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Peace process protagonism

**Peace Process Protagonism: The Role of Regional Organisations
in Africa in Conflict Management**

Abstract

Regional and sub-regional organisations in Africa play vital roles in the promotion of peace and security on the continent. The African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) mandates certain roles for AU-recognised Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and RECs have been active in many peace and security spheres from early warning to peace missions. This article seeks to illuminate the changing landscape of regional security governance in Africa, primarily through the lens of formal peace agreements, which are important tools for ending violent conflict. Extant research does not establish the frequency and capacity of regional organisations' *engagement* in peace agreements. We present original quantitative data, systematically tracing these evolving and uneven activities. Our data establishes trends of REC peace agreement engagement that vary across Africa's sub-regions during 2002-2015. We further explore patterns of organisational *interaction*, presenting case studies of peace processes that highlight important variation in terms of the distribution of influence and authority.

Introduction

Regional and sub-regional organisations in Africa have long collaborated on peace and security issues. This is evident in the foundational peace and security protocol of the African Union (AU) with its establishment of the African Stand-by Force comprised of contingents from each of the sub-regions.[1] How does this envisioned collaboration play out across a range of peace and security activities, and how is it navigated by both the AU and the AU-recognised sub-regional organisations, known as Regional Economic Communities (RECs)? As part of broader reform initiatives aimed at clarifying the division of labour between continental and sub-regional organisations, the AU held its inaugural Mid-Year Coordination Meeting of the African Union and the RECs in July 2019.[2] Moving forward, this multi-level meeting will convene in lieu of the AU's mid-year summit. In addition, RECs are increasingly interacting with each other and working to harmonise their peace and security efforts. For example, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) held their first joint summit to coordinate peace and security policy in July 2018.[3] These developments speak to both the conflict management roles played by (some of) the RECs and to the need to better understand how peace and security roles are practiced by the range of intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) on the continent.

This paper seeks to illuminate the texture and dynamics of the evolving landscape of regional security governance in Africa, primarily through the lens of formal peace agreements,

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[1] African Chiefs of Defense Staff, "Policy Framework for the Establishment of the African Standby Force and the Military Staff Committee Part 1"; African Union, "PSC Protocol."

[2] "Decisions of First Mid-Year Coordination Meeting Between the African Union, the Regional Economic Communities and the Regional Mechanisms."

[3] "Final Communique of the Joint Summit of ECOWAS and ECCAS Heads of State and Government on Peace, Security, Stability and the Fight Against Terrorism and Violent Extremism."

which are increasingly important tools for ending violent conflict.[4] Peace agreements are vital documents in and of themselves because they open up space for interaction amongst the domestic conflict parties and the outside actors that are increasingly engaged in agreements. These outsiders participate not just as mediators but as third parties assuming responsibility for the monitoring and implementation of agreements.[5] Peace agreements can therefore show us both how outside actors are creating standards and practices for ending conflict and how they are promoting norms and roles for themselves.

Making use of an original dataset of peace agreement engagement by regional organisations (2002-2015), we establish the frequency and capacity of this engagement for the AU and its "building blocks" – the eight officially recognised RECs. The RECs vary greatly in their level of engagement in peace agreements, ranging from the trailblazing ECOWAS – which exceeds overall AU engagement levels – to the dormant Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), which engages in none of these activities. We find variation not just in overall activity level but also in activity patterns across the most engaged RECs. ECOWAS is frequently involved when conflicts arise in the sub-region, and both the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and ECCAS have seen upticks in their engagement relative to the AU in recent years. The Intergovernmental African Development Community (IGAD) has engaged more selectively, concentrating especially on peace agreements addressing South Sudan, while the Community of Sahel–Saharan States (CEN-SAD) saw a short period of higher engagement driven by the activities of an individual leader (Muammar Gaddafi).

We also use this data as a starting point to investigate the ways in which these organisations *interact* (or not) while engaging in peace agreements, as the terms of multi-level

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[4] Bell, "Peace Agreements," 373–74.
[5] Wittke, "The Minsk Agreements," 48.

security governance are contested and unsettled both in law and practice.[6] The majority of peace processes analysed here, defined as engagement across several peace agreements to end a specific conflict, are subject to engagement by at least one African IGO. Of these engaged processes, two-thirds are engaged by more than one IGO . Most of this is AU-REC overlap, but a few processes are also subject to overlapping REC-REC engagement.[7] Overlap does not always mean equal engagement and influence, though; in some cases, an organisation takes "ownership" of a peace process. A classic example is ECOWAS' consistent management of the Liberian process in the 1990s, and we expand on this case in Section IV. In other instances, ownership is less clear – and overlapping organisations might interact cooperatively or competitively – a pattern illustrated by our second case study of REC and AU engagement in Central African Republic (CAR). In combination with the descriptive statistics presented in Section III, these case studies augment our understanding of conflict management practices across the continent by revealing a range of overlapping engagement patterns.

