

Journal of Strategic Policy and Global AffairsVol: 03, Issue: 01(2022) DOI: <https://doi.org/10.58669/jspga.v03.i01.04>**The Impact of Regional Organizations on International Relations: EU-AU Comparative Analysis**

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Abstract The study aims to compare and analyze the impact of two regional organizations on international relations: The European Union (EU) and the African Union (AU). Through a comparative analysis, the study explores the similarities and differences between the EU and AU in terms of their role in shaping international relations. The study defines the role of EU and AU in international affairs, and the importance of both the regional organizations in global trade and politics. The study will also identify the existing shortcomings and potential areas of cooperation in EU-AU relations. The study then examines the challenges and opportunities that both organizations face in their efforts to promote cooperation, integration, and stability in their respective regions. Various existing platforms that shape international relations between EU and AU will be further analyzed in the literature. The study will finally analyze the effectiveness of the partnership and future policies that may strengthen the areas of cooperation between EU and AU.

Keywords: European Union (EU), African Union (AU), EU-AU Relations, Cooperation

Introduction

Regional organizations are groups of countries within a geographic region that come together to coordinate and cooperate on issues of mutual concern. These organizations play a crucial role in shaping international relations by promoting cooperation, integration and stability among their member states and with other regional and global organizations. The role of these organizations include but is not limited to promoting peace, deterring wars, facilitating economic cooperation, addressing regional security threats, and mediating in global issues. They often serve as a platform for diplomacy and conflict resolution, and can also serve as a stepping stone for countries to eventually join larger, global organizations such as the United Nations. Some of the most successful regional organizations include the European Union (EU), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The study focuses on two such organizations i.e., European Union (EU) and African Union (AU). Both the EU and AU have diverse levels of integration and cooperation, and their impact on international relations varies accordingly. The neighboring continents share a long history of cooperation, from the colonial rule to the 21st century. The multilateral relationships between both the organizations amplified with various joint programs, specifically to combat poverty, improve economic coordination, energy, science and technology, human rights, climate change, fighting militancy, and joining hands to promote democracy in the African region. The Joint Africa-EU strategy (JAES) was one of the landmark events in the laying the foundations of closed engagements between both continents (Chané and Killander, 2018).

Methodology

This comparative study aims to examine the impact of regional organizations on international relations by analyzing the EU and AU in terms of their economic, political, and social aspects. After defining each organization's role in the global relations and their areas of interests, the study will also explore the challenges and opportunities that both organizations face in shaping international relations. The methodology used in the study is a comparative analysis, which seeks to explore the similarities, differences, and areas of mutual interests and cooperation between both the regional organizations. The study relies on secondary data such as academic articles, policy reports, official data from the concerned web resources, and other relevant literature. The data will be analyzed through the lens of theories and academic content linking to international relations, with a focus on the role of regional organizations in shaping global trade, human development, and politics. Additionally, the opportunities and challenges faced by these regional organizations when partaking mutual cooperation will also be analyzed using the theoretical model approach. The findings of the study will be presented in a clear and concise manner, and the conclusion will reflect the key findings and provide insights into the impact of regional organizations on international relations between the member states of African Union and the EU.

Literature

Regional organizations are formed for a variety of reasons, however, the general purpose of these international organizations is to promote cooperation and coordination among member states on shared subjects, such as economic development, trade, security, and political stability (Lenz et al.,

2014). The primary concern of these regional organizations is to maintain international order and to promote harmony within their region. They are the larger and all-encompassing platforms for conflict resolution, foreign policies, and the stepping stones for gaining political clout at global stage. Additionally, regional organizations can facilitate economic cooperation and integration, which can lead to increased prosperity and stability. The effectiveness of regional organizations can vary depending on the specific organization and the issues it addresses. Some organizations, such as the EU and Association of South East Asian Countries have been very successful in promoting cooperation and integration among member countries. Others, such as the African Union (AU) and South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), have faced challenges in achieving their goals due to lack of resources and political will among member countries. However, all of these organizations have played some role in maintaining peace, economic cooperation, and political integration within their regions (Chané and Killander, 2018).

EU: Historical Background & Prospects

EU began as the cooperation council for European Coal and Steel Community in 1951, and later expanded into the world's most cohesive bloc of prosperous countries. The European Economic Community (EEC) was established in 1957. The EEC and Euratom were later merged into the European Community (EC) in 1967 (Graziatti, 2017). In recent years, the EU has faced a number of challenges, including the ongoing debt crisis in several member countries, COVID-19 pandemic, the refugee and migration crisis, and the BREXIT. Despite these challenges, the EU has remained committed to promoting cooperation and integration among its member countries (Cini and Borragán, 2022). Presently, the EU comprises 27 countries, and has a single market, a common currency (Euro), and common policies in areas such as trade, agriculture, and fisheries. However, despite these challenges, the EU continues to be an important organization and is committed to promoting peace, stability and prosperity within Europe and beyond. The EU is focusing on economic recovery, strengthening its internal market and creating jobs, implementing the European Green Deal and digitalization, and strengthening its external relations (Chané and Killander, 2018). Additionally, the EU is working towards a more strategic and autonomous defense policy and more effective foreign policy in wake of the Russia-Ukraine war in 2022.

