

Staying Alive: The Strategic Use of Regional Integration Organizations by Vulnerable Political Leaders

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Abstract

The role of regional integration organizations (RIOs) in the domestic politics of African states has been under-appreciated. I develop a model of these organizations as clubs that are of particular value to weak state members. I argue that leaders with insufficient means to manage their respective domestic crises alone most value RIOs that function as cartels, painting a glossy veneer over collusion to benefit incumbent politicians. Elites cloak survival-boosting behavior under the guise of regional stabilization and peacekeeping interventions. This often entails allowing peacekeepers to target opposition groups and rubber-stamping questionable elections. The strategic use of RIOs for cross-border elite collusion is most likely to occur where the likelihood of crisis spillover across neighboring countries is high, when incumbents are vulnerable to replacement by domestic opposition groups, and when the average economic capacity of member states is

low. This dissertation lays out 1. the portfolio of survival-enhancing strategies which become available to leaders of low income countries through cooperation with their neighbors, 2. why some of these strategies for domestic survival require RIOs, and 3. which leaders are most likely to turn toward survival strategies which rely on RIO cooperation.

1 Introduction

Observers are often quick to dismiss African regional integration organizations (RIOs) as failing economic development projects that struggle to increase intra-regional investment and connectivity. Over the last several decades, most African regional organization members have not met stated goals regarding monetary and fiscal policy convergence, in spite of the reams of policy recommendations well-intentioned RIO technocrats deliver to member state leaders. RIOs succeeded in multiplying the numbers of summits and bureaucratic training retreats held across Africa each year much more rapidly than they expanded intra-regional trade. In light of these failings, Jeffrey Herbst (2007) declared that African leaders use RIOs as symbolic sovereignty boosting clubs, where they assert the legitimacy of their authority over young states with arbitrary borders. African RIOs are not widely believed to be important institutions for day-to-day domestic politics, nor are they widely acknowledged for sparking deep cooperation. Small, poor states are expected to free ride on the inputs of regional hegemons and donors. Successful cross-border integration and cooperation are more associated with higher-income, liberal countries in the Global North, and particularly with the European Union, where the expected payoffs from cooperation are high due to economic interdependence.

If the conventional wisdom is actually correct, and African RIOs are little more than

hollow legitimacy boosters, then why do RIOs appear to be a first resort for leaders in crisis who could otherwise focus more energy on domestic policies for political survival? How should we explain growing evidence and scholarly recognition that African leaders do invest significant time and scarce resources in providing reciprocal assistance to neighboring leaders, and that significant cooperation occurs under the umbrellas of RIOs? Scholars expect threatened political elites to seek resources from Western patron states with deep pockets in order to finance policies for domestic political survival. I argue here that we should also take note of the more surprising fact that in some regions, leaders of low income states regularly expend their limited resources to resolve other states' domestic political crises, rather than free-riding. Even though African leaders have proven skeptical of delegating binding decision-making powers to reform-minded technocrats (Borzal, 2012; Duthie, 2015), we should not discount the depth of cooperation among some groups of African elites, or the importance of RIOs for maximizing the gains from elite cooperation. In fact, African RIOs are particularly valuable for leaders of weak member states when they insure against crippling domestic disruptions.

I argue that cooperating with neighboring political leaders is one strategy that opens a new menu of options for threatened political leaders when their domestic resources—including money and skilled manpower—are insufficient to ensure their political and personal survival. In regions where neighboring leaders consistently face similar threats to survival that are also likely to generate political instability among their resource-constrained neighbors, regional organizations provide leaders with survival-enhancing benefits that each leader could not obtain otherwise, such as a stand-by force ready to intervene after coups. Institutionalizing political gains from inter-elite collusion is possible when leaders are not primarily concerned about threats from neighboring states' leaders.

In the post-Cold War era, regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and East Africa's Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) maintained high profiles in diplomatic circles and assumed more sensitive security-related functions as global superpowers became increasingly reluctant to ensure African security. Through this dissertation I will explore how incumbent elites in certain regions take advantage of the growing importance of RIOs for their own benefit, such as by rubber-stamping questionable elections and exchanging RIO diplomatic jobs for political support. Peacekeeping forces and mediation teams deployed from RIOs helped to protect some civilians and establish coalition governments in the wake of civil conflicts. However, some leaders clamp down on opposition groups using troops ostensibly sent for peacekeeping purposes. Leaders also buy off restive military elites with commands in regional missions.

A new theory to explain leaders' varying commitments to RIOs is warranted given that state characteristics which theoretically should have predictive leverage, such as market size, do not actually correspond to leaders' commitments toward integration and cooperation within African regions. In 2016, the African Union's report on eight recognized sub-regional organizations found that a country's economic weight in its region does not strongly predict its leader's commitment to regional cooperation (Koami et al., 2016)¹. That leaders from the least affluent states globally are often the most devoted to supposedly superfluous RIOs is cause to question conventional wisdom about African RIOs. The inverse relationship between domestic political-economic stability and cooperation among African leaders is the puzzle at the heart of this dissertation. What configuration of conditions provide the ideal, enabling conditions for mutually

¹The African Regional Integration Index Report assessed states' cooperation on five dimensions: trade integration, regional infrastructure, productive integration, free movement of people, and financial and macroeconomic integration (security integration is not included).

beneficial cooperation among political elites from neighboring countries?

1.1 Structure of the Dissertation

This project seeks to provide a new theoretical framework to understand elite cooperation through regional integration organizations across Africa and test the implications of the theory. The strategic use of RIOs- where it is possible, who participates, and why- is an important, open area for research and this dissertation will take additional steps toward explaining these phenomena. RIOs, as organizations which carry international prestige but whose high-level internal workings are difficult to observe, provide unique advantages for disguising leaders' cartel-like cooperation. While regional hegemons, such as South Africa and Nigeria, typically stand to gain the most economically from RIOs, the political benefits of RIOs inspire broader commitment across leaders. Variation in levels of elite cooperation within and across RIOs has yet to be fully explained by the literatures on regional integration, African politics, or regional peacekeeping. One reason for this gap is that the most influential theories of international cooperation rest on assumptions about Weberian-type democratic states which are unrealistic in the context of weak states.

The second chapter will elaborate further on the theoretical conception of RIOs as cartels providing insurance for like-minded political elites with insufficient means to manage their respective domestic crises alone. Leaders use RIOs to combat domestic threats because RIOs couple low transparency with high international prestige, and offer unique advantages to generate funding for military activities. RIOs provide executives in democratizing states with some latitude for discretionary spending outside the bounds of stronger domestic checks and balances. The benefits associated with RIOs would not be so easily obtained through informal cooperation among leaders because Western donors and leaders in multilateral institutions are more willing to fund the

actions of formal regional organizations with democracy and rights promoting clauses. While many bureaucrats employed at African RIOs genuinely believe in their organizations' stated contributions to regional public goods and integration, political elites support RIOs for narrower, self-serving purposes. African RIOs simultaneously connote higher international prestige and lower accountability than domestic institutions precisely because they are executive-dominated. In the second chapter, I also introduce the conditions under which we should expect to see this manner of cooperation evolve, and conditions where deep cooperation on elite survival is unlikely to obtain. When sufficient conditions are present, we see that leader survival beyond political office becomes an outcome negotiated informally in the halls of regional integration organizations.

In the third chapter, I present cross-regional evidence to test the implications of the theory across all African RIOs and assess average treatment effects from the explanatory variables. The first test establishes that my theory of RIO cooperation does explain variation in levels of elite security cooperation across African subregions.

In the fourth chapter, I will present the Economic Community of West African states as a most likely case for strategic elite cooperation based on the explanatory variables discussed in chapter two. ECOWAS's framework for conflict prevention (ECPF) illustrates the details leaders negotiate on to reduce moral hazard and boost their reputation with donors, while actions that leaders take in interventions justified under the ECPF demonstrate clear pro-incumbent bias. Chapter four will present empirical evidence of increased cooperation among ECOWAS countries resulting in better survival outcomes for incumbents and political elites in member states during the 2000s.

Chapter five is likely to present a paired case study to juxtapose against ECOWAS and establish that different values of the main explanatory variables demonstrably cause lower cooperation among another region's elites.

Questions that I will address in this dissertation include: Why do leaders of many low income states choose to invest scarce resources in regional integration organizations? How and why do African leaders maintain mutual insurance schemes in some regions- where, for example, poor neighbor states send each other food and medicine in the wake of disasters- but similar reciprocity does not obtain in other similarly poor regions? What are the theoretically relevant domestic factors within member countries underlying cross-regional differences in elite cooperation? Before delving into when and how leaders use RIOs to boost their survival prospects in subsequent chapters, I begin here by describing the conventional wisdom on regional integration organizations and the origins of threats to leader survival.

1.2 Existing Explanations for Regional Cooperation (haven't yet filled in a couple missing IO theory bits)

Much of the early scholarship on regional integration organizations assumes that these organizations follow a logic of economic maximization. Scholars identify the drivers of demand and supply of economic regional integration. On the demand side, Mattli (1999) proposes that states create regional integration organizations when seeking to internalize externalities that cross borders within a group of countries, especially as these externalities rise and there are increasing payoffs to regional rules that facilitate market exchange. Economic motivations for joining RIOs include increasing market access and the ability to influence trading partners' domestic economic policies (Carpenter, 2009). The standard theory of RIOs motivated to address externalities would predict that states join regional organizations when there is a regional hegemon willing to bear a disproportionate share of the costs for monitoring members and providing regional goods.

On the supply side, leaders are more willing to supply integration when their domestic economies are struggling (Mattli 1999). During economic downturns leaders are more concerned about overall economic gains from integration for securing their own survival, and less concerned with particularistic groups opposed to integration. While the potential gains from economic integration are certainly important motivating factors for leaders signing on to regional integration organizations, it is also the case that African leaders' enthusiasm for RIOs has not waned in the absence of economy-wide gains from membership. Any explanation for state leaders joining and supporting regional integration organizations must account for the full range of political costs and benefits of RIOs.

Focusing at the state level, scholars generated theories that predict when incumbent politicians are likely to anticipate benefits from joining regional integration organizations. Mansfield, Milner and Rosendorff (2002) propose that signing on to a regional integration agreement is a costly, credible signal that politicians are committed to less protectionist, less extractive trade policies. Politicians in democracies join regional organizations to tie their hands and communicate to voters that they are not "bad" extractive types. Individual leaders give up some control over economic policies and therefore should be able to shift blame for economic outcomes to international causes (Mansfield, Milner and Rosendorff, 2002). By this logic, we should expect to see incumbents who want to shirk blame for economic outcomes joining RIOs with healthy democracies and delegating control over economic policies. In reality, leaders balk at delegating economic policymaking to RIOs (Borzel, 2012). The theory of hand-tying to shirk blame, therefore fails to explain why leaders of undemocratic regimes or very weakly institutionalized democracies choose to join regional integration organization with similarly unconsolidated member states.