I. African Regional and sub-Regional Organisations in Peace and Security

Scholars of diverse theoretical orientations have in recent years urged us to pay greater attention to regional groupings as we seek to understand existing and emerging governance challenges and responses. Charles Kupchan calls for the devolution of power to regional bodies as a way to manage a global turn away from Western dominance.[8] Andrew Hurrell predicts that regions will play a central role in the "coming struggle for global political legitimacy,"[9] and Amitav Acharya

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[6] Nathan, "Will the Lowest Be First?," 5–7.
[7] Overlapping REC-REC agreement is found, for example, in peace processes in CAR, DRC, Somalia, and Darfur.
[8] Kupchan, *No One's World.*
[9] Hurrell, "One World? Many Worlds? The Place of Regions in the Study of International Society," 146.

sees the policies of regional actors and emerging powers as key to the promotion of stability in the approaching "multiplex world."[10]

However, the concept of regions is contested, and scholars have operationalised regional membership based on geography, patterns of behaviour, or mutual interdependence among other characteristics.[11] For the purposes of this article, regions are conceptualised as a group of states within a specific geographic space. The regional organisation for Africa is the AU, which has 55-member states including all states in Africa as well as the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (also known as Western Sahara).[12] Organisations below the continental level are conceptualised as sub-regional organisations. This article focuses on the RECs recognised by the AU that cover (sometimes overlapping) zones in sub-Saharan Africa.[13] These include the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), CEN-SAD, East African Community (EAC), ECCAS, ECOWAS, IGAD, and SADC.[14] AMU is an AU-recognised REC with members states in North Africa, but as noted above, it is inactive and has not convened since 2008.[15]

African IGOs in peace and security

Many of these organisations have played a robust role in peace and security in Africa for a significant period of time. When the AU formally replaced the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 2002, its new Constitutive Act included specific provisions advancing the regional organisation's role in maintaining peace and security in Africa. For example, Article 3 states one

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[10] Acharya, *The End of American World Order*.
[11] Fawcett, "Exploring Regional Domains," 432.
[12] "Member State Profiles."
[13] Other inter-governmental organizations and ad hoc groupings engage in peace processes on the continent. These are outside the scope of the data, but we include discussion of some of them in the case study section.
[14] "Regional Economic Communities (RECs)."
[15] "Peace and Security Council Report No 113," 4.

of the objectives of the organisation is to "promote peace, security, and stability on the continent".[16] ECOWAS has been a particularly active organisation in peace and security in the West African sub-region and in providing a model for other organisations to draw on when advancing their own peace and security policies.[17] Originally created to focus on economic integration and development, it adopted peace and security protocols in the late 1970s and early 1980s and revised its Treaty in the early 1990s to reflect a stronger peace and security mandate.[18]

Beyond these powerhouses of peace and security, nearly every AU-recognised REC has been involved in at least one peace agreement to end violence in its sub-regional sphere. For instance, as described in the case study section, CEN-SAD, ECCAS, and the AU were all engaged at different (and at times overlapping) points to resolve conflict in CAR, and IGAD has been highly involved in conflict management efforts in South Sudan. There are also sub-regional organisations that are not recognised as official RECs by the AU, such as the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) as well as numerous instances of non-institutionalised sub-regional arrangements to address conflict, like the Regional Initiative for Burundi. Our analysis focuses on AU-recognised RECs because of their distinct role in the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), but our conclusions point to additional areas of potential research beyond AU-recognised RECs.

There is a large body of research on the security governance role of IGOs both globally and specifically in African conflicts.[19] Increasingly these studies also examine the mandate and activities of sub-regional and regional organisations in addition to global or extra-regional

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[16] "Constitutive Act of the African Union," 5.
[17] See data analysis and case study sections below.
[18] "ECOWAS Revised Treaty"; "Economic Community of West African States Protocol on Non-Aggression"; "Protocol A/SP.3/5/81 Relating to Mutual Assistance on Defence."
[19] Lundgren, "Conflict Management Capabilities of Peace-Brokering International Organizations. 1945-2010: A New Dataset"; Mullenbach, "Deciding to Keep Peace."

bodies.[20] There are also many valuable studies that analyse responses to particular conflicts by particular organisations.[21] As evidenced by the existing literature, both sub-regional and regional bodies undertake a variety of conflict management roles from establishing mechanisms and institutions to prevent conflict to deploying peacekeepers. The added value of the quantitative component of the present study is that it systematically establishes the level and type of REC peace agreement engagement across the continent during the 21st century (complementing existing case study work on the increasing importance of the RECs). Using a global database of peace agreements, our study illuminates diverse patterns of engagement by RECs in Africa, providing a basis for further exploration of how and why sub-regional organisations in Africa engage in peace agreements and peace processes and how understandings and practices of subsidiarity are evolving.

IGO overlap and subsidiarity

There is substantial overlap in terms of membership and mandate among IGOs in Africa with security roles.[22] Some of this overlap is among the RECs (both those that are recognised by the AU and other sub-regional groupings), but the greatest overlap is between the AU and the RECs. Questions about how labour should be divided among these different levels of security governance and about which actors should defer to which when goals or strategies diverge remain open. The AU's 2002 Protocol on the Peace and Security Council gives primary

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[20] Diehl and Lepgold, *Regional Conflict Management*; Tavares, *Regional Security*; Engel and Porto, "The African Union's New Peace and Security Architecture"; Jeng, *Peacebuilding in the African Union.*
[21] Apuuli, "IGAD's Mediation in the Current South Sudan Conflict"; El-Affendi, "The Impasse in the IGAD Peace Process for Sudan"; Wilen and Williams, "The African Union and Coercive Diplomacy"; Southall, "SADC's Intervention into Lesotho."
[22] Panke and Stapel, "Exploring Overlapping Regionalism."

responsibility (and therefore authority) to the continental body.[23] However, a 2008 memorandum of understanding on AU-REC cooperation introduces the language of subsidiarity,[24] and this implies some deference to lower level groupings.[25] The July 2019 AU-REC Coordination Meeting produced a new draft protocol on AU-REC relations to replace the 2008 memorandum.[26] Even this most recent document is unlikely to settle questions around subsidiarity as norms and practices continue to evolve, and different actors have different ideas about its interpretation.