Figure 1: EU Map (as of 2022)



Source: Britannica (2023)

AU: Historical Background & Prospects

In 1960s, a group of African leaders, including Ghana's first President Nkrumah and Egypt's President Gamal Abdel Nasser, began to call for greater cooperation and integration among African countries. In 1963, the OAU was established with the goal of promoting unity and cooperation among African states. The African Union (AU) was carved out of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 2001. Presently, there are 55 member states in the AU and its political offices are located in Addis Ababa and Johannesburg. The aim of the Union is to promote cohesion among the African states, coordinate their cooperation, and safeguard the sovereignty of member states (USAID). In addition, African Union focuses on good governance, peace, security, protection of the values of member states, and democracy.

More recently, the AU has faced multiple challenges such as the ongoing conflicts in multiple member countries, the refugee and migration crisis, food security issues, and the negative effects of climate change in the Horn of Africa and Southern Africa (WEF, 2022). The AU is also dealing with the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has created new economic and health challenges. In terms of current prospects, the AU is focusing on building a more integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, through initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and African Union of Women (AUW) which will help to improve the lives of people in Africa by increasing trade, investment, and economic growth (Chané and Killander, 2018). Also, the AU is working on addressing the issues of governance, democracy, human rights and peace and security in the continent through its peace and security architecture.

Figure 2: Map of African Union



Source: SWAC/OECD

Role of the EU and AU in International Relations

Both the EU and AU significantly contribute towards regional and international cooperation in their respective continents. The EU, which is a supranational organization, plays a key role in promoting cooperation in the region. The policy areas include: the single market, foreign and security policy, and justice and home affairs. The EU also has a strong economic and political influence in Europe and beyond, and its member states often act in concert on the international stage. Additionally, the EU has been actively working on peacekeeping, humanitarian aid, and development in various regions. The African Union (AU) practices its mandate to promote harmony, safety, and economic development in the region (Okumu, 2009). The AU plays a key role in mediating conflicts and promoting stability in the region, and it has been involved in peacekeeping operations in a number of countries. Additionally, the AU has been working to promote economic integration and development in the continent, and has established a number of initiatives aimed at addressing poverty, unemployment, and other economic challenges facing the continent. The AU also aims to promote democracy and good governance.

In addition, both EU and AU's impact in international relations is not limited to their respective regions, they also interact with other international organizations i.e., World Food Program, World Economic Forum, United Nations, World Trade Organization, and World Bank. The EU has a strong economic and political influence in Europe and beyond, while the AU plays a key role in promoting peace and security, economic development, and good governance in Africa. The Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAST) is among the main components of inter-regional cooperation between African and Europe (Engel, 2018). The EU and the AU also engage in dialogue and cooperation with other regions and countries around the world, and have established partnerships and agreements with a wide range of actors.

EU Relations with African Union

Europe and Africa are neighboring continents separated by the Mediterranean Sea. Their relationship has a long history, dating back to ancient times when trade and commerce were established between the two regions. European powers such as Portugal, Spain, and Britain also colonized many African countries in the 19th and 20th centuries, shaping their political and economic systems. In recent years, there have been efforts to strengthen trade and investment ties between Europe and Africa, with a focus on promoting sustainable development and reducing poverty on the African continent (Chané and Killander, 2018). As per the Rome Treaty, the EEC supports various social and economic development programs for African countries and coordinates closely with the AU and various Regional Economic Communities of Africa (RECs). The EU implemented an integrated policy for the African continent in 2005, which provides a common strategy on behalf of all European nations to improve various social, political, and economic indicators for the African people. The 'One Africa, One Europe' is first of the EU's multiple policy frameworks to uplift the people and uproot the poverty in Africa. This Pan-African policy framework has since delivered positive results for both the partners and the people of both continents (Yusuf and Ouguerouz, 2012). At the second EU-AU Summit in 2007, the top-level dialogue between the heads of states from both the continents gave consent towards adopting another organization named Joint EU-Africa Strategy (JAES). The strategy adopted motions and pledged to agree on an all-inclusive working strategy, which will solve Africa's fundamental problems. The aim of the JAES is to work for equality, mutual respect, and common success. The committee met several times to review the progress of ongoing partnership plans and add newer plans to the strategy (Killander et al., 2015).

The Article 220 of the TEFU (Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union), and the subsequent Article 221 (1) state that EU shall maintain appropriate international relations with other organizations and ensure their veracity through its secondary organizations. Similarly, the African Union under its Article 195 (VII) defined its openness to international organizations, such as non-African nations, NGOs, and other regional and international establishments by granting observer status to them. The constitution of both the EU and AU permit them to openly cooperate in their fields of interest in multiple subjects. EU has already established its office in Addis Ababa where the headquarters of AU are located. Both the regional organizations mutually cooperate on ground at highest level and in the form of working groups and ministerial talks. The division for Pan-African Affairs is a coordination division established to carry on the talks and work on existing and potential partnerships. Also, the Africa Working Party (COAFR) is responsible for international partnerships between the countries included in

both the regional organizations and the subsequent regional economic councils in Africa and the EU.