Others have made similar arguments involving leaders "hand-tying" to explain why

young democracies would join regional integration organizations. Pevehouse (2002) argues that reform-minded, fledgling democratic regimes used regional organizations to consolidate democratic reforms in the face of pushback from domestic elites. When RIOs are able to impose costs on delinquent members, states can use RIOs as commitment devices to bind elites to ongoing reform programs. Signing on to RIOs which monitor members signals leaders' seriousness about reforms because democratic backsliding could result in sanctions. Pevehouse (2002) finds that RIOs are more willing to reinforce conditionality in regions where a larger proportion of states are (strongly) democratic.

1.3 Existing Explanations for African Regional Cooperation

Across African subregions, regional integration organizations were created for a host of historically contingent reasons. IGAD was created to fight desertification, and early incarnations of other African RIOs developed out of colonial policies (Bach, 2016). Modern African regional organizations initially consolidated to express pan-Africanism in opposition to apartheid and neocolonialism. From the start, African regional integration organizations' summits served as stages for leaders to reify their sovereign authority, gaining recognition from other international organizations (Herbst, 2007). Regional integration organizations in Africa are also useful for attracting funding from Western donors that can be used for the redistributive patronage politics, which underwrites the support of neopatrimonial leaders (Gray, 2015).

Of the major regional organizations in Africa, it is only plausible to make the case that ECOWAS and SADC consolidate reformers' democratic gains. ECOWAS's Secretariat increasingly receives credit for its democracy promotion efforts independent of member state leaders (Khadiagala, 2018)². However, scholars who make the argument

²Nigeria also receives questionable recognition as an anchor in ECOWAS's democracy efforts in

that ECOWAS or SADC's post-coup interventions to restore democracy are genuinely motivated by consolidating democracy do not rule out alternative explanations. The most prominent alternative explanation is that ECOWAS and SADC leaders' fundamental goal is actually to maintain regional stability by minimizing conflict-related spillover, and embracing some practices of democracy is the only way to gain material support from the Western-led international community toward restoring stability (Yaya, 2014). Later chapters of this dissertation provide confirmatory evidence that leaders believe upholding a nominally democratic status quo with limited pressure valves to channel discontent in one's neighbor contributes to their respective long-run security. While making the case for regional leverage to promote democratization in ECOWAS and to a lesser extent SADC, Hartmann (2016) does acknowledge that SADC has typically allowed Robert Mugabe to violate democratic principles in Zimbabwe to avoid spurring conflict and causing additional spillover of Zimbabweans to South Africa. Positive accounts of democracy promotion through ECOWAS and SADC (ie Hartmann 2016) point to upward trends in democracy indicators across member countries, but cannot fully explain why for every case of successful RIO poll monitoring, both RIOs continue to verify elections riddled with fraud.

The structuralist perspective on African regionalism attempts to explain the quick crisis responses of the African Union and other RIOs as well as resource pooling by arguing that a securitization phenomenon occurred in Africa. Following Buzan and Waever (2003), scholars claim that security community members actually view their own security as inseparable from and largely identical to that of their neighbors. The identity shift among groups of peripheral countries occurs partly in reaction against instabilities caused by Western-led globalization (Buzan and Waever, 2003). However, securitization implies a deep identity transformation different from the strategic cal-

spite of many ongoing violations of democratic norms in Nigeria by its state officials.

culations that actually appear to take place among incumbent leaders. Meanwhile, constructivists attribute the development of so-called “security communities” to Kantian liberal peace undergirded by the spread of Western-style democracy and open economies (Adler and Barnett, 2000). I argue that cartels are more apt metaphors for the working of African RIOs. Rapid assistance in line with the interests of political elites does not transpire due to any identity transformation, but more so due to the paranoia of leaders who cannot rely on domestic institutions to remain loyal during coups.

With increasing frequency, contemporary scholars and policymakers argue that African regional organizations remain relevant because their peacekeeping and mediation units provide “African solutions” to African problems. African subregions where states at least *appear*³ to delegate more authority to RIOs also appear to be more successful in security sector cooperation and mediation efforts (Haftel and Hofmann, 2017). This strand of the literature is concerned with whether or not African RIOs bring about positive outcomes in conjunction with civil society groups, such as fostering more durable peace, accountability and human rights protection (Francis, 2010). Evidence regarding whether African regional organizations are transformative with respect to these normative concerns is mixed (Mansfield and Solingen, 2010).

³It is unclear to me whether delegation actually matters much for security cooperation given that nominal delegation to SADC or ECOWAS institutions typically does not go far toward guaranteeing that member states will implement RIO policies. Hooghe and Marks (2015) note that while general purpose African RIOs such as ECOWAS and SADC delegate power to formulate the content of policies, they are “low pooling” RIOs, meaning that member states do not allow themselves to be bound into complying with most RIO directives. Instead, leaders keep their domestic veto powers.

1.4 Synthesizing Complementary Work on Shadowy Regionalism in Africa

The theory laid out in this dissertation aligns more with scholars who argue that self-serving impulses motivate leaders to commit to regional integration organizations. I summarize their arguments here and highlight areas wanting for explanation.

First, this dissertation follows in the wake of studies on African RIO leaders who appear motivated to consolidate “democratization” but are more concerned with ensuring access to donors. Nathan (2016) lays out a list of ways in which RIO mediation efforts in the name of saving democracies actually undermine democratic politics: “They have endorsed undemocratic power-sharing arrangements, validated undemocratic elections, annulled democratic elections, accepted the overthrow of elected leaders and governments, legitimized coup leaders and consented to amnesty for human rights abuses.” Rather than protecting democracy, Western donors implicitly encourage African RIOs to place stability above democracy in their hierarchy of normative commitments. RIO leaders avoid creating outright winners and losers, even when this entails including criminals in government. Leaders frequently judge that stabilizing countries to save lives is a higher priority than- and justifies suspension of- democracy (Nathan, 2016).

Söderbaum (2004) provides a framework for thinking about regionalism in Africa characterized by three modes of governance: Neoliberalism, sovereignty boosting, and shadow networks. Soderbaum’s ideas about sovereignty boosting and shadow networks are particularly relevant. As he states, “an important part of the explanation for the regional interventions carried out under the banner of regional organizations, such as SADC and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), can be seen as a relatively informal governance and a collective intervention mechanism, whereby ruling governments pool sovereignty and power in order to strengthen their

own and their neighbors' weak governments and regimes against domestic opposition and national disintegration.”⁴ This framework serves as a point of departure to more clearly specify conditions where RIOs are more or less likely to operate as shadowy elite networks.

For semi-authoritarian leaders, promoting one's image as a good regional neighbor and supporter of regional stability initiatives goes a long way toward securing support from Western hegemons and reducing pressure to fully democratize (Jourde, 2007). Authors who previously observed that RIOs which nominally espouse democratic norms still enable authoritarian regimes to abuse power, such as Stoddard (2017), do not go far enough to evaluate their claims systematically within ECOWAS or with reference to other regions. The intuition of these scholars aligns with the theory in this dissertation, and I hope to provide an in-depth examination of scope conditions that generate variations in incumbent collusion through RIOs across African regions and over time. By using careful case selection, interviews, and newly collected cross-regional data, we can more thoroughly assess the extent to which leaders collude in RIOs that initially appear to espouse full democracy.

Finally, some scholars have observed that regional integration organizations benefit leaders by attracting capital from more developed economies and concluded that the member state leaders value RIOs for their “extra-regional” benefits (Krapohl, 2017). As previously mentioned, RIOs in Africa have become magnets for development project financing. While it is clear that leaders value RIOs for the extra-regional recognition and material benefits they attract, I hope to illuminate the intra-regional, and particularly intra-elite, benefits that leaders from African states also derive through RIOs.

Overall, there is a prominent undercurrent of pushback against the notion that re-

⁴For an illustrative example of shadow regionalism, see Hoffman (2006)'s account of how Liberia's Charles Taylor initially benefited from one such regional web of informal patronage that allowed for mutual profiteering while nullifying any base for opposition.

gional integration organizations which espouse democratic norms are necessarily good for democracy in the long run. Much more can and should be said about how participation in regional integration organizations relates to leaders' goals vis a vis domestic politics in member states. In other words, scholars have offered answers to the question of "what" these institutions are but we still need more complete answers for "how", "why" and "under what conditions" RIOs work to protect incumbent elites in various regions. As a phenomenon, the role regional integration organizations play in sustaining incumbents should be of broad interest in political science because it appears to manifest (in varying intensities) across and beyond Africa.

1.5 Leaders' Incentives: The Problem of Political Survival and Commonly Explored Strategies

External threats to leader survival, such as escalation to inter-state war, are considered to be much less common among African states compared to the threats posed by non-state actors. A large benefit from the African Union is that it brought most African leaders to a consensus against declaring war versus other state leaders. Nevertheless, for African leaders concerned about inter-state war, RIOs might help leaders increase their prospects for survival. Haftel (2007) argues that African leaders convene regular meetings at RIOs so leaders can exchange information about their interests and resolve while building trust and familiarity. By widening the bargaining range (sharing information) and increasing the flexibility and informality of mediation efforts, RIOs reduce the likelihood of conflict among member states. However, when revisiting data on RIO summits, it appears that many African leaders convene frequent meetings at RIOs during times when tensions between neighbors are low and the likelihood of inter-state disputes occurring appears minimal. African regions more prone to inter-state

disputes, such as East Africa or Central Africa, convene fewer meetings than their more collegial counterparts. This suggests both that leaders are not predominantly concerned with the threat inter-state war poses for their survival, and that avoiding inter-state war is not what motivates some RIOs to hold more cooperation-boosting summits than others.

The common thread among threats to leader survival in volatile African countries is that they typically have roots in domestic opposition. Outside actors alone are unlikely to topple a regime that does not have semi-organized native opponents in the military, elite society or other domestic groups.

To forestall threats and remain in power, leaders are widely thought to rely on domestic policies that raise the costs of opposition coordination and collective action. Leaders limit opposition access to finance (Arriola, 2012), regulate the flow of information through media, co-opt leaders from the civilian and military elite, manipulate electoral institutions or monitors (Cheeseman and Klaas, 2018), engage in clientelistic redistribution, ban political parties, and sometimes order violent crackdowns. Rather than genuinely increasing the fairness of elections, it is partially the case that illiberal leaders game democracy indicators by implementing cleverer strategies of electoral manipulation (Cheeseman and Klaas, 2018).

