect lives and ensure human security. Therefore, from its beginning, IGADD recognized external intervention as permissible and legitimate, especially in certain situations. The main point of contention was whether foreign (non-African) intervention in the internal matters of African states was acceptable.

Even so, the IGADD, which President Omar al Bashir of Sudan invited to help resolve the conflict in his country, lacked the legitimacy that comes from a proper mandate—since it lacked a legal framework for such actions—and from the capacity to carry out such interventions. Additionally, the organization had to deal with external actors like the UN and the Libya-Egypt coalition—both claiming to be the legitimate authorities in Sudan and Somalia—and sometimes with individual states like Ethiopia and Uganda, which often sought to launch unilateral interventions. In 1993, when it launched its mission in Sudan, IGADD was a modest organization that had only just begun to move beyond its non-political role of coordinating regional responses to drought and food

insecurity in the Horn of Africa. Angoma (2019) notes that IGADD lacked both the will and the capacity to engage in the complex political affairs of its member states, and it recognized its limited authority over peace and security issues in the region. When the President of Sudan invited IGADD to help resolve the conflict, it was the first implicit acknowledgment of the organization's authority and legitimacy as a political actor in the region. Experts on IGAD point out that this invitation gave the organization the power to act on behalf of the states (Interview, 2019b; Interview, 2019iia). The subsequent involvement of IGADD and later IGAD in transforming conflicts in Sudan, Somalia, and South Sudan helped nurture the legitimacy planted by this invitation.

Over time, IGADD faced challenges from individual member states and external entities, such as Nigeria, the United Nations, Western groups including the Troika and the International Peace Fund, as well as coalitions like Libya-Egypt, all competing for the exclusive right and authority to resolve regional conflicts in the Horn of Africa. An IGAD official stated that, similar to its mandate for peace and security, IGAD exercised its authority and legitimacy well before its formal recognition by international actors—and long before these were officially outlined in the 1996 founding document (Interview, 2019iia). Although IGAD's mediation efforts have had shortcomings, they have strengthened the organization's role and reputation as a neutral mediator. By the time Somalia's Arta Agreement and Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) were signed in 2004 and 2005, IGAD was widely accepted as the legitimate regional actor. As a result, IGAD's involvement in resolving conflicts in Sudan, Somalia, and South Sudan not only provided an opportunity to showcase its influence in peace processes but also effectively established its authority and legitimacy as a regional leader.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

This research set out to establish the impact of the engagement of three African regional organizations—the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)—in the transformation of conflicts in their respective subregions, on their organizational transformations. The underlying premise of this study is that engaging in conflict transformation has provided these regional entities with a platform and an opportunity for growth that they have not been able to access through other objectives of state cooperation. The central hypothesis is that, lacking substantial economic incentives—such as the attractive power observed in other regions, such as the European Union—the persistent threats to African States posed by recurrent violent conflicts and widespread insecurity have served as the primary catalysts for regional integration in Africa.

The research was set against the dominant view in discourses on African integration that Africa has not fared well in attempts at economic integration. But, while scorecards for the performance of regional organizations like ECOWAS and the AU in respect of their stated and foundational objectives, such as economic development, have not only pointed to dismal failures, but have in fact proclaimed that the organizations were in their essence, “designed to fail”, the research shows that the organizations have demonstrated remarkable functionality for the performance of tasks such as conflict prevention, conflict management and conflict resolution.

I have demonstrated that African regional organizations greatly benefit from the increased willingness of African states to cooperate on security issues. Moreover, these states are more willing to allocate resources to conflict mitigation efforts than to other regional public goods. The threats of conflict and their regional spillover effects clearly indicate policy failures and underscore their consequences. Such threats tend to create stronger incentives for regional consensus and cooperation than other integration goals, such as economic development and trade. For many African regional organizations, from the continental level—the African Union—to subregional institutions such as ECOWAS, SADC, and IGAD, maintaining peace and security, as well as preventing and managing conflicts, has taken priority over other goals, such as expanding trade and economic growth. The interests of states—within the AU and the RECs—seem best aligned regarding peace and security, especially when states view the risks of inaction as more dangerous

and costly. As Vanheukelom (2019) argues, African leaders find implementing commitments in sectors like agriculture and infrastructure development within regional frameworks “unattractive,” because they often struggle to demonstrate the immediate benefits or costs of regional action or inaction in these areas. Conversely, the margin for error is much smaller in peace and security matters. States have no choice but to seek regional cooperation to resolve conflicts and prevent their escalation and spillover effects. Therefore, the costs and benefits of regional cooperation on peace and security are clear.