Scholars and policymakers identify several potential advantages of subsidiarity, a principle "founded on the idea that sustainable peace is possible if conflict resolution mechanisms are led by actors who are culturally, geopolitically and/or strategically close to the crisis in question."[27] More proximate states (i.e. members of the relevant REC) often have a greater stake in a given conflict because of its potential negative externalities, and so conflict management is more likely to align with national interest. These states should also boast greater knowledge of the history of the conflict and of the facts on the ground.[28]

On the other hand, proximity may also come with biases, and a less-proximate actor may approach a conflict with greater impartiality. An even more serious problem with a REC-first approach, though, is the matter of capacity – larger organisations at higher governance levels often boast higher budgets and more personnel.[29] Related to both of these shortcomings is the matter of political will, which may or may not be greater at a lower governance level, depending

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[23] African Union, "PSC Protocol."
[24] African Union, "Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Area of Peace and Security between the African Union, the Regional Economic Communities and the Coordinating Mechanisms of the Regional Standby Brigades of Eastern and Northern Africa."
[25] Nathan, "Will the Lowest Be First?"
[26] "Peace and Security Council Report No 115," 2.
[27] "The Principle of Subsidiarity," 4.
[28] Møller, "The Pros and Cons of Subsidiarity," 4–5.
[29] Nathan, "Will the Lowest Be First?," 5; Møller, "The Pros and Cons of Subsidiarity," 8.

on the conflict being managed and the relationship between the heads of state involved. In fact, Africa's RECs vary greatly with respect to their engagement in peace agreements – which reflects variation in both material capabilities and political will. Given this uneven REC landscape, which we illuminate below, there is now increasing recognition of the need to prioritise comparative advantage when dividing tasks between the AU and the RECs, a so-called "functional subsidiarity."[30]

Beyond the interaction amongst RECs and between the AU and RECs, these organisations also engage with international peace and security organisations, notably the United Nations (UN), which is responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security but provides a role for regional organisations through Article 53 of the UN Charter.[31] This has created a situation in Africa where there is a unique and interwoven security architecture comprised of different organisations with varying competences, territories, policies, and powers.[32] Furthermore, as our data on REC engagement will show, institutional relationships on peace and security issues are evolving, and there are multiple levels and realms of interaction. Our data focuses on engagement in peace agreements, but there is other literature that discusses the dynamics of these relationships in other realms of conflict management, notably peace operations. For instance, Balas introduces the concept of multiple-simultaneous peacekeeping operations (MSPOs) characterized as similar missions deployed in the same conflict environment at the same time and shows that MSPOs increased from about 10 percent of all peacekeeping missions in 1992 to 70 percent of all missions in 2007 with the trend showing no signs of

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[30] "Peace and Security Council Report No 113," 3.
[31] "Charter of the United Nations."
[32] Cimiotta, "'Triangular' Relationships between the United Nations and Regional and Sub-Regional Organizations in Maintaining Peace," 323.

regressing.[33] In addition, Bah and Jones have offered typologies of different types of

partnerships in peacekeeping operations, which include sequential, parallel, and integrated

operations.[34] Within the realm of peacekeeping operations, some of the earliest and most

innovative examples of partnerships have come from Africa. For example, both the UN and

ECOWAS were engaged in peacekeeping in Liberia in the early 1990s.[35]

    While the practice of subsidiarity has been widely explored in the literature through both

quantitative and qualitative studies, our study is uniquely able to visualise how subsidiarity plays

out in peace processes across the African continent. Our quantitative analysis shows to what

extent the AU and RECs are engaging in peace agreements in their spheres, illuminating the

practice of subsidiarity. Furthermore, our qualitative analysis focuses on overlapping

engagement amongst African IGOs in resolving conflicts on the continent through peace

agreements. As discussed below, this overlap plays out differently across different peace

processes. In some cases, a particular REC or the AU takes more ownership of the process. In

others, authority is less concentrated, which can create situations of competition or cooperation

among organisations that can shift over time. We explore these patterns and trace stasis and

change through illustrative case studies.

II. Methodology

As noted above, we use mixed methods to analyse two related phenomena in turn: First, we

present descriptive statistics to illuminate variation in *peace agreement engagement* level and

type (over time and across African organisations). Second, we present qualitative studies of two

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[33] Balas, "It Takes Two (or More) to Keep the Peace," 385–86.
[34] Bah and Jones, "Peace Operation Partnerships," 23–24.
[35] Bah and Jones, 22.

cases of *organisational interaction* in the context of a peace process. The aim here is to illustrate important variation in such interactions with respect to peace process ownership and interaction dynamics.

The quantitative data presented below is based on our coding of 294 peace agreements for pre-agreement and post-agreement engagement by the AU and the RECs. We analyse peace agreements to end conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa signed from 1 January 2002, the year of the formal creation of the AU after a multi-year transition, until 2015 in the Peace Agreements Database (PA-X)[36]. Peace agreements to resolve conflicts in North African states are excluded from the quantitative analysis. PA-X Version 1 is a global dataset containing over 1500 agreements, and it defines peace agreements as any "formal, publicly-available document, produced after discussions with conflict protagonists and mutually agreed to by some or all of them, addressing conflict with a view to ending it".[37] Outside actors can of course be engaged in promoting peace and ending violent conflict outside the confines of peace agreements. For instance, they can work behind the scenes to pressure conflict parties to come to the negotiations table or assist victims of conflict. However, focusing on the role defined for regional and sub-regional organisations in peace agreements is important because peace agreements both prescribe the terms of peace and outline the role that outside actors played in achieving that peace and their role in maintaining it. Peace agreements therefore tell us something about the role outside actors play in resolving the conflict and the roles they are crafting for themselves in managing peace and security in their spheres of influence. In this sense peace agreements are living documents that seek to provide the terms of peace for current and future conflicts, and as our case studies

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[36] PA-X (2017). Peace Agreements Database and Access Tool, Version 1. Political Settlements Research Programme, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh. www.peaceagreements.org
[37] Bell et al., *PA-X Codebook, Version 1*.

will show, these organisations often shape these agreements and are in turn empowered by their provisions.