Among concentrated groups that could credibly threaten to organize in protests, incumbents also preempt grievances. They may do so by subsidizing food and oil for urban populations at the expense of diffuse rural populations, and by protecting elites' businesses from outside competition in domestic markets. The literature also emphasizes the role that major patron states and multinational corporations play, inadvertently or otherwise, in financing vulnerable leaders' domestic policies of political survival. Leaders in resource-scarce environments appeal to the geostrategic interests of patron states and non-state actors for funding and in-kind assistance that pays for

various types of voter suppression.

1.6 Cartel RIOs and Elite Political Survival

Based on the foregoing discussion, our current understandings on whether and when RIOs play central roles in member states' domestic politics of survival are clearly muddy, with predictions pointing in multiple directions. Some anecdotal evidence suggests that RIOs are instrumental for managing threats from opposition groups in a manner that contravenes the spirit of democracy. One goal of this project is to marshal the evidence and draw conclusions regarding whether RIOs are more likely to function as cartels to protect political elites and whether they genuinely adhere to democracy promotion.

One thing about African RIOs is clear: since the end of the Cold War, RIOs have evolved into central actors in peacekeeping and disaster management situations across Africa. There is growing recognition of the tendency of leaders to seek immediate crisis assistance from neighboring low income states, often prior to contacting the African Union, Western patron states, or the United Nations. RIOs can intervene during coups or contested post-election periods of instability by assembling mediation teams, sending in coalition troops, and convening emergency head of state summits. In spite of the fact that they possess fewer resources than Western powers, political leaders from African states donate resources to co-members more rapidly in the wake of crises compared to the EU (Hardt, 2014). This dissertation primarily operationalizes intra-elite cooperation by examining security cooperation prior to or during crises. Security cooperation entails sharing resources of states' military and police forces, jointly benefiting from donor funding for stabilization through trainings, and enabling neighboring leaders to get away with domestic repression up to a certain threshold.

The responsibility for addressing crises with security implications is dispersed across

state borders as leaders of neighboring states who have very limited resources nonetheless commit to helping the regime next door. The extent to which regional groupings of African countries are successful in maintaining close cooperation varies widely across the continent. While the level of cooperation among neighboring African regimes frequently makes the difference between death or life in comfortable exile, we still do not have sufficient explanations as to why some regions are more cooperative than others.

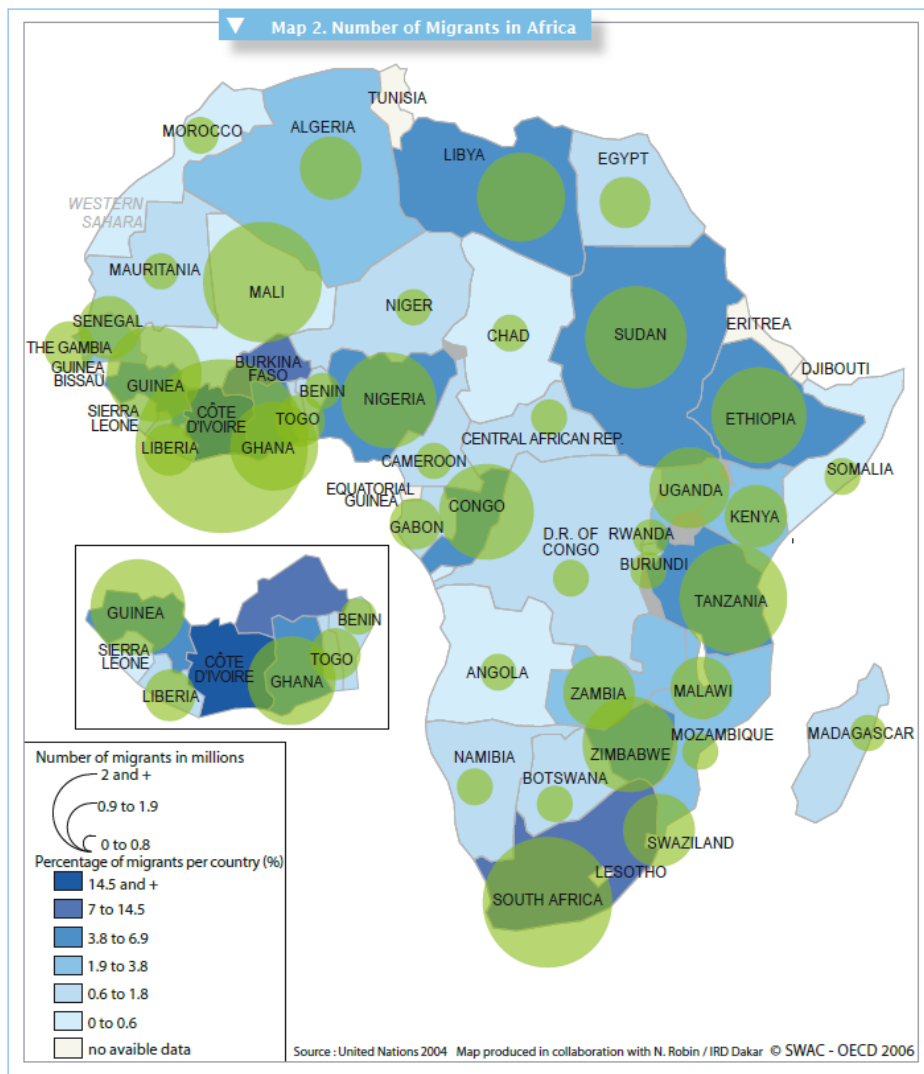


Figure 1: Migrant Numbers and Population Percentages by Country

2 Theory: Regional and State Levels

2.1 The Interests of State Leaders

Across most African states- democratic or otherwise- individual personalities often play an outsized role in steering national political agendas. Many African states experience or recently transitioned from neopatrimonialism, where politics centers around the whims of one leader, who is not accountable to a large swath of society, and where clientelism structures political interactions. While most African leaders are increasingly constrained by the judiciary and legislative branches of government, it is nonetheless the case that African presidents have strong agenda setting and de facto veto powers over many sensitive policy areas. The executive is particularly powerful in the domain of foreign policy and international cooperation. Therefore, in order to explain cooperation across African states, it is reasonable to begin by considering the goals of African leaders.

The core problem facing leaders in many low income countries is how to survive their tenure in office and leave office unscathed. Ruling in political environments prone to coups, mutinies, and insurgencies, political leaders from the less stable subset of African countries are more likely than most sovereigns to find themselves exiled, imprisoned, or dead. Because they also care about living comfortably if they must leave office, former leaders' futures are also jeopardized insofar as replacement and dissolution of their party is likely. The best predictor of whether a leader is likely to be removed before the end of her mandate is the number of irregular political transitions in her country's history.

As discussed in chapter 1, domestic opposition poses the main threat for present-day incumbents who want to survive in office. Therefore, every leader must decide upon a strategy to safely remain in office. A leader's strategy consists of a portfolio of

actions that she can take depending on the nature of the threat that she faces and her constraints. Depending on whether the leader is more concerned with disaffection in her army, popular mobilization, or opposition political candidates, for example, she can choose to bolster her power through actions that co-opt, appease, repress, or altogether eliminate a threat. Actions for co-optation are those which buy the long-run support of a threat-maker through contingent provision of benefits. Appeasement consists of buying short-run relief from the threat-maker through a one-off transaction. Repression entails coercively limiting the ability of the threat-maker to act. Lastly, a leader can permanently eliminate a threat-maker altogether. Leaders' chosen strategies include an optimal mix of actions that co-opt, appease, repress, or eliminate potential threats.

In a relatively low income, resource-constrained country, a leader has limited resources that she can devote to enacting her survival strategy. The leader's resources consist of currency, material goods, jobs that supporters value for their earning potential or prestige, military capacity, and some amount goodwill with external funders that can all be allocated toward the survival strategy. Leaders are keenly aware that their supplies of the aforementioned resources are finite and must be allocated strategically. Co-optation, appeasement, and repression all imply ongoing expenditures that drain the leader's resources, limiting a leader's ability to finance other priorities.

Co-optation and appeasement commonly entail distribution of jobs, material goods, and money. Repression makes use of money, material goods, and military capacity, all while reducing the leader's supply of goodwill with external funders who disapprove of repression. Resorting to elimination, such as by killing an opponent or detaining the opponent indefinitely, immediately drains much of a leader's goodwill with external donors, who are often funders of last resort when a leader faces exogenous shocks to stability. Faced with their budget constraint, leaders would prefer an ideal outcome where threats disappear, or at least would like to increase the resources available to

them for survival purposes. Leaders cannot simply generate additional supplies for their survival strategy alone. However, in the same way that individuals prone to periodic disasters pool their resources through insurance schemes, African leaders can insure their access to greater resources during survival emergencies by forming resource pooling clubs with likeminded leaders.

In the sections that follow, I first describe regional cooperation and then outline the ways in which regional integration organizations contribute to leaders' survival prospects by expanding leaders' supplies of all the elements required for survival-boosting strategies. I argue that, partly due to the norms espoused by powerful Western states and international organizations, RIOs have a comparative advantage in boosting threatened leaders' survival prospects while limiting potential for moral hazard among member state leaders. However, the conditions which allow security insuring RIOs to obtain are rare, which explains why RIOs of this nature exist in few African sub-regions. The subsequent sections provide more detail on scope conditions which limit the feasibility of security insurance RIOs for leader collusion.

2.2 Varieties of Regional Cooperation in Africa

There is a continuum in intra-regional elite cooperation, ranging from disconnection to solidarity. At the low end of the spectrum, there is no "common interest" agreed upon among regional political leaders, and leaders cannot count on their neighbors for crisis assistance. Under disconnection there is no common expectation that if one leader helps his or her neighbor, that same neighbor will have an incentive to return the favor in future times of need. In other words, there is no expectation of positive reciprocity- rewarding cooperation with cooperation- and trust among leaders is low. Rather, state leaders are likely to define their priorities at odds with their neighbors', viewing some neighboring regimes as threats to undermine or isolate. Leaders and

their elite supporters do not agree upon conditions where it is legitimate to formally assert an interest in the outcome of neighboring countries' domestic issues. Leaders emphasize non-interference and do not recognize an obligation to resolve crises outside their borders. Accordingly, leaders do not provide soldiers for neighbors' peacekeeping missions, as their soldiers would be met with suspicion. Nor do neighbors provide election monitoring officials to bolster the credibility of neighboring states' elections. Neighbors are not expected to assist when security vis-a-vis non-state actors is not guaranteed within a leader's own borders. Outward-looking policy among these leaders in an environment of low trust aims more to close borders in the face of potential spillover rather than collaboratively mitigating conflicts at their sources.