Conversely, research indicates, through cases like the OAU/AU, ECOWAS, and IGAD, that African states’ commitment to regional cooperation in other sectors—such as transnational infrastructure, trade, economic development, and food security—has been weaker and less consistent, mainly because failing to implement these policies carries minimal reputational risk and fewer sanctions and costs. These objectives, related to conflict prevention and management, have been key drivers of regional cooperation in Africa and have shaped the institutional structures of these regional organizations. As these organizations have assumed active roles in conflict management, they have experienced significant institutional and normative transformations. This is especially evident in the cases of the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). The research highlights the crucial role that conflict management has played in revitalizing and transforming regional integration in Africa. It demonstrates that conflict management has served as a significant incentive for region-building and has been the primary goal of integration.

Using the process tracing research method, the study has identified regional conflict management initiatives of the three regional organizations as a key factor contributing to their transformation. While the study recognizes other motivations and factors proposed to explain reforms in the regional organizations—such as the desire for financial independence, exemplified by the recent AU-Reform initiative led by President Paul Kagame of Rwanda in 2020—and pressure or support from external actors like the EU and the United Nations, these reform programs have not achieved the same far-reaching and effective transformative impacts as those driven by the organizations’ conflict management responsibilities. In fact, the organizations’ involvement in conflict management has sometimes highlighted the risks of over-reliance on external donors (Byiers, Woolfrey, Medinilla, & Vanheuke, 2019, p. 13), prompting calls for institutional and

organizational adjustments to address resource gaps. As demonstrated clearly in the case of IGAD, the urgency of conflict management often requires rapid mobilization and deployment of resources to prevent either the outbreak or escalation of violence. The dependence of African organizations on external donor funding for peace and security has, in many cases, restricted their ability to deploy peacekeeping or peace enforcement missions quickly and when necessary. Therefore, enhancing the capacity of regional organizations for effective conflict management remains a key reason for their reform efforts.

The role of Member States in the transformation of regional organizations, as a factor in their persistence and change, has been emphasized and weighed against the impact of their engagement in conflict management. While it is true that Member States of regional organizations have played key roles in initiating and managing reforms and transformations, and that the transformation of these organizations often depends on the willingness and capacity of their Member States to invest in reforms, the study shows that States have been more proactive and willing to invest, even incurring additional transaction costs, when their security or regional security is threatened. African States were more willing to mobilize action to enforce commitments and to overcome domestic challenges that otherwise impede their integration when security issues are involved or when preventing or limiting the spill-over effects of conflicts. Whenever their security is at stake, it becomes easier for States to overcome domestic interests, pressures, interest groups, and general apathy towards collective action, to achieve regional cooperation and even reform these organizations.

Even regional hegemons like Nigeria and Ethiopia have been more willing to participate, without hesitation, in regional security initiatives than in other non-emergency issues such as regional trade. Nigeria, for instance, was more hesitant about joining the recently launched African Continental Free Trade Area, whereas it more readily assumed leading roles in regional conflict management initiatives within the framework of ECOWAS. Ethiopia, which is the major player in the security regionalism promoted by IGAD, approaches economic integration with skepticism and engages minimally with regional blocs focused on economic integration. Therefore, even in cases where the transformation of regional organizations seemed to depend solely on the willingness of states to approve organizational reforms, the need for regional conflict management more strongly motivated and prompted state action toward regional integration. It suffices to argue,

as done in the study, that while other factors have indeed contributed to region-building in Africa and the transformation of existing regional organizations, they have not singularly explained efforts as significant as conflict management in the persistence and evolution of these organizations. The study demonstrates that conflict management remains the single most important incentive for stronger regional cooperation and for states' investment in transforming regional organizations in Africa.

