

**BUILDING COLLECTIVE IDENTITY IN AFRICA: THE ROLE OF AFRICAN  
REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

**BY**

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## STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for any award or any degree or diploma in any university or other institution. It is affirmed by the candidate that, to the best of his knowledge, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

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## **ABSTRACT**

A growing body of literature has revealed the multifaceted ways in which regional organizations especially the EU construct a sense of collective identity among members. However, relatively little is known about the African case with respect to how its regional organizations construct an identity. Significantly, the literature on regionalism and identity-building have stressed four main ways in which regional organizations construct a collective identity. Using the African Union and ECOWAS as case studies, the study comparatively examines how shared values, membership debates, formal institutions and cultural cooperation shape collectively the identity of member states in African regional bodies. Under each theme are plausible propositions, advancing the notion of how identity building occurs within these regional organizations. The study also highlights the impact of institutional size in the construction of identity between the AU and ECOWAS. Overall, the research identifies that regional organizations in Africa have shaped the identity of their members along those themes, particularly with ECOWAS a sub-regional body whose relatively small size has allowed it to be more proactive in identity building than the AU which is largely Africa's continental organization.

**KEY WORDS:** Collective Identity, shared values, membership debates, formal institutions, cultural cooperation, AU, ECOWAS

## ÖZET

Literatürde bölgesel organizasyonların, özellikle de Avrupa Birliği'nin, çeşitli şekillerde üyeleri arasında kolektif kimlik inşa ettiğini ortaya koyan önemli sayıda çalışma bulunmaktadır. Öte yandan, bölgesel organizasyonların Afrika içerisinde kimlik inşa süreçlerine yönelik çok az çalışma bulunmaktadır. Kolektif kimlik kavramı Afrika bölgesel organizasyonları arasında görülmektedir ve bu organizasyonların rolü farklı bölgesel ve alt-bölgesel organizasyonların üye ülkelerin kimliklerini nasıl şekillendirdikleri ve geliştirdiklerini göstermektedir. Bölgeselcilik ve kimlik inşası üzerine yazılmış eserler, bölgesel organizasyonların dört temel yolla kolektif kimlik inşa ettiklerine işaret etmektedir. Afrika Birliği ve ECOWAS'ı vakıa analizine tabi tutan mevcut çalışma, Afrika bölgesel örgütlerinin ortak değerler, üyelik tartışmaları, resmi kurumlar ve kültürel işbirliği üzerinden nasıl kolektif kimlik inşa ettiğini karşılaştırmalı bir analize tabi tutuyor. Bölgesel örgütler içerisinde kimlik inşa kavramının nasıl ilerlediği üzerine makul savlar önerilip bu savlar ışığında incelenmektedir. Afrika Birliği ve ECOWAS'ı karşılaştırarak mevcut çalışma ayrıca kurumsal büyüklüğün kimlik inşa sürecine nasıl bir etkide bulunduğu da ışık tutmaktadır. Özet olarak, bu çalışma Afrika'daki bölgesel örgütlerin belirtilen yollarla üye devletlerin kimliklerini şekillendirdiğini göstermekte ve özellikle de ECOWAS'ın daha küçük bir yapıya sahip alt-bölgesel bir kurum olmasının avantajıyla Afrika'nın kıtasal organizasyonu olan Afrika Birliği'ne göre daha proaktif bir kimlik inşa süreci içerisinde olduğuna işaret etmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kolektif Kimlik, ortak değerler, üyelik tartışmaları, resmi kurumlar, kültürel işbirliği, Afrika Birliği, ECOWAS

## **DEDICATION**

*I dedicate this work to the Almighty God whose blessings, favor and protection has carried me this far. This work is also to my lovely aunt Mrs. Ernestina Dadzie (New York - USA), my mum and dad, as well as my brother and two sisters.*



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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

**ACALAN** - African Academy of Languages

**ACHPR** – African Court on Human and People’s Rights

**AMU** – Arab Maghreb Union

**AMP** - Academic Mobility Program

**AU** - African Union

**ASEAN** - Association of South-East Asian Nations

**CA** – Constitutive Act

**CCJ** – Community Court of Justice

**EAC** - East African Community

**EBID** – ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development

**EC** - European Commission

**EC** - European Community

**ECOWAS** - Economic Community of West African States

**ECCJ** – ECOWAS Community Court of Justice

**EU** - European Union

**FESPACO** – Pan African Film Festival of Ouagadougou

**PAP** – Pan African Parliament

**SADC** - Southern African Development Community

**SADC** - Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic

**OAU** – Organization of African Unity

**UNECA** – United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

# Chapter 1:

## Introduction

### 1.1 Regionalism in Africa

One distinctive feature of the contemporary international system since the end of the cold war has been the evolution of regional organizations. Throughout this period, regionalism has taken different forms and shapes, varying from small groupings that include no more than a few actors and focus on a single issue, to huge continental-unions that address a multitude of common problems (Behr & Jokela, 2011). Accordingly, the proliferation of these new regional groupings (Fawcett 1995, p.9) and the revival of older regional bodies can largely be attributed to the activities of state and non-state actors, which transcends boundaries through global governance. These activities for long have endorsed the study of regions, regionalism and regionalization to gain prominence in world politics (Breslin et al. 2002).

Regional cooperation in Africa was initiated at an epoch where most African territories were still under colonial rule (Hartmann, 2015). As a matter of fact, many scholars argue Africa's regional integration record is not impressive (Hartzenberg, 2011, p.8), as mainstream perspectives tend to claim that if there is any regionalism at all in Africa, "it is primitive and characterized mainly by failed or weak regional organizations and a superficial degree of regional economic integration" (Grant & Soderbaum, 2003). In the article *Crafting Regional Cooperation in Africa*, Herbst (2007) argues that, several attempts at creating formal regional organizations failed in Africa, leaving an assumption that regional cooperation will continue to do so in Africa because the domestic and regional environments are so different from Europe, which has the highest density of successful regional experiments. The continent's poor historical record of regional cooperation and integration in the past has led many in the field to claim that regionalism in Africa is doomed to failure (Chazan et al. 1999, p. 312; Francis 2000, p.1-3).

An early phase of integration started during the first decades of independence and was enshrined in the Lagos Plan of Action; an initiative of the Organization for African Unity adopted by the heads of states in 1980 (De Melo & Tsikata 2015). African states had embraced regional integration as an important component of their development strategies and concluded a very large number of regional integration arrangements (RIAs), several of which have significant membership overlap (Hartzenberg, 2011). The proposed framework was for African integration into pan-African unity and continental industrialization by the division of the continent into RECs that would constitute a united economy, the African Economic Community. Three regional integration arrangements were supported by the Economic Commission for Africa: Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and the Economic Community for Central African States (ECCAS), and later, the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU).

The commitment to regionalism in Africa by most states was part and parcel of the broader aspiration of continental integration, a vision that led to the creation of the mother organization OAU as well as other regional and sub regional bodies. This new setup at the continental level became mutually reinforcing with proposals and actual negotiations aimed at establishing North-South integration arrangements between Africa and developed countries or regions (Dinka & Kennes, 2007). Some of these were the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) presently being negotiated between four groups of African countries and the European Union (EU). At the global level, almost all African countries became members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) or applied for membership. It is even argued that the recent transformation of the OAU into the African Union (AU) has significantly strengthened the movement towards the goal of Pan-African political and economic union (Dinka & Kennes, 2007). Starting in the 1980s, and later, following the end of the cold war, initiatives entered a second, more outward-looking, phase where most regional organizations were a revival of previous efforts that had either been abandoned or established to replace new ones (De Melo & Tsikata, 2015).

Historically, the first regional organization to appear on the African continent was the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963. It was a continental Union, politically motivated and tailored to champion the course of freedom from colonial rule and independence. From time, other organizations came up at the sub continental or regional level, especially from the 1970s. This new development sparked other organizations such as United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), in East Africa was the East African Community (EAC) in 1967, Southern Africa later formed the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) and from West Africa emerged the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975.

Presently, the African continent witnesses a surge in varied regional groupings that operate at different levels with different motives and agendas. Older regional bodies have transformed into new forms, such as the OAU which in 2002 became the African Union (AU). A compilation and collection on African regional groupings in the publication of Soderbaum (1996), *A handbook of Regional Organizations in Africa* showed that well over 200 of these organizations in Africa exist with new ones continually emerging. Many of these African regional bodies have only slightly different objectives, names and memberships compared to the old and already existing organizations. In addition, the objectives, institutional structure and membership of many of these existing organizations often change over time (Soderbaum, 1996).

Aside the political developments, African regionalism dealt with different aspects of economic cooperation, particularly at a peak where many scholars observed Africa's marginalization in the globalized economy. Clearly, the new dynamics of African regionalism that we observe from the 1990s onwards is unquestionably related to changing patterns of political, economic and social developments in the international system. It is coupled with a variety of institutional designs that also exist among African regional organization and generally: African regional bodies are composed of an impressive array of different arrangements, "ranging from customs unions to continental organizations such as the AU

including fictitious ‘organizations’ which practically exists only on paper as well as functioning monetary unions” (Börzel & Risse 2016, p.280). Hartmann (2016 ) also observes that much of the African literature on regional organizations posit that institutional structures within African regional bodies are mostly intergovernmental, consensus based, with inclusive membership rules and informal decision – making processes, and that heads of state tend to rely on themselves to bargain over contested issues (Börzel & Risse 2016; Herbst 2007; Soderbaum 2004). All these developments point to the series of activities in African regionalism so far, amidst some challenges it confronted during the early stages.

Primarily, this study is interested in the identity dimension of regionalism as it relates to the identity building capacity of African regional organizations over the years. Distinctively, identity remains a contested issue in African regionalism yet it plays a key role among its regional bodies. Defining how an African identity is being constructed sometimes remains problematic, as many argue it calls for the consideration of other several key elements. In this study, the various institutional designs and size factor of African regional organizations set the stage for examining how they construct a sense of collective identity among member states.

## **1.2 Collective Identity building and its Origin in Africa**

The two great waves of regionalism in Africa provides the basis for the origin of collective identity building on the continent. The first wave began in the early 1950s and late 1960s where African regionalism was associated with the fight against colonization, ensuring of decolonization and the promotion of Pan Africanism (Franke 2007). At this peak, identity building was reduced to the level of struggling and fighting to get rid of the vestiges of colonialism and apartheid which was highly predominant in Africa (Shivji, 2006). Hence, the identity building process of Africa was borne out of Pan

Africanism in which most black Africans within and outside the continent (diaspora) aimed at protecting and maintaining an African identity through the expunging of misconceptions surrounding the continent.

Pan-Africanism as an ideological movement started in the 19th century as a reaction against the degradation that local and imperial powers had subjected the blacks to through slavery (Oloruntoba, 2015). It happened by the realization of the precarious conditions and the denial of the sense of being by black people, through systematic imposition of a sense of inferiority complex largely by the West. Various movements particularly the Organization of African Unity (OAU) pioneered such discourse (Legum, 1962; Bankie & Mchombu, 2008). The main agenda was to demonstrate internally and worldwide that Africa in its unique way was capable of constructing its sense of collective identity, only possible through emancipation from acts of colonization, intimidation and apartheid confrontations (Suttner, 2010). The movement by credentials deserves commendation for providing the platform through which local and international campaigns were mounted against colonialism (Oloruntoba 2015).

Typically, as the construction of a sense of collective identity among regional organizations according to Rumelili (2007) entails the production of a sense of difference with states outside of the regional body, the proposal for a Pan African agenda was by way of distinguishing the existing African values from those inferior practices which were imposed on most African states across the region. Without any alternative, this act of exhibiting a sense of difference was not downplayed by the then existing African regional body, the OAU and among several other African scholars who championed this cause of building an identity in the region and beyond (Shivji 2006).

From time, Pan-Africanism became not just a movement but a conviction, a belief and an ideology for the reconstruction of the psyche, the mind, the being and the essence of a black African man and woman (Legum, 1962; Oloruntoba 2015). Largely, Pan Africanism meshed with the identity that most African regional organizations over the years had sought to construct. Pan-Africanism as an ideological



and philosophical force had defined the struggle to ensure the collective realization of the destiny of the Black race across the Atlantic by political and intellectual leaders of African descent both at home and in the Diaspora (Oloruntoba, 2015).

Besides, the second wave of regionalism which took place in the late 1970s and early 1990s also enhanced identity building in Africa. The second wave was more focused on revitalizing and expanding the mandates of existing regional bodies rather than on creating completely new groupings (Dinka & Kennes, 2007). This period of regionalism was termed the “globalization of regionalization”: thus an era where there was an interpretation of globalization as a threatening force for Africa. African regionalism and identity building moved from fighting colonialism and apartheid to a stage of embracing the influence of globalization in the African region. Out of those developments emerged several sub regional organizations that also supported the move of building a collective identity through different dimensions which encompassed not only the cultural but beyond social, economic and political spheres. It is to the eternal credit of the Pan-Africanist movement that all the countries in Africa today are free at least politically, from the yoke of colonialism. It is also argued that the movement provided the impetus for the formation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which was later transformed to the African Union in 2002 (Adogamhe 2008).

The African identity which came out of the earlier activities of the Pan African movement has been sustained to a level where regional bodies in the African region by various practices contribute to the construction of such identity. The African identity is not pre given or fixed in essence but have transformed over time through certain conducts and activities by African regional organizations on the continent (Hall, 1990). Clearly, the process of identity building which started with pioneers of Pan Africanism laid the foundation for the identity building process which African regional organizations have continued with until present.

### **1.3 Regional Organizations and identity building**

Beyond the historical, economic and political roles discussed in the earlier section, there exist a “community building” role that regional organizations adopt, primarily engaging in, and serving as reference points for various practices that construct, promote, and sustain a sense of collective identity among their member states (Rumelili 2007, p.1). There currently remains regional organizations that form “security communities”, through which interstate relations are governed by shared identity and mutual trust (Deutsch et al.1957). Evidently, these community formations among states define regions and this sense of mutual belonging in regions, socializes states into collective identities (Rumelili 2007). It is worth noting that the ‘regionness’ of an organization is not just geographically defined but also based around a common identity and culture (Fawcett and Gandois 2010, p.619). Therefore, Paasi (2011, p.13) portends that all regions have not only a territorial shape (vague or more explicit boundaries) but also a symbolic shape that manifests itself in social practice that produces/reproduces the region and which is used to construct narratives of identity and to symbolize a region. Reasonably, the role of identity becomes essential in regional formation, as the success of regional organizations largely impinge on the construction of its identity.

Several approaches to identity formation exist in the growing interest of regionalism. Among them is the divide between the essentialists and social constructivists school of thoughts. The essentialist approach postulates that identity is made of cultural raw material that have pre given and fixed essence (Rumelili 2015); and the task of identity studies should be uncovering this essence (Smith, 1995). Applied to African identity, then it can be maintained that the African identity has an unchanging essence grounded in a common history, geography, and civilization (Huntington 1996). On the other hand, social constructivist emphasizes that while identity belongs to an individual or an entity, it rests on the recognition of other individuals and entities within a structure of shared meanings (Rumelili 2015, p.4). Therefore, the identity of Africa is changing, depending on who identifies with Africa, in what ways and

to what extent actors attribute themselves to Africa. These mainstream approaches to identity formation in spite of their differences are considered inextricably intertwined and inclusive for explaining identity formation among African regional organizations.

Significantly, the creation of regions through collective identity also leads to the production of differences with the outsider states and this production of differences, Neumann (1998) argues creates a “nexus between the collective self and its others and not in the self-seen in isolation” (p.399). In line with this, community building is a “double sided process where the production of a sense of collective identity within the community inevitably entails the production of a sense of difference with states outside of the community” (Rumelili 2007, p.6). In particular, a correlation exists between regionalism and identity, as far as its implication results in a production of a sense of difference, and allows member states in a region to consider themselves different from others. Cederman (2001) however admonishes scholars not to only focus on how to forge identity and build community, but also to consider the negative effects of exclusion and dilution (p.3). Thus, the formation of regional organizations should not only focus on deepening or widening its scope of identity, but more so, making sure that it is not made so wide to allow and dilute the values of identity in such regional organization.

The literature on regionalism and identity has largely focused on Europe and Southeast Asia (Archaya & Johnston 2007; Fioramonti & Mattheis, 2015), as the European Union for instance embodies an element of identity with other regional bodies modelling its way of constructing identity. Of course, many scholars have questioned what exactly a European identity is and the issue remains a contested one even at present. Regardless of that, the EU’s construction of identity has served as a prototype for most regional bodies in the world particularly Africa.

In contrast, there has not been much work on African regionalism and identity. In this study, more emphasis will be shifted to the African region and the activities that lead to the construction of a sense of

collective identity among its regional bodies. Africa provides an interesting case of how its regional bodies construct identity in the region. This study shall identify those mechanisms while exploring also the coexisting organizations at the regional and sub – regional levels. Literature on regionalism and identity focuses on these themes: thus shared values, membership debates, formal institutions and cultural cooperation as catalysts that influence regional organizations in constructing a sense of collective identity (Laffan 2004; Rumelili 2007; Schimmelfennig 2001; Smith 2004). The next section discusses these themes in relation to how they shape the identity of member states in African regional organizations.

#### **1.4**

#### **The Ways of Building Collective Identity**

Building collective identity occurs through a number of ways, especially with the multidimensionality that surrounds the meaning, scope and composition of the term identity. The impact is also evident in existing literature on regionalism and identity that have largely focused on explaining the dimensions through which regional organizations shape the individual identity in a region. In this study, the ways in which collective identity is constructed among African regional organizations is explored under four major themes thus: shared values, membership debates, formal institutions and cultural cooperation.

It is also worth noting that these four major themes to be discussed are not the only ways of building a collective identity in regional organizations as from time other factors have influenced the identity building discourse. Briefly, these four major themes shall be discussed below but widely expressed in the subsequent chapters of this study.

## **a) Shared values**

Regional organizations articulate certain shared values during the process of identity building and these form part of the ways they collectively shape their members' identity. Shared values in general express what groups of people believe in as legitimate. Therefore, given that member states decide to uphold certain shared values, then collective identity is enhanced easily among those members. In this study, the concept of shared values is considered an ideal standard of behavior that member states may uphold to in their quest to construct an identity, so long as they accept to be part of the regional organization.

The shared values are usually found in treaties, protocols, acts and conventions of regional bodies; and they govern the conduct of member states in the region (Koslowski, 1999). Extensively, shared values are expressed in the form of democracy and good governance, collective self – reliance, solidarity, peace and security, domestic sovereignty and non – intervention, human rights and social justice among others. They are ideals and standards of behavior that member states are entreated to comply with, so long as they remain part of the organization (Schimmelfennig, 2000).

At a point where these shared values are undermined by a member state, there is the possibility that such state may undergo sanction or suspension from the regional body (Doxey, 1980). ECOWAS in 2010 announced the suspension of the Republics of Guinea and Niger from the West African regional body, because both countries had breached values on democracy and good governance. Niger was suspended by ECOWAS as their economic and bilateral assistance were halted in 2009, after ex-President Mamadou Tandja changed the constitution to extend his rule. Similarly in Guinea, those sanctions were imposed on them by ECOWAS in 2009, following a bloody crackdown by security forces on protesters, which included an arms embargo (Reuters March 24, 2011). All those acts from these ECOWAS member states were affronts to the principles of shared values which had been enshrined in the treaty of the

Community and expected that members complied with them. Those two cases show how values are able to influence the construction of identity among regional bodies.

Moreover, shared values serve as conditions for accepting members into regional organizations while building a collective identity and a state's ability to demonstrate those values are paramount in the identity building process of regional bodies (Wodak, 2007). Mostly, member states whose values are in conflict with a regional organization in the first place cannot ascend to become members of the organization. It takes only states that agree to accept certain values to be considered as part of a regional body. For example, The Treaty on the European Union states that any European country may apply for membership if it respects the democratic values of the EU and is committed to promoting them (European Commission ENPEN, 2016). In this instance, states who are unwilling to accept such values automatically disqualify themselves from becoming part of the regional body.

This study will consider the African case with respect to how shared values that are enshrined in treaties and acts of regional bodies lead to effective identity building. It will also examine how shared values whose breach carry sanctions are able to enhance identity building among regional bodies. Taking a closer look at some shared values from treaties and acts of African regional bodies, this study explains how they collectively contribute in shaping the identity of member states in the African region.

## **b) Membership debates**

Debates on which states are eligible for membership in regional organizations lead to identity building. Thus, regional organizations are able to construct identity during the process of membership debates. In Africa for example, geographical boundaries have predominantly influenced who is accepted into or out

of a regional body, as geography mostly becomes pre – existing or fixed elements for defining identity. However in this study, it is worth noting that identity construction is not only limited to geography, but more so the enlargement process in itself creates identity through inclusion and exclusion of states. Hence, regional organizations beyond geography define their identity during the enlargement process.

The enlargement process involves the conditions and activities for accepting and assessing the eligibility of members into regional bodies. Enlargement debates constitute a key part in identity building among regional bodies and importantly, an area where the geographical boundaries are shaped through inclusion and exclusion of applicant states. In 1987 for example, Morocco’s application to the EU was rejected based on not being European (Neumann 1998; Rumelili 2015). Though European identity is not explicit on its membership but needs to be justified by applicants, what exactly must have influenced Morocco to apply for membership outside the African region is necessary in understanding the contested nature of identity building in membership debates. On the other hand, for EU to also reject Morocco during the enlargement process allude to the fact that there are some existing identity parameters that move beyond geography, and that applicant states must be willing to proof those elements that makes them qualified for membership in a regional body.

During identity building among regional organizations, the enlargement process is relevant for defining who qualifies to join (the ‘self’) and who is disqualified (the ‘other’) as a member in the organization. Membership debates in African regional bodies have similarly led to identity building and member states have defined their identity during the enlargement debates that allow states to either pass the criteria of being accepted or refused membership in regional bodies. On the theme of membership debate, this study shall examine ways in which enlargement processes among African regional bodies influence identity building. In the African regional organizations can be found cases that relate to how enlargement processes lead to the construction of identity in the respective regions. Hence, this study

shall employ African regional bodies to demonstrate their identity building role during membership debates.

### **c) Formal Institutions**

The evolution of formal institutions in regional organizations, have led to the construction of collective identity. Thus, regional organizations through the establishment of formal institutions have shaped the identity of their members. From a micro level of analysis, this study will focus on formal institutions of African regional bodies and the ways they serve as identity builders in their respective regions. Like the European Union where there exist formal institutions such as the Commission, European Council, European Court of Justice and European Parliament, the African regional bodies have also followed similar paths of establishing these institutions as they end up enhancing collective identity in the region.

Identity building among formal institutions may occur in several ways. The study will unveil plausible hypotheses to which such institutions construct identity. More often than not, the holding of frequent and regular meetings/sessions, effective execution of more supranational roles and institutions ability to exist functionally and engage in a number of decisions have enhanced identity building in the African region.

African regional bodies organize various meetings/sessions that involve representatives of member states in the region. As often as those meetings are held, the more representatives get to know, familiarize and identify themselves collectively as ‘Africans’. Moreover, some individuals in these formal institutions take up roles at the supranational level that allow them to work wholly for the regional organization with no national responsibilities attached and such positions have defined their identity as well. On the contrary have been other actors who take on ‘double roles’ that demand both national and



regional level of commitments (Laffan, 2004). Those roles are also representative in nature and fairly lead to identity building.

Exclusively, identity building in Africa has also taken a different form with the existing formal institutions that are set up under African regional bodies. This study through some propositions will reveal how formal institutions of African regional bodies carry out identity building roles in the region.

#### **d) Cultural Cooperation**

Cultural cooperation remains a key factor for shaping the identity of members in regional organizations. Mostly, member states define their identity through the conduct of cultural cooperation in regional organizations. Cultural cooperation occurs at a point where regional organizations promote the transmission of knowledge, skills, arts, and information across national boundaries. By doing so, states who belong to these regional organizations are expected to embrace those cultural elements during transmission, while practicing them in their respective regions.

Regional organizations are guided by cultural policies and these influence the manner in which they tend to construct various identities among their members. In general, cultural policies as Schindler (2012) expounds aim to address and promote the cultural dimension of integration through relevant legislation and government funding. In pursuance of cultural cooperation, regional organizations implement policies to support cultural activities and in the process, enhance identity building. Since the mid – 1990s when the EU gained official competence to act on cultural issues with the Treaty of Maastricht, cultural programs and actions which have followed onwards have been geared towards promoting and spreading European culture in the region. For example the EU funds a number of cultural programs in the form of

grant programs, contests, regulations, European Capitals of Culture, European Years among others (EUROPA EU, 2017).

Certain indicators influence regional bodies through cultural cooperation to construct identity. Among them include the adoption of a cultural charter which is significant for identity building; the organization of several international festivals and cultural events; holding of meetings by Ministers of Culture from various member states; sports, education and cultural exchange programs as well as symbols, language and anthems of regional organizations. These indicators effectively push regional bodies to build identity around their members through cultural cooperation.