In order to systematically document how and to what extent the AU and RECs engage in peace agreements, we coded all agreements in sub-Saharan Africa during 2002-2015. We coded first for mentions of the AU and/or RECs. We next coded agreements with such mention(s) for the peace process activities described in detail below. We focus on Africa because of the peace and security mandates of its regional and sub-regional organisations. In a regional sphere, where there are overlapping organisations at different levels with an interest in and some institutional capacity for conflict management, how does subsidiarity play out? We applied an original coding scheme to each agreement in our dataset, coding activities in several categories, the most important of which are the following:

1) The agreement indicates the organisation played a facilitation or mediation role in the negotiations that produced the agreement (pre-agreement engagement)[38]

2) The agreement establishes an implementation/guarantor role and/or monitoring role for the organisation (post-agreement engagement)[39]

We also used this data to begin investigating organisational interaction (engagement overlap). Section IV presents two qualitative case studies that demonstrate how much peace

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[38] To be coded affirmatively, IGO facilitation must be indicated in the text of the agreement. Examples of such indications include: 1) the agreement was made under the auspices of the IGO, 2) an expression of thanks to the IGO for facilitating the negotiations is included, 3) the conflict parties met at the invitation of an individual, acting in his/her role as an IGO mediator or negotiator.

[39] Some examples of language indicating an implementation commitment include: 1) a provision mentions the IGO as a guarantor (the IGO does not need to be the sole guarantor), 2) the IGO is given a specific task to implement the agreement (e.g. the AU is on a committee to demarcate a boundary line), 3) an IGO representative is included on an implementation committee, 4) the IGO has the power to make binding decisions (in response to disputes between the parties) and/or impose sanctions on the parties. Some examples of language indicating a monitoring commitment include: 1) a provision states that the IGO is to monitor the progress of the agreement, 2) an IGO representative is included on a monitoring committee, 3) parties are to update/report to the IGO, 4) parties can bring disputes to/appeal to the IGO with disputes.

processes in Africa can vary with respect to the nature of this overlap. CAR and Liberia both experienced internal conflict that impacted stability in their sub-regions and elicited interest in conflict management by sub-regional, regional, and global organisations. Despite these baseline similarities, differences in the type and dynamics of inter-organisational interactions in the two cases provide an interesting set of contrasts. In Liberia, ECOWAS maintained consistent ownership over the process even when regional and international organisations provided support. In CAR, however, there was a lack of a clear peace process owner. We also find a scaling-up dynamic in CAR, where authority eventually transferred from a sub-regional organisation to a regional organisation. Our case studies detail the engagement of regional and sub-regional organisations in peace agreements throughout the peace processes, highlighting cooperation, overlapping efforts, and diverging approaches. They provide examples of the evolving roles of these organisations and illuminate the changing landscape of peace and security governance in Africa.

III. (Sub-)Regional Peace Agreement Engagement (2002-2015)

This section focuses primarily on the five most active RECs: ECOWAS, SADC, IGAD, ECCAS, and CEN-SAD. In it we visualize the activities of these organisations in two categories, based on our coding of peace agreements: 1) pre-agreement engagement and 2) post-agreement engagement. First, did the REC act as negotiator or *facilitate* the talks that led to the conclusion of the agreement? Second, does the agreement name the REC as a guarantor or outline *implementation* responsibilities for it? And/or does the agreement provide for a ceasefire *monitoring* or other verification role for the REC? We close the section with a brief overview of the activities of the less engaged RECs (AMU, EAC, COMESA).

Higher activity RECs

Since the absolute number of REC-engaged peace agreements in a given sub-region and time period is not an especially meaningful data point *per se*, we present line graphs (Figures 1-10, page #) that visualize REC engagement *alongside* AU engagement in each REC zone. We also provide overall figures of relative engagement by calculating the number of REC-engaged peace agreements as a percentage of AU-engaged peace agreements (see Table 1). The AU is a particularly active regional organisation on peace and security, compared to its counterparts in other world regions,[40] and using its activity as our baseline allows us to better compare REC activity across time and space.

[Insert Table 1]

We find significant variation in REC engagement patterns (and overall engagement levels). Unsurprisingly given its pathbreaking role in peace processes in the 1990s, **ECOWAS** is the overall REC leader in both pre-agreement and post-agreement engagement during the period of study (see Table 1), although there is variation in engagement across time. Importantly for subsidiarity research, it actually often surpasses AU engagement levels. Specifically, its intense involvement in the Côte d'Ivoire peace process is largely responsible for the substantial ECOWAS-AU gap during 2002-2003 and 2006-2007 (see Figures 1 & 2). The AU also engages in the process in Côte d'Ivoire, but not at the same level.

SADC's overall engagement is below that of the AU within its sub-region, but SADC tracks very closely with AU engagement trends (see Figures 3 & 4). Interestingly, the AU-SADC engagement gap narrows over the course of the time period, with SADC exceeding AU levels by

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[40] Coe, *Sovereignty in the South*.

its end. **IGAD's** activity level (relative to the AU) is comparable to that of SADC, but IGAD does not display the same upward trend (see Figures 5 & 6). In fact, IGAD's high points (where it surpasses the AU) are situated at either end of the time period. Importantly, these peaks are made up exclusively of engagement in the South Sudan peace processes. In other words, IGAD seems to be somewhat selective about its engagement.