The three regional organizations – OAU/AU, ECOWAS, and IGAD – studied here have demonstrated the important role that engaging in conflict transformation plays in triggering and legitimizing the establishment and transformation of Africa's regional organizations. As shown, before their active involvement in conflict management, all three organizations were barely recognized as serious regional and global players. The OAU – the predecessor of the AU – was often dismissively called a “toothless dog” and “an empty talk-shop,” with almost no capacity to provide meaningful solutions to African problems. The revival of the organization, transforming into the AU in 1999, marked the moment when Africa decided to take responsibility for solving its issues. Importantly, the slogan “African Solutions to African Problems,” which reflects this desire for African leadership in managing its affairs, originates from this transformation. The AU's engagement in conflict management after its formation has led to its recognition as a legitimate global actor. Similarly, both ECOWAS and IGAD were less known before their notable involvement in conflict management—ECOWAS in Liberia in 1990 and IGAD in Sudan in 1996. Their subsequent participation in conflicts within their regions boosted their legitimacy, gained them international recognition, and infused them with a level of dynamism that was absent when their focus was solely on pursuing narrow objectives related to regional public goods.

The analytical framework used by the research shows that the conflict management initiatives of regional organizations have led to transformation – through organizational learning – in the mandates and objectives, practices, operational procedures, and normative and institutional structures of these organizations. In some cases, they have also affected the authority and legitimacy of organizations that serve as regional and global actors.

The study shows that the involvement of the three regional organizations in resolving conflicts in Africa significantly contributed to their own transformation by prompting changes in their goals,

principles, and structures. I argued that the crises caused by policy failures and legitimacy deficits faced by these organizations during the 1980s and 1990s—due to the rising number of inter-state and especially intra-state violent conflicts—helped loosen their cognitive frameworks, including their mandates. This also sent clear feedback that there were serious mismatches between their cognitive structures and the realities they faced. Additionally, I proposed that their participation in conflict management served as a learning opportunity for the organizations and their founding member states, creating a platform for coalitions of transnational epistemic communities to build consensus on the need to revise the organizations’ narrow principles and mandates. As a result, the feedback from conflict management efforts strengthened their capacity to acquire new knowledge, allowing them to adjust their goals, principles, mandates, and institutional frameworks. It also eased the concerns of hesitant states who were reluctant to sanction or invest in organizational changes and inspired epistemic communities to help guide these organizations toward change and transformation. The core idea is that engaging in conflict management triggered the organizations’ transformation. This study aims to establish that connection.

In the case of the OAU/AU, it has been shown how the outbreak of intrastate conflicts in the 1980s and 1990s prompted a series of changes within the organization, ultimately leading to its complete transformation and rebirth as a new entity—the African Union (AU). The OAU, founded in 1963 mainly to coordinate Africa’s efforts against colonialism, proved to be fundamentally inadequate and poorly equipped both in normative and institutional terms to ensure security and address the challenges resulting from the end of the Cold War. The AU, energized by a renewed and expanded mandate, emerged from recognizing the limitations of the OAU’s organizational and normative structures. As the study indicates, perhaps the most significant change in the AU driven by its renewed commitment to expanding its role in conflict transformation was a normative shift involving the easing of the principles of non-interference and sovereign equality of states, and the introduction of principles such as non-indifference and the rejection of coups d’état and unconstitutional changes of government (African Union, 2001). This normative shift, in turn, broadened the AU’s conflict transformation mandate and led to the development of a more comprehensive normative and institutional framework to support this expanded role. This new framework set the stage for a “robust re-emergence of African agency” in governing its peace and security agenda (ACCORD, 2014).