In the opposite extreme case, neighboring leaders use formal institutions to facilitate beneficial collaboration. Leaders are more confident that they understand neighboring elite's intentions and believe that their goals are compatible. In other words, leaders develop trust in their "common interest" as the basis for potential gains from regional cooperation. Regardless of their original mandates, regional organizations become prestigious covers for leaders' mutually beneficial, insurance-providing "stability cartels". At this extreme, positive policy reciprocity shapes the expectations of political elites. Incumbents motivated by the desire to increase their odds of survival cooperate with neighboring elites for domestic political gains. *Regional integration organizations have a comparative advantage in 1. raising entry barriers against domestic opposition, 2. attracting foreign funders, and 3. coordinating crisis assistance to incumbents' advantages.*

The use of state resources by incumbents to appease, co-opt, or repress key groups in order to limit opportunities for opposition groups is a hallmark of democratic backsliding (Haggard and Kaufman, 2016). One way in which RIOs raise barriers to entry by opposition groups is by enabling incumbents to provide prestigious diplomatic jobs

as rewards to loyal supporters. Opposition groups do not have the ability to use state resources, such as control of diplomatic postings, in order to buy support. Regional organizations' various divisions meet frequently to generate and distribute valuable jobs to key supporters, fostering political stability and maintaining the loyalty of key supporters in each member state. Providing rents for technocratic elites, military top brass and former leaders-turned-mediators alike, RIOs enable leaders to coopt potential opposition. Strategically distributing diplomatic postings is particularly important in African countries where incumbents must watch out for retired personalist leaders with large followings who could upset the status quo by returning to the political spotlight (Southall and Melber, 2006). Even leaders constrained by democratic constitutions can innovate within RIOs to improve outcomes for themselves and their coalition members.

In more severe instances of democratic backsliding, state leaders who share RIO co-membership can hijack RIO peacekeeping missions to coerce opposition groups. Such maneuvers appear as *quid pro quo* arrangements between leaders whose opposition groups frequently cross international borders. Home state A provides troops for a peacekeeping mission in neighboring host state B, and in return host state B's leaders allow troop-contributing country A to crack down on home country A's opposition groups sheltering within host state B's borders. So long as the troop-sending state A manages to rhetorically link the opposition groups in neighboring country B- the target of attacks- with rebel groups, they may be able to avoid widespread international condemnation. So long as they trust neighboring leaders to control troops deployed across their borders, leaders colluding in this fashion reduce the extent to which opposition groups can escape their home government's reach. Chapter three explores specific instances of this phenomenon which have occurred in the West African region under the guise of ECOWAS peacekeeping.

Since the end of the Cold War, Western donor states have preferred to coordi-

nate not only peacekeeping, but also disaster response efforts and election monitoring through native, multilateral institutions. The normatively positive perception that Western states have attached to regional organizations as legitimate purveyors of local solutions boosts the incentive for African leaders to house cooperative efforts within RIOs. To the extent that Western donors train RIO monitors and legitimate their authority to rubber stamp elections which may or may not have been conducted in political environments not conducive to free choice, Western donors increase the likelihood that RIOs are implicated for democratic backsliding.

Under the conditions specified in the following section, the cooperation facilitated through RIOs causes leaders to make decisions that existing theories of international politics would not necessarily predict. For example, members of Stability Cartel RIOs are more likely to allow their neighbors to place military units within their own borders, in spite of the vulnerability to neighboring leaders that this appears to generate. RIOs whose members are typically thought to covet sovereign authority also unexpectedly legitimate neighbors' cross-border interventions to restore stability, acknowledging that spillover from neighboring countries has direct bearing on domestic political survival. Neighboring leaders thus recognize an obligation to invest resources in resolving disputes where their counterparts cannot independently do so, as well as a relatively high level of within-group trust. When an RIO credibly conveys solidarity among regional leaders, the perceived odds of rebels defeating any member government decline. Weak governments standing together are stronger (larger range of possible actions), and thus they have less need to engage in more costly, overt repression. Western nations bankroll leaders so long as they frame group efforts in terms of regional "stability" and "security". As a credible signal of mutual trust, leaders host some of their neighbors' soldiers in their country, often as part of peacekeeping efforts or to keep neighboring leaders alive. Leaders formalize their commitments to common governance principles and to

mutual help. Coordination around a common standard of appropriate behavior helps member states save face internationally and prevent moral hazard among members. Stability cartel RIOs reduce threats to incumbents' political survival and lives that are generated by elites, opposition groups, and the international community.

Existing regional groupings of political elites, as defined by regional integration agreements (RIAs), fall on varying points of this cooperation spectrum. Individual regional organizations can also move along the spectrum internally as relations among regional leaders strengthen or deteriorate over time. With stronger relations to neighboring leaders, members may express disapproval of friendly regimes that violate organizational norms, but stop short of supporting severe retaliation. In contrast, at times when relationships among leaders are weak, neighbors may support mutineers in response to deviant regimes' choices that violate regional norms. Different positions on the regional cooperation spectrum correspond with different bundles of actions that member states are likely to take in response to neighbors' crises.

2.3 Necessary Conditions for Maintaining the Club Insurance Scheme

For a club insurance scheme to remain viable, the regional crisis environment must fit several criteria. First, the disruptions that leaders face must be relatively large such that they exceed the capacity of each member state to handle the disruptions alone. Leaders who are not susceptible to facing any crises that they would be unable to handle alone have little incentive to buy into an insurance scheme. Additionally, if leaders only face crises that they cannot handle without their neighbors once in every century, this large gap between disruptions does not prompt frequent enough interaction to maintain reciprocity. Mutual insurance also fails in the opposite extreme scenario, where leaders

face large disruptions almost continuously in their respective countries. When crises are too frequent, each leader will always prefer to focus on his or her own crisis, rather than committing to help neighbors. Thus, there is a goldilocks point in the frequency of crises; insurance scheme RIOs are most useful to leaders at the point where disruptions are possible, but all members are not constantly in crisis simultaneously.

In addition to a regular frequency of disruptions, it must also be the case that the occurrence of disruptions is not highly correlated across member states. If crises strike all member states simultaneously, leaders will not be well-positioned to help their neighbors. Instead, neighbors incapable of managing their respective crises would need to seek extra-regional assistance as a first resort.

Lastly, the RIO insurance scheme must be able to limit moral hazard if it is to succeed. As is the case with insurance schemes generally, members who know that they will receive assistance in the event of catastrophe might be more likely to engage in risky behaviors. If RIO membership has the perverse effect of reducing leaders' incentives to avoid conflict with their domestic opposition, this would decrease the usefulness and viability of the RIO insurance scheme altogether. Therefore, to ward off moral hazard, leaders must be able to identify and sanction co-members who engage in excessively risky behavior. For this purpose, leaders sign on to RIO documents that define the limits of acceptable behavior for member states to engage in. Among weak states which partly rely on donor funding, these standards are usually consistent with powerful donor states' normative standards. Leaders know that each of them will violate some of these rules on occasion when under threat, but also acknowledge that rule breakers must walk a fine line. If a member state leader egregiously violates any of the RIO's standards and this fact is publicized, it is taken as a sign of moral hazard. Accordingly, co-members will refuse to provide requested assistance to leaders in crisis who have very conspicuously exceeded moral boundaries set by RIOs and their donors.

While leaders claim that they refuse to assist co-members who violate their code of conduct due to moral outrage, they are typically motivated by a deeper need to ward off opportunistic behavior.

2.4 Explaining Intensity in Regional Elite Cooperation

What explains placement at various points along the spectrum of cooperation across and within regional integration organizations over time?

I propose that in regional groupings where member countries periodically experience high domestic volatility and high probability of disaster diffusion, leaders formally commit to regional integration organizations to help them coordinate post/mid-crisis assistance and facilitate mutually beneficial mechanisms for coopting potential opposition. High domestic volatility implies that an incumbent faces serious threats to her ability to serve her full term in office that often entail unpredictability and inability for the incumbent to fully respond. Disasters that cause such volatility can contain be partially exogenous, such as droughts or mudslides, but the reasons that these phenomena threaten livelihoods and generate calls for leaders' resignation is also endogenous to the incumbent leader's choices.

As they repeatedly face similar threats, leaders who do not strongly suspect malintent among neighboring regimes and who can agree upon guiding norms work through regional organizations to promote regime stability within and across borders. More than providing public goods such as economic development- which are typically central to integration projects' stated goals- leaders support regional organization to boost their odds of political survival. Given each leader's main goal is to maintain stability, cooperation through RIOs is likely the strategy viewed most favorably in the international community. For political elites in countries that lack the capacity to independently manage internal crises, reinforcing regional cooperation is a sovereignty pooling

strategy. When variance in the incidence of crises is large across a regional community, then the expected gains from cooperation decrease for most members, and reciprocity is less obtainable (scope condition).

2.4.1 Explanatory Variables

In order to explain post-Cold War variation within and across African regions, I will first enumerate in greater detail the factors that shape elite perceptions of regional cooperation. Observing levels of these variables, the theory should be able to predict where and when leaders of low income countries will behave most cooperatively vis-a-vis their neighbors.

Across African sub-regions, high levels of intra-regional cooperation only develop when cooperating with neighboring elites is incentive compatible for incumbent politicians. For high investment in regional cooperation through RIOs to be incentive compatible, particular conditions must obtain which enable an RIO to boost incumbents' survival prospects and address threats that incumbents could not handle independently. Otherwise, incumbents would prefer to solve their own respective domestic issues without investing time and resources in maintaining RIOs. Perceptions of neighbors' intentions and the ease of disaster diffusion interact to shape the likelihood that a group of leaders will utilize regional integration systems to formally commit to reciprocity. Likelihood of disaster spillover, variation in states' resources, and perceptions of neighbors intentions are all central to shaping demand for strong RIO cooperation as well as willingness to supply cooperation.

On state resources: The relevant measure of state resources here includes whether a state has sufficient money, troops and access to the supplies and trained facilitators needed to respond to evolving crises that could otherwise jeopardize an incumbent's grip on power. A state's resources influence its ability to pay, train and arm the troops

needed to monitor border crossing points and police the full extent of its territory. Paying civil servants' wages in a timely fashion also reduces public grievances against the incumbent leader, reducing the likelihood of anti-incumbent protests. To avoid appearing feeble and to maintain situational control, leaders prefer to utilize their own troops in disaster response efforts when possible. However, for most states with lower GDP, leaders recognize that independent crisis management is not currently a realistic goal. Leaders in poorer states can still save face to some degree by coordinating disaster relief and security provision with neighbors and local groups, rather than solely relying on former colonizers.