Over the past years, African regional organizations have continued to adopt cultural policies that help in defining an African identity. These policies constitute modes and practices that members engage in as part of belonging to regional bodies. Regional bodies in Africa embrace cultural policies as an integration tool for enhancing and shaping identity. Hence they usually occur in ways such as upholding the Pan African cultural heritage, festivals and events to the adoption of cultural charters, symbols, music (anthems), language and arts. These variables are significant for African regional bodies as they construct a sense of collective identity through cultural cooperation.

This study shall also examine how cultural policies influence identity building in the African region, especially the cultural indicators that shape the identity of member states in the African regional bodies.

## **1.5 Research Questions**

The following research questions shall be examined:

- (i) In what ways do shared values promoted by African regional organizations shape the African collective identity?
- (ii) How do membership debates in African regional organizations result in African collective identity building?
- (iii) In what ways do the formal institutions of African regional organizations shape the African collective identity?
- (iv) How do cultural policies of African regional organizations influence the African collective identity?
- (v) How does the institutional size of African regional organizations matter in the construction of an African collective identity?

## **1.6 Cases in African Regional Organizations**

Prior to the genesis of the independence era, “virtually all African countries have sought to embrace and participate in the activities of regional organizations” (Dinka & Kennes 2007, p.5). Today, there are more regional organizations in Africa, than in any other continent and most African countries are members of more than one regional integration initiative (Dinka & Kennes, 2007; Soderbaum, 1996). The increase in the activities of regional organizations in Africa, also present cases related to how the identity of their members are shaped. Exclusively in this research, the African Union and the ECOWAS are selected as case studies for establishing the point on how an ‘African / West African’ identity is constructed through

them. Respectively, the African Union and ECOWAS are regional and sub regional bodies on the African continent with overlapping membership. With the selection of these two African regional bodies, a better comparative analysis of identity construction can be made in terms of their differences in institutional size and similarities in institutional designs. Noticeably in terms of institutional size, the AU has a large size compared to ECOWAS whereas the institutional designs of the two regional bodies are almost similar. Below is a further discussion on these two African regional bodies (AU and ECOWAS).

On May 25, 1963, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), Africa's first regional organization was formed in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Union started its operation soon after its charter was adopted in September that same year. The OAU was committed to helping bring about change and freedom to many African countries and restore the dignity of African people (SAHO, 2012). After many African countries had gained independence from their colonial masters, the idea of creating the AU was revived in the mid-1990s under the leadership of Libyan head of state Muammar al-Gaddafi (Ronen, 2002). The Sirte declaration was issued by heads of state and government of the OAU on September 9, 1999 calling for the establishment of an African Union. The Declaration followed with summits at Lomé in 2000, when the Constitutive Act of the African Union was adopted, and at Lusaka in 2001, when the plan for the implementation of the African Union was adopted (Omorogbe, 2011). In 2002 the OAU was dissolved and was replaced by the African Union (AU). Currently the AU holds a total membership of 55 member states with Morocco being the newest member state, having joined in January 2017 after it withdrew from the Union in 1984 (AU Member States, 2017).

Conversely, ECOWAS is also a sub-regional group in West Africa, established by the Treaty of Lagos, Nigeria on May 28, 1975. It currently holds fourteen (15) member states namely, Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. Mauritania which was in the beginning a member of the Community left in 2002, to join the Arab Maghreb Union. ECOWAS was mainly set up to promote economic trade,

national cooperation, and monetary union, for growth and development throughout West Africa. Later, a revised treaty was signed by member states on 24 July 1993 to accelerate the integration of economic policy and improve political cooperation. Indeed, many have argued that ECOWAS has become much more than the mere sum of its members, though it can still be criticised for acting as a ‘club of states’ in certain circumstances (Lucia 2016, p.1). In spite of the existing pattern of behaviour seen as common among African regional organisations (ROs), characterised by distrust and the primacy of sovereignty, ECOWAS over the past has yielded to be proactive in uniting its member states through regional cooperation (Haacke and Williams 2008: 214; Williams 2009; Cawthra 2010: 34; Söderbaum 2011: 61). In the 1975 Treaty of ECOWAS, the primary motive was “to promote co-operation and integration, leading to the establishment of an economic union in West Africa ....” and this objective has moved beyond to drive the Community in striving also for a collective identity building in the region (ECOWAS Treaty, 1975).

Extensively, African regional organizations represent identity builders in terms of their ability to construct identities among their members and clearly, the African Union and ECOWAS are examples of such bodies. This research shall examine the identity building capacity of the two regional bodies, as the African Union constructs an ‘African identity’ whereas a ‘West African’ identity is seen from the angle of ECOWAS.

## **1.7 Research Design**

The institutional size of regional bodies is essential in determining the effectiveness of identity construction. Two factors influenced the selection of AU and ECOWAS as case studies in this research. First, the reason for the selection of AU and ECOWAS is to analyze whether institutional size of regional

bodies affects identity building. Observably, ECOWAS seem to have a relatively small size membership, compared to the AU which is the continent's regional organization. Yet ECOWAS is able to construct identity through the same means as the continental organization, the AU. Again, the issue of overlapping membership between the two have influenced both regional bodies to virtually learn from the other, as their modes of constructing identity have been similar.

Secondly, despite the existing differences in the institutional designs of many African regional bodies, the AU and ECOWAS appear to have similar institutional designs distinct from other African regional bodies, and that makes the two suitable as case studies in this research. Example, the structure of the AU in terms of its organs, institutions and functions are closely the same to that of ECOWAS. More so, ECOWAS which from the onset sought to tackle economic and trade related issues in its region, currently moves beyond those economic roles to embrace the political, social and security dimensions in integration. This makes ECOWAS a good match for comparison with its mother organization, the AU. It also provides a fair ground to comparatively make a good case of how both organizations construct identity among their members.

Additionally, this research does not assume that the AU and ECOWAS are the only regional bodies in Africa that are able to construct a sense of collective identity. However, the main point in this study is to use the two to represent how African regional bodies in general shape the identity of their members. The study aims at comparing the AU and ECOWAS, respectively as regional and sub regional organizations in Africa, with the motive of addressing how the two are able to construct a sense of collective identity.

## 1.8 Research Methodology

For a variety of reasons, the concept of identity proves a difficult term to explain even generally among the social sciences. Identity is slippery and the fundamental paradox of the term is inherent in itself (Buckingham, 2008). The ability to determine whether identity exist and how it is being shaped remains a challenge. Again, the very composition of what entails an identity is also contested, as scholars have often posed several questions of what exactly identity is made of. Normally, “identity is too ambiguous, too torn between “hard” and “soft” meanings, essentialist connotations and constructivist qualifiers, to serve well the demands of social analysis” (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000). However in this study, the focus is to analyze some factors that have enhanced and shaped the African collective identity among its regional bodies. Hence, the concept of identity in this study shall be associated to the African collective identity, which is shaped through a number of factors by the activities of its regional bodies.

It should be understood that one challenge therefore in this research is the fact that explaining identity is hard to reconcile with and constructively, some factors may be more influential than the other, in terms of how they influence a group’s identity. It is not surprising that Brubaker and Cooper, (2000: p.2 ) maintain that “conceptualizing all affinities and affiliations, all forms of belonging, all experiences of commonality, connectedness, and cohesion, all self-understandings and self-identifications in the idiom of “identity” saddles us with a blunt, flat, undifferentiated vocabulary”.

This study is mainly based on a qualitative research and is conducted from secondary sources of data related to African regional bodies. These data mostly centered on the regional processes and activities of the AU and ECOWAS. Secondary data were obtained through review of books, journal articles, relevant publications, official and unofficial archives and speeches from representatives of African regional bodies.

In analyzing how shared values shape the identity of member states in African regional bodies, the study focused largely on the African Union Constitutive Act of 2002 and the Revised ECOWAS Treaty of 1993. In these documents are sections that respectively spell out the shared values and principles of the AU and ECOWAS. The study derived these shared values of the two African regional bodies from their acts and treaties, to indicate how they contribute in constructing a collective identity among their members. In addition, speeches, expressions and statements collected from the AU and ECOWAS bodies were used in emphasizing the role of shared values in shaping the identity of member states in African regional bodies.

The section on membership debate focuses on case studies from African regional organizations (AU and ECOWAS) to explain how identity is constructed among member states. First, relevant cases which elicited membership debates were identified. The case study method in this research is driven by the need to achieve a holistic and an in-depth investigation of the phenomenon under study. A case study is a “well – defined aspect of historical episode that the investigator selects for analysis, rather than a historical event itself” (George and Bennett 2005, p.17). On membership debate, the case studies were selected in relation to how African regional bodies construct identity during the enlargement process. Under this, cases are drawn from Haiti which held an observer status since 2012 until it petitioned to be a member of the AU that same year; Morocco’s withdrawal from the OAU in 1984 over the admission of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) as a full member of the organization; and Mauritania’s withdrawal from ECOWAS to join the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) in 2000. These cases are used to support the argument of how identity building occurs among regional bodies through membership patterns.

This study also examines the formal institutions of the AU and ECOWAS to express how those institutions shape the identity of member states respectively in the African and West African regions. The AU and ECOWAS have a number of formal institutions as for instance under the AU, this study



looked at the: AU financial institution, the ACHPR, the Assembly, Executive Council, AU Commission, African Court and Pan African Parliament. Also in the ECOWAS, the Authority, the Council of Ministers, the EBID, Community Parliament, Community Court and the Commission are selected in the study. The study also considered the frequency of meetings held by these formal institutions, as a way through which identity building occurs. Collectively, the research analyzed the existing and non – existing formal institutions in these African regional organizations. Other documents, archives and protocols relating to the roles and activities of formal institutions in the AU and ECOWAS were employed in the study, to explore how they shape the identity of members.

On the aspect of cultural cooperation, this study looks at the cultural elements that shape the identity of African / West African members in the region. These cultural elements are expressively found in the cultural charters and protocols of African regional bodies. The AU cultural charter which was adopted in 1976 and the Protocol on Cultural Framework for the ECOWAS are key documents that were assessed in this study. Other relevant documents as well as statements and expressions on African / West African festivals, languages, symbols, anthems, sports, education and international cultural and exchange programs are adopted in this study. More so, the AU and ECOWAS symbols and flags are identified and their meanings shall be explained in relation to how they shape member states' identity. It should be noted that the AU flag and symbols are similar to the ones used earlier by their predecessor the OAU. After the coming in of AU; a competition was announced for designing a new emblem and flag. However, the Assembly of the African Union decided at the Addis Ababa session of 2004 to retain the emblem and flag of its predecessor, the OAU, and adopt them as the new AU flag and emblem. This study places much emphasis on how the symbols, anthems and colour of the flag enhance identity building among members in African regional bodies.

Overall, this study on how an African collective identity is constructed among member states in African regional bodies is conducted around available documents, statements and expressions derived

from the period in which these two African regional bodies (thus AU and ECOWAS) began their operations on the continent. These secondary data and materials have also been subjected to content analysis, geared towards attaining the objectives set for this research.

## **1.9 Outline of Chapters**

This thesis unfolds as follows: the introductory chapter and conclusion summing up to six chapters in all. From Chapter two through to five is a connection to each of the four key themes around which African regional bodies construct a sense of collective identity.

Chapter 2 of this thesis begins with the theme on shared values as a key element for identity building in African regional organizations. The African Union and the ECOWAS are selected as case studies, while I assess the manner in which both regional bodies construct their various identities through shared values. By doing so, I examine the AU Constitutive act and the Revised ECOWAS treaty, while I identify examples of shared values that these regional bodies maintain and hold on to. Values such as democracy and good governance, peace and security, solidarity, domestic intervention and non –interference as well as protection of human rights and social justice have all influenced identity building in the AU and ECOWAS. However, this chapter comparatively reveals that ECOWAS though it has its own challenges, has been more proactive and forthcoming in utilizing shared values as a tool for identity building than the African Union which is considered the main regional body in Africa. This is however, is not to erase or undermine the efforts the African Union has played so far in constructing identity through shared values, but to advance the argument that ECOWAS has largely dealt with identity building through its shared values.

In Chapter 3 of this study, the focus is shifted to the subject of membership debate as an identity building tool in African regional bodies. The chapter argues that identity building among African regional bodies move beyond geography to incorporate the enlargement processes itself, where inclusion and exclusion plausibly enhances identity construction. On the AU, I present cases from 2012 when Haiti decided to seek membership in the Union and another case where Morocco willingly left the African Union. From ECOWAS, the study considers the Mauritanian case and the sudden withdrawal from ECOWAS in 2000 to join the Arab Maghreb Union. These cases are selected to support the notion that the process during membership debates in itself is a critical part of identity building among African regional bodies.

Some formal institutions that serve as identity builders in African regional bodies are discussed in Chapter 4 of this study. The chapter argues that regional organizations in Africa have advanced the building of collective identity, through the establishment of formal institutions. Again, chapter 4 carefully examines some of these formal institutions and individuals working under them. This chapter is modelled on three propositions to which such institutions construct identity. The propositions suggest that, the holding of frequent and regular meetings/sessions, effective execution of more supranational roles and the institutions ability to exist functionally and engage in a number of decisions enhance identity building in the African region. Comparing the AU and ECOWAS, Chapter 4 per the propositions reveal that, ECOWAS has again been more proactive in building a collective identity through its formal institutions than the African Union. Evidently, this chapter foresees identity building in Africa regional bodies to have taken a new turn through the existing formal institutions serving under them.

Chapter 5 advances the theme of cultural cooperation as influencing identity building among African regional bodies. In this part, I provide a review on cultural policies, the various forms they manifest in regional bodies and the impact of these policies in identity building. Simultaneously, the chapter draws on some cultural policies from the African Union and the ECOWAS; looking at the ways in which such

policies result in the construction of identity among the African / West African region. Based on such analysis, the chapter argues that cultural cooperation is indeed an effective tool for fostering identity building in African regional organizations.

Finally, Chapter 6 provides a summary on findings, conclusion and recommendations of all the chapters which have been discussed.



# Chapter 2

## Building Collective Identity through Shared Values

### 2.1 Introduction

In recent times, regional organizations are increasingly becoming channels through which shared values are expressed among member states in a region. Considerably, the creation and implementation of shared values effectively influence member states in defining or attributing themselves to a specific regional body. Identity building has also emanated from values that are expressed by member states and the product of these values are partly because of existing formal agreements member states decide to sign on to.

Essentially, sovereign member states that belong to regional organizations are governed by some formally written and ratified agreements that legally bind the individuals and states (Shaw, 2003). These agreements are usually called treaties or acts that contain the guiding principles for the behavior and conduct of regional organizations and members. The values contained in these treaties enhance identity as members uphold them in their region. For example in the common provisions of the treaty of the European Union (Title 1, Article two), has been established the principles and values defining the Union as: “...*founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities*” (Treaty of EU, 2012). Similarly, the preamble to the Lisbon Treaty opens with the assertion that human rights, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law are all part of Europe’s cultural, religious and humanist inheritance (EU, 2007). The principles and values enshrined in the treaty of the EU and Lisbon respectively shape the identity of member states and define the content of ‘European identity’, especially what it means to be European in the region.

African regional bodies are not exceptions with respect to the role that values play during identity building. Values are also evident among African regional bodies as the proliferation of regional activities on the continent allude to the fact that member states often comply with those values in order to maintain successful regional cooperation. Therefore, as long as shared values are promoted among member states a sense of collective identity is also constructed. Again, regional bodies in Africa are guided by principles and values that are enshrined in treaties and acts. Hence, identity building occurs when those shared values and principles are respected and promoted by the member states in the regional body. Significantly however, little is known about how African regional bodies are able adopt these shared values in identity building. This further raises questions of the kind of shared values that shape the identity of member states and the ways in which they occur in African regional bodies.

In this chapter the African Union and the ECOWAS shall be used to explain how shared values shape the identity of members in the African /West African region. This chapter is divided into four main parts. The first part provides a review on the role of values in regional identity building. In the second part, the African Union Constitutive Act is examined, pointing to values that define the identity of members in the organization. The third section also considers the Revised Treaty of ECOWAS and how the basic values in the treaty enhances the building of a West African identity. The final part simultaneously compares both African regional bodies and concludes that for a long time since the founding of acts and treaties, shared values have served as a means for identity building among regional bodies in Africa.

## **2.2 THE ROLE OF VALUES IN IDENTITY BUILDING**

The dearth of clarity in the concept of ‘shared values’ attest to the multifaceted and diverse meanings given to its definition. The concept of value can be defined in different forms as it represents socially

desirable goals (Van Deth & Scarbrough, 1995). In explaining values, we can rightly speak of religious, political, social, aesthetic, moral, cultural and even personal values (Idang, 2015). Commonly, values represent standards of behavior and lasting beliefs shared among people within a society. Each individual, as we could see, has some sense of values and there is no society without some value system (Idang, 2007, p.4).

Obviously, in every society exists set of values that cover aspects of human endeavor. These roles, norms and values facilitate the building of regional bodies and construction of identity. Schimmelfennig (2001) suggests that the ‘collective identity’ of a region is composed of the values of its political leaders, the norms that they share and the regional organization’s formal rules on accession. These values are the guiding principles that define and shape the society and individuals. In that sense, the question of value can therefore be akin to human society and activities (Kanu 2010, p.149) and values actually permeate every aspect of human life.

At the national level, states also possess some forms of values that define them from the others. These elements of values held by states turn to bind them together as one people with a common sense of belongingness. As in many state constitutions, the Preamble of the 1992 constitution of Ghana for example begins with the phrase “We the people of Ghana” and continues with

“.....**IN EXERCISE** of our natural and inalienable right to establish a framework of government which shall secure for ourselves and posterity the blessings of liberty, equality of opportunity and prosperity...”

The statement in the preamble of Ghana’s constitution clearly expresses the basic national values that all citizens (Ghanaians) need to uphold and promote in order to create a sense of belongingness among themselves. States possess national values that define the very character they are made of. Values in this

case features at the state level by providing a set of ideals which citizens follow, while shaping who they are and what they share together in the state.

Beyond the state level of analysis, values also exist among regional bodies. Regional organizations in the past have entered into series of agreements that bring member states collectively together to share in common values and principles. At least, every regional organization maintains some form of values that defines the organization and its members. The ASEAN Charter which entered into force on December 15, 2008 bears the motto “One Vision, One Identity, One Community” and is an example of how a regional body of a kind expresses its basic common values through its Charter (ASEAN Motto, 2017). Likewise, the values that guide and govern the functioning and operations of the African Union Commission are built on:

“Respect for diversity and team work; Think Africa above all; Transparency and accountability; Integrity and impartiality; Efficiency and professionalism; and Information and knowledge sharing” (African Union, 2017).

These instances among others point to the fact that values are unquestionably influential in the roles and activities of regional organizations. Values set the agenda for most regional bodies to define their ideals and principles for which they stand for in a specific region.

Over the years, shared values have formed part of the agenda of most regional bodies in building collective identity among their members. As a result, the values propel the necessary change needed in regional organizations need for building a collective identity. Socially and politically, values are able to transform into effective results that enable members to define themselves differently from the others. Hence, “values appear as crucial for interpreting social and political change” (Van Deth & Scarbrough, 1995, p.5) and changes that happen in the society, either political or social is due to existing values that people hold on to among the standards of behavior.



Aside the social and political changes that values bring, naming is also one impact which can result from values. The regular practice and promotion of values by member states of regional bodies constructs a particular naming for the group. As this occurs, a distinction can be made between the self and others. For example, people usually refer to the term “European values” or ‘American values’, as a result of a particular standard of belief or ideals which have been practiced and maintained for a while by some group of people in a region. This naming effect is also attributed to the manner in which the shared values unite the group of people and binds them with a common belief. Elsewhere, we have seen African culture as "all the material and spiritual values of the African people in the course of history and characterizing the historical stage attained by Africa in her developments" (Idang 2009, p.142). It simply means that there is a peculiar way of life, approach to issues, values and world views that are typically ‘African’ (Idang, 2015). Consequently, values that are promoted by individuals provide a naming effect which in itself is a way of shaping the identity of the members in the group; as the expression of a specific region’s values obviously leads to the naming of the people in such regions. To that effect, ‘European values’, ‘American values’, ‘Asian values’ as well as ‘African values’ are all products of a naming effect derived from promoting and practicing some values in a region.

Another way of understanding ‘value’ is to think of it as general concepts people believe in (Morgan 1992; Wallace 2003). Key concepts such as justice, democracy, solidarity, collective reliance, fairness and equality are examples of values that most member states in regional bodies endorse. What is special about these and other concepts of value is that we typically think that they should constitute norms not only for one cultural group or community but also for everyone. Thus, shared norms often provide the foundation for more formal institutional processes of regional integration (Keck and Sikkink, 1999). The important point is that fundamental concepts of value are always experienced as valid from a particular point of view, woven into a person’s social and cultural context (Nordby, 2008).

Identity building among regional organizations move in tandem with values and the way member states promote such elements of values. It is also necessary to note that, the instance where all member states come into a consensus to accept and embrace these shared values make the identity building process effective among regional bodies.

In the case of African regional organizations, shared values are also expressed in the form of concepts such as equality, human rights, justice, fairness, security, peace, sanctions, freedom and democracy. Some scholars precisely define shared values in Africa as “the pan African struggles against the many challenges facing the continent. These include poor leadership and lack of accountability in governance, dictatorship and authoritarianism in politics, economic underdevelopment, ecological crisis, social exclusion, disunity, disharmony and violence in many African societies” (Yaya 2014, p.2). From this definition, it can be argued that some of the African values that are shared by member states in regional bodies emanated from the experiences and challenges that continue to beset the continent.

Member states who belong to African regional bodies, consent to these values and are committed to upholding them as a way of enhancing identity building in the region. In doing so, the identity of members are shaped according to those values and admittedly members states that embrace these values are considered as having a kind of identity in the region. Legally, it is binding on all member states to embrace and promote shared values as long as they wish to maintain membership in the regional body. In the event where member states decide to breach any of those values, they could be sanctioned as part of safeguarding those values in the regional organization.

From this point, it is deduced that shared values can effectively lead to the construction of collective identity among regional bodies on the conditions of the following propositions:

***Proposition 1: Shared values that are enshrined in treaties and acts of regional bodies usually lead to an effective identity building***

*Proposition 2: Shared values whose breach carry sanctions can enhance an effective identity building in regional bodies.*

### **Proposition 1**

Shared values enshrined in treaties and acts of regional bodies are mostly effective during identity building. Certain values exist that may not be necessarily effective in enhancing identity because it has no source of influence. Treaties and acts that contain values of regional bodies effectively enhance identity building based on its influence on member states. Thus, regional organizations can effectively build a collective identity once those values are enshrined in their treaties and acts.

Before member states are accepted into regional bodies, they must agree to sign a treaty or an act where various principles, conventions and values regarding the organization and members are clearly stipulated. Signing on to such treaty or an act implies that every protocol or rule within is regarded as legitimate and useful for the member states to comply with. As long as these treaties contain shared values and member states have agreed to by signing, the willingness in promoting those values in the regional organization is certain and those values become formal and binding on all members. Based on that, regional organizations through values are also able to effectively shape the identity of their members.

### **Proposition 2**

Shared values that carry sanctions when there is a breach can effectively enhance identity building among member states in regional bodies. Sanctions matter when instituting values to function among members

in regional bodies. Values shape the identity of member states in regional bodies when members are mindful of the sanctions that go with them. There are cases where less attention is given to member states who breach certain values of regional bodies. Regional organizations that show concern when there is a breach in any of their values have the capacity to strongly influence and shape the identity of members within the organization.

Identity building through shared values go with sanctions. It is only by means of sanctions that values can be enforced to enhance identity among members. A common sanction which most regional organizations adopt when members breach certain values is suspension. Member states could be suspended from regional organizations to demonstrate to other how important values need to be upheld in the organization by members. ECOWAS for example in 2009 suspended two of its member states (Guinea and Niger) for breaching basic regional values on good governance and democracy. This sanction served as a deterrent to other member states in the region to be cautious not to conduct any act that would breach the values of the Community. The sanctions was a way of collectively enforcing values to effectively work in the West African region, while constructing an identity. Overall, values it is clear that values that carry sanctions work effectively for regional bodies to construct a sense of collective identity among their members.

From the relationship established between the two propositions, I consider the case of Africa and how their regional bodies construct a sense of collective identity through common shared values. Examining the values in treaties and acts of African regional bodies and the influence of sanctions on those values is essential under this chapter. This chapter selects cases from the AU and ECOWAS to unveil how their values lead to the construction of identity. In addition, the influence of sanctions on these values shall be discussed.

The next section studies the African Union Constitutive Act which contains the values of the Union that member states are expected to adhere to. The objective is to underscore the role of these values in the treaty and assess how they have influence the building of collective identity in the African region.

### **2.3 CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY THROUGH AFRICAN UNION (AU) VALUES**

The Constitutive Act of the African Union establishes the codified framework under which the Union is to conduct its activities. The Act was signed on July 11, 2000 at Lomé (Togo): and came into force after two thirds of the 53 signatory states ratified the convention (Gebrewold, 2010; Murithi, 2009). The entry into force of the Constitutive Act also marks the imminent end of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which had united all African states since 1963 (Packer and Rukare, 2002).