The study further reveals a mutually reinforcing relationship between the AU's organizational transformation and its conflict transformation efforts: on one side, the AU's engagement in conflict management has contributed to transforming those conflicts; on the other, this involvement has coincided with the organizational change of the AU itself. During, and clearly as a consequence of, its participation in conflict management, the new organization has implemented several changes reflected in updated normative and institutional frameworks. Notably, these include the creation of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), the African Governance Architecture (AGA), and the Peace and Security Council (PSC), a set of institutions described as "forward-looking and proactive continent-wide security infrastructure" that utilizes the strengths of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to foster greater continental integration, especially regarding peace and security (2014). Additionally, the Constitutive Act of the AU established several other important institutions, some even without direct relevance to the AU's peace and security mandate. The AU has also enacted several normative changes through protocols adopted by member states. Through its new peace and security framework, the AU aims to address numerous violent conflicts and political crises across Africa. Its peace and security efforts have included sanctioning unconstitutional transfers of power, preventing conflicts, and deploying peace operations. Since its founding in 2000, it has deployed more than 50 peace missions across over 18 countries in Africa (Vanheukelom, 2019). Peace and security, especially the prevention, management, and transformation of conflicts, are central to the future of the AU and to its legitimacy and relevance. Therefore, it is clear that as the AU has taken on more conflict management roles, it has also adopted new norms and organizational structures. The study shows that the AU's conflict transformation initiatives have played a significant role in driving these changes.

On the other hand, I have also shown how the internal dynamics of the West African sub-region have contributed equally to the transformation of ECOWAS's focus, shifting from a primary concern with economic integration and market expansion to conflict management. The increasing awareness of and consensus about the seriousness of violent conflicts and governance challenges in West Africa helped strengthen the collective effort among ECOWAS Member States to find solutions to both inter-state and internal conflicts seen as threats to the region's peace, stability, and security. This also fueled the ongoing commitment of West African countries to enhance

regional cooperation through ECOWAS, aiming not just for economic development but also for collective security.

Furthermore, research has demonstrated that, similar to the case of the AU, ECOWAS has experienced substantial transformation in its organizational and normative frameworks as a consequence of, or resulting from, feedback derived from its engagement in conflict management within the West African sub-region. Specifically, while ECOWAS's conflict management endeavors have facilitated the resolution of various disputes, its active participation in these conflicts has concurrently contributed to the development of its own organizational and normative infrastructure. The growth and transformation of ECOWAS have been iterative processes, characterized by incremental modifications that appear to serve as feedback mechanisms from its conflict management initiatives.

The study has demonstrated that ECOWAS has experienced numerous transformations since its establishment in 1975. Its development as a political organization reached its zenith during the 1990s, particularly in its assumption of conflict transformation responsibilities. The significant transition of ECOWAS into a political and security actor was not fully realized until the 1990s, when it adopted a more defined role in conflict resolution throughout West Africa. Beginning with the Liberian conflict in the 1990s and initially operating under a limited and weak mandate, ECOWAS's security framework and authority for conflict resolution progressively strengthened as its involvement in regional conflict management expanded. ECOWAS's intervention initiatives primarily encompassed mediation, peacekeeping operations, and the potential for military intervention (Atuobi, 2010-2011).

ECOWAS's conflict transformation initiatives, especially in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, and Guinea-Bissau, were accompanied by several organizational changes. These included new norms (outlined in protocols and decrees) and institutions adopted afterward, highlighting a close link between its involvement in conflict transformation and its internal transformation. The hallmark of ECOWAS's transformation was the adoption of a revised Treaty in 1993, which almost completely overhauled the organization's goals and structure. Clear connections have been made (see Aggad and Miyandazi (2017, p. 5)) between this revision of the Treaty and ECOWAS's

role in managing violent conflicts in the region. The revised Treaty legally enshrined norms on democracy and governance, partly prompted by ECOWAS's recent engagement in the Liberian conflict in 1990. It also established several organizational mechanisms and institutions with greater power and expanded mandates. After the Liberia mission in 1990, ECOWAS built a more structured conflict management and resolution system, adopting the 1999 Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security; the 2005 Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (PDGG); and the 2008 ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (EDPF) (ECOWAS, 2008). The adoption of these frameworks reflected ECOWAS's efforts to link peace with its other goals and demonstrated how its conflict transformation initiatives significantly shaped its organizational transformation.