Thus, contrary to received wisdom, low state capacity among regional community members should not necessarily be a barrier to maintaining cooperation, even during crises. Instead, resource deficits represent opportunities for leaders to benefit from pooling community resources, so long as trust among leaders is sufficiently high. On the other hand, member states with larger economies may bear the expectation of handling more of their own problems independently. If this is the case, then reciprocity should be less consistent in regional communities with large disparities in member state capacity and member state neediness. Correspondingly, reciprocity should be more easily maintained in regional communities where state capacity is more evenly distributed among members and all members have similar risk portfolios. With parity in these two parameters, all leaders in a regional grouping are more strongly incentivized to maintain cooperation.

Perceptions of neighbors' intentions (relationship quality): Do neighboring elites have expressed desires to institute policies that will undermine the home government's political stability? Have neighboring governors expressed intentions to actively interfere in the home country? Do regional governments face a common non-state or external state threat? If there are armed oppositional groups posing a threat within the

home country, do these groups draw support from sources in neighboring countries? Do threats escalate to the point where individuals' and/or political parties' survival and continued existence are called into question? When elites have more to fear from domestic opposition than the meddling of their neighbors, elites work together to reduce the likelihood of irregular turnover in the political elite class. If leaders are suspicious of their neighbors' intentions, deep cooperation will not endure. Scholars have created scales to measure the quality of relationships between countries and foreign publics, so-called "public diplomacy outcomes," but to my knowledge they have not done so to quantify relationship quality between leaders (Tam and Kim 2016). ((The scale created by Tam and Kim might be adaptable for my purposes, although the number of border disputes ongoing in a region might be an acceptable stand-in for this measure. I am likely to mostly rely on qualitative evidence to substantiate claims about relationships, though. Also need to introduce the role of the AU here. If a state really needs intervention but leaders in sub-region do not have strong cooperative RIO then leaders will have to allow AU to lead intervention. Can probably easily find evidence that keeping command of intervention in-house (in-region) is preferred.))

Leader insecurity: The concept of leader insecurity refers to a sense that a leader is susceptible to existential threats that he or she does not have sufficient resources to prevent or remedy. Political leaders that are insecure have cause to worry about the extent to which they can survive their tenures in office using the resources under their command alone. Given that leaders value survival very highly, they are motivated to take steps to reduce their insecurity. Insecurity is partly generated by conditions within a leader's country, such as the presence of mutineers or the realization that the leader cannot afford to pay off supporters. However, insecurity can also be generated in the international system, such as when a leader is concerned about an imminent attack from a nearby adversary state or replacement carried out by the US. The source

of a leader's insecurity, whether domestic or international, has implications for the strategies leaders are likely to pursue in order to reduce their insecurity. Forming mutual assistance pacts with neighbors is one action in a portfolio of possible actions that leaders take when they are motivated in large part by insecurity. Part of the theoretical contribution of this project is to point out that leaders are more likely to cooperate closely when their sources of insecurity are primarily domestic. When two leaders are each insecure but their threats do not covary perfectly, they can gain from cooperation on mutual assistance.

In contrast, personalist leaders with firm grips on power in settings with no organized opposition are less insecure than leaders who fear that their fall from power is imminent. Leaders with no credible opposition do not need to buy off potential challengers with prestigious diplomatic positions. Since stronger personalist leaders need to coopt fewer powerful individuals, they also might have less need for the proliferation of prestigious diplomatic postings at RIOs.

Spillover: When people, objects and ideas can cross borders to exit their home country, they make contact with and impact events and ideas in receiving countries. This spillover is not necessarily negative or positive, but it does imply a lack of all-encompassing discretion by governments with respect to what crosses international borders. The likelihood of spillover depends on several variables, including the porousness/passability of borders between countries, the density of cities nearby borders, intraregional migration patterns, the ability to communicate across bordering cultures, and the extent to which neighboring political regimes address the needs of their respecting border region populations. To think about whether spillover is likely for a set of countries, we can ask some of the following questions: Is intraregional migration high? Are major population centers of neighboring countries located within relative proximity of each other? Do countries in the region have well-established control over

border crossing points, or is it easy for individuals and groups to move between countries unobserved?

Many of the effects associated with cross-border spillover can be negative from the viewpoint of political elites. For example, if one regime does not address the needs of its constituents in the wake of a natural disaster, that regime increases the likelihood that at-risk citizens and the problems they have will flee into neighboring countries. If refugees strain the resources of host communities, they can increase a leader's insecurity.

As another example of costly spillover, consider that when opposition groups become discontented with the incumbent elites in their home country and choose armed rebellion, they might want to physically move into neighboring countries to avoid persecution. Subsequently, their anti-incumbent stance may also spill over into the discourse of politics in neighboring countries. Refugee flows across borders can facilitate the spread of arms and insurgents, as well as create competitive stress in the host state (Salehyan and Gleditsch 2006).

When populations frequently cross borders, it is easier for disease outbreaks to spread among neighboring populations. For the poorest states that are already least able to face destabilizing events alone, it is a survival imperative for leaders to share information and coordinate with neighbors. This is increasingly true in regions impacted by the effects of climate change. A higher probability of disaster diffusion increases the impetus for active cooperation.

2.5 Within Region Differences: Regional Black Sheep

tbd

2.6 Verbally Modeling the Decision to Cooperate in RIOs

Once selected, leaders are motivated to keep power for themselves and their party. In more volatile countries, leaders also have the high-stakes issue of survival during or after their terms in mind. That is, if they fail to protect themselves against vulnerabilities, there is a chance that leaders will need to flee to avoid incarceration or personal injury, and their parties could be eliminated.

In the post-Cold War era, threats to leader survival in African states often come from domestic opposition. Outside actors alone are unlikely to topple a regime that does not have organized native opponents, particularly given the strong norms against overt warfare which have developed between African countries. Outside actors can partner with domestic opposition to topple a regime.

In cases where domestic opposition figures intend to unseat incumbents, domestic parties must complete two steps. The first step entails co-opting the incumbent's critical elite backers, who are usually top members of the military and capitalist classes. Parties cannot win without building a coalition among elites who have resources and social capital. To co-opt elite backers, a party must convince elites that their expected benefits from cooperating with that party are larger than their expected benefits from collaborating with incumbents or other parties.

The second step entails tarnishing public perceptions of the incumbent's competency. Domestic opposition is most emboldened when the leader in office mishandles a highly salient crisis, such as by failing to deliver relief materials in the wake of a natural disaster or failing to protect civilians from non-state actors. Opposition politicians cite instances that reflect poorly on the competency of incumbents as reasons to vote the ruling party out of office. The domestic opposition may also benefit from turning a blind eye to crisis actors that threaten and embarrass the current regime. Such groups may be home-grown insurgents or rebels from neighboring countries. Unless

insurgent groups directly threaten assets of opposition political leaders, the opposition may choose to allow these groups to undermine the ruling party.

Incumbent leaders know that they lack capacity to handle crises alone, but do not want the extent of their competence gap to be revealed to the public. Conveying competency is particularly difficult when the opposition adopts an uncooperative strategy and extraordinary crisis response efforts face the prospect of oppositional holdup. Crises are increasingly problematic when they drain domestic resources for patronage. Meanwhile, leaders are constantly aware that they require a critical mass of elite backers. Paying the reservation prices of elite backers in the military and business sectors is costly in the best of times. Leaders need some form of insurance to reduce the likelihood that the next crisis will fatally destabilize their regimes by tarnishing their image and raising the prospects of elite defections or military coups. As a sort of insurance, leaders can seek commitments from a limited number of actors for help in resolving domestic conflicts and managing human disasters as they arise in the future. Leaders can solicit commitments of resources from major powers, multilateral organizations, or regional organizations.

Over-reliance on major powers or the large multilateral organizations dominated by Western powers (such as the UN) to manage disaster response imposes domestic political costs. Leaders appear weak and vulnerable by repeatedly running to Western powers or the World Bank et al for on-the-ground support. Leaders concerned with status and their ability to credibly signal self-sufficiency would like to be able to turn down aid from developed countries, or at least coordinate their own disaster response efforts. Furthermore, major powers and major multilateral organizations typically employ their own independently recruited staff, generating fewer opportunities for the regime to target benefits for specific domestic elites.

Regional organizations present an alternative vehicle for embattled leaders seeking

outside resources and assistance coordinating relief efforts. To the extent that neighboring leaders enact similar political strategies (are of similar regime types), they are less likely than Western powers to reveal new, unflattering details about the ruling party's handling of domestic conditions. Leaders can influence job allocation in regional integration organizations, and therefore utilize these organizations for elite patronage. Leaders know that neighboring countries' leaders face a similar portfolio of periodic crises that threaten their ability to project competency and maintain patronage flows. Therefore, neighboring leaders recognize that they face a similar dilemma and can mutually gain from cooperation. When there is a high likelihood of crisis spillover from one country to the next, cooperation is incentive compatible for leaders who do not wish to inherit their neighbors' problems.

Solution: Leaders utilize regional organizations (which might have been created for totally different reasons) as “stability cartels.” Leaders agree to support each other in moments of crisis and share pooled access to rents among their respective supporters. Leader A helps Leader B manage his domestic crisis in time t not solely to prevent spillover, but also because he knows that he must do so for Leader B to reciprocate when Leader A confronts crisis during $t + 1$. Neighborly assistance indirectly contributes to political survival by improving the perceived efficacy and speed of crisis response. Neighbors also can directly assist by refusing to host insurgents from neighboring countries.

Having an active organization with frequent meetings aids in monitoring and enforcing fair contributions across states. While any regional collective good raises the specter of a collective action problem, the problem should be less severe due to leaders' fears of disaster diffusion. Abandoning neighboring leaders is not terribly tempting because doing so increases the likelihood of contagion/spillover, undermining oneself.

It is much more difficult for opposition candidates to steal the incumbent's elite

supporters when those supporters rely on the incumbent for contingent benefit streams that will disappear if the incumbent leaves office. In addition to high-profile domestic cabinet positions, incumbents coopt elites with contingent positions of power in regional organizations. RIOs that cover many policy areas as well as security provide jobs and influence for civilian and military elites alike.

Additional scope condition: If variation across members in the incidence of disasters is high, then the average expected gains from cooperation in a group insurance scheme decline. Thus, reciprocity is less likely to remain consistent in regions with high variance in destabilizing conditions across member states.

In summary: Regional organizations can help ruling elites cooperate with their neighbors to manage their respective domestic threats and prevent crises from spreading. More than providing public goods such as development or increasing trade, regional organizations serve the purpose of keeping leaders alive between elections.