A plethora of values is found in the Constitutive Act of the AU that spells out who a member state is what is expected of them and ways to comply with the very fundamental principles and values of the Union. These values are also what describe the identity of member states as Africans. To understand how values shape the identity of member states in the AU, this part assesses some basic principles and values enshrined in the AU Constitutive Act that contribute to the building of identity among member states in the African region. It looks specifically at the section regarding Principles in the AU Constitutive Act.

Article 4 of the Constitutive Act stipulates that the Union shall function in accordance with the following principles:

- (a) Sovereign equality and interdependence among Member States of the Union;
- (b) Respect of borders existing on achievement of independence;
- (c) Participation of the African peoples in the activities of the Union;
- (d) Establishment of a common defense policy for the African Continent; through such appropriate means as may be decided upon by the Assembly;
- (e) Peaceful resolution of conflicts among Member States of the Union through such appropriate means as may be decided upon by the Assembly

- (f) Prohibition of the use of force or threat to use force among Member States of the Union;
- (g) Non-interference by any Member State in the internal affairs of another;
- (h) The right of the Union to intervene in a Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely: war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity;
- (i) Peaceful co-existence of Member States and their right to live in peace and security;
- (j) The right of Member States to request intervention from the Union in order to restore peace and security;
- (k) Promotion of self-reliance within the framework of the Union;
- (l) Promotion of gender equality;
- (m) Respect for democratic principles, human rights, the rule of law and good governance;
- (n) Promotion of social justice to ensure balanced economic development;
- (o) Respect for the sanctity of human life, condemnation and rejection of impunity and political assassination, acts of terrorism and subversive activities;
- (p) Condemnation and rejection of unconstitutional changes of governments.

Credit: (AU Constitutive Act, 2002)

The above clauses under Article 4 of the AU Act, define the principles and values on which the African Union is guided, specifically the ideals and behaviors that are embraced by all member states in the Union. Together, it is observed that values such as sovereign equality, participation of the African people, human rights, social justice, democratic principles, gender equality, peace and security, common defense policy for African states and respect for borders have widely represented the principles governing the all member states in the AU. These principles are enshrined in the AU Constitutive act and they allow every member state that ratifies the Act through signing, to uphold such values in the organization. A breach of those values follow political and economic sanctions from the Union (Kioko, 2003, p.807). Hence, members who adhere to these values construct a sense of collective identity by the common ideals they share together in the region as member states.

Below, I discuss some of the AU values expressed by its member states in the Constitutive act and the way they shape the identity of member states in the African region.

### **a) The Principles of domestic sovereignty and nonintervention**

The AU Act reaffirms the values of domestic sovereignty and nonintervention. Precisely, it stipulates the defense of the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence of member states (Art. 3 (b)), as well as the principle of noninterference by any member state in the internal affairs of another (Art. 4(g)). The AU Act under this principle emphasizes the need for all its member states to be internally sovereign, avoiding any kind of interferences from other member states. This principle of domestic sovereignty and nonintervention is an AU value enshrined in its Act and for that matter its effectiveness in shaping the identity of member states is realizable. Thus, members are willing to maintain these enshrined values within their region since they ratified the act by signing before becoming part of the Union. Particularly, the CA does not preclude intervention by the Union, as a body concerned with peace, security, and stability in the region, in the event of internal conflict (Packer and Rukare, 2002, p.372). Patently, Article 4 (h) allows for the "right of the Union to intervene in a Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely: war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity."

Therefore, each member state in the AU is entitled to uphold the value of domestic sovereignty among the principles governing the Union. Morocco's willingness to leave the AU due to its disputed territory issues with Western Sahara in 1984 reinforces this principle of domestic sovereignty expounded in the CA. Lately in 2017, Morocco has officially returned to the AU and before their return, the Foreign Minister of Western Saharan, Mohamed Salek Ould Salek had earlier stated that Morocco's occupation contradicted the founding principles of the AU and insisted that if Morocco wants to join the Union, it must respect the rules and values of the Union, since;

"The aim and essence of the Union is the liberation of Africa. Morocco [has] become a colonizer ... We fought against colonialism and apartheid; how come we are going to accept a country who declared publicly and solemnly that he is occupying a part of a country who is a member of the African Union?" (BBC News Africa, 2016)

Morocco's return to the AU currently shows its readiness to now comply with the principle and values of domestic sovereignty and nonintervention in the AU. Hitherto the time when Morocco interfered in the Western Saharan territory, it was established that though Morocco geographically is situated within the African continent, its failure to uphold and accept the common value of domestic sovereignty in the AU disqualified it from claiming membership and identity in the African Union. Values therefore create a distinction between the self and the other, as this could separate Morocco (the other) from the African Union (thus the self) in terms of identity and even membership in the AU. Clearly at the time, Morocco could not define its identity in relation to the AU, for its inability to respect the value of domestic sovereignty and non - interference. In addition, for Morocco at the time to escape the possible sanctions it would have received from the AU based on its reluctance to comply with the principle of domestic sovereignty, Morocco willingly opted out from the Union. It buttresses the proposition that values that carry with them sanctions are more realizable and lead to effective identity building among regional organizations.

#### **b) Democratic Principles and good governance**

Democracy and good political governance features prominently among the AU values in the Constitutive Act and constitute the first thematic area under the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) (Mangu,



2014). Unlike the OAU, the AU considers democracy and good political governance seriously (AU Constitutive Act 2000, Arts 3 & 4). Since its inception, the AU has adopted several other instruments aimed at promoting democracy and good political governance among its member states. For decades, most African countries were ruled by military or one-party regimes (Basedau, 2003). In response to popular agitation, much of the continent shifted to multi-party systems in the 1990s, and coups became less common (Africa Renewal, 2010). Yet many of Africa's newly elected leaders were still reluctant to criticize their less democratic peers. Currently this is changing, as the AU and other African regional organizations move more systematically and firmly to uphold democratic values and good governance in the region.

In 2002, the AU Constitutive Act included among its principles “condemnation and rejection of unconstitutional changes of government.” These values have been key to the AU, as the Union keeps entreating all members to comply with them accordingly. A good instance where the AU succeeded in enforcing this value was during the 2008 coup d'état in Guinea which emanated from the death of Lansana Conté's the longtime President at the time; an incidence which allowed the army to take over power (Africa Renewal, 2010). However, the AU promptly condemned the coup and suspended Guinea from their activities until the country returns to Constitutional order (allAfrica, 2008). These sanctions were meted to out to Guinea to consciously remind it of the need to respect the values and principles of democracy and good governance. It was also a way of building identity among member states, since all member states who breached these values did not qualify to be identified as part of the AU.

Again, the impasse in Madagascar and the coup in Niger which led to the suspension of both countries by the AU in 2009, attest to how the AU employs sanctions to shape and build its identity among member states in the region. Hence, democracy and good governance remain essential values in the AU for constructing identity in the African region. The AU continues to help many African countries to advance democratic values and good governance by way of shaping their identity in the Union. With

a number of sanctions in place, member states are willing to comply with the values in order to avoid contradicting the guiding principles of the Union. Member states that accept these values are defined as part of the AU and this is a way of building a collective identity. Values in this case serve as an identity building tool for the African Union.

### **c) Protection of Human rights and Justice**

The protection of human rights and justice are common values expected by member states in the African Union. Since its creation as OAU, it has been preoccupied with human rights as evidenced by the struggle for the decolonization of Africa and the right to self-determination and independence (Gawanas, 2009; Twala, 2014). Human rights and justice have remained key values of the Union's agenda, as it strongly holds these elements as binding on all states willing to be recognized as members of the Union. Manifestly, among the principles in Article 4 (m) & (n) of the AU Act have expounded values of human rights and social Justice respectively. In addition, the AU in contrast to the OAU, 'made human rights an explicit part of its mandate, as embodied in its Constitutive Act, and mainstreamed human rights in all its activities and programs' (Gawanas, 2009, p.135).

Some scholars have argued that basically, the African Union (AU) has three principal mechanisms for protecting human rights on the continent: thus through a Charter, a Commission and a Court all devoted to Human and Peoples' Rights (Manrique and Bandone 2013). These mechanisms are effective ways of promoting values in the Union and building a collective identity in the region. For instance, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), based in Banjul, Gambia, is a subsidiary organization, tasked with promoting and protecting human rights and peoples' rights throughout the African continent (AU ACHPR, 2017). The ACHPR serves as a regional court that rules on African

Union states' compliance with the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (National Commission, UNESCO 2010). An institution such as ACHPR strongly believes that upholding values such as human rights and social justice could foster a strong cooperation among member states in the African continent.

Furthermore, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (Charter) is the foremost legal instrument for the promotion of human rights in Africa (Manrique and Bandone 2013). The Charter establishes duties for states and individuals and recognizes the most universally accepted civil and political rights, as well as economic, social and cultural rights (ACHPR, 2017). The coming into being of the African Charter on human rights represents AU's readiness to subject all its members to respect human right values and justice. An African Court exists, complementing the ACHPR in promoting human rights values. However, the Court's jurisdiction applies only to the 26 states which so far have ratified the Court's Protocol out of the 54 countries in the Union (Manrique and Bandone 2013, p.6).

Importantly, the AU sets up the Africa Human Rights Day (AHRD), to project its values on human rights and justice annually on the African continent. A recent celebration of this occasion was held in Gambia on October 21, 2016, under the theme "*Women Rights – Our Collective Responsibility*" (AU Commemoration of AHRD, 2016). The occasion was observed in all other member states that belonged to the AU. This creates a kind of identity for member states that celebrate this occasion at their national level. The significance of such celebration is also to portray that human rights and social justice are AU values that are worth promoting and must not be undermined in any way. Though the African Union is still plagued with challenges in ensuring effective recognition of human rights values on the continent (Manrique and Bandone 2013), the few efforts which the ACHPR, AU Court, as well as the African Charter employs are viable options for strengthening the respect for these values and enhancing an African identity among members.

#### **d) Promoting Peace and Security as values**

The African Union intends to end armed conflict in Africa by 2020, so despite a comprehensive agenda to build towards a ‘peaceful, integrated and prosperous Africa’ by 2063, peace and security remain a current key priority in the work of the African Union Commission (Chatham House, 2014). As a continental organization in Africa, it establishes institutional mechanisms to support its role in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts, particularly through of its Peace and Security Council (PSC) (AU PSC, 2017). This has been the most critical institutional component of the African Union’s peace and security architecture (Aning, 2008) and these measures are compounded by AU’s new security regime, premised on several norms especially principles and values on peace and security, emanating from the Constitutive Act.

A clear example of how the AU respects and upholds security and peace among its values is demonstrated by the AU’s security policy in the Constitutive Act, with a preamble where member states are:

*Conscious of the fact that the scourge of conflicts in Africa constitutes a major impediment to the socio-economic development of the continent, and [recognizes] the need to promote peace, security and stability as a prerequisite for the implementation of our development and integration agenda.*

Certain core principles have influenced the AU while it employs values on security in the African continent. are: Sovereign equality of member states (Article 4a); Non-intervention by member states (Article 4g); African solutions to African problems; Non-use of force/peaceful settlement of disputes (Articles 4e, 4f, 4i); Condemnation of unconstitutional changes of government (Article 4p); The AU’s right to intervene in a member state in grave circumstances (Article 4h). According to Aning (2008), the

“combination of these values and norms plus the institutional mechanisms has given the AU an institutional vibrancy that creates opportunities for proactive responses to some of the continent's security challenges” (p.3). Peace and security are among the AU values that shape the identity of member states into understanding the need for the continent to be devoid of any form of conflicts and threats while the AU persistently ensures member states to comply with them, once they are enshrined in the Act.

Moreover, the PSC of the AU is the single most powerful institution within the peace architecture of the AU. Preceding the adoption of the Constitutive Act, several processes had been introduced towards establishing a collective African security regime (Aning, 2008). There is the Peace and Security Council serving as a standing decision-making organ of the Union and ‘a collective security and early-warning arrangement to facilitate timely and efficient response to conflict and crisis situations in Africa’ (AU PSC, 2017). Understandably, these inputs by the AU are in support of ensuring peace and security values are maintained within the African region.

Unfortunately, Africa is continually beset with issues of conflict and insecurity and many scholars have argued that the likelihood of achieving the goals to end conflict and maintain peace in the African region will be constrained as long as an atmosphere of lasting peace and stability does not actually prevail in Africa. Yet, the inception of the AU Constitutive Act and the sanctions in place for member states who breach these values have largely influenced the Union in building a kind of identity that influences members to observe order in the region. These initiatives put in place by the AU are avenues to inform members to uphold peace and security as vital values for the Africa region as they further help in building a collective identity.

Overall, this section of the chapter has centered on the Constitutive Act of the AU and sanctions as very influential in values that regional bodies enforce among member states. Key values such as domestic sovereignty and nonintervention, democracy and good governance, protection of human rights and social

justice and ensuring peace and security have been used to explain how identity building occurs among member states in the AU. In as much as the AU witnesses various shortcomings in projecting and instituting these values among their member, it is worth noting that to some extent its efforts as a continental regional organization in constructing an African identity has been achievable through shared values that carry sanctions and are enshrined in their Act.

The next part of this chapter turns to the ECOWAS, a sub-regional body in West Africa, and assesses its Revised Treaty that contains the organization's values. The manner in which ECOWAS values shape and define the identity of members in the West African region will be discussed.

## **2.4 CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY THROUGH ECOWAS VALUES**

The Revised Treaty of ECOWAS contains the fundamental principles and values on which the Community and its members should operate. Focusing on the role shared values play in influencing the identity of members; this section considers the very principles and values that guides the conduct and behavior of member states in ECOWAS. These values and principles are outlined in the Revised Treaty of the ECOWAS and all member states that ratified the treaty must comply with such values in order to be identified as part of the West African Community. These values also carry with them sanctions and hence member states need to be willing to maintain those values and principles. States that fail to uphold these rules and values are sanctioned accordingly by ECOWAS, to serve as a deterrent to other member states in the region. All these activities are carried out by ECOWAS in the hope of projecting and promoting the West African values in the region.

Similar to the African Union, the Article 4 of the Revised ECOWAS Treaty also spells out a number of principles and values which member states must strictly adhere to in the region. It states that:

“THE HIGH CONTRACTING PARTIES, in pursuit of the objectives stated in Article 3 of this Treaty, solemnly affirm and declare their adherence to the following principles:

- a) equality and inter-dependence of Member States;
- b) solidarity and collective self-reliance;
- c) inter-State co-operation, harmonization of policies and integration of programs;
- d) non-aggression between Member States;
- e) maintenance of regional peace, stability and security through the promotion and strengthening of good neighborliness;
- f) peaceful settlement of disputes among Member States, active co-operation between neighboring countries and promotion of a peaceful environment as a prerequisite for economic development;
- g) recognition, promotion and protection of human and peoples' rights in accordance with the provisions of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights;
- h) accountability, economic and social justice and popular participation in development;
- i) recognition and observance of the rules and principles of the Community;
- j) promotion and consolidation of a democratic system of governance in each Member State as envisaged by the Declaration of Political Principles adopted in Abuja on 6 July, 1991; and
- k) equitable and just distribution of the costs and benefits of economic co-operation and integration.

Credit: (Revised Treaty of ECOWAS, 2015)

The clauses listed above under Article 4 of the Revised ECOWAS Treaty, express the ideals, principles and values as well as the standard of behaviors that are embraced by all member states in the West African region.

Carefully, most of the basic values in the treaty of ECOWAS such as sovereign equality, participation of the West African people, human rights, social justice, democratic principles, gender equality, peace and security, common defense policy for West African states and respect for borders can also be found in the AU act. It is not surprising since ECOWAS itself is a sub-regional body under the main African organization, the AU. One distinctive feature, found in the ECOWAS values which appears missing in the AU values is the principle of collective self – reliance. This particular value would be emphasized in

the preceding sections however practically; the values enshrined in the ECOWAS treaty are virtually the same as those in the AU constitutive Act. It again rests on how both regional bodies have ensured the effectiveness of these values in shaping the identity of their members in their respective regions.

Below, I discuss some of the enshrined values in the ECOWAS treaty and how sanctions along with them have influenced the identity of member states in the West African region.

#### **a) Consolidating Democratic System of Governance**

ECOWAS was formed at a time when the region was predominantly under military dictatorships and with the benefit of hindsight; it enables us to wonder how naive it was to imagine that economic integration was feasible in such an environment (Nwauche, 2009, p.322). For ECOWAS to be additionally recognized as a regional body that upholds democratic values and governance among its member states seemed quite unusual and perhaps an odd element coming up in such sub regional body. Yet, among ECOWAS' ideal has been the belief that a sound economic activity impinges on a region where democratic values and good governance are respected and shared among members (ECOWAS, 2015). This motivation has its roots in protecting civilian governments from military coups and preventing civil conflict in the West African region.

ECOWAS shapes the identity of member states by promoting democratic values in two principal ways (Tejpar and Albuquerque 2015, p.1). First, is by expansion of its role in election monitoring, and seeking to prevent leaders coming to power through less than fair elections. Second, is the adoption of the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance since 2001 which emphasizes that;



“the party and/or candidate who loses the election shall concede defeat to the political party and/or candidate finally declared the winner, following the guidelines and within the deadline stipulated by the law.”

Clearly, ECOWAS is increasingly being involved in the “promotion of democratic governance which has been more targeted at conflict prevention, management or resolution strategy” (Yaya 2014, p.95). We witness a similar expression of such value in the AU but more under a large spectrum of membership than in the ECOWAS.

More so, ECOWAS promotes its values and norms through election conditions and observation including “zero tolerance for power obtained or maintained by unconstitutional means” and constitutionalism which has begun to trump national sovereignty (Afro barometer, January 2017). Recently in 2017, ECOWAS succeeded in enforcing its democratic and good governance values as an identity building mechanism, through the Gambian electoral case in 2016. The main fear that the incumbent of the Gambia might not relinquish power to the incoming successor and further disrupt the swearing in ceremony saw the intervention role of ECOWAS; with forces drawn from all member states in the West African region. The main reason for the intervention by ECOWAS was to demonstrate to member states the essence of upholding its democratic values in the region and condemning any act that could undermine such values (Reuters, 2017). ECOWAS was able to employ values of democracy and good governance to shape the identity of Gambians, through the intervention which created the need for Gambian leaders to respect the ECOWAS values in order to maintain its membership with the community.

Prevalently, the Gambian election dispute is not the first of its kind that ECOWAS has confronted. Côte d’Ivoire’s 2010 electoral case and the Guinea Bissau coup in 2012 are all cases to recount, where ECOWAS showed its role as a regional body in upholding democratic values among its members. In contemporary times, ECOWAS remains an identity builder through its capacity of influencing member

states with shared democratic values. Member states in the West African region that are able to conform to these values enshrined in the Treaty of ECOWAS are considered with a 'West African' identity. The values by ECOWAS carry with them sanctions that facilitate its enforcement among member states. The ECOWAS democratic values are therefore able to shape the identity of its members in the West African area.

### **b) Ensuring Regional Peace and Security**

Member states in West Africa are entreated to promote values of regional peace and security as this shapes their identity in the region. ECOWAS has not relented in its efforts of projecting values of peace and security among its members in the Community. Largely, ECOWAS deals with peace and security challenges facing the region, with specific focus on human security (Hussein et. al, 2004, p.8). For instance, Ero (1995) portend that in Africa, the rise of security issues and concerns in regional politics make it more essential that "economic relations be harnessed on a sound political and security foundation....." This has been the reason why ECOWAS' ambition over the years has been to pursue trade cooperation peacefully in tandem with a secured environment.

As mentioned earlier in Article 4 (f) of the revised Treaty of ECOWAS, "peaceful settlement of disputes among Member States, active co-operation between neighboring countries and promotion of a peaceful environment as prerequisite for economic development" is intensely a value that is maintained by all member states in the region. In ensuring that values of peace and security is not undermined, the 1999 ECOWAS Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-keeping and Security was enacted based on the concern of the ECOWAS Community about the proliferation of conflicts within the sub region that threaten peace and security (Yaya 2014, p.93). The

Protocol also echoes the opinion of the ECOWAS Community that good governance, the rule of law and sustainable development are essential preconditions for peace and conflict prevention (ECOWAS 1999, p. 4-5). In subsequent years, there has been the ECOWAS Conflict and Prevention Framework in 2008 to guide member states into complying with values of peace and security and placing mechanisms to resolve conflicts in the region (Adebajo and Rashid 2004; Tejpar and Albuquerque 2015). These instruments are geared towards constructing a sense of collective identity through shared values of peace and security by member states.

Consequently, shared values on peace and security that are enshrined in the Treaty of ECOWAS facilitate the identity building role of the ECOWAS as similarly observed in the African Union. Indeed, these measures are not immune from certain challenges as in some instances; ECOWAS continues to struggle at dealing with peace and security issues in the region. Nonetheless, the manner in which peace and security values have become a standard set for all member states to comply with in the region alone is commendable. ECOWAS does not cede peace and security values for actions that lead to conflicts in its economic relations. Hence, most West African countries example Liberia and Guinea have faced sanctions from ECOWAS at a point when peace, security values gushed out, and stability was threatened in these states. Extensively, peace and security are values that shape the identity of members in West Africa and an attempt by member states to subvert these values in the regional body could either lead to sanctioning or the lost in membership.

### **c) Solidarity, Collective self-reliance and Intervention**

Solidarity, collective self – reliance and Intervention are shared values that are found in the ECOWAS. They are elements that collectively unite member states in the West African region and provides a feeling

or action, especially among individuals with a common interest and mutual support within a group. Recently, ECOWAS also takes keen interest in intervention as an active way of helping members conform to certain values in the region. Enshrined in article 4 (b) of its treaty, member states are expected to be each other's guard in the region, observing fully the principle of 'solidarity and collective self-reliance' as a value for identity and community building.

Member states in ECOWAS solidarize with each other during identity building in West Africa. As these standard of behavior are exhibited among member states, a common West African identity is achieved through the enforcement of those values. For instance Nigeria's witness of several deadly Attacks in 2014, by Boko Haram (a terrorist group), where almost all member states from ECOWAS issued statements condemning the act and solidarizing with Nigeria during the difficult time. A statement issued by the ECOWAS Chairman also stressed the need for solidarity in these times where Nigeria was in peril, as it read;

“...any destabilization of Nigeria was a destabilization of the whole of the West African sub-region ...hence all member states must solidarize with Nigeria in these times” (Daily Graphic, 2014).

ECOWAS also expounds among its values the need for collective self-reliance as an element for enhancing identity in the region. Comparatively, this principle of collective self-reliance does not feature among the values of the main African regional body, the AU. The sub regional body ensures that members collectively rely on each other for any form of assistance or support in the West African region. Collectively, members are entreated to be dependent on other member states and advance a course of maintaining assistance with one another. A value of this nature is considered crucial for all members in the ECOWAS region.

Beyond collective self - reliance is the introduction of intervention, as a means to also promote identity building in the region. ECOWAS has currently redefined the principles of sovereignty and non-interference in West Africa through various regional practices, like regional interventions or policies addressing transnational issues (Lucia, 2016, p.5). The right of intervention in the event of a breach of democracy (e.g. a coup d'état) or of a conflict endangering the region has become a value widely expressed among ECOWAS member states. ECOWAS's interventions in the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s are considered prime examples of this new trend of strategy adopted through the organization's values to shape the identity of member states.

In general, ECOWAS through shared values of solidarity, collective self-reliance and intervention have constructed a sense of collective identity in the region. The promotion of these values and principles further shape the identity of member states, as long as members comply with these values enshrined in the treaty and aware of possible sanctions regarding a breach. Inclusively, all ECOWAS member states are identified as 'West Africans' based on the values of solidarity, collective self-reliance and the role of intervention expressed by member states in the region.

#### **d) Protection of Human rights and Social Justice**

The Revised ECOWAS Treaty is assumed to have reformed the perception and reception of human rights in the constitutional framework of ECOWAS as it makes specific reference to human rights straight from its preamble (Ebobrah, 2008). The Revised Treaty further recognizes 'promotion and protection of human and peoples' rights in accordance with the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights' as one of the fundamental principles the Community would adhere to in the pursuit of their objectives. Human rights

and social justice are values that ECOWAS member states cherish, as they are encouraged from time to time to respect and practice within their respective states and in the Community.

Among the ways of promoting these shared values, ECOWAS as part of its institution making mechanisms created the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice (ECCJ). The ECOWAS Court of Justice was created pursuant to the Revised Treaty of the ECOWAS. The Court is the judicial organ of the Community and is charged with resolving disputes related to the Community's treaty, protocols and conventions. The ECCJ has competence to hear individual complaints of alleged human rights violations and is increasingly active and bold international adjudicator of human rights violations in West Africa. From 2005 when it acquired jurisdiction over human rights issues, the ECCJ has issued several path-breaking judgments, against example Niger for condoning modern forms of slavery, the Gambia for the torture of journalists, and Nigeria for failing to regulate the multinational oil companies that polluted the Niger Delta (Alter et. al, 2013). These roles by the ECCJ are able to influence member states into accepting basic human rights issues as key to defining their identity as member states.