ECCAS is considerably less engaged than SADC or IGAD, but, as with SADC, we can observe its increasing activity over time albeit only slightly (see Figures 7 & 8). It is worth noting that the ECCAS zone (central Africa) is a crowded space with respect to IGOs. The UN's peacekeeping presence is strong here, and several formal and informal sub-regional bodies operate here as well. Apart from ECCAS itself, these include SADC, CEN-SAD, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), ICGLR, and the Regional Initiative for Burundi. Finally, the trans-regional **CEN-SAD** engaged at a rate comparable to that of ECCAS, but its engagement does not trend upward (see Figures 9 & 10). In fact, its activity is concentrated in the 2006-2009 period. Before his overthrow in 2011, Colonel Gaddafi served as "High Peace Mediator in the CEN-SAD Space." CEN-SAD's peace agreement engagement during these years largely reflect the Libyan leader's involvement in Sahel-Saharan peace processes (e.g. Chad and Chad/Sudan).

[Insert Figures 1-10]

Lower activity RECs

COMESA, like CEN-SAD, is transregional – it spans from Tunisia to Madagascar. Although it has a mandate to promote peace and security, it did not facilitate any agreements or commit to implement or monitor them. The EAC, a smaller grouping in the Eastern region, participated in

the Somalia peace process, but Somalia is not an EAC member.[41] The EAC did not facilitate

negotiations for (or commit to implement) any of the PA-X peace agreements to which its

member states were party. Finally, we find no agreements in the PA-X database that mention the

AMU. This is not surprising, given the AMU's inactivity in general (it has not convened since

2008) and its "lack [of] capacity to take on any responsibilities at this stage."[42]

IV. Patterns of Organisational Interaction: Case Studies

The previous section established regional and temporal variation in REC activities, showing how

the RECs differ in their level and type of peace agreement engagement and how their levels of

engagement have changed over time. In this section we turn to the ways in which *peace

processes vary* with respect to *patterns of organisation interaction*. As noted in the introduction,

several of the peace processes studied here have been engaged by a single African organisation

(e.g. the AU in Kenya), but twice as many have been subject to organisational overlap (via peace

agreement facilitation, implementation, and/or monitoring). Peace processes with overlapping

engagement vary, though, and we make two kinds of distinctions, exemplified by our contrasting

case studies. The first is whether there is a presence or absence of a peace process "owner." In

some cases of organisational overlap, one of the overlapping organisations can be said to exert

ownership over the process. Ownership is demonstrated by setting the parameters of the peace

agreement or peace process and by deference from other organisations. ECOWAS did this in

Liberia when it adhered to the ECOWAS peace plan despite numerous spoilers and agreement

failures. The UN and the OAU also both acknowledged the primacy of the ECOWAS peace

plan. In other cases, including CAR, there is not a clear leading organisation. The second

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[41] Somalia has applied for EAC membership.
[42] "Peace and Security Council Report No 113," 4.

distinction is whether the distribution of influence/authority is static (as in the Liberia case) or dynamic (as in the CAR case). In CAR we find a "scaling up" of relative influence from a REC (ECCAS) to the AU.

As noted above, in both cases, an internal conflict led to widespread atrocities. Both conflicts were complex and occurred over a number of years, and various sub-regional, regional, and international organisations were concerned about the consequences of the violence. These cases were chosen as illustrative of wider patterns exhibited in our data. They demonstrate how different patterns of engagement can play out in conflicts with similar circumstances.

Liberia (consistent concentrated authority)

Although outside the scope of our quantitative data, Liberia is a critical case study because it was the first significant ECOWAS response to a conflict in its sub-region, and ECOWAS has often repeated this pattern of engagement that was set in Liberia. Furthermore, the case study of Liberia is often explored with a focus on the ECOWAS peacekeeping mission. However, the case of Liberia also shows consistent leadership of ECOWAS throughout the peace process despite problems with political will and lack of capacity. Other organisations, including the OAU and UN, were brought into the process, but their statements and resolutions deferred to the ECOWAS peace plan. The Liberian civil war began in 1989. It was a destructive conflict with many civilian casualties, and it threatened the peace and security of the region. The Standing Mediation Committee (SMC) was created by the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State in May 1990. Its stated purpose was to investigate and intervene in disputes between states that threatened the stability of the sub-region. Immediately upon its creation, the SMC took up the

issue of conflict in Liberia.[43] Taking into account work by Liberian civil society to end the violence, the SMC proposed an ECOWAS peace plan at the Banjul Summit in August 1990. Formally approved by the ECOWAS Authority in November 1990, the plan called for an immediate ceasefire, the deployment of a monitoring group to supervise the ceasefire and an interim government with subsequent national elections. The plan also called for ECOWAS to provide substantial support through setting up the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), establishing a peace fund, and monitoring elections.[44]

The initial conception of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) was a 4,000 strong force with a mandate to maintain law and order, protect life and property, facilitate essential services, provide security for the interim government, observe elections, and fill the role of a police force.[45] However, ECOMOG was not able to end to the civil war, and negotiations to reach a political settlement continued. A ceasefire agreement was signed on 24 October 1990 by representatives of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) and the Independent National Patriotic Front (INPFL) rebel group with the Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPLF) listed on the agreement but not signing. The ceasefire agreement was witnessed by a representative of the ECOWAS SMC, and ECOMOG was a critical mechanism to enforce the agreement as it was tasked with helping to delineate buffer zones, carry out inspections, and disarm combatants.[46] At this point, the AFL, NPFL, and INPFL signed a joint declaration of the cessation of hostilities and agreed to the ECOWAS peace plan and ECOMOG monitoring.[47]

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[43] "Thirteenth Session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government."
[44] "Decision A/DEC.2/11/90 Relating to the Adoption of the ECOWAS Peace Plan for Liberia and the Entire West African Sub-Region (ECOWAS Peace Plan)."
[45] Aboagye, *ECOMOG: A Sub-Regional Experience in Conflict Resolution, Management, and Peacekeeping in Liberia*, 62.
[46] "Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities and Peaceful Settlement of Conflict in Liberia (Banjul III Agreement)."
[47] "Joint Declaration on Cessation of Hostilities and Peaceful Settlement of Conflict (Bamako Ceasefire Agreement)."