When elites have more to fear from domestic opposition than the meddling of their neighbors, elites work with regional neighbors to reduce the likelihood of irregular turnover in the political elite class. Why neighbors? Lower costs of monitoring and enforcement, larger incentive to maintain cooperation.

2.7 Hypotheses

1. Regional integration organizations will be significantly more likely to intervene in member state conflicts through peackeeping and mediation in regions with the highest probability of disaster diffusion.

2. After taking into account leaders' relationships, state capacity will be inversely related to the frequency of meetings among regional heads of state.

3. Requests for mediation will be more consistently met by leaders in regions with lower crisis rate variance.

4. Leaders will cease to support spoilers- co-members who threaten the prestige of their RIO through blatantly egregious misconduct.

2.8 Empirical Strategy

I will use a mixture of quantitative and qualitative evidence to test these hypotheses in the dissertation. Chapter 3 incorporates statistical methods for data analysis of cross-regional data. Subsequent chapters use a mixture of qualitative methods, such as process tracing, along with smaller-n quantitative evidence to shed more light on varying cooperation within regions and the impact of cooperation on leader survival outcomes.

Table 1: Concepts, Dependent Variables, Sources

Concept	Dependent Variable, lowest unit of aggregation	Source
Crisis Assistance	Number of interventions RIO led- peacekeeping (country-year)	Mullenbach, ACLED
Crisis Assistance	Number of interventions RIO led- other crises (country-year)	ACLED
Crisis Assistance	No. of UN/RIO peacekeepers from region/external to region in members (region-year)	IISS Military Balance Reports
Security boosting/Threat deterrence	Y/N and number of joint training exercises (region-year)	IISS (not yet counted)
Leader survival outcomes	Change in coup incidence, fragility index (country-year)	Powell and Thyne, Polity2, Vdem
Collaboration among leaders	RIO Head of State summits (region-year)	Self-collected
Costly commitment	Automatic RIO funding mechanism y/n (region-year)	Self-collected
Non-cooperation	Number of instances where assistance requested not received	Self-collected

Table 2: Concepts, Explanatory Variables, Sources

Concept	Explanatory Variable, lowest unit of aggregation	Source
Trust in neighbor intentions	No. of neighbor state troops stationed within country borders (country-year)	IISS Military Balance Reports
Vulnerability to disruption	Natural disaster incidence (country-year)	EM-DAT
Differences in vulnerability	Variation in natural disaster incidence (country-year)	Self-calculated via EM-DAT data
Likelihood of instability	Dependency ratio (pop age 0-14 as % pop) (country-year)	World Bank
Member state resources	GDP/capita (country-level), cross-regional variation	World Bank
Spillover	Migrant, refugee stock (country-level)	UN, World Bank, ILO
Domestic political threat to incumbents	Competitiveness of politics	Polity, Vdem
Alignment of interests	Number of ongoing inter-state, border disputes (region-year)	Self-collected
Vulnerability of incumbents	Number of insurgencies, civil conflicts (state-year)	QoG

3 Cross-regional

This chapter seeks to incorporate more quantitative, larger-n statistics alongside qualitative evidence to show that the correspondence among the explanatory and dependent

variables generalizes beyond West Africa to other subregions. This chapter will do so by providing a variety of correlational statistics from other African regions using newly collected data, as well as other quotes and qualitative evidence speaking to elites' perceptions. I will construct several models to test implications of my theory.

Correlational Snapshot: I can provide summary statistics about theoretically relevant variables for each African RIO in my sample during particular years. Demonstrating that regional characteristics such as likelihood of spillover and average member state wealth correlate with measures of RIO cooperation with correctly anticipated positive or negative signs.

Model 1: The country-year will be the level of analysis for one model of the relationship between theorized predictors of cooperation and a variable measuring a country's contributions to RIO cooperation per year (example of country cooperation= number of troops in co-members for peacekeeping in X year). For all member states in all RIOs included in the post-Cold War era, I will need annual measures of the explanatory variables including regime (in)security, the presence of disputes with neighboring sovereigns, the presence of rebel groups, receipt of aid from neighboring state, etc.

Model 2: To test the second implication, that leaders benefit from RIO cooperation, I will use the country-RIO-year as my unit of analysis. I will construct a survival model, where the EV is a measure of cooperation and the DV is a measure of survival/outcome favorability. Leader survival data: I will use and update 1. Archigos data on leaders' start and end dates, manner of leaving office and post tenure fates and 2. LEAD data on leaders' characteristics 3. Powell and Thyne coup data to count whether a leader faced a successful and/or unsuccessful coup each year. I can compare this across regions and within regions over time.

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	Peacekeepers and Observers in Co-member (UN controlled)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Median no. disaster 1990-2016	+21.589 (97.361)	+105.550 (225.967)	+203.656 (177.295)
Variation no. disaster 1990-2016		-2.554 (6.658)	5.584 (5.883)
Peacekeepers, Troops in non-comembers			-1.064** (0.378)
Land Area sqkm	-0.0001 (0.0002)	-0.00002 (0.0004)	-0.0002 (0.0003)
Number of members	572.157* (267.327)	630.873 (374.149)	843.232** (297.567)
Avg member GDPpcap USD	-2.192* (1.096)	-1.318 (1.585)	-2.088 (1.250)
Max diff member GDPpcap USD		-0.083 (0.190)	-0.125 (0.147)
Gray's econ RIO vitality score		-2,161.091 (6,618.587)	-5,771.459 (5,250.908)
Constant	2,783.101 (5,582.035)	4,086.495 (16,518.750)	10,576.830 (12,915.190)
Observations	18	18	18

Figure 2: Cross-region Correlations

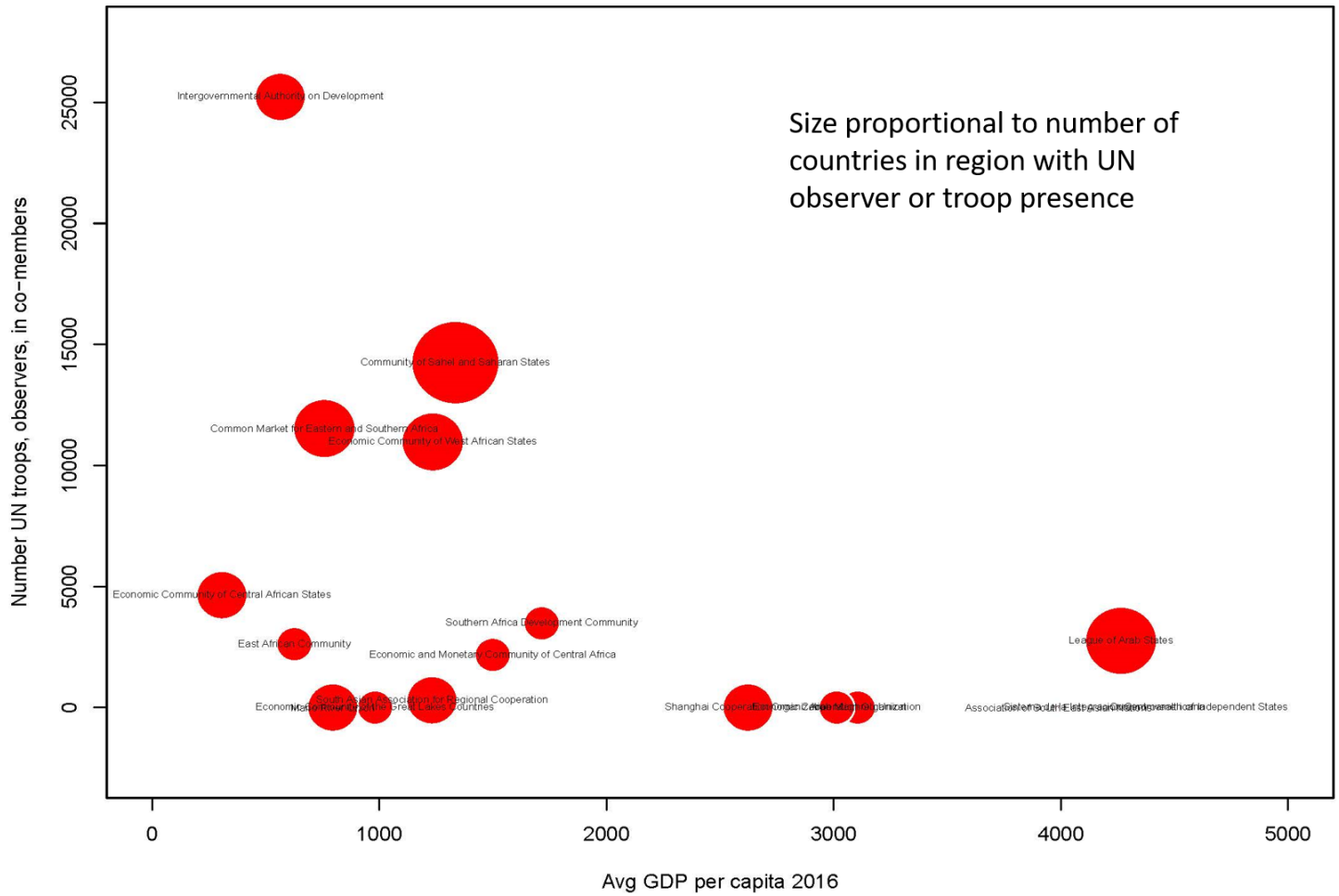


Figure 3: Troops in Co-members

4 ECOWAS: Demand and Supply for RIOS (This section is very scattered currently)

“Indeed, West African leaders probably meet more frequently in various councils and communicate more regularly than their counterparts in Western Europe.”