Additionally, ECOWAS implements various legal mechanisms that protect human rights and ensure social justice in West Africa. At some periods sessions are also organized which draws human rights experts across the continent to deliberate over critical issues in this field. Example during March 2015, a biennial conference was held in Guinea Bissau, where legal and human rights experts from within and outside West Africa came together to discuss and examine the role of the ECOWAS Community Court in the protection of the human rights of community citizens as a fundamental value of the community (ECOWAS CCJ, 2012). Participants at the conference touched on the subject under seven sub themes which focused on the human rights mandate of the court, access to justice, human rights protection and community law and the exhaustion of local remedies for human rights cases (ECOWAS CCJ, 2015). Furtherance to that, ECOWAS ensures social justice, under Article 34 of the Supplementary Protocol

which emphasizes the resolve of member states to adopt practical modalities for the enforcement of the rule of law and human rights.

Regardless of the tremendous role ECOWAS continues to play in projecting its values of human rights and social justice, the West African region cannot be considered free from challenges of abuses and social injustices. These ill-fated incidences still happen in some parts of the West African region, despite the sub – regional body’s aim to promote these values. In as much as these issues are prevalent, the role of ECOWAS has been able to shape the identity of its members around common values of human rights and social justice. The sub regional body frowns on any form of human right abuses and injustices. Hence any member state that fails to uphold these values strongly is likely not to be defined as part of the sub - regional body. Undeniably, it makes firm a point to state that values concerning human rights and social justice are prerequisites for accepting members to become part of the ECOWAS and this is a way of building a collective identity.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has expounded on the ideas of how shared values shape the identity of member states in regional organizations. The conduct of member states over the years has been built on these values found in the acts and treaties that member states ratify or sign on to. Largely, member states are able to comply with these values and promote them accordingly, so long as they accept to continue to be part of the regional body.

Putting emphasis on the African case, this paper has demonstrated through two propositions that shared values that are enshrined in treaties and acts of regional bodies usually lead to an effective identity

building and shared values whose breach carry sanctions can enhance an effective identity building in regional bodies. The African Union (AU) and ECOWAS have been the areas of focus in this chapter, as these regional bodies have been used to explain how values shape the identity of members.

In the AU Constitutive Act (Article 4), is an outline of values and principles that shape the identity of member states in the Union. Member states in the AU who have ratified this Act are expected to maintain the shared values both at the national and regional levels. Values such as domestic sovereignty and non – interference; democracy and good governance; protection of human rights and social justice; and ensuring peace and security, have been studied as shared values in the AU Act that shape the identity of members states. In the same vein, the Revised Treaty of ECOWAS spells out a number of values and underlying principles that govern member states in the West African Community. ECOWAS ensures that the very fundamental values on which the Community stands are respected and embraced by its members. Again, under article 4 of the treaty are values such as solidarity, intervention and collective self-reliance; democratic consolidation and good governance; human rights and social justice; and peace and security. Distinctively, the concept of collective alliance is an ECOWAS value that is not found in the AU. The West African region through ECOWAS has keenly maintained these values as crucial for building identity and by so doing a collective identity is constructed in the region.

Sanctions move along with shared values in the process of shaping the identity of members in regional organizations. It is observed from the second proposition in this chapter that shared values that carry with them sanctions in terms of a breach is effective for the construction of identity. Cases from ECOWAS and AU have demonstrated widely, how the AU and ECOWAS manage to construct identity with sanctions in place. Consequently at some point where member states fail to comply with the necessary shared values in a region, sanctions are meted out to these members to restore order the essence of values in identity building. In this chapter, reference has been made to Guinea and Niger as member



states of ECOWAS who have witnessed the impact of sanctions based on their breach of certain shared values in the organization.

Comparatively, the treaty of ECOWAS contains values almost similar to that of the African Union. Nonetheless, it is observed that ECOWAS has been more influential through its shared values, to shape the identity of members than the AU. Perhaps, this success is attributed to the small membership size in ECOWAS that allows it to easily enforce those shared values among its members. However, shared values as long as they remain enshrined in treaties or acts and carry sanctions in terms of a breach; are assumed effective in shaping the identity of members in regional organization. In conclusion, this chapter has shown that shared values in African regional organizations continue to shape the identity of member states in the Africa region.

# Chapter 3

## Constructing collective identity through Membership debates

### 3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has advanced the argument that shared values are influential in shaping the identity of member states among African regional bodies: as long as those values are enshrined in treaties or acts of regional bodies and carry with them sanctions in terms of a breach. Aside the theme on shared values, regional organizations are generally able to construct a sense of collective identity through the process of membership debates. Constructing identity based on geography remains an act that occurs across many regional organizations. Extensively, most regional bodies depend largely on geographical boundaries to construct a sense of collective identity with member states. Example, we deduce a sense of constructing identity out of geographical boundaries from the AU constitutive Act (article 29.1) regarding membership eligibility, which states that ‘only African states’ are entitled to join the Union.

Ostensibly, this narrow expression of ‘African state’ obviously centers on geography and considers an African state to be a mere expression of pre given and natural geographical boundaries. The same is the case of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), where the building of a ‘West African Community’ points to the difficulties of demarcation in the West African region. The continuous attribution of reference to geographical boundaries as the only means for constructing identity in African regional organizations, particularly in the AU and ECOWAS begs the question of whether boundaries are pre given or fixed in itself. Thus, are geographical boundaries constructed or they are ideals that are fixed and pre given in nature?

Historically, some scholars have argued that, the African continent is one whose national borders were forced on them due to colonialism (David, 2011) and therefore, defining identity based on national borders alone does not sufficiently warrant an African identity. Nonetheless, it appears African regional and sub-regional bodies still point to geographical boundaries as if they were pre given and naturally fixed for the construction of identity, discounting the fact that the institutional practices and processes of membership debates are also capable of enhancing the construction of identity among member states in regional bodies.

This chapter seeks to establish that, geographical boundaries are not the only means of constructing identity, but more so the enlargement process which involves the inclusion and exclusion of some member states, in itself add up to the process of constructing identity in Africa. Three cases stand out as extreme in expressing the uncertain and contested nature of African boundaries in the AU and ECOWAS. In addition, the cases demonstrate how the enlargement process and membership debates in both AU and ECOWAS have resulted in building an ‘African / West African’ identity.

The first case refers to Haiti, a Caribbean country which took a bold decision recently to join the AU. A request which was officially turned down, owing to Article 29.1 of the AU constitution regarding membership, which disqualifies Haiti as clearly a “non – African” state. Just for the AU to deny Haiti membership based on not being geographically part of the African region is a critical issue to look at. It also raises questions of where exactly an African boundary starts from and ends. Perhaps, what actually could have pushed Haiti to seek membership from nowhere than the AU, would be of interest in this issue.

The second case pertains to Morocco, thirty two (32) years ago when it took a decision to withdraw from AU’s predecessor the Organization of African Unity (OAU), in protest of the Union’s acceptance of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) as a member state. The basis for which the OAU

accepted the SADR as a member state in 1984 was built on Article 2 of the OAU Charter, which aimed at the eradication of all forms of colonialism from the continent and as a result OAU expressing its fullest support in bringing immediate and unconditional liberation to all African territories under Spanish domination after most African countries had gained independence. Hence, the SADR on such grounds qualified for membership in the OAU, a decision which Morocco was not at peace with. Surprisingly, this same Morocco a country consequently being only miles away from Europe as geography describes, after opposing OAU's acceptance of SADR in 1986 sought membership in the European Union (EU). Equally, such application was also turned down by EU, with the reason that the European Union is one, opened to only Europeans. Such event again brings to mind the question of identity construction through membership debate.

The third case relates to the ECOWAS a sub-regional body and Mauritania over how such a country which lies between the Maghreb and Sub Saharan Africa, pulled out of the ECOWAS in 2000 just to join the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) as a way of strengthening Arab African Minority. Mauritania's decision to return to the ECOWAS and the rules governing membership eligibility would be the center of focus in this case.

These three selected cases from the AU and ECOWAS will be used to justify that, the processes and practices which occur during enlargement and membership debates offer unlimited insights into how regional organizations construct identity. It will further show that, carefully analyzing the construction of an African identity from the processes of membership enlargement are necessary in African regionalism as the AU and ECOWAS have served as identity builders where states apply for membership as a means to define their identity and where they belong to in a region.

This chapter is divided into four parts. The first part provides a review on how identity is variously constructed among regional communities through membership patterns. The second part looks at the AU

membership debate as an identity building process with reference to the case studies of Haiti and Morocco. The third part focuses also on ECOWAS membership debate and the way this builds identity with the Mauritanian case. The chapter concludes that, defining identity only on the basis of borders does not wholly provide a better description of an African or West African identity but rather such construction of identity is one that moves beyond borders to cover practices and processes of membership enlargement.

### **3.2 Analyzing Membership Patterns of Regional Bodies in Identity Building**

The definition of regions in International Relations studies have mostly centered on geographical proximity of states (Mansfield and Milner, 1997) and this is linked to why perhaps boundaries also influence membership patterns of regional bodies in identity building. Carefully, membership eligibility and enlargement process among regional bodies are ways states construct their identity, especially during state's application to join regional bodies. Yet, the construction of identity has been subdued mostly by the concept of boundaries, where membership eligibility of states into regional bodies have been solely defined geographically. To conceive regional geography as if it were defined by physical boundaries does not provide a satisfactory explanation of a state's eligibility to join a regional organization (Thomas 2016). At some stage, it is not even clear what physical geography is implied by the name of a particular region. For example, the description of ECOWAS as 'a 15-member regional group with a mandate of promoting economic integration in all fields of activity of the constituting countries': raises the question of where precisely these constituting countries begin from and end. Geographical boundaries therefore at some point are hard to define and that alone challenges the notion of making it the sole criteria for accepting states into regional bodies.

Fawn (2009, p.6) posits that, regions have different constituting features and cautions the further challenge of dealing with 'regions' as a 'complicated category' as it brings together both material and virtual elements as well as diverging social practices and discourses. Archaya (2012) admits that certain shifts have occurred in regionalism, where the concept has moved from the previous idea of being a monopoly of states to one which encompasses interactions among non-state actors and between states and non-state actors within a given area. This assertion implies that not only states are entitled to be part of regional bodies, let alone apply for membership, but also, non-state actors can seek membership in regional bodies. Beyond that, some regional bodies have been created on economic grounds allowing activities which attract and pool countries to join for economic reasons. As Mansfield & Milner (1999) put it "disputes over the definition of an economic region and regionalism hinge on the importance of geographic proximity and on the relationship between economic flows and policy choices" (p.3). Economic activities in this sense also matter in regional bodies for collective identity building.

In as much as economic activities contribute to the building of identity in regional bodies, so do political activities. Regions may provide solutions to the contradictions between states and markets, security and insecurity, nationalism and cosmopolitanism. Hence, Katzenstein (2005, p.2) postulates that, "regions have both material and symbolic dimensions and we can trace them in patterns of behavioral interdependence and political practices". Noticeably, regions are politically and behaviorally constructed and its construction need not focus only on a single dimension, but instead, move beyond territories of even the major power and connect with other regional powers in a different area or region.

Although one cannot rely on 'geographical eyeballing or legalistic inspection' to answer such intensely political questions of how regions are made' (Cederman 2001, p. 2), theories such as social constructivism, similarly emphasize how some social indicators possibly push for the creation of regions. As Ruggie (1998, p.235) puts it 'space is not given in nature and can be a social construct that people somehow invent'. Thus, the border of a region 'is not a geographic fact that has sociological

consequences, but a sociological fact that takes geographic form' (Hemmer and Katzenstein, 2002, p. 587). By this, Said (1978) admits geography is meaningful and politically consequential essentially through the ways in which it is imagined.

In particular, some have conceived regional bodies as cultural and political spaces whose identities evolve as actors attribute certain characteristics to an 'other' in order to provide meaning and coherence to their 'self' (Thomas, 2016). In the same way, Neumann (1999) and Rumelili (2007) have mapped changes in the meaning of Europe over time, tracing how it was constituted in opposition to various salient 'others', most notably Russia and Turkey, over decades and even centuries. Their logic is unquestionable as no group of states can claim that certain characteristics distinguish its members without referring implicitly or explicitly to other states that lack the same characteristics, either entirely or in sufficient measure (Thomas, 2016). Their arguments on identity emphasize individuals' sense of belonging to a region and sharing the characteristics of other individuals in the region. There have also been much of the literature on European identity and socialization (Cederman 2001; Checkel and Katzenstein, 2009; Risse, 2010) with focus on whether, how much and under what circumstances individuals consider themselves to be European, instead of or in addition to whatever other identities they may feel (Thomas, 2016).

Additionally, within these geographical spaces have existed activities that form part of regional bodies; identifying them by what they do or practices which they engage in. As Rumelili (2007, p.1) posits, regional organizations are "contemporarily serving as 'community – building'" which directly engage in, and serve as the reference points for various practices that construct, promote and sustain a sense of collective identity among their member states". Likewise, the main gap this chapter intends to fill is to highlight that, membership debates over eligibility among regional bodies is an alternative means for constructing identity. In other words, the processes that regional bodies engage in to accept or refuse members during membership debates lead to the construction of a collective identity.

Membership debates over eligibility is key in the identity building discourse of regional bodies and constructing identity through such means involves certain processes which defines the identity status of states in question. Whereas some states automatically become members of regional bodies by virtue of where they find themselves geographically, others need to defend the basis for which they feel qualified to be part of such regional organization. Neumann (1998) for example gives an extreme case of Former German Democratic Republic, which became a member of the EU without an application, referendum, or even ratification by the European states themselves (see Rumelili 2015, p.180). Similarly, Nigeria among other West African states is strategically positioned on the sub Saharan Western belt such that its membership in a regional body like the ECOWAS or AU is obvious and unquestioned. On the contrary, for a Caribbean country like Haiti which is nowhere close to Africa to seek membership in the AU is an issues that looks beyond a case of building identity through geography.

Clearly, the widespread interest on how membership patterns lead to identity construction is in regional bodies is shrouded by the lack of consensus on definition of region and partly because many scholars do not agree on what constitutes a region. Though ambiguities exists over membership eligibility in regional bodies with many defining a region on the context of a group of states located in the same geographical boundary, this review underscores the point that the practices which go on during membership debate cannot be overlooked as an indicator for building identity. In that case, building identity through membership patterns is multi-dimensional and does not follow a single strand of activity or condition. As Rumelili (2015, p.177) maintains, “.... no pre-existing and fixed identity is applied as a condition for membership in a regional body”. Therefore, beyond boundaries, identity building can still occur during the process of enlargement. Regional organizations shape the identity of member states during debates over which state is accepted or denied membership.

Primarily, the review considers identity construction among regional bodies, pointing to how identity building moves beyond the idea of geography during membership debates. It allows for



discerning into two propositions that extensively support the claim of how identity construction occurs beyond geography in membership patterns of regional bodies. Below are these propositions.

***Proposition 1: Regional organizations that are more open with no strict eligibility conditions on membership easily construct a collective identity.***

***Proposition 2: The ambiguity of geography in the membership debates of regional organizations leads to identity building.***

### **Proposition 1**

Regional organizations that are open to members with no strict eligibility conditions on membership are able to easily construct collective identity. Generally, regional organizations decide the membership status of states through their eligibility conditions. Hence, applicant states need to fulfill certain eligibility criteria before being accepted as a member of regional organization. The conditions that should be met are crucial in determining the fate of applicant states and defining their identity as members in the regional organization. On the other hand, some regional organizations may have no limitations regarding eligibility of whom may be accepted or denied membership. This characteristic could be influential in determining member states' interest for regional bodies.

Typically, the eligibility conditions and nature of regional organization (whether open or closed), tend to influence the pace at which members get interested in applying for membership in regional organizations. In cases where regional organizations open up without strict eligibility conditions on membership, states are able to apply more easily to become members of the organization. This process also enhances identity building as it encourages states to identify with regional organizations. For example, unlike the African Union that specifically makes it clear in its Constitutive Act that members

should come from the African continent before they are accepted into the Union, ECOWAS on the other hand is more open and unclear about its eligibility conditions, especially who is able to join the Community. In this case, applicant states may show more interest in regional organizations that tend to put aside restrictions regarding membership, in order to build a collective identity through the regional body.

Though on the converse, regional organizations with closed membership can as well construct a collective identity, the application of membership in regional bodies and identity construction usually boils down to the openness and the nature of the eligibility conditions during the enlargement process. Eligibility conditions depending on its flexibility could inspire or discourage members to join regional bodies. Certainly, identity building consequently becomes easier with regional organizations that are open with no strict eligibility conditions on their membership.

## **Proposition 2**

For long, there has been existing ambiguities over what exactly constitutes the term geography, in the membership debates of regional organizations. Regional organizations often build collective identities through common geography and the nature of ambiguity surrounding the term, is in itself a way of constructing a sense of collective identity. The term geography remains contested in regional organizations, as many elements and alternatives constitute its construction. Geography may be constructed through a common idea, culture, history, value, norms and social practices. This clearly depicts that geography is always not pre – given or fixed and even the idea that geography relies solely on boundaries is insufficient for constructing a sense of identity in regional bodies.

Presumably, the ambiguity of geography in the membership debates of regional organizations leads to identity building based on how it is constructed in various ways. The concept of geography moves beyond mere borders or boundaries and member states could define their geography even according to what they consider to share in common with the regional organization (Hemmer & Katzenstein, 2002). Haiti for example considered a common history as what connects it to the African Union in terms of geography and therefore decided to apply for membership in the Union (The Guardian, 2012). Similarly, Morocco applied for membership in the European Union in 1987, though in terms of geographical boundary its location was not even within Europe. These among other cases that will be discussed in the preceding sections, point to the fact that the term geography is ambiguous and a contested one that comes up during the construction of identity in the membership patterns of regional body. The varied ways through which geography is understood in membership debates also allows for the construction of identity among member states in a region.

From the relation established between the two propositions, the case of Africa and the manner in which their regional bodies construct a collective identity during membership debates is considered. Examining the enlargement processes that have occurred among African regional bodies and their eligibility conditions which move beyond geography is needed in this section. This chapter selects cases from the AU and ECOWAS to reveal how identity building have occurred through the above propositions. It begins with cases of membership debates in the African Union, specifically Haiti and Morocco's application and withdrawal of membership from the Union.

### 3.3

### **AU Membership debate and identity building**

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) which later became the AU among other regional bodies was established as post-colonial projects with the explicit aim to safeguard state borders and shield sovereign governments from external interference (Hellquist, 2014). From time, when most African states had been freed from colonial rule, the main agenda on which African regional bodies such as AU were set up transformed, shifting to tackle other major issues on the continent (Hartmann, 2016). It is by this reason that the approach to which African regional bodies carry out their activities since the end of colonial rule have taken on different trajectories. Same is the case for the construction of an African identity. The present ambiguities surrounding membership eligibility in the African Union on who gets accepted, rejected and suspended in the Union, is an issue of interest in determining how identity is constructed along the African region.

Ultimately, the construction of an African identity in the AU has mostly depended on geography, African ancestry or common values. Yet, there lies the question of what must have influenced a state which is geographically nowhere to the African borders to seek membership in the AU? This suggests that, though geography and other criteria for shaping identity matter, the membership debates on which state are either accepted into or refused into regional organizations is key in identity building. The Haitian case supports this claim of how the enlargement processes in the AU lead to the construction of identity.

#### **a) Membership Debate over Haiti's application to the AU**

The AU is made up of five (5) geographical regions; the North, Southern, East, West and Central. Currently, the decision has been to categorize the African Diaspora as the Sixth Region of the AU

(Kassim, 2013). This decision as many scholars argue has not been practical since the five geographical regions under which the AU operates are only active during the AU organs sessions, where even the African Diaspora is not represented (Kassim, 2013). The African Diaspora is made up of the communities throughout the world that have resulted by descent from the movement in historic times of peoples from Africa, predominantly to the Americas, Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and among other areas around the globe. Haiti among other countries fall under this grouping (Kachipande, 2016). As a slave trade diaspora descending from African slaves with strong ties to countries in Africa, Haiti is a Caribbean country whose identity has been unyielding in the quest for freedom and stability (Cromwell 2016).

Immediately after kicking its French colonizers to the curb, Haiti's independence was undermined and was expected to pay a large indemnity to France or risk not being recognized by many other countries as its own nation. Haiti, in search of legitimacy and security, paid the fine though this did not guard it from being a pawn in the West's political ambitions (Cromwell, 2016). In 1915 the US occupied Haiti, lasting almost 19 years; taking over the Haitian government, changing its laws, with a long fight and bloody battle in an attempt to get the Haitians to surrender to its rule and protect its interests.

Haiti's history of being colonized under Western powers to some extent is not far different from many African countries that have had a long and despicable history with Western powers. From occupations and invasions to the division of the continent, African nations had suffered because of Western interests. As David (2011) posits, there was first the "Scramble for Africa" with a hot race for control of the African continent followed with the partitioning of Africa during the Berlin Conference, which "began the process of carving up Africa, paying no attention to local culture or ethnic groups, and leaving people from the same tribe on separate sides of European-imposed borders"(p.2). In an attempt to reclaim the African continent's resources, culture, and economic power, the African Union was founded in 2001. The controversial and much maligned dictator, Muammar Gaddafi, the Libyan leader led the creation of the African Union (Nolan 2011). Widely been discussed and debated, the leader had

a vision of a unified Africa, which included a Caribbean islands with African populations, as stated in his 2009 speech in Tripoli

“ ..... an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena .... I wish to see a United States of Africa, including the Caribbean islands with African populations such as Haiti, Jamaica and the Dominican Republic” (Murori, 2016).

The African Union is currently a 55-member bloc, all being countries on African soil. However, Haiti's soil is trodden by African men, women and children and ties have been strengthened between African nations, especially since their awful earthquake in 2010 (Cromwell, 2016). Now, five years after Gaddafi's death, this vision seems to become a reality.

Despite being geographically disconnected from the African region, Haiti still shares some political and cultural ties with Africa. At the 2010 AU summit, the Chairperson Jean Ping told Haitians they were free to come back to Africa if they so wanted since:

“We (Africans) have an attachment and link to that country. The first Black Republic...that carried high the flame of liberation and freedom for black people and has paid a heavy price in so doing,”

Consequently it was unsurprising when a recent announcement came in 2012 that Haiti is petitioning to become the first country off the continent to join the African Union. Always been an observer state in the AU, Haiti in 2016 attended the African Union International Conference of Heads of State and Government, held in Addis Ababa in Ethiopia. In this conference were delegates sprung with Haiti's wishes to seek full membership (Parks, 2016), as Haitian's Prime Minister Dr. Garry Conille was reported to have said at the summit that:

“...The African continent occupies a place increasingly important in the diplomatic action of the Haitian government ... to this end, a process of participation of Haiti in the African Union was

engaged with the President of the regional institution, for the grant to Haiti, of a status of associate member and of the accreditation of a diplomatic mission with that organization,” (Parks, 2016).

Barely weeks after many held positive expectations over Haiti’s scheduled acceptance as a member of the AU, came another meeting in Kigali where the AU Commission in a statement issued on Tuesday, May 17 denied the granting of Haiti full member status, on the basis that, according to its statutes (article 29.1 of the AU constitution), “only African states can join the African Union”. Ostensibly, this thin definition of ‘African states’ have relied more on geography neglecting the practices along membership debates which add to the building of collective identity in the region. The usage of only African states is self-limiting to the Union and serves no immediate purpose. In other words, it is a no-brainer that physical proximity is often the least element necessary for fostering identity between countries (Face2Face Africa, 2016).

Though AU was against Haiti’s decision of becoming fully part of the Union, the reasons against such decision alone could be said to be a way an African identity is constructed in this membership debate. What probably could have motivated Haitians to seek membership in the AU? According to Garry Pierre-Pierre, publisher of the Brooklyn-based Haitian Times, “Haiti always calls itself ... a little piece of Africa in the Caribbean, and so thinking they share so much of the African culture from religious practices to the way we interact”. From this assertion, Haiti’s goal is not to consider the construction of an African identity from the point of borders but more importantly in relation to what they consider to share in common with the African continent. The Haiti’s high commissioner to South Africa, Jacques Junior Baril has proposed that their membership to the AU should be an automatic one since;

“It’s not something we (Haitians) decided, it’s a place that we (Haitians) earned after we fought for our independence 212 years ago .... We paved the way for every other African nation to be free today, so historically speaking Haiti should have been in the AU already.”

Obviously from the above statement, Haitians sought membership in the AU not based on geographical proximity as the AU act demanded but instead on the grounds of a common historical culture and lineage it believes to share with Africa. It cannot be overstated that in this new era of regionalism, physical distance counts for next to nothing. For Haiti to admit that it shares something in common with the African continent, pushing it to seek membership in the AU clearly demonstrates that the construction of an African identity moves beyond mere geographical borders to focus on other elements of commonality among member states.