However, Charles Taylor almost immediately objected to some of the provisions and continued to act as spoiler in subsequent negotiations.

Further peace talks in Geneva in 1992 and 1993 were the first to be held in formal collaboration with other international actors. This time the talks were jointly facilitated by the UN, OAU, and ECOWAS. However, the final communiqué deferred to ECOWAS stating, "This historical meeting provided a unique opportunity for the three parties to engage in a friendly and conciliatory dialogue among themselves with a view to advancing the search for a peaceful and lasting settlement to the Liberian crisis in accordance with the ECOWAS Peace Plan and the Yamoussoukro Accords".[48] Following this round of talks, on 22 September 1993 the UNSC adopted Resolution 866 creating the UN Observer Force in Liberia (UNOMIL). The UN Resolution stipulated that ECOMOG would have primary responsibility for implementing the agreement while the UN Mission would monitor and verify the process.[49]

The culmination of repeated failures to end the violence led to the Abuja Peace Process. This process spanned almost two years but did eventually lead to an end of the first Liberian civil war. In 1997, ECOWAS approved a package of financial support for the Liberian elections and reaffirmed their commitment to the 1990 ECOWAS peace plan that stipulated democratic elections as a primary means to resolve the conflict.[50] The peace agreements demonstrate that ECOWAS was the driving force behind the peace processes, and it was the REC that allowed regional and international actors into the processes while still adhering to the goals of the ECOWAS peace plan. ECOWAS set the framework for a way to end the conflict in 1990 that

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[48] "Communique Issued at the Conclusion of the Peace Talks on Liberia Held at Geneva," 1.
[49] "Resolution 866 (1993)."
[50] "Final Communique, the Fifth Meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the ECOWAS Committee of Nine on the Liberian Crises."

was acceptable to the Community and followed through on their commitment to holding elections. Flawed as they were, the elections were held, and Charles Taylor was elected president. While Liberia would return to conflict just a few years later, the first Liberian war ended with the Abuja Accords and the national elections.

Often there is a focus on the final agreement in a peace process, but agreements and processes have the capacity to build and regress over time. Liberia demonstrates many characteristics of political unsettlement where the conflict was contained by temporary legal and political structures but not fully resolved, and there were multiple international, regional, and local sources of authority during the many peace processes.[51] In political unsettlement, outside actors, in this case ECOWAS, hope to use the temporary institutions to push for a long-lasting resolution, but conflict actors often use them to entrench their own positions.[52] Over several years, ECOWAS was unable and at times politically unwilling to enforce peace agreements and force rebel groups to comply showing the issues with political will and capacity outlined above. However, the patterns of progress and regression along with conflict parties acting as spoilers are common in efforts to end violent conflict, and the inherently messy nature of peace processes should not negate the fact that ECOWAS was the driving force behind the resolution of the conflict in Liberia and that international and regional institutions took their cues from ECOWAS.

As suggested by proponents of the concept of subsidiarity, the West African sub-region bore the brunt of the conflict impacts, and ECOWAS member states were therefore invested in conflict management. However, these states also exhibited biases at times and faced problems with capacity and trust throughout the many peace processes. ECOWAS took the lead on setting the

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[51] Bell and Pospisil, "Navigating Inclusion in Transitions from Conflict," 7.
[52] Bell and Pospisil, 9.

terms for an acceptable peace, but other actors also came in to support the process as needed (and with deference to the ECOWAS peace plan), thus showing aspects of functional subsidiarity.

The ECOWAS response to Liberia was important because it helped to develop ECOWAS's model of responding to violent conflict. Often, the Liberia response is studied because of the pathbreaking ECOMOG military intervention.[53] And the ECOMOG intervention was indeed pivotal. However, the leadership role taken on by ECOWAS in the peace processes was also critical. Since Liberia, ECOWAS has revised several foundational documents, including its organisational treaty and defence protocol, to create the legal and institutional frameworks to support a more robust role in peace and security.[54] ECOWAS has consistently taken on substantive roles in peace processes, notably in Cote d'Ivoire, as seen in Section III. While ECOWAS often follows this pattern and has built on the Liberia model over time, the organisation should not be viewed as only practicing one pattern of engagement in peace processes. Indeed the AU and other international actors were more active in the peace agreements pertaining to the conflict in Mali and the wider Sahel region. Instead this case study has demonstrated how one pattern of engagement played out in a particular peace process, and it has highlighted the importance of this case in creating a model not only for leadership in peacekeeping but in peace processes.

Central African Republic (overlapping & shifting authority)

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[53] Aboagye, *ECOMOG: A Sub-Regional Experience in Conflict Resolution, Management, and Peacekeeping in Liberia*; Adebajo, *Liberia's Civil War*; Pitts, "Sub-Regional Solutions for African Conflict"; Levitt, "Humanitarian Intervention by Regional Actors in Internal Conflicts."
[54] "ECOWAS Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-Keeping, and Security"; "ECOWAS Revised Treaty."

CAR provides an example of engagement overlap among RECs and between RECs and the AU. Although a single organisation never assumed complete ownership of this process, which encompasses two distinct but related rounds of violence, we see a shift toward greater AU ownership (a version of the 'scaling up' dynamic). There was also involvement by France and the UN in the CAR context, but for the purposes of this article we focus on the dynamics amongst African organisations. CAR has suffered from successive bouts of instability and violence for many years. In 2003, President Ange-Félix Patassé was deposed in a coup d'état and replaced by Francois Bozize, and the crisis deepened with rebellions involving several armed groups.[55] The armed groups included the Democratic Front of the Central African People (FDPC), the Union of Democratic Forces for Unity (UFDR), and the Popular Army for the Restoration of Democracy (APRD). Peace processes in 2007 and 2008 led to a series of peace agreements that involved several sub-regional and regional organisations.