Finally, like both the AU and ECOWAS, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in the Horn of Africa exemplifies a regional organization that has undergone organizational transformations while engaging in conflict management. IGAD was initially established as the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD) in 1986, tasked with addressing drought and desertification that had caused one of the worst famines in history in the Horn of Africa in the early 1980s. IGAD was drawn into conflict management when the intensity of the conflicts in the Horn of Africa grew in the late 1980s and early 1990s, forcing the leaders of the member states to concede that the pursuit of development in such a volatile environment would be futile unless the challenges of conflicts and state instability were first addressed.

The decision of the States to revamp the Organization, rename it as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and give it an expanded mandate that now includes conflict prevention, management and resolution, as well as humanitarian affairs (Murithi, Intergovernmental Authority on Development on the Ground: Comparing Interventions in Sudan and Somalia, 2009), was prompted by IGAD's resolution to engage in managing conflicts in the Horn of Africa. Since then, the evolved IGAD has been involved in resolving some of the world's most protracted conflicts: Sudan and Somalia, and has gained acceptance from member states as having

sufficient legitimacy and credibility to involve itself in their internal affairs. IGAD has built strong normative and institutional structures as it has intervened in these conflicts, gradually transforming into an organization responsible for conflict management in the Horn of Africa. It has also since been involved in managing and resolving the civil war in South Sudan, which erupted in 2013.

Like AU and ECOWAS, IGAD's involvement in conflict management in the Horn of Africa shows a mutually reinforcing relationship between its conflict transformation efforts and its organizational growth. While favoring a more informal institutional structure than the AU and ECOWAS, IGAD has still built a basic institutional framework for its operations and adopted a stronger, broader normative framework. Since 1996, it has expanded its organizational setup and created a hierarchy of intergovernmental institutions to carry out its functions. I have observed that IGAD's institutional development follows its political initiatives—IGAD acts first, then establishes institutions in response. Additionally, its expanded role in conflict management has enhanced its legitimacy as a regional actor and earned recognition from both the continent and globally as the key player in the Horn of Africa. IGAD's ownership of peace processes is partly due to the region's isolation after the failure of the US-led UN intervention in Somalia in 1993, and partly because member states want to keep outside actors like Egypt, Libya, and Yemen out of regional conflicts. The study shows that IGAD's peace-making activities have helped legitimize the organization and foster wider acceptance of IGAD as the only suitable forum for managing conflicts in the Horn of Africa.

In summary, the research conclusively demonstrates that the AU, ECOWAS, and IGAD have undergone substantial transformations, characterized by the expansion of their organizational structures and the fundamental revision of their normative frameworks. Furthermore, it has been evidenced that these organizational modifications have frequently coincided with or followed their engagement in conflict management activities across the continent. This study establishes a robust correlation between the conflict management endeavors of these organizations and their subsequent transformations. It illustrates that conflict management has functioned as a catalyst for organizational learning, which has, in turn, propelled these changes. Additionally, the study affirms that these transformations are primarily driven by learning stimulated through the peace and security initiatives of the organizations, with learning acting as the mechanism through which

engagement with violent conflicts precipitates organizational change.

It has been established that the mandates and objectives of the three organizations—the AU, ECOWAS, and IGAD—remained relatively unchanged during periods when they were not actively engaged in conflict transformation (for the AU: 1963-2000; for ECOWAS: 1975-1990; for IGAD: 1986-1996). Although member states strongly aspired to broaden the mandates of these organizations in response to emerging challenges, particularly the outbreaks of conflict across Africa, the organizations exhibited considerable resistance, often operating below optimal capacity. The decision by these organizations to assume responsibility for conflict management after the 1990s led to a broad expansion of their mandates and objectives. Records and respondent accounts indicate that this transformative shift was driven by lessons learned from endeavors to contain ongoing conflicts and to prevent the emergence of new ones. Consequently, the reforms of these organizations reflect feedback derived from their participation in conflict management. Recognizing conflict management as a core goal was fundamentally an acknowledgment of the fact that the limited scope of their earlier mandates constrained their actorness.