The African identity is constructed as long as there is a shared element of commonality between the applicant state and the regional body. Haiti did not need to geographically find itself within the African territories before requesting to fully become a member in the AU. Identity building among regional bodies through membership debates is relatively contextual and does not strictly follow fixed or laid down elements. As Rumelili (2015, p.177) posits in relation to the EU, “no preexisting or fixed identity is applied as a condition for membership”. Similarly, Haiti’s rejection by the AU is not what matters in this analysis but instead, the claim Haiti makes during the enlargement process to support why it qualifies to become a member of the AU. Below are cases of AU membership debates that affirms how identity building occurs among member states in Africa.

#### **b) Membership debate over Morocco’s withdrawal and quest to return to the AU**

After thirty - three years on the outside, Morocco has finally, returned to the African Union body that it dramatically left in 1984. Prior to this decision at the 27th AU summit held in Kigali Rwanda, the Moroccan King Mohammed VI announced that his country wanted to rejoin the African Union (AU), stating that:



"For a long time our friends have been asking us to return to them, so that Morocco can take up its natural place within its institutional family. The moment has now come" (Al-Monitor, 2016).

Actually, the 27th summit was expected to be the venue where Morocco's decision would have been formally announced though historically, Morocco pulled out of the Union, over AU's decision to recognize and accept the self-proclaimed Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) as an official member state.

In the AU founding Constitutive Act, which was adopted in Lomé, Togo, on 11 July 2000, the African leaders underlined that:

"The AU shall function in accordance with a number of principles including, inter alia, sovereign equality and interdependence among Member States of the Union; respect of borders existing on achievement of independence; and prohibition of the use of force or threat to use force among Member States of the Union".

The statutes concerning membership in the AU Act allows the organization to recognize the SADR independent and as a member state. Yet the AU's position on this matter did not sink well for Morocco, as it was not surprising that it at the time remained the only country in the African region that was not a member of the African Union. Objectively, Morocco's exit was influenced also by the ambition to continue to occupy by force parts of an AU member state (the Sahrawi Republic), in violation of the objectives and principles of the AU Constitutive Act (Omar 2014; World Affairs, 2016).

From this example, it is deduced that the African Union through its Constitutive Act provides strict eligibility conditions that widely centers on the African geography as a means for acquiring membership. Yet a state like Morocco, which already qualifies for membership per geography willingly decided to withdraw from the Union. It implies that geography is not often the only basis for which states qualify to become members of regional organizations. More clearly, violations of certain regulations in the AU Act

prevented Morocco from claiming membership in the AU, let alone contribute in constructing an African identity in the region.

Furthermore, regardless of Morocco's withdrawal in 1984, its chances of getting accepted back into the Union was more guaranteed than would have been for an 'outsider' state which did not belong to the African region as the case of Haiti. Such benefit came for Morocco due to the importance which the AU attaches to geography as a membership eligibility criteria. Beyond this, the AU enlargement process also requires applicant states to receive the approval of the other member states before accepted, as stipulated in its Constitutive Act that:

“... admission shall be decided by a simple majority of the Member States. The decision of each Member State shall be transmitted to the Chairman of the Commission who shall, upon receipt of the required number of votes, communicate the decision to the State concerned” (Article 29.2).

Practically, the above clause underscores the point that, the AU enlargement process involves series of activities from endorsement of applicant states by other member states to the consideration of geography as criteria, which often lead to shaping member states' identity in the region. Hence, identity building through membership debates moves beyond a mere fixed or pre given geography as the enlargement process itself contribute to identity building. Largely, it is observed that the AU membership eligibility conditions have been more closed than open to states, compared to the ECOWAS which does not have any stringent conditions on its membership. Overall, the Morocco case points to the fact that membership debates in the AU results in the inclusion or exclusion of some states which in itself forms part of the identity building process.

The next part of the chapter turns to ECOWAS, a sub-regional organization in West Africa and on how membership debates in such regional body have led to the construction of a West African identity.

It focuses on a case study of Mauritania which withdrew its membership from ECOWAS to be part of another sub regional body (AMU) outside of West Africa.

### **3.4 ECOWAS Membership Debate and Identity building**

Although “West Africa” is not an obvious geographic entity but rather a historical colonial creation, there is a broad consensus that, ECOWAS brings together all “West African” states today and the organization’s membership is saturated (Hartmann, 2013). Thus, the possibility of “other West African states” joining ECOWAS has not been excluded in the 1975 treaty, and this potentially allows for the accession of even Gabon, Cameroon, Chad and other states closer to the region (Hartmann, 2013). It again implies that, ECOWAS has never conducted a debate about criteria that member states need to meet, prior to acceding to the organization. The general objective of ECOWAS (as stated in Article 2 of the 1975 Lagos Treaty) has been;

“to promote co-operation and development in all fields of economic activity ... for the purpose of raising the standard of living of its peoples, of increasing and maintaining economic stability, of fostering closer relations among its members and of contributing to the progress and development of the African continent.”

Since ECOWAS does state explicitly in its treaty the criteria for which states are eligible to join the organization unlike the AU, its aim has been to use economic cooperation as a means to open up to any state in the West African region and beyond, interested in becoming part of the Community. Aside member states who make up the Community, its vision as a sub-regional organization has been:

“.....the creation of a borderless region where the population has access to its abundant resources and is able to exploit same through the creation of opportunities under a sustainable environment.” (ECOWAS homepage - Basic Information, 2016).

The above shows that membership eligibility conditions in ECOWAS is more flexible and not strictly tied to the idea of geography unlike the African Union. Extensively, membership eligibility conditions

in ECOWAS is not dependent on geography, though implicitly, ECOWAS continues to place emphasis on the ‘West African’ region even evident in its full meaning (ECOWAS). In effect, the openness and flexibility of eligibility conditions in the ECOWAS enable it to easily attract member states and construct a common identity in the West African region, owing to its tendency to draw more states regardless of their geographical position. In fact, the membership eligibility conditions of ECOWAS and the enlargement process openly enhances identity building among its member states. The Mauritanian case and the ongoing membership debate in ECOWAS widely explains how identity building takes place in the West African region.

#### **a) Membership Debate on Mauritania’s Withdrawal and Request to rejoin the ECOWAS**

In 1975, all independent states in West Africa became members of ECOWAS without any eligibility conditions attached. Cape Verde later joined in 1977 (Hartmann, 2013). Currently, Mauritania is still considered the only “contested” additional member state of the West African regional organization (Hartmann, 2013) owing to how it is geographically positioned. Earlier argued by Hartmann (2013), the West African boundary is saturated and this difficulty in mapping where exactly a West African border begins or ends, have put a state like Mauritania which spans between the Sub Saharan and Maghreb into a tight position of defining its identity in relation to one particular regional body. Known to be among the founding members of ECOWAS, Mauritania later in 1989 signed the treaty establishing the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU). Early December 1999, Mauritania announced its intention to withdraw from ECOWAS, until 2000, when the country finally ceased to be part of the Community.

Primarily, the decision by Mauritania to leave ECOWAS was in order to allow the country concentrate its efforts in the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) for cultural reasons and also in the hope that

its interests will be better protected (all Africa, 2000). In addition, Mauritania's intention to get more strongly involved in the Arab League and the Maghreb Union necessitated this action of withdrawing from the ECOWAS. Mauritania is presently few step ahead of making a comeback to ECOWAS, as recently declared by the Mauritanian's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Mohamed Saleck Ould Mohamed (Afrol News, 2016). The Arab-Maghreb Union 'that was bent on promoting the superiority of minority Arabs in Africa' had previously succeeded in convincing Mauritania to pull out of ECOWAS. However recently, Mauritanian officials are more than convinced that the country has missed many economic benefits for pulling out of ECOWAS and hence Mauritanian officials have now shown their commitment to restore cooperation with ECOWAS, which obviously enables the country to tap a number of benefits through regional cooperation (Afrol News, 2016).

From the Mauritanian case, it could be established that Mauritania's position geographically provided it the advantage to either decide willingly to join the ECOWAS or AMU. Yet, the influence which AMU had on Mauritania was able to push the state to withdraw from ECOWAS. It supposes that geography again matters for identity building in membership debates of regional bodies, but not always influential for shaping the identity of member states. Moreover, for Mauritania to withdraw from ECOWAS and become part of the AMU, in itself forms part of the enlargement processes through which member states shape and define their identity in regional bodies.

Furthermore, there has not yet been a case where ECOWAS has turned down an applicant state which is outside the region from joining the Community, the membership debate over eligibility in ECOWAS has been more open and less complicated, compared to the AU which sets out strict membership requirements for an applicant state wanting to join the Union. The enlargement process in ECOWAS easily allows for the construction of a 'West African identity' among members, as it involves open and less restrained eligibility conditions and exceptions for membership. After all, ECOWAS did not deny Mauritania membership at the beginning when the organization was set up, though

controversially the geographical position of Mauritania was a factor which made it easier to engage in shifting the goal posts to the AMU.

Vividly, the case of Mauritania shows that the construction of identity through membership debate does not necessarily have to follow some fixed or rigid laid down elements such as geography, but also how open and less eligibility conditions are may allow for the construction of a collective identity among member states. Arguably, it is worth noting that on the other side a regional organization that is more closed with strict eligibility conditions can as well construct easily a sense of collective identity. However, the enlargement process in regional organizations with open membership and less eligibility conditions foster a more effective and accessible way of attracting states to build a kind of identity as seen from the case of ECOWAS. The ambiguity of geography also plays a key role in allowing identity to be constructed through various dimensions among regional organizations. On this score, the enlargement process that allows for either inclusion or exclusion of states in regional organizations is a way in which identity building takes place.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

The focus of this chapter has been to demonstrate that membership debates among regional organizations lead to the construction of a sense of collective identity. Specifically, the chapter has drawn cases from the AU and ECOWAS membership debates to explain how identity building occurs among member states. Apparently, geographical proximity of states which counted as a fixed and pre give determinant

for deciding states' eligibility in most African regional bodies is reconsidered. Thus, in as much as geography is significant for shaping the identity of members during membership debates, this chapter establishes the fact that the construction of identity moves beyond the idea of geography. Elaborating on plausible ways by which membership debates result in identity building, two propositions have been used to suggest that regional organizations that are more open with no strict eligibility conditions on membership easily construct a collective identity and the ambiguity of geography in membership debates of regional organizations leads to identity building.

Cases on membership debates from the AU and ECOWAS have been used to illustrate that the enlargement process itself lead to the construction of an African identity among member states. Haiti's membership rejection in the AU, Morocco's withdrawal from the OAU and Mauritania's withdrawal from the ECOWAS have explained these arguments.

Carefully, this chapter observes that since ECOWAS does not have any clear condition regarding its membership eligibility criteria, it has enabled the construction of a collective identity in the West African region more easier compared to the AU that limits states through Article 29 of the Constitutive Act, where applicants states in the African region are only those entitled to become members of the Union. On the contrary, the AU's strict membership eligibility conditions have also allowed it to define their member states identity from the others. This shows that identity building through membership debates could be multidimensional and relative depending on the regional organization.

Broadly, the AU and ECOWAS cases have shown that the enlargement processes during membership debates often enhance identity building among member states and therefore, placing too much emphasis on only geography as a way of defining membership in regional bodies is insufficient for understanding how identity building occurs among regional organizations. The patterns for constructing identity through membership debates are not tailored on only a fixed geography but importantly, the

processes and institutional practices during the enlargement enhances collective identity. Neumann (1998) is therefore right to posit that, "... identities are fluid not only across time and space but even, as they pertain to the same subjects at the same point in space and time" (p.400). Overall, the membership debates in the AU and ECOWAS indicate how member states shape collectively their identity specifically through the processes of enlargement.





# Chapter 4

## **Building Collective Identity through the Formal Institutions of AU and ECOWAS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Regional organizations in Africa from the previous chapters have shaped the identity of member states through shared values and membership debates. Beyond those themes that shape the identity of member states, formal institutions of regional bodies have been influential with respect to the construction of a sense of collective identity. Identity has been one of the most elusive and contested concepts in social sciences to the point where many have suggested abandoning it altogether (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, p.8). Yet, its importance to the study of regionalism cannot be downplayed especially with regard to regional organizations and their formal institutions. In instances where identity may be found in and fostered by institutions; in other cases, it may be constructed by everyday social practices (Hopf 2002; Brewer 2007). For example, Checkel and Katzenstein (2009, p.4) maintain that, identities are revealed by social practices as well as political attitudes and are shaped by social and geographical structures and national contexts.

Constructing a collective identity often requires one's association to groups, be it a religious, ethnic, professional, gender, and ideological categories. Cederman (2007, p.7) points out that, identity formation is built around regional formations and groupings, which involves the mobilization of differences and interactions. These regional formations and groupings are put into various categories, under which individuals identify common features which bring them together. As Rumelili (2015) admits, identities are defined with respect to a number of collective identity categories. Thus, "collective identities are

premised on people's identification with social categories and their shared features... identification entails the act of associating oneself with that label and belonging to a category" (p.2).

Applicably, formal institutions of regional organizations serve as conduits for the construction of identity among its members. Generally, they shape the identity of their members through the activities that individuals play within those formal institutions. From those activities, their identities are also shaped as members assume new roles that differs from their previously held positions in the region. For example, within formal institutions of the European Union (EU), individuals have taken up roles which define their identity as Europeans occupying supranational positions like 'European' judges, lawyers, magistrates, Ministers and Parliamentarians within the EU. Seemingly, this collective identity building in the EU formal institutions parallel that of African regional bodies and hence, poses questions of how formal institutions of African regional bodies also construct collective identities. Thus, what is the African case concerning collective identity building in their formal institutions?

As a way of replicating the European Union and its formal institutions, many African regional and sub regional bodies followed the path by setting up formal institutions as a means to enhance integration on the continent. The output of these formal institutions and individuals working in them is what have resulted in collective identity building. From a micro level analysis, this chapter analyzes how and to what extent formal institutions of African regional bodies and individuals within them contribute in the collective identity building processes.

This chapter is divided into four main sections. The first part provides a theoretical review on institutionalization and identity building, suggesting three main propositions on which formal institutions and individuals construct collective identity. The second part analyzes some formal institutions of the African Union (AU) and relates them to the propositions on identity building. The third part also examines some formal institutions of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and

relate them to the suggested propositions. The chapter ends with a summary table of the institutions discussed and a conclusion that formal institutions of African regional bodies enhance identity building on the African continent.

## **4.2 INSTITUTIONALISATION AND IDENTITY BUILDING**

Institutionalization and identity building in African regionalism is patent in the nature of roles formal institutions play at the micro level, in African regional organizations. This is compounded by example, African Union's (AU) adoption of some institutional features found in the European integration processes, from the establishment of Commissions, Courts, Councils and Parliaments to even the use of similar symbols (Fioramonti and Mattheis 2015, p.2). It implies that, identity building occur through formal institutions of regional bodies, and enhance the process of integration. This section through a theoretical review underscores the argument that, formal institutions of African regional bodies create the space for individuals working within to be embedded in practices which eventually turns out to build new collective identities for the regional bodies.

Apparently, formal institutions of regional organizations have become social categories by which individuals associate and label themselves with, in order to enhance the identity building process during integration. This relation also emphasizes the role formal institutions play when individuals identify with them, and how they are able to enhance the identity building processes under regional bodies.

Besides, there exist plausible ways by which formal institutions of regional organizations construct collective identities. Generally, individuals who work in these formal institutions are entrusted with responsibilities which collectively identify them as part of the regional body. Socialization is among the approaches to which such individuals are embedded into institutions. Checkel (2005) suggests that, socialization as a process inducts actors into the norms and rules of the given community. As individuals

decide to comply with rules and regulations binding on the institutions they indirectly accept to be socialized into the institution and this goes along to enhance collective identity.

Aside socialization, some scholars have suggested the need for a level of commonality among individuals, as it facilitates identity building in regional bodies. Laffan (2004) describes identity building as “the crafting of a degree of commonality and is suggestive of association, sharing, and community” (p.78). Regional organizations that are mostly successful are able to construct collective identities because of the degree of commonality and shared identity which exist among their members and formal institutions. Constructing an identity of such kind as Laffan (2004) posits, also relies on “the institution’s position in the institutional landscape, the roles that are associated with the institutions, the proactive identity building policies that institutions foster, and the attitudes of the individual social agents that occupy those roles” (p.85). Unarguably, these conditions allow formal institutions of regional bodies to build collective identities and enhance integration.

Building on Laffan’s criteria for constructing collective identity in formal institutions, I suggest some plausible conditions under which formal institutions of regional organizations construct a sense of collective identity. These are grouped into three main propositions below:

***Proposition 1: Frequent and regular sessions/meetings of institutions help build a collective identity.***

***Proposition 2: Effective execution of more supranational roles within institutions help build a collective identity.***

***Proposition 3: Functionally existing institutions which engage in a number of decisions help build a collective identity.***

## **Proposition 1**

Holding frequent and regular meetings/sessions are essentially important for building collective identities, especially among formal institutions of regional bodies. The number of times individuals serving within such institutions meet can go a long way to carve a collective identity among regional organizations. Regional organizations are usually governed by rules and regulations regarding how often institutions working under them are supposed to meet and carry out roles. The frequency of such meetings or sessions serve as determinants for identity building. Thus, as often as members in an institution meet to convey a session, the more they get to know, socialize, familiarize and carve a common identity for themselves in a regional body.

Drapper and Nene (2015) have argued against the EU as the best model for African regional organizations to follow. Yet, the best could be said of how institutions within the EU hold regular and frequent sessions which contribute to the building of a European identity. For example, the EU Parliament in every year holds 12 plenary sessions in Strasbourg. Its Members meet in parliamentary committees in Brussels, where additional plenary sessions are further held. Sanctions are put in place for member states who fail to attend any session organized under such institutions (EU Parliament, 2016). All these initiatives have enhanced the European integration process of identity building.

Similarly, as institutions under AU and ECOWAS adopt frequent and regular sessions, the likelihood of building a sense of collective identity among members; as they are bound to socialize, familiarize and know themselves in the course of discussing matters of common interest to the region. Frequent and regular sessions in the AU and ECOWAS institutions are essentially helpful for members to engage in and identify themselves as ‘Africans’ or ‘West Africans’ pursuing a common interest in their region. It is on such score that the number of times meetings are held become a part of most institutions

agenda in building a collective identity. This proposition shall be compared to some of the AU and ECOWAS institutions.

## **Proposition 2**

Building collective identities are also dependent on the nature of roles performed by the individuals working in the formal institutions of regional bodies. Roles determine the level of commitment and positions individuals are likely to hold, be it at the local, multinational or an interplay of both. In addition, the identity background of members in these formal institutions can be defined because of their roles. For example, assuming the role of an 'African' judge simply defines the background and origin of the position holder as one, coming from the African continent. Hence from time, roles unveil the background of holders and help individuals identify where they belong to in a particular regional body.

Roles which lead to the building of collective identities turn out either as supranational or representative in form. According to Laffan (2004), institutions in the European Union have led to 'the creation of new supranational roles which carry with them Europe wide responsibilities' (p.96). The EU Commission for instance has members who are identified according to their roles they perform wholly and largely at the supranational level. In the same way, other members are identified based on roles they are called to act out representatively.

Acting out supranational roles in formal institutions demand that, individuals are entrusted with responsibilities that allow them to be fully committed and wholly engaged in multileveled tasks than their national ones. Individuals in this case exercise wider roles in the name of the regional body and those roles in no way conflict with their national interests. A good example being an EU Judge with

supranational roles which require such a Judge to be independently committed to only the EU and exercise wider 'European' responsibilities of neutrality and impartiality while seeking the interest of all member states belonging to the Union (EU Court of Justice, 2016). Supranational roles are hence, more effective and conducive in building a collective identity in the sense that, the nature of such roles do not allow individuals to play any other roles aside the ones expected of them at the regional organization level. The kind of identity they build for themselves emanates from the regional unit with which they identify with and the level of commitment they attach to such roles.

Representative roles on the other hand are exercised by individuals who are already in charge of national assignments but have been drawn from their national context to carry out roles on behalf of institutions at the regional body level. Representative roles allow members to act out double roles. Thus, in as much as members think of the common interest of the regional organization, they at the same time have some commitment and mandate to fulfil in their respective national levels. Example is a Minister of Foreign Affairs who is at the same time designated to serve in a regional institution. In this case, individuals at the regional level act out roles in the interest of the regional organization, in spite of the fact that he or she also owns a national allegiance. Representative roles to some extent contribute to the building of a collective identity but not to the very extent with which supranational roles do. This is because, alongside the execution of representative roles, members keep in mind the commitment they have to their nation, as this does not fully strengthen the identity building process during integration.

In all, it should be noted that, supranational roles are more favorable than representative roles, when it comes to the building of collective identity. Supranational roles in their nature are more likely to expedite the creation of collective identity than representative roles. For this reason, institutions of regional organizations whose members effectively execute more supranational roles end up building a stronger collective identity for their regional organization within which they work.

### **Proposition 3**

Identity building involves formal institutions which have the capacity to exist functionally and engage in a number of decisions. Formal institutions of regional bodies cannot exist in reality and be robbed of roles of decision making. It is when a number of decision making roles are left in the hands of these institutions that identity building could be fostered and enhanced. Ironically, some formal institutions of regional organizations have existed as ‘white elephants’ with no meaningful role to play in terms of decision making. The Court of Justice of the AU has never been in existence, though on paper, it is recognized among the institutions of the Union. With this defect, the hope of building a collective identity through such institution is stifled by the fact that the institution in reality has failed to exist, let alone be entrusted with the power of decision making in the Union. Functionally existing institutions can be efficient for collective identity building; depending on the number of decisions those institutions are entrusted with.

Additionally, formal institutions of regional organizations through the adoption of decision making functions, are able to specialize in their roles and further build a collective identity. In other words, while individuals working within those institutions engage in a number of decisions, they are likely to become embedded in the practices and norms of the regional bodies and in the end specialize in their functions. Specialization of roles also results in identity building. Example, the Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU) per their decision making functions of ensuring that EU laws are interpreted and institutions abide by the laws, become identified by the European Union body through such specialization. Hence, the number of decisions formal institutions engage in are significant for specialization and identity building.

Moreover, the number of decisions formal institutions usually engage in cut across several dimensions and may be multidimensional in nature. Thus, decision making functions by formal institutions become more broadened while it embraces a plethora of areas on security, health, monetary



issues, legal cases, trade, transport, technology and agriculture. Individuals who work in formal institutions of regional bodies are entrusted with those decision making roles in order to collectively resolve issues in the region. This way of tackling issues in regional bodies tends to enhance integration and identity building. In 2013 when an unprecedented Ebola outbreak struck the West African continent, the ECOWAS Commission in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) called on all Health Ministers from West Africa to meet and look at the way forward in curbing the menace (ECOWAS, The Ebola, 2014). This call on all health ministers from West Africa is an indication of how collective identity could be constructed through formal institutions of the ECOWAS, entrusted with multidimensional decision making functions.

Unarguably, the functionally existing institutions of regional organizations which also engage in a number of decisions are bound to enhance identity building in regional bodies. The number of decisions, the nature of such decision and the specializations to such decisions are all characteristics which point to the building of collective identity.

The next section of this chapter considers the three propositions expounded above, in relation to some formal institutions of both the AU and ECOWAS through an analysis. I begin by examining the African Union and some of its formal institutions, demonstrating the extent to which the propositions hold true in relation to the building of collective identity.

### **4.3 African Union and its Institutions**

The African Union is characterized as an organization with formal institutions which operates at a more continental level within the framework of bounded territory, rules of membership, and the allocation of values to its member states. Its activities extend beyond borders to the wider international system. The AU's objectives, has been different and more comprehensive than that of the previous OAU, focusing

less on sovereignty of the member states and more on the sovereignty of a unified continent and the influence of such a unity (Oji 2004).

As part of the Union's goal in building a collective identity, the AU is structured into divisions or branches which are referred to as organs. These organs or institutions are independent yet rely on each other to make the Union function at its best. They are made up of namely:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| i) The Assembly,                            | vi) The Executive Council,                     |
| ii) The Permanent Representatives Committee | vii) The Commission,                           |
| iii) Specialized Technical Committees       | viii) The Pan-African Parliament,              |
| iv) The African Court of Justice            | ix) The Economic, Social and Cultural Council, |
| v) Financial Institutions                   | x) The Peace and Security Council              |

*Credit: (African Union webpage)*

The above listed formal institutions in the AU, contribute meaningfully to the construction of an African identity for the Union. This part assesses some of these AU formal institutions, based on the above propositions.

