

Reviews

Regionalism in Africa: Genealogies, Institutions, and Trans-State Networks

by DANIEL C. BACH

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In this book Daniel Bach provides a thorough analytical and comparative review on Africa's regionalism from the inception to its current status. The book provides an overarching historical, social, political and economic overview on regionalism. It covers many distinctive aspects on the topic ranging from rules, norms, institutions and the dynamism of trans-state networks, as well as the influence of colonialism and Pan-Africanism.

The book starts by making two specific important distinctions: First, it distinguishes between two prototypes of regionalism: sovereignty pooling, which involves the transfer of sovereignty to a supranational body as demonstrated by the EU model, and sovereignty enhancement, which also focuses on non-interference in the internal affairs of the member states as was exemplified in ASEAN Free Trade Agreements. *Regionalism in Africa* adopts the latter model as enshrined in the Constitutive Act of (O)AU. The second important distinction made in the book was in the regionalism-regionalisation nexus, which points to the fact there could be regionalism but not necessarily regionalisation. This has been typical of African regional blocs, as they have been described as purely ceremonial without significant trade liberalisation impact. These distinctions are very relevant when analysing regionalism and its impact in Africa.

Although regionalism in Africa has been motivated by many different inspirations at different stages of African history, the dominant narratives have been the African regional integration schemes' attempts at mimicking the EU model, especially in copying the EU's similar structures. Following the EU model mainly has been viewed from the perspective of the linear or successive approach (FTA-CU-CM-EMU) to deepen and strengthen integration. However, African integration could also be viewed as a unique integration that has borrowed from different integration models all over the world. Thus, the adoption of a mixed strategy involving partial implementation of EU models along with borrowed aspects of an Asian developmental regionalism approach may be a better alternative than a complete mimicry of one specific form of regionalism. The current agitations within the EU especially demonstrated by Brexit, may be a good lesson against the transfer of sovereignty to supranational body.

The argument of the border lines and trans-state networks being viewed as a stimulus for cross-border interactions is debatable. The positive effect of the borders being attractive for the creation of lucrative cross-border transactions is tenable, however, the high incidence of political conflicts that are directly linked to the porous nature of border demarcations undermines this argument.

The costs of the porous nature of these borders include their use as major hot-spots for conflict, where they act as warehouses for illicit arms and safe havens for armed rebels. Additionally, they are also the major source of election disputes as they create an avenue to question the nationality of individuals with regards to their voting rights and eligibility to contest elections. For instance, the recent political stalemate that engulfed Côte d'Ivoire relates to issues concerning cross-border nationality. A detailed cost-benefit analysis may show the costs emanating from the haphazard nature of border lines would far outweigh the benefits especially as the businesses or revenue accruing from cross-border transactions are shrouded in corrupt practices, as indicated by the author.

Another relevant point raised by the author was defragmentation and connectivity through the building of regional hard and soft infrastructures. This is relevant considering that the main revised objectives of the Lagos Plan of Action and NEPAD are to promote economic development by boosting regional trade and investment. The book documents a number of successful regional projects and cross-border initiatives especially in intra-regional services in the banking and telecommunication sectors within various RECs, although most of the RECs have not graduated from FTA status to a higher level of integration. For instance, African regional blocs such as ECOWAS and SADC have developed major inter-regional institutions and inter-sectoral projects and these regional blocs are making significant headway in promoting intra-regional trade and investment.

Thus, the evaluation of Africa's regional blocs requires a multi-dimensional or more holistic approach. The assessments should not be limited only to how the RECs meet their linear progression plans (from FTA to EMU) or how they fully or partially implement the EU style of regionalism. This is important as it is also not sufficient to rely on intra-regional trade as a yardstick to measure the effectiveness of the RECs as this may not reflect the true statistics in the case of Africa, considering the high incidence of unofficial trade not captured in the official bilateral trade statistics.

Overall, the book is a one-stop source for students and policymakers on regionalism on the continent, considering its use of both historical and current information. However, a chapter on specific challenges that the RECs face and some possible suggested recommendations on how to deepen and strengthen regionalism would have made the book more complete and also more useful for practitioners and policymakers in the region.

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The African Union: The First Ten Years by OMAR ALIEU TOURAY
Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016. Pp. 260. \$85 (hbk).

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The book, written by a former Permanent Representative of Gambia to the African Union (AU), explores Africa's prime organisation's first ten years of existence (2002–2012). Touray argues that none of the mainstream IR theories can fully capture the AU and hence suggests 'Fusionism', a *mélange* of