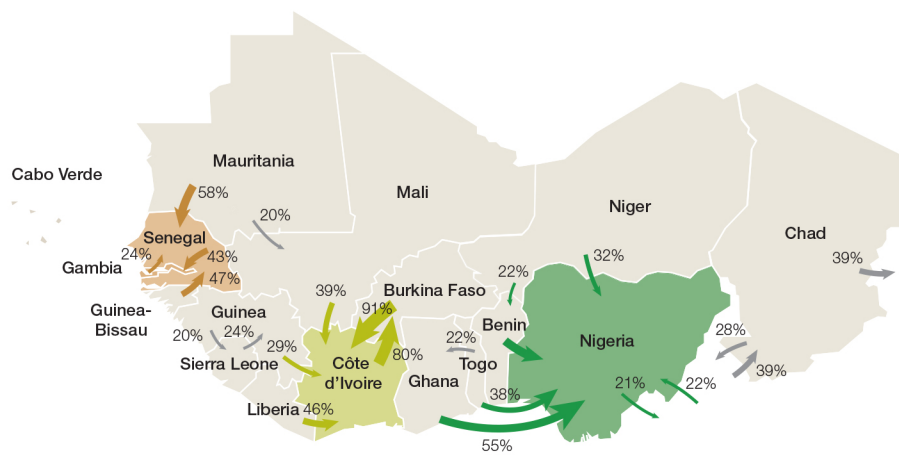
Former Nigerian Pres. Gowon from his PhD thesis on ECOWAS, 1984

ECOWAS study design- West Africa in the post-Cold War era is a source of most-likely cases for the theory presented here where I can use process tracing to assess whether the proposed causal mechanisms function as anticipated. West African states are resource-constrained and the disparity across states is generally not huge. Due to dense clustering of major cities, especially along the Gulf of Guinea, and high intra-regional migration, the likelihood of spillover is high. One in five West Africans live within 31 miles (50km) of land borders (OECD/SWAC, 2017). Leaders are vulnerable to crises of state control (ie coups, insurgencies) in most states. “Natural” causes of disaster are highly prevalent (droughts, mudslides, etc) but do not always hit all member states simultaneously. ECOWAS country leaders do demonstrate trust by way of allowing neighboring troops to be stationed in their own borders (and more evidence of relatively high trust in cooperation needed). ECOWAS leaders also intervene rapidly as crises escalate in member states, often via current and former heads of state forming mediation teams, and cite the need for regional stability as their underlying motivation (Gowon, 1984).

The Economic Community of West African States has faced intense scrutiny. Taylor and Williams (2008) note that while “ECOWAS (and the AU) actively sanction (at least for a while) the de facto authorities in states which experience a coup [they] do

4. ECOWAS: DEMAND AND SUPPLY FOR RIOS (THIS SECTION IS VERY SCATTERED CURRENTLY) Cottiero

WEST AFRICAN EMIGRATION WITHIN WEST AFRICA, 2015



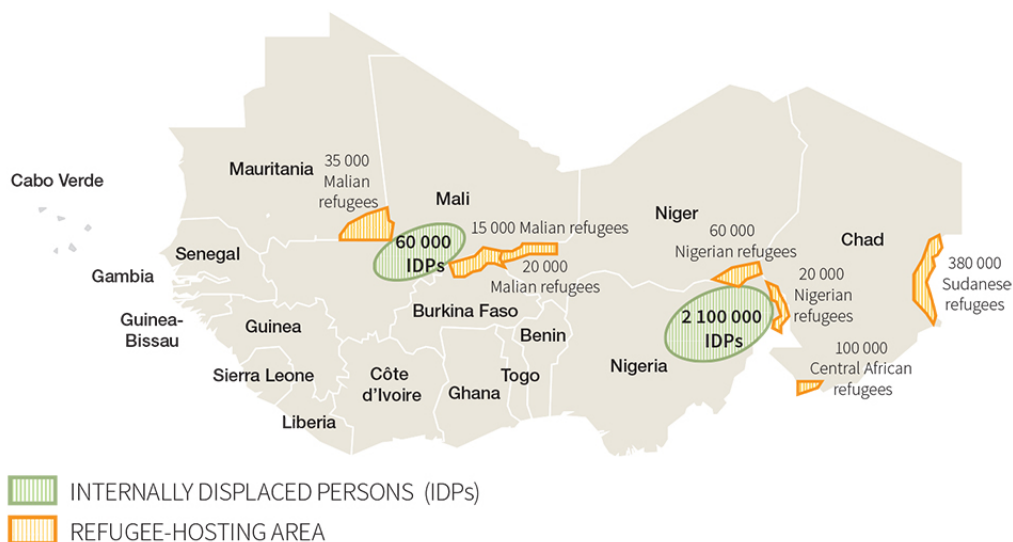
Only values greater than 20% of the emigrant workforce from each country present in the other countries of the region are represented.

Source: United Nations (2015), Departement for Economic and Social Affairs, International Migration Trends

© 2016. Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat (SWAC/OECD)

Figure 4: ECOWAS intra-regional migration

REFUGEES AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS LINKED TO CURRENT OR RECENT CONFLICTS



Source: UNHCR (2016), Global Trends, Forced Displacement in 2015

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Figure 5: West African refugees and IDPs

4. ECOWAS: DEMAND AND SUPPLY FOR RIOS (THIS SECTION IS VERY SCATTERED CURRENTLY) Cottiero

Border markets and potential cross-border functional regions

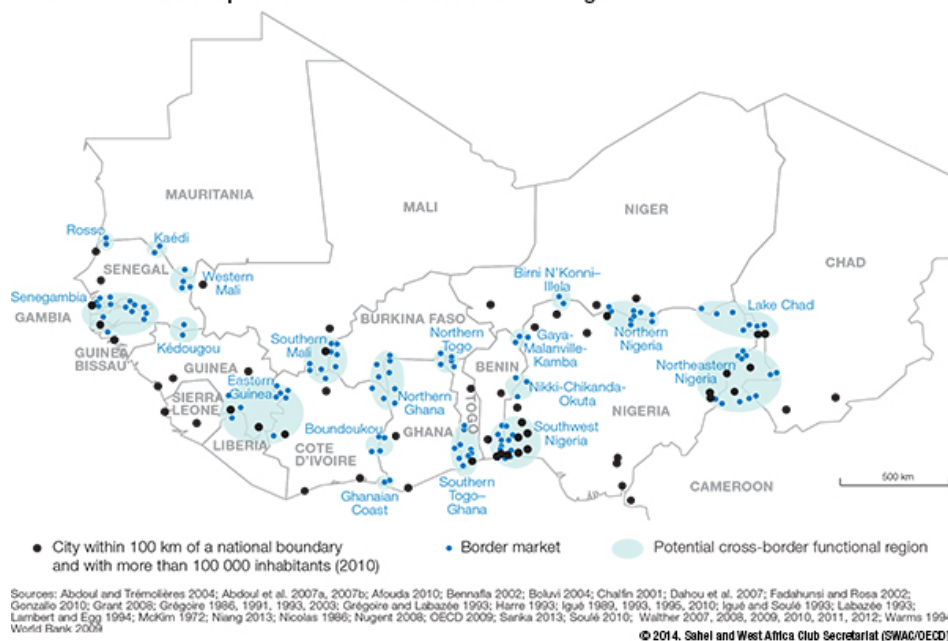
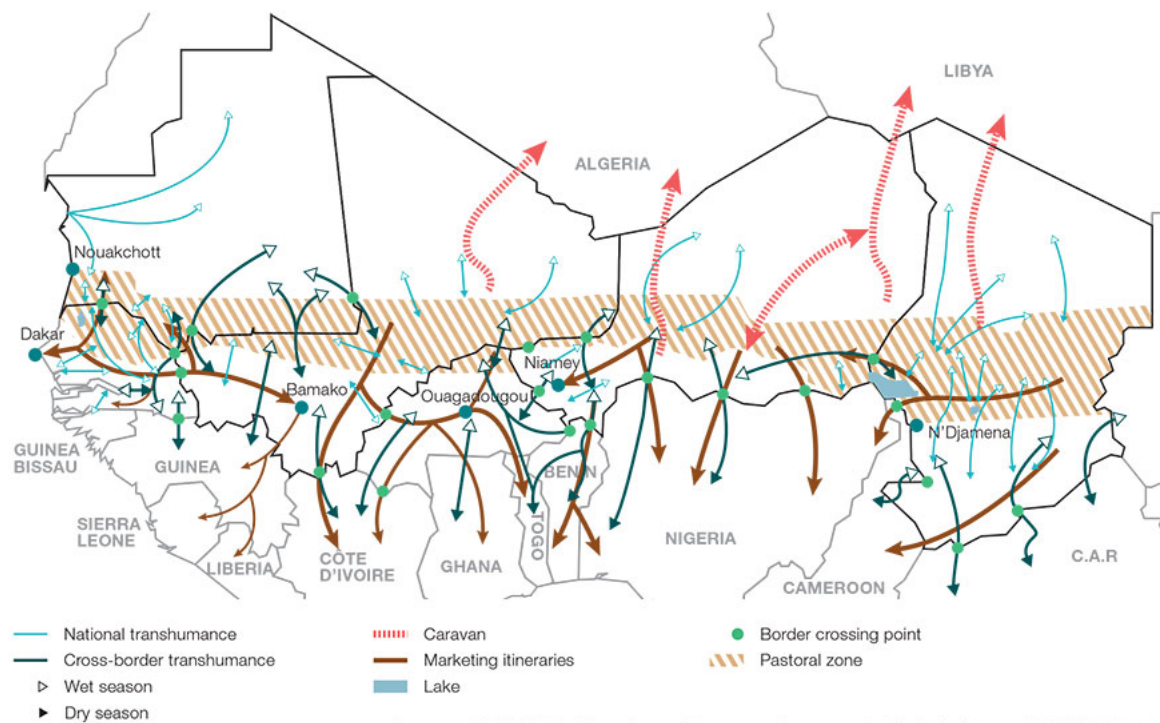


Figure 6: ECOWAS border community clusters

very little when incumbent regimes maintain their grip on political power” through what others have called sham “Potemkin” elections (Cheeseman and Klaas, 2018). While ECOWAS’s criticism of coups is commendable, it is also a decision that clearly benefits incumbent regimes that can manipulate the domestic political environment in the lead-up to and during elections. ECOWAS might, according to these authors, be a club of incumbents helping each other preserve the political status quo while partially performing “democratization” to keep Western powers happy. Unfortunately, Taylor and Williams provide no systematic evidence aside from a reference to Togo, where “the AU– at the behest of ECOWAS– signed off on a blatantly rigged election (supervised by a mere 20 ECOWAS electoral observers), thus effectively legitimising a coup which imposed dynastic succession and demonstrating the willingness of ECOWAS to support a facade of constitutionality.” ECOWAS ignores a great deal of fraud committed by elites and opposes coups orchestrated by outsiders, all while walking a fine line of

TRANSHUMANCE AND NOMADISM



Sources: FAO-CIRAD, Atlas of trends in pastoral systems in the Sahel 2012; OECD/SWAC 2009

Extract: OECD (2014), An Atlas of the Sahara-Sahel: Geography, Economics and Security, OECD Publishing, Paris.

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Figure 7: ECOWAS population border crossings

maintaining appearances for the West. This dissertation instantiates these claims more completely in chapter 3 by examining all ECOWAS interventions.