#### **a) The Assembly**

The Assembly functions fully as the most important decision-making body and supreme organ of the African Union. It consists of 54 heads of state of all member states and as such adopts its own rules of procedure (AU Handbook, 2014). The Assembly is mandated to accelerate the political and socio-economic integration of the African continent as Article 9 of the AU Constitutive Act allows for some basic functions such as; setting policies, creating budget, considering membership requests into the Union, monitoring the implementation of policies and decisions of the Union as well ensuring compliance by all Member States (AU Handbook 2014, p.12).

The number of times the AU Assembly decides to convey a session is very necessary for the building of a collective identity. With reference to the AU Constitutive Act it stipulates that:

The Assembly shall meet at least once a year in ordinary session. At the request of any Member State and on approval by a two thirds majority of the Member States, the Assembly shall meet in extraordinary session (Article 6 clause 2).

In a 2004 Summit, the Assembly decided to hold its ordinary sessions twice a year thus, January and July (Assembly /AU/Dec.53 (III)). The AU Assembly since then has had 27 summits with the recent one being held in Rwanda (Kigali) on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July, 2016, dubbed “African Year of Human rights with particular focus on Rights of Women” (AU Summit, 2016). These summits and sessions are mainly held to deliberate over matters of interest to the African continent, and additionally serve as a platform for enhancing collective identity, as representatives get to socialize, familiarize and know themselves as generally ‘Africans’ with a task to fulfill for the Union.

The roles exercised by the Assembly are more representative in nature than supranational, as the heads of states from each member state are drawn from their national domain to perform roles on behalf of the Union. Mostly, there is the possibility for such members to face cross cutting identity pressures in their duties and commitment to both the Union and their nation. Regardless of role conflict which confronts representatives in the Assembly, it is expected that, all heads of state hold strictly to the AU’s Act in accordance with each activity they conduct. These established norms, rules, and role expectations amount to what Laffan (2004) terms “institutional identity”. Thus, the rules and regulations within an institution could also provide and place members with a kind of identity.

In associating the AU Assembly with the three propositions, it is observed that the Assembly exercises more representative roles than supranational ones and though supranational roles are more conducive for identity building as seen in the propositions, the representative roles however to some level enhance identity building. In terms of sessions, the AU Assembly unusually meet and despite these fewer

sessions which are held, it is still able to enhance collective identity among their members. Again, as a functionally existing institution, the AU Assembly engages in a number of decisions all coming together to promote and shape the identity of members in the institution. Hence, the three propositions to some extent hold true for the AU Assembly as an identity builder in the Union.

### **b) The AU Commission**

This is a permanent organ established by the AU Constitutive Act and is composed of a Chairperson, a Deputy Chairperson, and eight Commissioners all of whom are appointed by the Assembly based on gender balance and equitable representation of all sub-regions (AU Commission, 2016). The Chairperson and the eight Commissioners, act as international officials responsible for the day to day activities of the Union. Among their specific functions as stated in Article 3 of the Commission's statutes is *"to represent the AU and defend its interests under the guidance of and as mandated by the Assembly and Executive Council"* (AU Commission, 2016).

Since the Commission serves as the secretariat of the AU, members within this institution meet regularly on a working basis to carry out their activities for the Union. By these regular meetings or sessions, members in the Commission are able to know, socialize and identify themselves as group of 'Africans' joining to build a sense of collective identity in their workplace (thus within the Commission). Furthermore, each member who is elected into the Commission is responsible for a particular portfolio. Available portfolios are peace and security, political affairs, infrastructure and energy, social affairs, human resources, science and technology, trade and industry, rural economy, agriculture, and economic Affairs (AU Commission, 2016). All these portfolios grant or provide members the ability to engage in a number of decisions on behalf of the Union which allows for inclusivity and identity building.

Currently, the AU Commission is seen as a formal institution which functionally exists and as of January 2014, it had 1444 staff including those at Headquarters and regional offices (AU Commission,

2016). The Commission engages in other functions such as initiating proposals; implementing decisions taken by them; acting as custodian of the AU Constitutive Act and legal instruments; providing operational support for all AU organs; managing the AU budget and resources; and harmonizing the AU's programs and actions. These functions are all part of decision making powers entrusted to the Commission under the AU.

One other way the AU Commission builds collective identity is through the exercise of more supranational roles at the multilevel of the Union. The AU Commission is identified with more supranational roles than representative ones while members who work in the Commission serve wholly for the Union by fully exercising greater African responsibilities to build a collective identity. The nature of the AU Commission as a functionally existing formal institution, exercising more supranational roles that allows it to engage also in a number of decisions through regular meetings, demonstrate clearly that, the three propositions remain true for the AU Commission as a formal institutions which builds a collective identity for the African Union.

### **c) AU Court & African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)**

The African Union Court was envisioned to be the principal judicial organ of the AU with authority to rule on disputes over interpretation of AU treaties (AU Court Protocol, 2003). However, the AU Court has ceased to exist, owing to the inability of a ratification to come into force by member states (AU Court Protocol, 2003). There have been concerns raised over whether the AU Court should be modeled on the European Court of Justice (ECJ) which has the competence to rule on the conformity of national legislation and other State acts, or whether any rights of audience should be conferred upon private parties whose interests are affected by AU decisions (Magliveras & Naldi 2002). Also, has been the decision of whether it could be possible to merge the AU Court with African Court of Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR). Some scholars have posited that, the two courts are a luxury that Africa can ill-afford and that,

it would be preferable to have one strengthened judicial body (Udombana 2003). In the same way, Viljoen & Baimu (2004) point out that, the AU Court ‘does not have an express human rights mandate which can allow human rights issues to receive the due attention they merit’ (p.254).

In spite of these, the ACHPR has already begun with its own activities for the AU, and is composed of eleven members elected by the AU Executive Committee from member states appointed by the AU Assembly (ACHPR, 2016). Individuals working in the ACHPR have the ability to exercise more supranational roles for the institution. This stems from the idea that the judges and lawyers from members states who work in such supranational organization like ACHPR have assumed greater ‘African’ responsibilities than their national roles require from them, and hence are fully committed to enhancing a common African integration.

Regarding meetings or sessions, the ACHPR holds two ordinary sessions a year, usually for 10 to 15 days each in March/ April and October/November (ACHPR, 2016). This means, the ACHPR as a formal institution meets irregularly, compared to the AU Commission which regularly meet each working day to take decisions for the Union. Mostly, the ACHPR is engaged in a number of decisions, centered on human rights and this defines the institution as one which exists functionally for identity building through its judicial activities (AU Handbook, 2014, p.75).

In linking the features of the ACHPR to the three propositions, it is deduced that though the ACHPR holds irregular sessions/meetings for its members and may not be as frequent as the other institutions, the fewer sessions which allow members to meet, are able to still socialize and familiarize members to know each other. Individuals consider themselves as Africans working to seek the interest of the Union and not their respective nationalities. The ACHPR’s engagement in more supranational roles have allowed for the creation of roles like ‘African judges, lawyers, magistrates and clerks whose duties cut across their local context to a multileveled dimension. The ACHPR feature is also coupled with a number of decision making on human right issues which enhances their identity building capacity

as an institution. In this instance, the three propositions on how AU institutions build collective identity to some point hold true for the ACHPR.

#### **d) The Pan-African Parliament (PAP)**

The Pan-African Parliament (PAP) is the law making organ of the African Union established under Article 5(1) (c) of the Constitutive Act. The purpose of the PAP is “*to ensure the full participation of African peoples in the development and economic integration of the continent*” (AU Constitutive Act, Article 17). The PAP provides a platform for people from all African states to be involved in discussions and decision-making on the problems and challenges facing the continent (AU Handbook, 2014).

The PAP has its sittings in Midrand, South Africa (AU Handbook 2014, p.68). The PAP was formally inaugurated in 2004 and has 245 representatives that are elected by the legislatures of 47 of the 54 AU states (AU Handbook 2014, p.69). Each member state sends a delegation of five parliamentarians to the PAP, at least one of whom must be a woman and the AU Act ensures that composition of the delegation would reflect the political diversity of the member state's legislature.

Concerning meetings and sessions of the Pan African Parliament, Rule 28 of the PAP’s Rules of Procedure states that:

“The Parliament should meet at least twice in ordinary session within a one-year period ...  
(Rule 29) Parliamentary sessions can last for up to one month, the PAP can meet in extraordinary session”

Recently, the PAP concluded its 2<sup>nd</sup> Ordinary session in May 2016 at Midrand, South Africa with the adoption of seven (7) draft resolutions and six (6) draft recommendations during its final plenary sitting, among which decision was taken to hold the next ordinary session in another member state of the African Union (PAP Sessions, 2016). These initiatives which show up in the house, contribute to identity building of the AU, and individuals in such institution get the chance to frequently meet, socialize, discuss

and deliberate over issues of concern to the Union. Individuals no longer see themselves as national parliamentarians but ‘African’ parliamentarians entrusted with deliberative functions for the Union.

In terms of roles, AU Parliamentarians who are drawn from each member state to represent the house of PAP exercise representative roles. Plausibly in relation to building an African identity, members who form part of the PAP carry multiple identities, and the main tension they face is between national identity and party affiliation. Moreover, members of the PAP may vary in their attitudes to the kind of policy they wish to see being fostered by integration. The coming in of the PAP has further created various positions and currently, the PAP can boast of a President and Vice Presidents, Parliamentary clerk with deputies, Secretariat, African parliamentarians, ten Permanent Committees and one ad hoc committee members who have come from different background but have African roles to play for the Union, as a way of building a collective identity.

In relating the PAP to the propositions, it appears that the roles of the PAP are more representative than supranational in nature. Thus Parliamentarians who serve in this institution are drawn from their state to represent the Union in the house of the PAP. Collective identity is still achieved to some extent. Sessions as observed are held often by the PAP as a means to increase socialization among members and shape their identity. The PAP as a functionally existing body of the AU exercises more of advisory and consultative roles. Hence, the number of decisions the PAP engages in is limited due to the protocol of the PAP which does not allow for a full legislative function as any ordinary parliamentary body. Conversely, it could still be argued that, the propositions to some extent hold true for the PAP as an identity builder of the AU.

Overall, the application of the three propositions to some of the AU formal institutions indicate that, indeed building collective identity depends largely on the roles of formal institutions in regional organizations. Though the AU institutions vary with respect to the number of sessions they hold for individuals working within, at least, the frequent and regular meetings/sessions by some institutions help



in enhancing collective identity. In addition, the more individuals in the various institutions of AU meet, the better it increases the building of collective identity especially through socialization. Though *proposition 2* suggests for a more effective execution of supranational roles than representative ones, it is also seen that, some AU institutions have enhanced collective identity building not only through supranational roles but representative roles. However, AU institutions which execute supranational roles have more often been effective in collective identity building than the others.

The analysis further shows that, some AU institutions which are discussed above do not exist functionally, let alone engage in a number of decisions to build identity. The AU Courts point to these examples. This backlash supports Mistry's (2000) assertion that "African integration ideals have been based on lofty transcontinental ambitions, evocative political slogans, a plethora of treaties and regional institutions, high-minded principles, and protectionist proclivities" (p.554). The problem characterizes the AU as an organization, interested only in increasing its formal institutions rather than ensuring and enforcing their existence. Other institutions in the AU, like the PAP and the Executive Council are also limited in terms of the number of decisions they can make as institutions, due to the lack of absolute decision making mandate. In the face of these challenges, it can still be argued that some formal institutions of AU have continued to serve as identity builders in the African region.

The next section of this chapter shifts to a sub-regional organization in West Africa, ECOWAS. Similarly the next part shall explore some formal institutions of the ECOWAS and the extent to which the three propositions support how these institutions serve as identity builders for the Community.

#### 4.4

#### ECOWAS and its Institutions

ECOWAS is a sub-regional economic unit of West Africa established since 1975. Its mission has long been to promote economic integration across the West African region. On the subject of formal institutions, Article 6 (1) of the ECOWAS revised treaty outlines the following institutions:

- (i) The Authority of Heads of State and Government
- (ii) The Council of Ministers,
- (iii) The Community Parliament
- (iv) West African Health Organization (WAHO)
- (v) The Community Court of Justice
- (vi) The ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID)
- (vii) ECOWAS Commission

*Credit: (ECOWAS homepage- Other Institutions)*

All the above listed formal institutions in ECOWAS, contribute to the building of a collective identity for the West African Community. This part examines some of these by relating them to the propositions on how collective identity is constructed.

##### **a) Community Court of Justice**

The ECOWAS Treaty of 1975 included a directive for the establishment of a Community Court of Justice (CCJ) to adjudicate disputes related to the interpretation and operation of the Treaty. The composition and competence of the CCJ are determined by the Conference of Heads of State and Government (ECOWAS CCJ, 2013). The Court was set up to address complaints from member states and institutions of ECOWAS, as well as issues relating to defaulting nations. The details for the operation of the Court

were established by the 1991 Protocol on the Community Court of Justice and in December 2000 the Court came into full operation (ECOWAS CCJ, 2013).

Regarding its area of jurisdiction, Article 9 of the 1991 Protocol sets out that the CCJ “shall ensure the observance of law and the principles of equity in the interpretation and application of the provisions of the Treaty.” The Court also ruled that it includes jurisdiction over human rights cases (ECOWAS CCJ, 2013). Codified in a 2005 ECOWAS Supplemental Protocol, it was in principle that, the CCJ has jurisdiction to hear human rights cases and expand the admissibility rules to include disputes between individuals and their own member states (ECOWAS CCJ, 2013). Since these amendments, the CCJ is thus four courts in one: an administrative tribunal for ECOWAS, a human rights court, a court of arbitration, and an Inter-State dispute resolution tribunal (ECOWAS CCJ, 2013). The mandate given to the CCJ to have a hearing over human right issues has not been the case for the AU Court and has been one reason for the failure of the AU Court to come into existence.

The CCJ functionally exists as a permanent institution with a President, Chief Registrar, and seven (7) Judges. The seven judges sit on the Court, each serving a five-year term and no two judges can be nationals of the same state (ECOWAS CCJ, 2016). Members within the CCJ meet on a regular basis to conduct their activities and judicial roles in the name of the Community. Judges consider themselves as working in the interest of the West African Community and not in their national interest and this builds a sense of collective identity.

Furthermore, the CCJ mainly carries out supranational roles through their judicial activities in the West African region. A number of cases drawn from West Africa, come before the CCJ to handle. They range from human right cases, individual against member states cases and interstate cases. For instance in October 2013, the CCJ ordered the Republic of Ghana to pay \$250,000 (Two Hundred and Fifty Thousand Dollars) in compensation to the family of a 15-year old Nigerian Student, Augustine Chukwuebuka Ogukwe, who died in a swimming incident on October 15, 2013 in the country (CCJ Press

Release, 2016). The role of the CCJ in solving ‘West African’ disputes and cases are examples which indicate the activeness of the Court and its supranational roles in identity building.

Connecting the Community Court of Justice as a formal institution to the three propositions, it is understood that, the CCJ’s regular meetings it holds as judicial organ of ECOWAS, the effective execution of supranational roles and its capability to exist functionally and engage in a number of cases, make the CCJ an identity builder for the ECOWAS. Therefore, the propositions hold true for the CCJ as in institution of ECOWAS which helps in the building of collective identity.

### **b) Executive Secretariat (now ECOWAS Commission)**

The ECOWAS administrative instrument was transformed from an Executive Secretariat into a Commission on January 1997, in fulfilment of a decision taken to that effect the previous year (ECOWAS Commission, 2014). The Commission since then has been the main engine room of all ECOWAS programs, projects and activities. As a functionally existing institution, the Commission is headed by a President who is deputized by the Vice President. Again, the President is assisted in the discharge of his duties by 13 Commissioners. The Commission and its members are not just mere agents who belong to member states of the Community but purposeful actors who have the zeal to forge an institutional identity, justified on the basis of a ‘West African’ identity as illustrated in the ECOWAS Commissions’ aim that the:

“Community are to promote co-operation and integration, leading to the establishment of an economic union in West Africa in order to raise the living standards of its peoples, and to maintain and enhance economic stability, foster relations-among Member States and contribute to the progress and development of the African Continent”

The nature of the job at the ECOWAS Commission, allows members to meet regularly (on working days) to conduct their activities for the Community. The ECOWAS Commission and members within act out supranational roles, leading to the exercise of greater West African responsibilities. The

Commission is grouped into Departments and directorates from diverse cultural, ethnic, national occupational, gender, intellectual and professional background. These roles go a long way to foster a collective identity and allow for cooperation among different individuals from different backgrounds of member states.

The ECOWAS Commission engages in a number of decision during the identity building process. Addressing the ECOWAS Parliament recently in June 2016, the President of the Commission H. E. Mr. Marcel Alain De Souza, called for a greater collaboration of Member States to make conscious efforts on decisions regarding security; health challenges; malaria and its complications and the constant monitoring of the Ebola Virus Disease against resurgence (ECOWAS Commission, 2016). All these decisions on awareness which the Commission engages members and institutions are to safeguard member states who belong to the Community from any danger while it continuously builds a kind of collective identity in the West African region.

The three propositions are valid for the ECOWAS Commission, as a functionally existing institution that engages in a number of decisions, holds regular meetings and effectively executes supranational roles in the name of enhancing the goal of collective identity for the West African Community.

### **c) Authority of Heads of State and Government**

The Authority of Heads of State and Government is the supreme institution of ECOWAS composed of all Heads of State and/or Government of Member States (International Democracy Watch, 2016). According to article 7 (3) of the ECOWAS treaty, the Authority determines the general policy and major guidelines of the Community and gives directives, by harmonizing and coordinating the economic, scientific, technical, cultural and social policies of member states; overseeing the functioning of Community institutions and following-up implementation of Community objectives; preparing and

adopting its Rules of Procedure; and exercising any other powers conferred on it under the Treaty. The provisions in Article 7 indicate that the Authority is engaged in a number of decisions for the Community and exists functionally.

As the supreme institution of ECOWAS, Article 8 clause 2 regarding sessions states that:

“The Authority shall meet at least once a year in ordinary session. An extraordinary session may be convened by the Chairman of the Authority or at the request of a Member State provided that such a request is supported by a simple majority of the Member States”.

The above clause implies that the Authority is only entitled to meet once in a year unless an extraordinary session is conveyed when needed. Though the Authority does not regularly meet as compared to its Commission and EBID, their sessions which they hold to some level enhance the building of collective identity and members meet to socialize during such annual summits. The meetings/sessions by Heads of State is a platform to pool together all ‘West African leaders’ and this ensures identity building among those who partake in such meetings. The Authority as a formal institution of ECOWAS, also acts out more representative roles than the supranational ones, with the heads of state from each member states serving as members who have been drawn from their national domain to act in the interest of the Community. Occasionally, the execution of representative roles have the implication of double hatting where representatives face cross cutting tensions in the roles they play for both their nation and the Community (Laffan 2004, p.85).

Despite supranational roles are more conducive and effective for building identity, the Authority exercises much representative roles which are somewhat necessary in the identity building process. Another backlash is that, the Authority does not often or regularly meet, but mostly once in a year. Aside the challenges that beset the Authority, it is able to exist functionally and is considered a supreme institution, which engages in a number of decisions. It is suitable to point out that, the Authority of Heads of States and Government under the ECOWAS, remains an identity builder in the region.

#### **d) Community of Parliament**

The ECOWAS Community Parliament was established by the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS in 1994 when the protocol on Parliament was signed. The protocol came into force in March 2000 and followed with the inauguration of Parliament on November 16, the same year. The role of the Parliament according to the protocol is *“a forum for dialogue, consultation and consensus for the representatives of the peoples of the Community with a view to promoting integration”* (ECOParl, 2016). The Community Parliament is admittedly however a young institution which plays an essentially consultative role by providing advisory opinion on issues covering a wide range of areas that are of crucial importance for the integration process.

ECOWAS parliament exists and is composed of 115 seats, distributed among the 15 ECOWAS Member States based on their population (ECOParl, 2016). Consequently Nigeria has 35 seats, Ghana 8 seats, Cote d'Ivoire 7 seats, while Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, Niger and Senegal have 6 seats each (ECOParl, 2016). Other member states thus Benin, Cape Verde, The Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Togo have 5 seats each. The Parliament's political organs are the plenary, the Bureau, the Conference of Bureau and the parliamentary standing committees. There is also a General Secretariat, under the authority of the Speaker of Parliament, in charge of activities in Parliament (ECOParl, 2016). Parliamentarians who serve in the Community Parliament are chosen out of their national context to represent the Community as stated with regard to the incompatibility act of the Protocol that:

*“The Protocol forbids any Member of Parliament, while in office from being a member of government, the constitutional council, the supreme court of a Member State; or a member of Courts and Tribunals of a Member State; a judge, lawyer or registrar in the Community Court of Justice and the Court of Arbitration”* (ECOParl, 2016).

The above protocol allows members who take up positions in the ECOWAS Parliament to remain functional to the Community. Appointed members serve on the Community Parliament as ‘West African’ Parliamentarians assuming representative roles and engaging in decision making in the house.

Concerning the number of sessions/meetings organized, the Community Parliament has two ordinary sessions every year, each of which may not exceed three months (ECOParl, 2016). In the interim, the sessions have been reduced to two weeks each. The first sessions are held in May and the second, in the first week of September (ECOParl, 2016). Comparatively, the number of meetings/sessions organized by the AU Parliament (PAP) is not far different from that of ECOWAS Parliament. Both regional organizations and their Parliaments have at least two sessions in a year.

Furthermore, though the ECOWAS Parliament functionally exists as an institution, it is limited in terms of the number of decisions it makes in the Community. This is because; the ECOWAS Parliament is only made to carry out consultative / advisory roles rather than full legislative function on specific decision making (ECOParl, 2016). Such a limitation does not allow the ECOWAS Parliament to engage and have control over a number of decisions in the Community. It also stifles the building of collective identity, as individuals who are supposed to be in charge of law making functions are not fully entitled to decisions making procedures in the Community.

Beyond that, the three propositions still support the claim that the ECOWAS Parliament is an institution which enhances collective identity. However the institution's inability to conduct full legislative roles but advisory ones weakens the number of decisions it is able to make in ensuring identity building.

Below is a summary table with a comparative analysis of the selected formal institutions under the AU and ECOWAS. The summary table also categorizes each institution under the three propositions and summarizes how they serve as identity builders in those respective regions. The table is followed after by a conclusion on this chapter.



**Table 1: SUMMARY TABLE OF SOME AU AND ECOWAS INSTITUTIONS WITH PROPOSITIONS**

	PROPOSITION 1 (MEETING /SESSION TIMES)			PROPOSITION 2 (TYPE OF ROLES)		PROPOSITION 3 (EXISTING INSTITUTIONS AND NUMBER OF DECISIONS ENGAGED IN)			
	Regularly / Daily meet	Irregularly Meet	Does not meet at all	Supranational Roles	Representative roles	Functionally existing	Non Existing	Are engaged in More Decisions	Are engaged in Less Decisions
<b>AFRICAN UNION (AU) INSTITUTIONS</b>									
THE ASSEMBLY		✓			✓	✓		✓	
THE AU COMMISSION	✓			✓		✓		✓	
PAN AFRICAN PARLIAMENT		✓			✓	✓			✓
AFRICAN COURT OF JUSTICE			✓	NOT FUNCTIONING			✓	NONE	
* ACHPR		✓		✓		✓			✓
<b>ECOWAS INSTITUTIONS</b>									
THE AUTHORITY		✓			✓	✓		✓	
COMMUNITY PARLIAMENT		✓			✓	✓			✓
COMMUNITY COURT	✓			✓		✓		✓	
ECOWAS COMMISSION	✓			✓		✓		✓	

1

## 4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to demonstrate that the evolution and institutionalization of African regional organizations have led to the creation of collective identities. Thematically, Laffan’s classification of EU formal institutions as ‘identity builders’, has been replicated in this chapter, allowing African regional organizations specifically the AU and ECOWAS to be similarly assessed on such basis. From a micro

<sup>1</sup> The summary table above does not contain all the formal institutions of ECOWAS AND AU. This chapter only selects some institutions from both regional bodies in order to relate them to the three propositions.

\* ACHPR is not counted as an institution of the AU. However, the institution’s failure to merge with the AU Court of Justice has allowed it to begin its operation temporarily for the African Union.

level analysis, the formal institutions and individuals within African regional bodies serve as identity builders. The argument is supported by three main propositions which have suggested that; the holding of frequent and regular meetings/sessions, effective execution of more supranational roles and finally, institutions' ability to functionally exist and engage in a number of decisions are all means through which formal institutions construct identity.

The analysis of these propositions further show that indeed a strong correlation exists between formal institutions of African regional bodies and the concept of collective identity. The sense of belonging to 'Africa / West Africa' is constructed through these formal institutions and that both the AU Constitutive Act and the ECOWAS Treaty have made provisions for individuals in these formal institutions to engage in some, if not all, the three propositions discussed above.

Remarkably, the execution of more supranational roles by individuals working in formal institutions of the AU or ECOWAS, have led to the exercising of new roles which carry with them wider or greater 'African or West African' responsibilities, and have generated multileveled positions like 'African or West African' parliamentarians, bankers, magistrates, lawyers and Civil servants. More importantly, national officials and politicians whose jobs have been to promote and protect national interests are currently socialized into institutional collective norms through these formal institutions of African regional bodies. Nonetheless, it should be emphasized that, the extent to which collective identity can be effectively constructed is dependent on how both regional organizations thus (AU and ECOWAS) allow their formal institutions to play and apply the suggested propositions.