The January 2007 Birao Peace Agreement was between the Government of CAR and the UFDR. It provided for a ceasefire, troop containment, and liberation of political prisoners among other things. It specifically cites the Charters of the UN, AU, and CEMAC but does not mention any facilitation or role in implementation for these organisations.[56] The February 2007 Syrte Agreement mandated a ceasefire between the Government of CAR and the FDPC and UFDR rebel groups. Libyan President Moammar Al Ghaddafi offered mediation support is his role as the CEN-SAD Permanent High Mediator for Peace. The Syrte Agreement included similar provisions to the Birao Agreement between the government and only UFDR, such as containment of troops and prisoner release, but this agreement included a much stronger implementation role for Ghaddafi as the CEN-SAD mediator. In the event of a disagreement on

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[55] Welz and Meyer, "Empty Acronyms."
[56] "Accord de Paix de Birao."

implementation the agreement mandates that the matter would be taken to him and his judgement final.[57] Ghaddafi's personal engagement as the High Mediator as well as Libya's interests in particular conflicts were often driving forces in CEN-SAD's involvement in particular peace processes. Another ceasefire agreement with the government of CAR and the final rebel group, APRD, was not signed until May 2008. Gabon President El Hadj Bongo Ondimba in his capacity as President of the CEMAC Ad Hoc Committee on Central African questions assisted with mediation, and CEMAC also played a role in monitoring the agreement by allowing disputes over implementation to be brought before the sub-regional organisation but not making its decision binding on the conflict parties.[58]

The Global Peace Agreement with three rebel groups and the government of CAR was signed in June 2008. In this agreement we see a coalescing of the sub-regional organisations. Both Bongo, in his capacity as President of the CEMAC Ad Hoc Committee on Central African Question, and Ghaddafi, in his capacity as the Permanent High Mediator for Peace in CEN-SAD, offer mediation support. In addition, CEMAC and CEN-SAD may be included on the monitoring committee in addition to ECCAS and AU. Finally, it is CEMAC and the Government of Gabon that is mandated with implementation responsibilities, including convening the monitoring committee and issuing a final, binding decision if there are disputes on implementation.[59] Based on the agreement texts, we see split responsibility for the peace process culminating in a singular agreement bringing in all sub-regional organisations. It also shows the

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[57] "Accord de Paix Entre Le Gouvernement de La République Centrafricaine et Les Mouvements Politico-Militaires Ci-Après Designés."
[58] "Accord de Cessez Le Feu et de Paix Entre Le Gouvernement de La République Centrafricaine et Le Mouvement Politique et Militaire Centrafricain APRD."
[59] "Accord de Paix Global Entre Le Gouvernement de La République Centrafricaine et Les Mouvements Politico-Militaires Centrafricains Désignés Ci Après."

involvement of a REC that is not recognised by the AU and is often in competition with the AU-recognized REC, ECCAS.

The complicated engagement patterns in CAR are reflective of changing organisational dynamics within the Central African space. ECCAS was largely dormant for much of the 1990s and began a multi-year reform process in 1998 to revitalise the organisation's agenda to include a broader range of issues, including peace and security. While ECCAS was going through a transformation, CEMAC deployed the Force Multinationale en Centrafrique (FOMUC) in 2002.[60] In July 2008, FOMUC was succeeded by the Mission de Consolidation de la Paix en Republique Centrafricaine (MICOPAX) and deployed under the ECCAS Central African Peace and Security Architecture.[61] Both ECCAS and CEMAC have overlapping member states and mandates, and there is now an emerging division of labour with CEMAC prioritising economic issues and ECCAS prioritizing peace and security issues.[62] This division is not apparent in the 2007-2008 peace processes, but it can be seen in the peacekeeping missions in CAR. In addition, ECCAS has played a much more active role in managing conflict in CAR during its most recent crisis as demonstrated in this case study and in the quantitative data.

The most recent violence began in late 2012. Seleka, an alliance of rebel groups, sought to remove President Bozize after the failure of the 2008 Global Peace Agreement. During their campaign, Seleka looted and committed acts of violence, and this prompted local defence forces to mobilise in response. These forces were collectively labelled anti-Balaka.[63] Since the coup d'état in 2013 there has been significant violence and displacement and several peace agreements

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[60] Meyer, "Regional Conflict Management in Central Africa," 159–61.
[61] Meyer, 168.
[62] Byiers, "ECCAS and CEMAC: Struggling to Integrate in an Intertwined Region."
[63] Glawion and de Vries, "Ruptures Revoked," 424–25.

in an effort to stem the conflict. ECCAS pushed Bozize to negotiate, and in January 2013, the

rebel groups in the Seleka alliance and the Government of CAR signed several agreements.[64]

These agreements included monitoring and implementation roles for ECCAS and MICOPAX,

and they are also signed by an ECCAS representative.[65]

However, the agreement was not implemented, MICOPAX withdrew its backing from

Bozize, and violence resumed. Bozize was deposed in March 2013 by Seleka forces, and

Michael Djotodia came to power.[66] This led to tensions between the AU and ECCAS on how to

deal with the development. The AU suspended CAR in line with its policy against undemocratic

changes in government; whereas ECCAS recognised Djotodia as the new president of CAR.