Various sources and respondents' perspectives indicate that conflict management has emerged as the primary or foundational mandate of these organizations. In all three instances, official documentation explicitly acknowledges that regional integration and economic development are achievable independently of peace and security. This recognition underscores the necessity of adjusting mandates, objectives, and operational structures to adequately address peace and security requirements. Furthermore, evidence suggests that even when organizational capabilities were constrained by narrowly defined mandates, they nonetheless cited threats stemming from violent conflicts and civil wars to justify interventions extending beyond their original scope. Consequently, conflict management has served as a justification for expanding their mandates. The formal redefining of mandate boundaries and objectives often merely codified actions already undertaken by these organizations. On numerous occasions, these entities explicitly or implicitly cited states of insecurity induced by civil conflicts as grounds for extending mandates beyond their established legal frameworks. These additional actions outside the original mandates were subsequently formalized through treaty amendments, new agreements, or protocols, thereby establishing new mandates and objectives. The histories of these organizations reveal that

substantial expansions of mandates and objectives, driven by conflict management imperatives, can be clearly traced.

The study also examined the modifications in the legal and institutional frameworks of each organization. It concentrated on the evolution of legal instruments, including foundational treaties, agreements, and protocols related to mandates, as well as the transformation of organizational structures such as governance and administrative systems. The research aimed to determine whether the roles of these organizations in conflict management contributed to such changes. The primary hypothesis under investigation posits that the involvement of regional organizations in conflict management heightened the necessity for more robust legal and institutional frameworks, thereby prompting expansion in their legal and organizational infrastructures. Findings demonstrated that all three regional organizations experienced significant alterations in their legal and organizational arrangements, including the review or adoption of new treaties, agreements, protocols, and the reform or establishment of institutions. Official documentation, respondent testimonials, and academic sources indicate that conflict management—alongside the promotion of peace and security—served as the primary impetus for these infrastructural reforms. Furthermore, the organizations appeared to exhibit more pronounced changes in their legal and institutional structures attributable to their conflict management roles. For instance, each organization experienced an increase in protocols and the establishment of new institutions, many of which were directly or indirectly derived from their conflict management initiatives.

Furthermore, engagement in conflict management can be distinguished from other factors—such as the influence of external actors like the European Union—as a pivotal element in transforming the legal and institutional frameworks of organizations. Respondents observed that even the external support—both material and technical—that organizations received for their reform initiatives was predominantly related to their conflict management objectives. Numerous international actors have demonstrated a keen willingness to support African regional integration efforts when such support pertains to peace and security, given the perceived global significance of these issues. Several respondents associated with organizations supporting regional entities, including the United Nations and GIZ, emphasized that their assistance aims to enhance the conflict management capacities of these organizations. One respondent noted that her

organization's support is explicitly directed towards assisting African regional organizations in adopting best practices shared by international entities such as the United Nations related to conflict management. Moreover, the findings indicate that organizations similarly cited insecurity caused by civil conflicts as a justification for expanding and augmenting the powers and competencies of their legal and institutional structures.

The research also sought to establish the connection between organizations' involvement in conflict transformation and their increased authority and legitimacy as global actors. The primary hypothesis posits that regional organizations have utilized their roles in conflict transformation to enhance their authority and legitimacy both regionally and internationally. This increase in authority and legitimacy is evidenced by the organizations becoming more autonomous from states and other external entities; the heightened willingness of states to delegate competencies and decision-making powers to these organizations; a greater readiness among states and other stakeholders to collaborate through regional organizations; and the increased acknowledgment by states and international entities of these organizations as legitimate actors in specific domains such as peace and security. Because they participated in conflict transformation, these organizations have achieved greater independence from states and external bodies such as the United Nations and the European Union, thereby garnering increased acceptance and recognition as global actors. It is also evident that member states have delegated additional competencies and decision-making authority to these organizations as their legitimacy as conflict management entities has strengthened.

Furthermore, states and international entities such as the United Nations and the European Union have demonstrated an increased willingness to operate through these organizations and to acknowledge them as legitimate global and regional actors within specific issue domains. Even influential nations like Nigeria are now more inclined to collaborate through ECOWAS, signaling a transformation in ECOWAS's legitimacy and authority as a regional actor. In each respective region, these organizations are progressively recognized as legitimate regional actors, primarily due to the responsibilities they have undertaken in conflict management. Consequently, by participating in conflict resolution efforts, these organizations have utilized their roles to enhance their authority and legitimacy as both global and regional entities.