Comparatively, this chapter has simultaneously examined the AU and ECOWAS on how both regional bodies in Africa construct their institutional identities. It is observed that, the formal institutions of ECOWAS and the nature of its institutional size allows it to be more proactive in building a 'West African' identity compared to the formal institutions of the AU. Applying the propositions revealed that, all the formal institutions of ECOWAS have been active in holding frequent or regular meetings,

executing more supranational roles and existing functionally with a number of decision making functions. The case is however different in the African Union, where unfortunately the AU financial institution and AU Court of Justice have still not been able to come into force, though such institutions are recognized on paper as part of the Union's institutions. These lapses in the AU especially, the non - existing institutions make it vague and difficult in assessing how they serve as identity builders in the organization.

Nevertheless, this chapter is not silent about the other formal institutions of the AU and their notable roles in ensuring identity building in the region. Neither does it appraise the ECOWAS institutions as ones with no lapses in terms of constructing identity. ECOWAS also faces some challenges in the process of building collective identity. As discussed earlier, one of these has been the ECOWAS protocol which does not provide full legislative functions to its parliamentarians and hence limits the role of parliamentarians to act out advisory/consultative roles rather than legislative ones. Aside the various flaws from both regional bodies and their institutions, this chapter concludes on the assertion that, the formal institutions of the AU and ECOWAS largely advance the building of collective identities among their members.

# Chapter 5

## Constructing Collective Identity through Cultural Cooperation

### 5.1 Introduction

Cultural activities are essential social elements that drive the building of collective identity among regional organizations. Beyond the usage of culture to promote societal values and norms, collective identity has also been enhanced through culture. Ostensibly, cultural cooperation among regional organizations results in shaping the identity of members in the region. Thus, regional organizations have resorted to the use of cultural policies as a tool for defining and constructing identity in their regions. The European Union (EU) which is a model for most regional bodies have for example instituted some cultural policies which unite countries in the continent and define their identity collectively as 'Europeans'. Therefore, the culture sector in Europe has increasingly become an excellent conduit for promoting social inclusion and supporting cultural diversity (EC Culture, 2017). In addition, the European Culture Forum (ECF), a biennial flagship event which is organized by the European Commission with the aim of raising the profile of European cultural cooperation, and sparking debate on EU culture policy and initiatives is another good example of a cultural policy that has enhanced European identity among member states (EC Culture, ECF 2016).

Largely, regional bodies have come to realize the essence of cultural policies as efficient ways to build and define collective identity in their respective regions. In the case of Africa, its culture is said to have had a remarkable history of Western influence at the time of colonization, yet it still maintains a culture which is shared among members in the region (Harrison, 1999). Generally, African cultural values are expressed in the form of music, dance, symbols, arts, sports, language, folklore and festivals. These cultural values add up to defining and providing an ideal 'African culture' which is generally recognized

by all member states. Likewise, regional bodies in Africa have also sought to define the African culture, through the introduction of cultural policies that describe who an African is and what the African culture entails. Hitherto colonization when cultural policies in Africa was considered a political tool for combating the colonial denial of African culture and the negative impact of external domination by European cultures (Kovács 2009), presently the cultural cooperation agenda by many African regional bodies have shifted to the building of collective identity through introduction of cultural policies. Regional bodies in Africa have therefore identified means of defining their identity as Africans through cultural policies, implemented in the region.

Concurrently, as cultural policies have become medium through which regional bodies especially the EU express their identity, the case of Africa cannot be overlooked. It brings to light questions of the African case over the kind of cultural policies which have enhanced identity building in the region. Thus, what kind of African culture is being produced through identity building? How have African regional bodies implemented cultural policies during identity building? This chapter focuses on the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to examine how both regional bodies employ cultural policies in their quest to build a collective identity on the continent.

This chapter is divided into four main sections. The first part provides a review on cultural policy and the extent to which it influences the decisions of regional bodies in identity building. The second part examines the AU and some cultural policies it has adopted in constructing collective identity. The third part is also about the ECOWAS and the means through which its cultural policies have translated into identity building. The last section is a conclusion which maintains that both African regional bodies thus (AU and ECOWAS) have implemented cultural policies which variously define their identities as 'Africans or West Africans' in continent.

## 5.2 CULTURAL POLICIES IN REGIONAL IDENTITY BUILDING

Typically, every polity has a culture that defines the way of life of the people and shapes their individual identities. At the national level, states uphold their various cultures which define who they are, where they started from and where they belong to. Cultural policy for this reason can be attributed to the national level where a plethora of cultures comes into display at the local level, binding people through shared meanings and ideas. For instance in Africa, within each member state can be found various cultures which collectively define individuals in such locality as belonging to a national or local group. In Ghana for example, various ethnic groups such as the Ashanti, Ewe, Fanti and Mole - Dagbon exist with different cultural values that aim at collectively promoting the local 'Ghanaian culture' and tradition through various cultural practices and values exhibited in their respective ethnic groupings. Obviously, some of these cultural values which are projected at the national levels are similarly displayed in other countries and localities, moving cultural policies from those seen at only the national levels to ones practiced intra – nationally. Frequently, these cultural policies later turn out to be widely accepted by many countries and in turn become an internationally accepted culture.

To this point, it is argued that, beyond the national levels cultural policies have moved to regional and international levels, becoming a widely accepted phenomenon which shapes the way of life of members in a particular region. In this case, Africa for instance can boast of an 'African culture' which is a way of life that shapes each individual and provides a sense of belongingness to members in the continent. It is this way of life that every member is expected to conform and go by, in order to be identified as an 'African'. Regional organizations in Africa have taken up this role of promoting African culture through cultural policies which are implemented as part of regional goals or agendas, during cooperation. As a result, the evolution and development of cultural policies among regional bodies have come to be considered as an essential part of collective identity building.

Universally, culture has become a part of the way of life of people in the society, as it drives every individual to identify or associate with a particular group. Relatively, culture is also seen as increasingly global and an all-encompassing phenomenon which rests on social group of individuals. Just as culture is all-encompassing, cultural policy incorporates a broad range of measures to develop the cultural life of the people within a region. Hence, several policies with intense cultural significance are made by decision-makers of regional bodies to enhance identity building in their regions.

Singh (2010) defines cultural policies as “institutions, rules, and intersubjective understandings that arise in the task of governance ...institutions may be both governmental and non- governmental, and may encompass international organizations such as the World Trade Organization and UNESCO, regional organizations such as the European Union, businesses, foreign development agencies or film festivals”(p.9). Usually, regional bodies in the world have various motives for including cultural policies in their schemes or agendas. Braman (2008) shows that various forms of conventions and treaties have governed cultural products through international and regional organizations. Clearly, cultural policies are irreplaceable in the schemes and agendas of regional bodies as they direct regional bodies towards a particular cultural objective. In the European Union (EU), Schindler (2012) asserts that cultural policies aim to address and promote the cultural dimension of European integration through relevant legislation and government funding. The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community has a cultural policy which also aims at realizing an ASEAN Community that is people-oriented and socially responsible with a view to achieving enduring solidarity and unity among the peoples and Member States of ASEAN; seeking to forge a common identity and build a caring and sharing society which is inclusive and where the well-being, livelihood, and welfare of the peoples are enhanced (ASEAN 2016). Similarly in Africa, the AU which is a continental regional body has a cultural charter with thirteen (13) aims and objectives, among them being to promote freedom of expression and cultural democracy, indivisible from social and political democracy; the preservation and promotion of the African cultural heritage through restitution

and rehabilitation; the assertion of the dignity of the African men and women and of the popular foundations of their culture; and the combating and elimination of all forms of alienation, exclusion and cultural oppression everywhere in Africa (AU Cultural Charter, 2016). These motives guide regional bodies towards their cultural cooperation activities and further lead to the building of identity.

Besides, the cultural policies that regional bodies seek to adopt determine the kind of regional identity they intend to build across their respective regions. Cultural policies are therefore wide and cut across several dimensions. DiMaggio (1983) suggests that cultural policy must be thought of from across many different fields, comparing public and private policy in the arts with communications policy, debates about education curricula and other areas of cultural production and reception. In the same way, Mulchahy (2006) also observes that, “cultural policy encompasses a much broader array of activities than were addressed under arts policy ... the significance of the transformation to cultural policy can be observed in its demonstrable emphases on cultural identity, valorization of indigeneity and analyses of historical dynamics (such as hegemony and colonialism) .....” (p.5). As a result, many elements come to play in the making of cultural policies.

Furthermore, cultural policy is one concept which has to do with decisions about cultural goods when those decisions are, in some way, contested (DiMaggio 1893). In other words, if there is broad public consensus about the public value of a cultural good, then policy is principally about how best to distribute or allocate the good in question (DiMaggio 1893). In this instance, cultural policy also becomes a product and a process, a framework for making rules and decisions that is informed by social relationships and values, public and private, implicit and explicit (Miller and Yudice 2002, p.1). Cultural policies can transform into products or goods that are implemented for allocation by regional bodies in regional identity building.



As regional organizations embark on public policy making, so do they acknowledge the role of cultural policies as subsets to public decision making. Cultural policy is also ‘adjectival’ policy (Colebatch 2003, p.86); thus a sub - set of policy in general which is often called ‘public policy’ (McGuigan, 2004); and governs activities related to the public sphere, providing ‘governments the ability to pursue programs which promote greater accessibility’ (d'Angelo and Vespérini 1999).

Cultural policy thus continues to remain a process that provides for the preservation of the arts and culture of a people and is foundational of their history and of utmost relevance for growth and development (Towse, 1999, p.143). The ideas and features of cultural policy, advanced by many scholars suppose that most regional bodies in one way or the other pursue cultural policies as part of their regional identity building process. Actually, more policies are made not just on culture but also on education, agriculture, health among other aspects of the society as long as regional bodies foresee the results as a solid support for continuous cultural growth and development. Furthermore, the rules and decisions made for preserving the cultural history of a people (cultural policy) is not only of very high importance but one which regional organizations consider sustainable in the integration and identity building stages.

Back to Africa, Kovács (2009) recalls that the origins of African cultural policies trace back to the colonial period during which culture was considered a political tool for combating the colonial denial of African culture and the negative impact of external domination by European cultures on Africa and African Cultures. Between 1958 and 1963 African regional bodies and groups had started emerging, notable among them being the Organization of African Unity; Africa’s first regional continental organization (Franke, 2007). By that time, most African states were independent and there existed a set of fundamental principles for the development of African cultural policies. All regions took active part in this process and started to build up their cultural systems according to their cultural affinities, historical ties as well as their political and ideological options Kovács (2009). Regional organizations in Africa

until date continue to pursue cultural policies purported to define the African culture and build a collective identity.

Today the African continent holds an impressive number of sub - regional bodies aside the OAU (now known as AU), and all these bodies implement wider cultural policies in the region to enhance the African identity. These continental and sub - regional cultural policies add to the promotion of culture in its diverse forms through means of political, social, regional and economic integration as well as building identity. As Singh, (2010) puts it “a cultural policy remains important for the preservation of culture not just for Africa, but for the world at large” (p.21). Aware of this fact, the erstwhile organization of Organization of African Unity (OAU) and its successor the African Union (AU) have attempted to put cultural policies and institutions in place since the early 1960s. In the same vein, ECOWAS, as sub regional body in the Western part of Africa also consider cultural policies an effective tool in defining a ‘West African’ identity and enhancing Community building.

Succinctly, this review brings to understanding the role of regional organizations in shaping the identity of member states through cultural policies that are implemented in the region. Two main propositions are deduced from this process of identity building through cultural cooperation in regional bodies.

***Proposition 1: Cultural policies of regional organizations that reflect in the national culture of member states effectively lead to identity building.***

***Proposition 2: Cultural policies shape the identity of members when they are considered legitimate by member states in regional organizations.***

## **Proposition 1**

Member states in regional organizations are guided by various cultural policies, which provide the necessary guidelines expected of members while regulating their activities in the organization. More often than not, cultural policies of regional organizations that are embedded in the national culture of member states effectively lead to the construction of a sense of collective identity. Thus, so long as the cultural policies of regional bodies are made to become a part of the national culture of member states, they are able to easily influence and shape collectively the identity of the members to practice them also at the regional level.

Constructing identity in this case often require regional organizations to ensure that cultural policies that are practiced at the regional level are also descended to function at the national level. The success of cultural policies in shaping member states' identity hinges on how those policies are deep-rooted in the national culture of the members. These cultural practices yield effectiveness and encourage members to promote cultural policies while shaping their identity. For example, the participation in cultural events and festivals by member states at the national level makes it easier for them to observe similar practices at the regional level. The reason being that, the cultural practices at the regional level have been embedded in the national culture of member states and hence its implementation can be facilitated and carried out to shape the identity of members.

## **Proposition 2**

Legitimizing cultural policies is key in influencing member states of regional bodies to promote and implement them in the region. Regional organizations are able to shape the identity of their members when cultural policies are recognized as legitimate by members in the region. Primarily, cultural policies that are acceptable by all members provide the tendency of influencing members to embrace and promote

them accordingly. Culture in general is a public good and regional bodies pursue policies in the direction that promotes greater accessibility (d'Angelo et al. 1999). Cultural policies effectively influence identity building in regional organizations when they are considered legitimate especially by their members.

Significantly, cultural policies become legitimate when they are documented in Charters and Protocols of regional bodies. Most regional bodies have cultural Charters and Protocols that spell out the cultural activities to be observed and practiced by member states in the organization. Member states rely on those cultural Charters and Protocol documents to promote cultural values of their organizations and guide their conduct in the region. The acceptance of those cultural policies is because they have been documented and hence considered legitimate by their members. Identity building is as a result enhanced through the legitimacy member states attach to the cultural policies by regional organization.

From the connection between the two propositions, the case of Africa and the mode in which cultural policies shape the identity of member states in regional bodies will be examined. African regional bodies are not exception to this discourse on identity building through cultural cooperation, as their regional bodies have sought to put in place various policies that define and shape the identity of their members. Analyzing the cultural policies implemented by member states in African regional bodies and the way they shape identity of member states is hence significant in this chapter. This chapter will draw cases from the AU and ECOWAS to show how identity building occurs through cultural policies and its implementation by member states in the African region. It begins with the African Union and the ways their cultural policies shape the identity of member states in the region.

Continentially, the African Union which is the successor to the Organization of African Unity (OAU) is Africa's largest regional body having all fifty – four (54) countries in the continent as member states, with the exception of Morocco (Nyaxo, 2005). Established in 1985 as OAU, the founding fathers at the time when the organization came in were accredited as prominent men of culture who envisaged the need for cultural cooperation amongst African States as a means to break down linguistic barriers and promote understanding amongst the people in the continent (OAU, 1963).

Among the priority actions of the OAU has been to enhance culture as a tool for understanding cooperation and prior to that, the heads of state and government of the OAU in 1963 proposed to “Establish an institute of African studies to be a department of the African University in Ethiopia” (Kebede 2016). Though the said African University could not be realized as supposed by the early leaders, the influence is seen presently with the proliferation of African Studies Department in most African Universities. This earlier initiative by the OAU symbolizes how it had conceived ideas of building an African culture and identity through African studies departments in the various Africa Universities.

In the ensuing years of the OAU, notable cultural festivals including the First International Festival of Negro Arts in Dakar, Senegal, (1966); the First All African Cultural Festival in Algiers, Algeria, (1969); and the First Workshop on African Folklore, Dance and Music held in Mogadishu, Somalia (1970) were organized (Kovács 2009, p.24). Participants who witnessed these series of events at the time attested to the fact that “Never before had African culture and arts been given such a brilliant display of their richness, variety and genius. These events attest to the fact that, Africa has been in the process of constructing its collective identity through cultural events organized in the continent.

More in particular, the Charter of OAU also recognizes the role of culture and challenges members among others to promote the African culture on the Continent (OAU, 1963). The Charter in particular has highlighted the need for Member States to harmonize their policies in “educational and cultural cooperation”. Successively, African Ministers of Culture, since 1976 have adopted the “Cultural Charter for Africa, “which was later endorsed by the OAU Heads of State and Government (Kebede 2016). In the initial stage when the OAU sought to promote cultural policies, much attention was given to the role of culture in the struggle against colonialism and political independence (Kovács 2009; Kebede 2016). Example, the OAU Heads of State and Government adopted the Cultural Charter putting into factor the “... importance of the role of culture in political emancipation in the economic and social development.” In this connection, they “...recommended a biennial meeting of the Ministers of Culture with the view to defining and harmonizing the program of cultural activities in Africa” (OAU, 1976; Kebede 2016). In the same line, all ministers who were in charge of culture arranged periodic conferences to jointly identify common priority areas for the development of culture and through culture the development of the continent. The desire continued but realization of the ideals enshrined in the various documents Kebede (2016) claims remains to be investigated.

From the 1980s onward, a remarkable progress in assigning greater weight to the role of cultural policies in all aspects of African life has been experienced. Principal at the time was the 1985 Declaration of OAU Heads and Government on the Cultural Aspects of the Lagos Plan of Action which stressed the need to “... align cultural development with the economic development of Africa,” on the score that “... the success of the Lagos Plan of Action depends on the results of analyses of the interaction between culture and the other social and economic sectors” (Kovács 2009, p.36). These cultural policies and measures initiated at the time by the OAU laid the foundation for its successor the AU to follow. The zeal to continue with the implementation of such African cultural policies and values is what has currently translated into the cultural policies of the African Union and its role in identity building.

The early 2000s saw an abeyance in the cultural policies of the continental Union of Africa, the OAU. Thus, after 1993 when the 4th Conference of African Ministers in charge of culture in Benin was held, it appeared there was seemingly little or no major activity in the cultural sector of the OAU, until the formal inauguration of the AU and establishment of the various organs of the Commission, in 2003; which heralded a new era for the revival of the cultural agenda in the history of the continental umbrella Organization (Kebede 2016, p.46). From the very beginning, the AU introduced African languages and culture at the top of the continental agenda they sought to pursue and this was clearly depicted in the Union's vision and mission statement which read

“ .... the requisite condition for Africa to become a force to be reckoned with, a force we can rely upon, include, among other things ... the immense human and natural resources, the diversity and vitality of our cultures, our languages, our sense of solidarity and our readiness to dialogue, etc” (African Union, 2004).

Additionally, the AU's statement also acknowledged fully “cultural entrepreneurs, artists and sports associations... possess immense potentials for enhancing Africa's image and for reminding everybody that development is also a matter of culture (African Union, 2004). Among the early cultural policies of the AU was to ensure that, adequate funding is allocated for cultural programs. In the new continental architecture, culture was seen as a tool for continental integration and African renaissance (Kebede 2016, p.46). Presently, the AU continues to embark on several cultural policies which define the African culture and shape the identity of member states in the African region. Some of these cultural policies are discussed below.

#### **a) AU organization of International Cultural Events**

The early years of the inception of AU saw new cultural policies and projects, particularly in the form of International cultural events with the objective of revitalizing the cultural agenda on the continent. Series

of sessions on African cultural events were organized and this has continued until date. For example, the First Conference of Intellectuals in Africa and the Diaspora was held in 2002 in Dakar, by the African Union in collaboration with the Republic of Senegal. The general theme around which the Conference was held was “Africa in the 21st Century: Integration and Renaissance” (AU CAID Report, 2004; Kovács 2009). The Conference was a follow up to, and a logical extension of, the first Meeting of African Intellectuals and Personalities of Culture which took place in Dakar, Senegal, in 1996; with seven hundred (700) intellectuals and men and women of culture from Africa and its Diasporas particularly those from North, Central and South America, the Caribbean, Europe and the Arab world attending the Conference (AU CAID Report, 2004).

In addition to that, the Pan African Cultural Congress (PACC) thus the First, Second and Third editions had taken place since 2006 (African Union, 2004; Kovács 2009). The First Pan African Cultural Congress was organized in 2006 in the Ethiopia capital of Addis Ababa, on the theme "Culture, Integration and the African Renaissance". Before that, a meeting dubbed ‘The First Conference of African Union Ministers of Culture’ (CAMC), in December 2005; with the goal to achieve an integrated continent along the lines of the European model was held in Nairobi, Kenya and subsequent sessions of the Conference have taken place since every two years (Kovács, 2009). Through other events, the Union has also partnered with regional, continental and international institutions such as UNESCO in handling different fields of African culture or co-sponsor and participate in various fora aimed at presenting the state of African cultures, deliberating and finding key challenges for charting out and harnessing culture as an engine for sustainable growth and development of the continent. These events have not only seen to projecting African cultural values, but have also defined the continent’s regional identity, distinguishing it from other regional bodies who hold different cultural policies and values as well.



## **b) Update of the AU Cultural Charter**

Among AU's stringent cultural policy mechanisms has been the update of its Cultural Charter. Following inspirations from the Cultural for Charter Africa, adopted in 1976 by the Heads of State and Government of the OAU at a meeting in Port Louis, Mauritius, the AU has also succeeded in revising the Charter. The AU facilitated the updating of the 1976 Cultural Charter for Africa and renamed it as the Charter for the Cultural Renaissance of Africa 2005 (AU ACALAN 2016; Kebede 2016; Kovács 2009). The Charter was adapted within the

“context of the rapid global changes and finding solution to new challenges and persisting development expectation relating to the African Renaissance ....recognizes the role of culture considering that, cultural exchanges and initiatives taken in the form of cultural action contributes to the mutual enrichment, understanding between human beings and to the peace amongst states”  
(AU Cultural Renaissance, 2005: clause 2.2& 2.3).

The Union anticipates a revised and updated Cultural Charter will give a new impetus to efforts at establishing a common approach to dealing with cultural issues. Similarly, the revised Charter has been tailored in a manner which defines individuals and their identity in the region. Broadly, the AU's conscious effort at promoting its cultural policies through update of its Charter can be seen to be an efficient way through which an African identity is enhanced and constructed.

## **c) Education, Sports and Cultural Exchanges in AU**

Education and sports are valuable cultural policies for shaping the identity of member states in regional organizations. The Youth, Culture and Sports are among the various sectors under the Specialized Technical Committee (STC) of the AU which ensures identity building. Defined as an Organ of the African Union in accordance with Article 5 (1) (g) of the AU Constitutive Act; the STC on Youth, Culture

and Sports meets once every two (2) years. The first STC Meeting on Youth, Culture and Sport took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 2014 with the experts and Ministers discussing issues pertaining to the development of the Youth, Culture and Sport sectors at continental level as well as looking forward to ways of establishing synergies among the three sectors to enable the joint operationalization of the Specialized Technical Committee (AU Youth Division STC, 2016).

The African Union as a way of shaping the identity of its members through cultural policies supports some educational institutions in order to help project the African identity and cultural values. In 2008, the African Union agreed that the Pan African University (PAU) would be established, following a high-level panel appointed in 2009 to oversee the coming in of the institution. The PAU was officially launched in 2011, and the University's Statute was adopted in 2013 (Lom, 2011). Mainly, the aim of the PAU is to provide the opportunity for advanced graduate training and postgraduate research to high-performing African students, including promoting mobility of students and teachers and harmonizing programs and degrees (University World News, 2011). In this manner, many African students shall be enrolled with scholarships to study and train in African skills and values. Teachers would also be employed and given a profession which suits an African standard. This cultural policy by the AU in the field of education, in turn leads to the building of collective identity in the African region.

In the area of Sports, the African Union STC on youth, culture and sport has remained passionate and committed in promoting cultural policies through this direction. In June 2016, the AU STC on youth, culture and sport highlighted and approved a decision that the African Cup of Nations (AFCON); the main international football association competition in Africa now “belongs” to the AU and will be organized under the banner of the continental organization (Mail & Guardian Newspaper, 2016). According to AU commissioner for social affairs Mustapha Sidiki Kaloko, a new African sport institution (the New Architecture for Sport in Africa) will support and organize all sports activity on the continent, especially to harness the sport, culture and everything towards socioeconomic development rather than

just the question of sport for entertainment. The AU Commissioner reiterated that there had been a great impact on the issue of Pan-Africanism and the African cultural renaissance as he orates:

“You know in Africa, whenever we have conflicts anywhere, people go and start destroying cultural artifacts ....We’re working very hard to make sure that these cultural artifacts are repaired [and] protected in times of crisis and bring it to the attention of member states,”

(Mail and Guardian Newspaper, 2016)

Apparently, cultural policies of the AU has touched on sports as a key element for building regional identity while African values are projected on the continental level. Another has been cultural exchange programs, African arts films and theatres, which are all part of the AU cultural policies in building regional identity. The Panafrican Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou (Festival Panafricain du Cinéma et de la Télévision de Ouagadougou - FESPACO) is a film festival located in Burkina Faso (FESPACO, 2003). The AU is involved in the activities of this organization, as it holds biennial meetings in Ouagadougou, the headquarters of the organization. FESPACO primarily accepts for competition only films by African filmmakers and those largely produced in Africa. The festival offers African film professionals the opportunity to establish working relationships, exchange ideas, and to promote their work. The organization’s intended aim has been to "contribute to the expansion and development of African cinema as means of expression, education and awareness-raising" (FESPACO, 2003). It has also worked to establish a market for African films and industry professionals; and has attracted attendees from across the continent and beyond.