This disagreement not only centred around a normative difference but resistance from ECCAS to

perceived AU dominance. Instead of following AU protocol, ECCAS sought to assert its own

dominance in its sub-region.[67] However, Djotodia's regime was short-lived, and he was forced

out of power in December 2013 by ECCAS member state Chad.[68] This timeframe coincided

with the AU taking a more active role in conflict management through both peacekeeping

operations and in peace agreements. The February 2019 peace agreement signed in Bangui was

brokered by the AU with the involvement of other outside states and organisations.[69]

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[64] Carayannis and Fowlis, "Lessons from African Union-United Nations Cooperation in Peace Operations in the Central African Republic," 224.
[65] "Accord de Cessez-Le-Feu Entre Le Gouvernement de La République Centrafricaine et La Coalition Seleka"; "Accord Politique de Libreville Sur La Résolution de La Crise Politico-Sécuritaire En République Centrafricaine"; "Déclaration de Principe Des Parties Aux Négociations de Libreville Sur La Crise Centrafricaine."
[66] Carayannis and Fowlis, "Lessons from African Union-United Nations Cooperation in Peace Operations in the Central African Republic," 224.
[67] Welz, "Multi-Actor Peace Operations and Inter-Organizational Relations," 580.
[68] de Vries and Glawion, "Speculating on Crisis," 32.
[69] "Making the Central African Republic's Latest Peace Agreement Stick."

It is important to acknowledge that both regional and extra-regional actors helped to shape the CAR peace process. Chad took a strong interest in CAR, and France and the UN supported the leadership of different African organisations at different points. However, fundamentally this case study is meant to illustrate a prominent pattern of engagement in peace processes by African organisations. The CAR process from 2007 through today represents organisational overlap – resulting in both competition and cooperation between RECs and the AU – as well as a shift in authority from ECCAS to the AU for the most recent 2019 peace agreement, which is outside the scope of our quantitative data set. This "scaling up" was in large part due to capacity shortcomings within ECCAS,[70] and such limitations at lower levels undergird calls for "functional subsidiarity" in multilevel security governance. However, there were also significant normative differences in approaches to the change in government in this case. While organisational capacity and political will are concerns to be addressed in Africa's evolving peace and security regime, issues of norm contestation and policy disagreements also present themselves.

Conclusion

Peace agreements reflect existing – and prescribe new – security governance roles for a variety of actors involved in peace processes. These documents have both political and legal dimensions and provide information about the (often overlapping) conflict management activities of regional and sub-regional organisations. While there is significant work on the role of third parties in peace agreements and peace processes there has been a dearth of literature identifying patterns in engagement by regional and sub-regional actors. Our systematic analysis of agreement content

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[70] Welz, "Multi-Actor Peace Operations and Inter-Organizational Relations," 583.

reveals significant and multidimensional variation across REC zones and across peace processes. This opens up several promising avenues for future research, as the causes and consequences of these diverse modes of engagement are currently understudied.

We find that African IGOs vary in their overall level of peace process engagement, the selectivity of that engagement, and the pattern of that engagement over time. Furthermore, IGO activities overlap within peace processes, and the nature of that overlap varies. Several potential explanations for variation in REC engagement and leadership present themselves. Previous work has highlighted differences in REC mandates, which may play a role. Galadima & Ogbonnaya attribute REC underperformance in to underdeveloped policy frameworks at the organisation level.[71] The relationship between mandate and practice is complicated, though, as there is the potential for these organisations to push forward and clarify their mandates *via* peace agreement engagement. The material power (and foreign policy priorities) of a REC's lead member state might also help account for REC engagement disparities. Indeed, the most engaged RECs – ECOWAS and SADC – count economic powerhouses Nigeria and South Africa as members, respectively, and these states were very influential in advancing AU peace and security norms and policy.[72] Path dependency may also be at work in these particular cases, as SADC and especially ECOWAS were early to take on conflict management roles in the 1990s, and ECOWAS is also an example of a REC with a track record of taking ownership of peace processes.

Working in the other direction, divisions among member states may be limiting REC engagement and pushing them into backseat positions. While Egypt and Algeria boast relatively

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[71] Galadima and Ogbonnaya, "Regional Responses to Security and Development Challenges in East and Southern Africa."

[72] Tieku, "Explaining the Clash and Accommodation of Major Actors in the Creation of the African Union."

powerful militaries, poor inter-state relations in North Africa have paralysed the AMU.[73] Perhaps IGAD would have increased its peace agreement engagement to a greater degree were it not for sharp tensions between Ethiopia and its neighbours. The membership size of an organisation is also likely relevant. CENSAD and COMESA are perhaps too sprawling to have the requisite "actorness" or to keep up with AU conflict management activity across their many member states, given the AU's superiority level of institutionalisation. The text of peace agreements draws our attention to another potentially important factor: non-official and informal organisations and bodies. While the present paper focuses on actors identified in APSA, there are many other sub-regional actors. What role do informal arrangements play in shaping the engagement of formalised RECs? There are several instances, such as the Regional Initiative for Burundi, where neighbouring states did play a substantial role in the peace process. Are these informal arrangements circumventing REC institutions or are they niche responses to conflicts where particular third parties need to be involved to resolve a dispute that involves both domestic and external dimensions?

Overall our analysis of African peace agreements clarifies the nature of overlapping regionalism on the continent in the context of engagement in peace agreements in order to enhance our understanding of the peace and security roles of regional and sub-regional organisations in Africa, We also offer our conceptualization of authority concentration and authority shifts as a starting point for further investigation of the ways in which contested principles – notably subsidiarity, comparative advantage, and 'African solutions to African problems' – are interpreted and implemented; the reasons for the variation in inter-organisational relations; and the effect of multilevel and overlapping governance on peace process outcomes.

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[73] "Peace and Security Council Report No 113," 4.

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