The study analyzed how social and organizational practices in each regional organization have changed over time, highlighting how their involvement in conflict management has influenced these changes. It examined practices such as a greater emphasis on gender balance within organizations, a stronger preference for merit-based recruitment over political appointments, and the civilianization of peace operations. The study also looked at management practices, such as efforts to shift from bureaucratic management to new public management systems. The hypothesis is that participation in conflict management provided the organizations with a discursive context for transforming their social and organizational practices. However, the link between conflict management engagement and the transformation of these practices was weaker than in other areas studied. Several respondents cited other competing explanations for these changes. Nonetheless, there is enough documentary evidence suggesting that the transformation of social and organizational practices also results from feedback from their conflict management engagement. Various noticeable changes in these practices can be directly or indirectly attributed to the organizations' involvement in conflict management.

The involvement of organizations in conflict management helped loosen their bureaucratic culture, boosting their ability to learn. Indeed, the shock from policy failures during conflict management triggered social and organizational changes within the organizations and led to the adoption of new social and organizational practices. The organizations also seem to have used their roles in conflict management to develop new management practices.

Finally, the research aimed to highlight how organizations' involvement in conflict management contributed to their normative transformation. The study traced the normative changes these organizations experienced during two specific time periods. Its aim was to demonstrate how their engagement in conflict management significantly influenced the adoption of new norms, including rejecting indifference, opposing coups d'état and unconstitutional changes of government, promoting good governance and democracy, and safeguarding human rights. The hypothesis is that this normative transformation reflects lessons learned from their conflict management experiences. The most important changes driven by organizational involvement were normative in nature. The new roles organizations assumed in conflict management prompted reviews of established norms and principles such as non-interference and state equality, which had historically

been considered sacrosanct. The occurrence of conflicts and the organizations' involvement in managing them provided clear feedback that revisiting these norms was necessary. Respondents noted that organizational hesitation to engage in conflict management helped sustain certain norms that hindered peace in Africa. The findings indicate that organizations used their involvement in conflict management to reject some norms while promoting and adopting others.

Limitations of the study

Like the study of regional integration overall, the discussion on African integration is still developing, and questions about the role and influence of African regional organizations in managing the continent's political and economic issues remain unresolved. A particularly difficult aspect for researchers is the complex relationship between Africa's sub-regional organizations, including ECOWAS and IGAD—which are called the Regional Economic Communities in African integration language—and the continental organization, the AU. For theoretical discussions, this complexity makes it challenging to clearly separate the roles and effects of specific organizations. Unfortunately, this study's scope did not allow for a detailed distinction, which is an area for further research.

A significant challenge in researching African integration, which relates to the 'newness of the field,' is the lack of data. This is further compounded by the fact that travel within Africa requires a disproportionate amount of resources and planning. The scarcity of data and limited resources for data collection imposed additional constraints on the study's scope. The research could have, without doubt, benefited from examining a broader sample of African regional organizations, including those in central, southern, and northern Africa, to strengthen the findings and enhance their generalizability. Furthermore, the thesis could be improved with a comparative analysis of regional organizations worldwide. While the research findings sufficiently demonstrate the impact of regional organizations' conflict transformation efforts on their internal changes, this study also paves the way for further research, particularly involving a broader range of regional organizations.

Finally, the recent events since 2019—including the renewed wave of unconstitutional changes of government, military takeovers across Africa, the increasing number of civil wars in Sudan, Ethiopia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, among others, and the COVID-19 pandemic—have once again highlighted questions about the actorness (the capacity and agency) of African

regional organizations. Given these developments, one might argue that I have perhaps overestimated the capacity of these organizations to exert agency sufficient to influence their own transformation. While this point may hold validity, it's important to clarify that the thesis was never intended to evaluate the performance of the regional organizations; rather, it aimed to demonstrate that these organizations learned lessons from their attempts to manage conflicts, leading to internal recognition of the need for organizational adjustments. Although the goal of these organizational changes was to improve their capacity and agency, whether this enhanced capacity and agency have been effectively used in fulfilling their mandates remains a question for future research.

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