The Joint Africa-EU Strategy

At the highest level, JAES defines the action plans between both the regional organizations for partnerships including peace-keeping, security, energy, climate change, trade and finance, science and innovation, democracy, political stability, and more. Under the JAES, the EU-AU Summit is held after every three years alternatively in the EU and Africa, and comprises heads of state of both the regional organizations as representatives (69). Between 2014-2020, the JAES Action Plan has assigned a €845 million budget, covering all the prescribed areas of attention (European Commission). On January 26, 2023, under the EU-Africa Global Gateway Investment Package, the EU disbursed a €100 million package to train teachers in the sub-Saharan Africa. The package aims to alleviate the teaching standards of more than 15 million new qualified teachers of Africa by 2030 (Europa, 2023).

There are multiple areas of interests that are open to mutual cooperation and development, which are beneficial for both the continents and their people. Under JAES, the areas in which Europe and Africa are working together to achieve shared goals include:

Peace and security: Promoting peace, security, and stability in Africa and Europe, including addressing the root causes of conflict and terrorism.

Democracy, governance, and human rights: Supporting good governance, the rule of law, human rights, and democracy in Africa and Europe.

Trade, regional integration, and infrastructure: Improving trade and investment between Africa and Europe and promoting regional integration on the African continent.

Energy: Increasing access to affordable and sustainable energy in Africa and Europe.

Migration and mobility: Managing migration and mobility in a way that benefits both Africa and Europe and protects the rights of migrants and refugees.

Climate change: Recognizing the causes and possible impacts of climate change and promoting sustainable development in Africa and Europe.

Science, technology, and innovation: Supporting cooperation in science, technology, and innovation between Africa and Europe to promote economic growth and development.

Comparative Analysis

The EU-AU partnership has clear goals and active prospects towards the betterment of African continent. The relationship of both the regional organizations is said to have shifted from being donor-receiver to equal partners. Both EU and AU were established with the goal of promoting cooperation and integration among their member states. However, there are a number of fundamental differences in terms of their structure, action, and other aspects. The EU is a

supranational organization, meaning that its member states have transferred some autonomy to the EU in order to achieve greater cooperation and integration. In this regard, the EU has a number of institutions, including the European Commission and the European Parliament, that work together to make and implement decisions. In contrast, the AU is a more loosely-structured organization, with a more limited mandate, and its member states retain a greater degree of sovereignty. Moreover, the EU has a much broader mandate and a wide range of policy areas, including the single market, shared currency, shared foreign and security policy, and justice and home affairs. On the other hand, the AU has a limited mandate and access to issues such as peace, security, economic prowess, and governance. Thirdly, The EU has a more developed system of decision-making, with a complex system of checks and balances and a system of qualified majority voting, which makes it possible for the EU to take action on a wide range of issues. In contrast, the AU has a less developed system of decision-making, and its member states retain a greater degree of control over decisions. This can make it more difficult for the AU to take effective action on issues. The funding resources and institution of the EU are also more sophisticated and wide-ranging than the AU, whose member states are mostly capital-scarce and rely on foreign aids and loans. These differences limit the scope of mutual partnership, consent among all the countries in the AU, shrink the space for joint action plans because of mutual disagreements between the 55-member African Union countries, and the distribution of aids and investments under the JAES action plan. As per the EU resources, only the West African states are able to comply with the EU terms to some extent, and that trading with AU states have been a disadvantage for EU countries in negotiating complex commercial agreements with AU countries. Moreover, member states of the AU often protest that EU adopts extractive policies to accelerate exports from the EU and prevent illegal migration into Europe. In this regard, the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa was announced for the ‘most fragile states’ in 2015. The Fund disbursed over €3 billion since 2015 to the ‘most fragile states’ and has intervened in internal policies of such states, only to prevent migrations from these states to the EU countries (European Commission). There are also many areas of interests, which are either untapped or require immediate attention in the EU-AU partnership e.g., infrastructure development, communicable and tropical diseases, climate change, public health, higher education, piracy, renewable energy, skill development, and technology.

Conclusion

The role of regional organizations in international relations is significant in terms of regional trade and commerce, peace and stability, democracy, and justice. EU is the most prosperous regional organization, and the AU constitute countries that are still developing and face significant

challenges such as poverty alleviation, conflict management and resolution, and political instability in its member states. Despite these differences, both the EU and AU play important roles in promoting stability, security, and prosperity in their respective regions. The 21st century has seen extraordinary cooperation between both the regional organizations in multiple areas of mutual interest. The JAES is the more recent platform that facilitates dialogue among heads of states. The EU-AU summit aims to address Africa's structural issues, such as institutional reforms, and advance mutual trust and support among member states of the EU and AU. However, there is wide range of issues that still persist between both the organization, such as trust deficit, decentralized institutional structure of the AU, and EU's forceful and extractive policies on the selected AU member states. Overall, the regional cooperation between both the EU and AU greatly impact international relations between the member states of both organizations; which may be positive for some countries and negative for the others.

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