4.1 Unpacking contradictions in ECOWAS policy and leaders' actions

Reading key ECOWAS treaties and regulations, one gets a clear sense of the extent to which ECOWAS leaders walk a fine line between donor interests and the interests of member state executives. Beneath technocratic jargon and appeals to human rights, the politicization of ECOWAS officials is nonetheless apparent. One of the most influential ECOWAS doctrines produced in recent years, and which is currently undergoing revisions, is the 2008 ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework. Taken at face value, the ECPF is a highly progressive document that enshrines respect for women, youth, minorities, and local community stakeholders in development processes and inclusive political institutions. The greatest irony of the 2008 ECPF, which goes on at length about rights and due process, is the subsequent fate of the famous Burkinabe diplomat Djibril Yipènè Bassolé who prepared and signed off on the ECPF. In 2016, Bassolé was accused of being involved in the 2015 coup attempt in Burkina Faso, in spite of personal denials and denials from the coup organizers that he had been involved in any way. The UN condemned the Burkinabe government's apparent political motives for jailing Bassolé, who planned to run against the incumbent president in upcoming elections (Reuters, 2015). The fate of Bassolé, one of the most competent mediators in West Africa, highlights the need to read materials prepared by ECOWAS technocrats with a grain of salt. Some technocrats within ECOWAS genuinely believe in the advancement of individual rights and accountability in politics, but the convictions of those individuals do not surmount the motivations of national political leaders, who continue

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to sign off on ECOWAS documents in order to benefit from ECOWAS resources, but who subsequently flout the provisions of those documents whenever it is expedient to do so.

The ECPF initially emphasizes two aspects of conflict prevention: structural prevention (pre-emptive, long-term) and operational prevention (de-escalation, containment). Structural prevention entails respecting the rights of community members and engaging in non-corrupt politics so that voters do not develop grievances against their government and will not react with violence. The ECPF goes so far as to acknowledge how politicians generate grievances and why in the ECPF: “For instance, a repressive regime may create a security racket to protect itself, crack down on the labor movement, muzzle the press, imprison opposition figures, and fill a voters’ register with double entries and ghost names, all in the attempts to cling on to power. All these practices accelerate the negative transformation of structural factors and nudge society towards direct violence.” A boldface admission of previous wrongdoings was presumably supposed to convey in good faith that ECOWAS member state leaders would not repeat the abuses of their predecessors. Nonetheless, while the ECPF was written in 2008, member governments continued to manipulate elections and struggled to get along with the press corps. There is a consistent tension generated by clear examples of political and military leaders using ECOWAS to do the very things that ECOWAS’s Conflict Prevention Framework specifically calls out, while at the same time relenting a bit more often to constitutional limits.

While the ECPF’s wording is at least partly indicative of the constraints imposed by donor (“development partner”) perceptions and attempts to tackle moral hazard, the ECPF also injects phrasing that reflects the less neutral concerns of member state leaders. For instance the ECPF’s repeated calls for sanctions against “hate media” indicate politicization of ECOWAS technical recommendations. The ECPF repeatedly

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asserts that it expects both the media and civil society groups to promote the image of ECOWAS in exchange for permission to hold ECOWAS and other political entities accountable. There seems to be a cognitive disconnect between the document's admissions of the rights West African media to remain independent and the document's assertions that the media should serve to promote ECOWAS's good image.

The ECPF explicitly mentions spillover as a cause of obligation for member states to intervene in disasters and conflicts. Certain ECPF provisions such as this one show how ECOWAS is used to neutralize threats from older politicians "ECOWAS and Member States shall develop after-office roles for out-going incumbents and former Heads of State" Lots of proposed solutions entail having meetings and hiring more analysts.

Stated goals vis a vis military include "Increased predisposition of the armed forces towards democratic control...Increased confidence and trust between oversight bodies and the military/security hierarchy...[and] The elimination of the incidence of military incursions into politics and drastic reduction in armed brutality or recourse to arms to resolve disputes." Clauses such as this one indicate the extent to which ECOWAS is mandated to help leaders protect themselves against military interventions.

Some argue that recent events in the Gambia demonstrate greater commitment of West African leaders to the democratic principles of ECOWAS and a shift away from shadowy regionalism. When long-time Gambian President Yahya Jammeh initially acknowledged he lost in 2017's presidential elections but then refused to stand down, for instance, ECOWAS leaders compelled him to step down by threatening the use of force. Rather than ECOWAS leaders demonstrating a commitment to democracy, however, I argue that Jammeh simply pushed the limits of acceptable electoral manipulation too far by acting in blatant violation of the Gambia's constitution. By clumsily agreeing to results and then backtracking, Jammeh crossed a fine line, becoming a potential regional embarrassment. Because Jammeh's transgressions were highly visible

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and salient in international news, failure to act against Jammeh could undermine the benefits other leaders derive as a result of ECOWAS's prestigious status. Jammeh, whose erratic behavior and disrespect for neighboring states' diplomats had already begun to alienate leaders, was quickly compelled to step down because West African leaders wanted to save their reputations and access to donors more than anything else. However, Jammeh was allowed to retire in comfortable exile within Equatorial Guinea, a country that would certainly refuse to extradite him in the future.

In general, ECOWAS enables members in "good standing" to get away with electoral manipulation or other actions to neutralize threats from opposition groups, so long as those actions did not attract international attention for crossing certain red lines with respect to international norms. ECOWAS and member state leaders' reactions to controversial behaviors demonstrate a difficult balancing act. Leaders need to join in with international condemnation of errant behavior by member state leaders in order to maintain the prestige of their RIO because if the RIO loses prestige, it is less able to benefit leaders. Failing to condemn egregiously undemocratic behavior while external actors do so hurts RIO prestige and credibility, making third party states and IOs less willing to fund RIO activities. At the same time, certain leaders know that in the future it is likely that they will need to take unorthodox steps to deal with survival threats, and they will not want regional leaders to condemn them for those similar tactics. From the timing and contents of certain West African leaders' statements during neighbors' crises and crackdowns, we can see that the decision of whether or not to condemn fellow leaders' undemocratic actions is not taken lightly. Evidence substantiating this point speaks to the mechanism implied by my answer to the question "Why RIOS?". Cooperation through RIOS matters because the prestige and credibility of RIOS enables member state leaders to access money and greater range of actions than they would have through informal cooperation. Therefore, we should see that leaders

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are concerned about upholding the RIO's reputation even when doing so is costly.

Orders carried out by Guinean peacekeepers intervening in Liberia illustrate one instance where member states did not condemn undemocratic and unethical behavior taken in the spirit of enhancing incumbent survival because that behavior failed to garner international attention. Via ECOWAS, Guinea performed the role of stable mediator during conflict in Liberia and Sierra Leone, as well as host of refugees. Jourde (2007) argues the Guinean regime benefited by lumping domestic opposition in with neighbor rebels in its rhetoric, giving the regime cover to suppress opposition sheltering in Liberia. The Guinean government used peacekeepers to crack down on opposition groups even while it performed cosmetic democratizing reforms to domestic institutions. The Guinean also claimed that rebels and opposition actors were hiding among refugees from the Liberian conflict, eventually giving it plausible excuse to stop hosting more refugees even while it touted its willingness to host refugees. Essentially, as anticipated by my theory, Guinea's incumbent leader took advantage of ECOWAS as a legitimate vehicle to discreetly consolidate control over domestic opposition groups.

Also a subsection: variance across ECOWAS countries in terms of leaders that had tighter grips on power cooperating less with neighboring leaders.

- Necessary: evidence of leaders' intents to rely on reciprocal helping relationship with co-members to solve domestic survival problem. I will verify this for each ECOWAS intervention.

Example from Sierra Leone: Bundu (2001), who was the head of ECOWAS at the time when the organization intervened in Sierra Leone's civil conflict, claims that "the initial presence of Nigerian troops in Sierra Leone was as a result of the personal friendship between Babangida and Momoh" (73).

ie Akinyemi (1987):

"Consultation, in itself, is actually not a guarantee, but merely a prereq-

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uisite, of our support. We shall also apply the principle of reciprocity, on the grounds that those who require our support must also be prepared to support us...Nigeria's obligations to the Frontline States and the Liberation Movements in Southern Africa are perhaps the singular exceptions to our new emphasis on reciprocity in our international relations."

- "Reciprocity in Nigerian Foreign Policy" (The Akinyemi Doctrine)- A. Bolaji Akinyemi, *Nigerian Forum*, May-June 1987... In response to Nigerian President Babangida's "challenge [to] the nation's assembled foreign policy intelligentsia to identify and define Nigeria's national interest."

I need to gather qualitative evidence that leaders see their cooperation with neighboring elites through ECOWAS as essential to survival. There is some evidence of this from former Nigerian Pres Gowon's dissertation, but private correspondence to this effect would be more informative.

Former Nigerian Pres. Gowon- and ECOWAS co-founder- writing about ECOWAS in 1984 in his dissertation. On Nigeria's civil war against Biafran separatists ('67-70) and state survival: "...the drive for economic cooperation [was] based in the main on national as well as African integration. Nigeria had survived the civil war, thanks in good part to the loyal support of her Francophone neighbours. To continue as one nation, Nigeria had not only to develop its own resources and ensure their equitable redistribution within the country, but had also to win the confidence and trust of the other states of the region."

Need evidence on what benefits political elites perceive that ECOWAS provides for incumbents

Aside from interviews, process tracing through ECOWAS interventions to assess preferences, outside options considered etc

In terms of generalizability: ECOWAS is likely higher than most regions on average

with respect to the likelihood of spillover. In other regions, there are likely pairs of countries with high spillover but it is probably not as pervasive among all countries in those regions to the extent that spillover affects all ECOWAS members.

5 ECOWAS pt 2: Survival Implications

Here, cooperation switches from being considered as a DV to being considered as an EV.

Evidence for second part of theory's assertion that RIOS change leader survival prospects over time. I will need evidence that demonstrates RIOS matter for increased survival rates of West African leaders at least as much as other explanations already existing in literature.

Post-intervention in a member state, does the likelihood of coups decline? Do we observe longer post-intervention leader tenure (controlling for extent to which not blatantly violating term limits in constitution has become necessary for region saving face, maintaining stability).

Leader survival data: I will use and update 1. Archigos data on leaders' start and end dates, manner of leaving office and post tenure fates and 2. LEAD data on leaders' characteristics 3. Powell and Thyne coup data to count whether a leader faced a successful and/or unsuccessful coup each year. I can later compare this across regions and within regions over time.

Methods: Using a survival/hazard model with Archigos data on survival outcomes as it relates to an explanatory variable capturing the extent of regional elite cooperation.

6 Potential paired case

Could bring in SADC? Different from ECOWAS in that variance across members in need for cooperation is much larger. Correspondingly, cooperation is way less frequent.

In regions similarly high on conflict but low on other EVs (ie low trust and/or low spillover), sub-region RIOs are less likely to lead interventions. Instead, the AU is more likely to facilitate.

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