Education, Sports and cultural activities such as film festivals have been influential as a cultural policy tools by the AU, in shaping the identity of member states in the African region. These elements facilitate the smooth building of collective identity and allows the AU to inject in its members African cultural values, which translate into identity building.

#### **d) AU promotion of African Languages and Symbols**

Languages and symbols are indispensable elements in the buildup of AU's cultural policies, as the Union strives to enhance identity building. Incredibly, Africa is considered a continent, 'rich with over 3,000 indigenous languages ...' (Epstein & Kole 1998). One main African cultural policy introduced by the AU has been the setting up of the African Academy of Languages (ACALAN). The Academy is a Pan-African organization founded in 2001 by Alpha Oumar Konaré, (the then Malian President) under the auspices of the African Union, for the harmonization of Africa's many spoken languages. The AU's declaration of 2006 as the 'Year of African Languages' led to the inauguration of the interim Governing Board of ACALAN in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Academy has been in existence since its commission to begin operation.

One of the core projects of ACALAN which started in 2006, is the Pan-African Master's and PhD Program in African Languages and Applied Linguistics (PANMAPAL); commencing in three Universities namely, University of Yaoundé, Cameroon, University of Cape Town, South Africa and Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia (ACALAN, 2007). The aim of such project has been to train qualified linguists, language professionals, educators and other practitioners to become specialized in African languages and the application of relevant linguistic theory in the resolution of issues in relation to African languages (ACALAN, 2007). These efforts by the AU are geared towards defining an African culture and building collective identity.

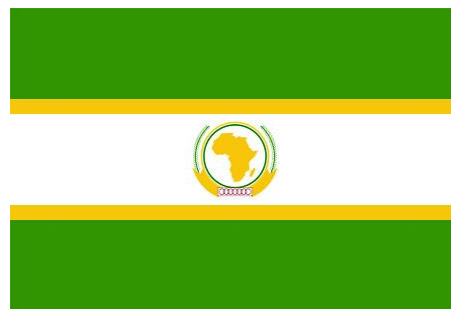
Symbols carry many meanings and represent what the group seeks to achieve or work towards for. The African Union has a flag which bears the symbol of the Union and these depict the African values alongside the identity of the region. In the emblem of the AU can be found the palm leaves shooting up on either side of the outer circle stand for peace; the gold circle symbolizes Africa's wealth and bright future; the green circle stands for African hopes and aspirations; the plain map of Africa without

boundaries in the inner circle signifies African unity; the small interlocking red rings at the base of the Emblem stand for African solidarity and the bloodshed for the liberation of Africa (AU Compendium 2012, p.9). Moreover, the AU has introduced a current flag adopted at the 14th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, which took place in Addis Ababa on 31 January 2010. The flag has a broad green horizontal stripe at the top, followed by a narrow band of gold. The broad white stripe bears the Emblem at its center followed by a narrow gold band and broad green stripe at the bottom. The colour green symbolizes African hopes and aspiration to unity. The gold colour stands for African wealth and bright future. The colour white represents the purity of Africa's desire to have genuine friends throughout the world (AU Symbol and Emblem, 2016).

### Images of the AU Symbol and Flag



**Figure 1.0** (AU Symbol)



**Figure 1.1** (AU Flag)

*Source: African Union Homepage*

The AU symbol and flag has become a standard which enables the description of the African culture and its identity. Almost all the African countries on the continent have adopted some colors from the AU flag, especially the colour green which generally serves as Africa's hope, aspiration and Unity. Also on

the African Union Passport exist the symbol and the flag at the front cover, symbolically describing the African continent. The AU also has a Union anthem depicting an African identity and its uniqueness in culture, especially in the third stanza which reads:

“..... Let us all unite and toil together  
To give the best we have to Africa  
The cradle of mankind and fount of culture  
Our pride and hope at break of dawn ...” (Source: AU Website)

Symbols and languages on this score counts in instances where regional bodies intend to construct a certain kind of identity. The cultural policy measures by the African Union in general can be said to have enhanced the building of the Union’s collective identity through the implementation of these cultural policies in the region.

The next part looks at the ECOWAS and its cultural policies which construct collective identity among its member states.

#### **5.4 ECOWAS CULTURAL POLICIES IN PERSPECTIVE**

ECOWAS represents a sub- regional body of fifteen (15) West African countries which came into being in 1975, through the signing of the Treaty of Lagos. The mission of the organization has been to promote economic integration across the region (ECOWAS, 2015). Prior to the formation of ECOWAS, the collective territory known as West Africa and from a regional point of view, was composed of an aggregation of states which had emerged from different colonial experiences and administrations. Though the region’s cultural, linguistic and ecological diversity presents both opportunities and challenges for the integration process, the desire to merge forces politically and economically has always

been accepted as a step forward in the aspiration to engender co-prosperity in the West African area (ECOWAS 2015).

As a sub-regional entity in West Africa, ECOWAS cultural policies have not been shelved in the pursuance of its goals and objectives in the region. Though it is assumed that most of the policies and regulations of the body will tailor the needs of economic cooperation in the region, ECOWAS perceives culture as a viable option which could be merged with economic cooperation to strengthen regional integration on the sub-continent. This vision is evidently expounded in Article 62 (Cultural Affairs) of the ECOWAS revised treaty, which stipulates that:

“Member States undertake to pursue the objectives of the Community Cultural Framework Agreement; encourage the promotion, by every means possible, of all forms of cultural exchange; promote, develop and, where necessary, improve structures and mechanisms for the production, propagation and utilization of cultural industries; and promote the learning and dissemination of a West African language as a factor in Community integration” (ECOWAS Revised Treaty).

ECOWAS cultural policies are indispensable in the region, mainly forming part of its main regional economic agenda of promoting integration in West Africa. More so, as a region with diverse cultures and peoples, the socio-cultural dimension of development also remains a necessary building block for establishing peace and security in the region. ECOWAS embarks on series of international cultural events, education, sports and film festivals, as well as promoting some West African languages and symbols within the region. These activities symbolize and bring out the real ‘West African’ cultural value while further enhancing the building of collective identity. Below are some of these cultural policies and agendas adopted by the ECOWAS as a means to define and construct a West African Identity in the region.

### **a) ECOWAS Promotion of International Cultural Events**

ECOWAS member states by way of promoting a West African culture and defining a collective identity are encouraged to work on the gains achieved in the area of culture policies, to drive the development of the region (ECOWAS, 2016). Like the African Union, which has a full charter on culture, ECOWAS also has Cultural Framework Agreement which guides the Community on how the various objectives could be achieved and maintained. Part of the Community's cultural goals has been to organize and promote international cultural events within and in partnership with other regional bodies. International cultural events have served as a medium for harnessing culture from respective backgrounds into forming a collective West African identity. Among such events have been Conferences of ECOWAS Ministers of Culture, held as part of ECOWAS' plan to bring together all heads in charge of the cultural Ministries in the various member states. The First Conference of ECOWAS Ministers was held in 2002 at Dakar, in Senegal and this has subsequently followed with recently the 5<sup>th</sup> Conference in 2015, held in Lome, the Togolese capital. In the 2015 Conference of culture for instance, the Permanent Secretary in Togo's Ministry of Communication, Culture, Arts and Civic Education, Mr. Tinaka Kossi, called for concrete results to facilitate decision-making by the Ministers and generally reechoed that governments of the region were counting on them to make culture an important leverage for sustainable socio-economic development (ECOWAS Press Release, January 2015).

In addition, during the course of the events, several recommendations and roles were discharged mostly to the Directors of Cultural Heritage, particularly in drafting the development of work plan on inventory, which safeguards and preserves the West African cultural heritage. In all, experts and Ministers of Culture from Member States, resource persons, representatives of religious organizations, staff of the ECOWAS Commission, as well as representatives of development partners and civil society organizations who work in the cultural sector usually attend such occasions. Practically, these efforts



contribute to the building of a collective identity and serves as an opportunity to bring together different cultures to play.

## **b) Education, Sports and Cultural Festivals in ECOWAS**

ECOWAS has made conscious efforts in joining different cultures of member states through education, sports, cultural exchange programs, festivals, seminars, art exhibitions and meetings with individuals serving in the social and cultural sectors.

In the area of education, there is the ECOWAS Academic Mobility Program (AMP), designed as a cultural policy to boost access to education in areas of strategic importance to the region, including the provision of scholarships at Masters and PhD levels (ECOWAS AMP, 2015). The program aims to increase the knowledge base of the region by promoting research, exchange of ideas, information and academic materials among universities and other institutions of higher learning. The AMP is financed by the ECOWAS Commission and managed by the Association of African Universities (AAU), under the Commission's supervision as a forum for consultation, information sharing and cooperation among African institutions of higher learning. ECOWAS also owns a vast experience in the management of regional academic program, with a Staff Exchange Program which aims at facilitating academic mobility and encouraging networking among ECOWAS member institutions, as well as contributing to improvements in the quality of training and research in West African higher education institutions. Under the Staff Exchange Program, academic staff from universities in West Africa, or West African academics in the Diaspora, are sponsored to undertake visits to universities in West Africa to offer services such as teaching, graduate theses supervision, serving as external examiners or engaging in joint research (ECOWAS AMP, 2015).

In the area of cultural festivals, ECOWAS as part of its operations towards cultural integration, supports the Nanga Def festival (in Senegal) where the traditions of West African countries come to display through live performances, music, dance, exhibits, film, art, games and a West African bazaar / market. This festival is educative and sheds light on the cultures of different West African countries. There is also, the Pan-African Film and TV Festival of Ouagadougou (FESPACO) the largest film festival in Africa dating back more than forty years. The event is organized once every two years in February and March in Burkina Faso as situated in West Africa. The event are premiers and showcases films from West African countries as well as providing information for West African peoples about their cultures as shown in films. Through such occasion, the people in the region are able to identify where they belong to and who they form part of as a way of ensuring collective identity building. In Mali, ECOWAS plays an influential role in also supporting the ‘Festival in the Dessert’ (Festival-au-Desert in French), where a three day of traditional Touareg art, music and dance is held in the dessert, attracting several international observers around the world and inside West Africa.

Sports and games are also channels through which ECOWAS parades its cultural policies and values of integration and identity building. ECOWAS has specially set up the Youth and Sports Development Centre (YSDC) which is responsible for the formulation and application of the basic principles relating to the youth and games. At the 7<sup>th</sup> Conference of the ECOWAS Ministers of Youth and Sports held in Burkina Faso (Ouagadougou) from August to September 2000, there was the suggestion for the introduction of ECOWAS Games with the objective to

“..... contribute to the integration of stakeholders of the West African Sport movement; enable member states to develop future sport elites; strengthen the sports-related economic base of member states; promote a sense of belonging to the same community” (ECOWAS YSDC, 2000).

The 2012 ECOWAS Games was the second biennial regional sports meeting held in the West African region. The sports event which was held in Ghana was massively attended under the theme:

“Promoting Peace and Unity among ECOWAS and the Youth through Sports”. Five sports which featured in the 2012 games were athletics, wrestling, handball, volleyball and boxing (ECOWAS Games, 2012). The first edition had earlier taken place in Nigeria. Outstandingly, the sporting event was one medium which united member states in the region especially the Youth through sports and different display of cultural talents.

### **c) ECOWAS Languages and Symbols**

In the past, ECOWAS had taken several actions towards economic and political integration, until it soon realized the need to have a Community of people instead of a community of States (Metondji 2015). The sub- regional institution saw that, it was difficult to conceive a “community of people” without an appropriate strategy that will culturally integrate them and establish an effective system of communication between the elites and the majority of the people (Metondji 2015). As a whole, there exist multilingualism in the West African region; a home to well over 1,000 languages (Caseley – Hayford, Wallace & Fargion, 2015). Language policies however have focused on French, English and Portuguese, which are spoken by less than 20% of the population (International Democracy Watch, 2012; Metondji 2015). One way through which ECOWAS employs language as a cultural tool for identity building has been through the setting up of various language centers for the three main official languages (English, French and Portuguese).

In 2005 for example, ECOWAS and Portugal signed an agreement to set up a Portuguese language center at the executive secretariat of the regional bloc in Nigeria's capital city of Abuja (Panapress, 2005). The center aimed to promote the training of translators, interpreters and staff in Portuguese, one of the

three official languages of ECOWAS. The Executive secretary of the ECOWAS at the time, Mohamed Ibn Chambas reiterated that:

"ECOWAS is determined to put the three languages on equal terms in our regional integration efforts...." (Panapress, 2005).

Other languages have also been on the agenda of ECOWAS to ensure centers are opened and made accessible to countries which experienced deficiency in any of the Community's official languages. Without doubt, these cultural policy measures in the area of languages, expunged by the ECOWAS drive towards the building of a collective identity among member states. The members' decision to learn various languages from these centers is a way of expressing one's commitment and identity to the 'West African' region.

Furthermore, symbols define a West African culture and enhance identity building among regional bodies. ECOWAS has a symbol which defines its identity in the region. The ECOWAS flag closely resembles the AU flag in terms of colour and symbols design. Nonetheless, the colors and symbols in the flag have not been given any interpretation in comparison to the AU. In actual sense, a relationship exist between the AU and ECOWAS, over how both display their colors and symbols. This relation is especially seen in how ECOWAS acknowledges the AU as the main organization to the extent of adopting the African map in their logo. The ECOWAS flag is made of the Africa map painted yellow inside a white background and inside the yellow space is found a green shaded area which represents the West African region and all member states in that region. Other colors such as red (wine), white and green in the ECOWAS flag uniquely explains the identity of the sub-regional body. (See below the image of the ECOWAS flag). The ECOWAS flag remains a cultural element that enhances identity building through its colors and symbols that give meanings to the regional community and shape member states' identity.



**Figure 1.3 ECOWAS Flag**

Moreover, the words and lyrics of anthems form part of regional efforts through cultural means to portray a collective identity. ECOWAS also has its anthem for the region. The ECOWAS anthem is sang each time a summit is held by heads of the member states and the lyrics in the anthem unites and defines who the member states are, as well as where they belong to. Having a track history of promoting regional economic activities in West Africa, the ECOWAS anthem has been translated into this mission and objective openly describing the economic regional heritage of the community through the lyrics in the anthem. The ECOWAS anthem upholds the integrity and cultural values of the member states, with the second stanza that reads:

“.....Peace and unity and social justice everywhere,  
Cultural integration and liberty we declare!  
Women and youth, all shall maintain our future bright.....” (Source: ECOWAS homepage)

The lyrics in the ECOWAS anthem depicts a West African identity which all member states are encouraged to represent and uphold. ECOWAS is able to use its anthem to define the West African culture and build as well an identity in the region. Relatively, it could be argued that, ECOWAS has also been proactive and outstanding in defining a West African culture, through cultural policies which are carried across the West African region. The promotion of international cultural events, the use of education, sports and cultural festivals as well as the role of languages, symbols and lyrics of regional

body anthems have been elements that project ECOWAS cultural values while further enhancing collective identity building.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

African regional bodies have employed cultural policies to promote and shape the collective identity of their members. Generally, member states in regional organizations through numerous cultural policies help to build a collective identity. Similarly, the inclusion of cultural policies in the treaties and acts of regional organizations lead to identity building and enhance regional cooperation. Comprehensively, cultural policies have the impetus to promote and project cultural values that shape member states in regional organizations.

This chapter has examined the African Union and ECOWAS, unveiling their cultural policies and the extent to which they shape and define member states in regional organizations. Cultural policies are not just mere policies but ones that carry cultural impact of shaping and defining a group of people's identity within a region. The thorough study of some cultural policies in the AU and ECOWAS show largely that African regional organizations and member states are shaped by their cultural elements resulting in an African / West African identity in their respective regions.

The construction of collective identity through cultural values have been carried out in Africa along a plethora of lines. For instance we observe that the African Union, since history have implemented various cultural policies and reforms widely in connection to its regional integration objectives. Some of these have been: international cultural events in the form of holding meetings by all African Ministers of culture, Pan African festivals, establishment of African Universities and Departments in the African

region, organizing sporting events, promotion of African languages through ACALAN and the usage of symbols and flags; have collectively shaped the identity of member states in Africa.

Similarly, ECOWAS has followed the direction of the AU, as it carries out a number of cultural policies in the West African region to shape member states' identity. Regardless of ECOWAS' main agenda to promote regional economic activities, its role in influencing member states by their cultural elements is achieved. As a sub-regional body, ECOWAS has been able to unite its 15 member states through cultural elements like arts and festivals, music and folklore, games, meetings of West African Ministers of culture, education, languages, symbols, flags and the regional anthem. The impact of these cultural policies are seen from the extent to which member states owe allegiance and show full commitment to promoting those cultural activities in the region. Accordingly, the 'West African' identity is constructed because of the influence of such cultural policies in the region.

Comparatively, the African Union has been more proactive in building a collective identity through its cultural policies than the ECOWAS. The history of Pan Africanism provides this due advantage to the AU, as most of its Pan African ideas are evident and reflective in the national culture of member states in the regional organization. Virtually, ECOWAS appears to be treading similar cultural policies which its mother organization (thus the AU) had taken. All the same, both regional bodies on the African soil have largely been able to demonstrate the relevance of cultural policies as effective pillars for identity building.

Understandably, this chapter has demonstrated that identity building in African regional organizations could be enhanced through cultural policies that define and shape member states' identity. More so, African regional bodies have actively been involved in the identity building process through the implementation of these policies that are legitimate and have influence in the national culture of member states.

# Chapter 6:

## 6.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study through its methodology and analysis, has thoroughly discussed the mechanisms by which African regional organizations construct a sense of collective identity in their region. Conclusively, fair analyses have been done and the research questions, objectives and propositions have been appropriately addressed.

Considering the four main themes; thus shared values, membership debates, formal institutions and cultural cooperation, this study has demonstrated that African regional bodies through these elements shape the identity of member states. These themes were discussed in relation to the cases from two main African regional and sub organizations (AU and ECOWAS). The following observations were made from these respective themes on the AU and ECOWAS.

Under shared values, it is observed that the AU and ECOWAS shape the identity of their members through common values such as domestic sovereignty and nonintervention, democracy and good governance, solidarity, peace and security, human rights and social justice. The study revealed that shared values enshrined in treaties and acts of the AU and ECOWAS, as well as values that carry sanctions in terms of a breach, help in shaping the identity of member states. On the theme of shared values, ECOWAS as a sub-regional body in West Africa has been more proactive in this dimension of constructing a sense of collective identity compared to the AU. The small size of ECOWAS membership allows the sub regional organization to successfully enforce its values by ensuring that member states comply with them. In spite of its effectiveness in shaping the identity of their member through shared values, ECOWAS continues to encounter certain problems in its region, as some member states have not fully yielded to comply with certain values of the Community. On the other hand, the African Union's effort in



constructing a collective identity through shared values is not marginalized in this study. Regardless of its large size membership, the AU has managed to shape the identity of members through its shared values and these values have enhanced the identity building in the African region. Unfortunately, there appeared to be an overlap in terms of the enforcement of these shared values between the AU and ECOWAS member states: as the AU's values are almost similar to that of ECOWAS. Hence, it becomes difficult to deduce whether member states often comply with AU values than the ECOWAS or even the vice versa during identity building.

Remarkably, on the theme of membership debate, it is noticed that the construction of a collective identity moves beyond mere geographical borders and the enlargement process of inclusion and exclusion is in itself part of the identity building mechanism of African regional bodies. For Haiti to seek membership in the AU and Morocco to decide to leave the OAU in 1984, alludes to the fact that the issue of identity building through membership debate is a contested one that moves beyond a mere discourse on geography to embrace the process itself. ECOWAS is also confronted with the case, where Mauritania leaves the Community to join the African Maghreb Union. In all these cases, the study has pointed to the goal that the issue of exclusion and inclusion mostly influence how African regional bodies shape the identity of member states in the region. The enlargement process is therefore an alternative that regional organizations have used in widely distinguishing themselves from the others during identity construction in the region. Therefore, regional organizations in Africa have the tendency to construct identity even through debates that arise during the enlargement process. Again, this study echoes the fact that despite much attention given to geography as pre given and natural in constructing identity, it is worth considering the process during membership patterns as this is equally influential in shaping the identity of member states in a region. The membership pattern cases from both AU and ECOWAS have demonstrated these ways of constructing identity in this study.

More so, the formal institutions of African regional bodies also shape the identity of member states in the region. Clearly this study has advanced the case that the evolution and institutionalization of regional organizations in Africa have resulted in the creation of collective identity. Thus, African regional organizations have charted the path of identity building through the establishment of formal institutions that serve as identity builders. From a micro level of analysis, the study has delved into the formal institutions of the African Union and ECOWAS; unveiling plausible propositions to how those institutions construct identity. The propositions suggest that, the holding of frequent and regular meetings/sessions, effective execution of more supranational roles and formal institutions' ability to exist functionally and engage in a number of decisions enhance identity building in the African region. Comparatively, it is realized, ECOWAS has been more proactive in shaping the identity of its members through its formal institutions than the AU. The success of ECOWAS again could be attributed to its small size membership over the African Union. Some formal institutions of AU have however been active in shaping the identity of member states, though the study shows that some formal institutions of the AU example its financial institutions and Court, to date exist only on paper but not in reality. This is an affront to the AU as it seeks to construct identity through its formal institutions. That notwithstanding, identity building generally in Africa as this study depicts, has taken a new turn with the formal institutions of both the AU and ECOWAS.

Constructing a sense of collective identity among regional organizations move along with cultural policies, as this study has exhibited how African regional organization shape the identity of members through this theme. Indeed the identity of member states in African regional bodies are expressed through cultural policies, particularly when members implement those policies in their regions. International cultural events, education and sports, anthems, language and symbols, cultural festivals and conferences have all shaped the identity of member states in African regional bodies. This study has comparatively examined the cultural policies of the AU and ECOWAS to show that the AU is more influential in this

direction of constructing its identity through cultural policies than the ECOWAS. Due to the record of accomplishment in Pan Africanism that started with the AU's predecessor OAU, cultural policies and the manner in which they shape member states' identity have received more attention in the AU than the ECOWAS. Undeniably the cultural policies of the two regional bodies look similar however; the African Union has gained much influence over how it effectively capitalizes on its Pan African history of the continent to express these cultural values among member states. ECOWAS nonetheless is seen to be treading similar trajectories in the cultural policies of the AU and the number of cultural policies seen in the AU have manifested among member states in the ECOWAS region. Overall, both the AU and ECOWAS have employed cultural policies in shaping respectively the identity of their member in the Africa / West African region.

Traditionally, the greater number of member states in regional organizations have been considered to hamper cooperation (Kelley 2010), though this conjecture may well be overstated and not always the case. However, in this study the contention over which size of regional organization favors identity building has been examined and clearly with the institutional size, this study has shown that ECOWAS' relatively small size has been effective in shaping the identity of members than the AU. The small institutional size of ECOWAS has been beneficial over how it is able to easily bring together members while shaping their identity in the West African region, compared to the African Union that has a large size membership. In addition, the institutional designs in the AU and ECOWAS as the study have shown virtually remained similar, evident from their values, norms, culture and even the existing formal institutions in the two regional bodies.

## 6.2 Recommendations on Future research

After a careful study of how African regional organizations, specifically the AU and ECOWAS construct collective identity through various themes, I proffer the following three recommendations as useful and promising avenues for future research.

First, it is still not so clear how the institutional size and designs best explain the construction of collective identity among African regional organizations. Collective identity among African regional organizations have evolved out of a plethora of factors that makes it difficult and challenging to point to a single variable like institutional size as influential for identity building in member states. Hence in future research, much attention need to be given to whether the number of member states in regional organizations still matter for the construction of a sense of collective identity.

A second useful direction for future research concerns the relationship between formal and informal institutions in identity building. Largely, formal and informal institutions work in tandem, and so the relevant question concerns how both institutions relate in constructing a sense of collective identity, rather than attributing it only to the formal institutions in African regional organizations as identity builders. Future research may hence consider the relation between formal and informal institutions in constructing a collective identity among African regional bodies. Thus, do formal and informal institutions reinforce each other during the identity building process, or do they often operate at cross-purposes, and how does this affect outcomes in identity building?

A third promising area for future research is to compare regional organizations more thoroughly with non-regional international organizations, in light of identity building. Comparison of international and regional organizations promises important insights concerning regional governance (Kelley 2010). Observably, regional organizations are usually expressed in terms of geography and membership size. Therefore, it would be of interest to also juxtapose with global international organizations, to see how

identity building takes place. That is, are regional organizations distinct from other international organizations in terms of identity building, and if they are distinct, how does this affect their institutional designs and roles in identity building?



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