

# ENIGMA OF SUB-REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN AFRICA: THE CASE OF THE ECONOMIC AND MONETARY COMMUNITY OF CENTRAL AFRICA (CEMAC), 1994-2020

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**Abstract:** *This chapter examines the enigma of Sub-regional economic integration in the Communauté Economique et Monétaire de l'Afrique Central (CEMAC) zone. The sub-regional integration idea was born out of the need for a united Africa during the immediate independence period, to be achieved through a gradual, but steady process. Although instituted in 1994, CEMAC was a re-make of the Economic and Customs Union of Central Africa (UDEAC) created in 1964. CEMAC was established, to promote sub-regional integration among central African states that shared a common legal tender, the CFA franc, through the promotion of trade, a genuine common market and greater solidarity. Albeit recording some inroads, CEMAC lagged behind its objectives, due to tardiness and overall poor implementation of policies, limited technical capacity, divergent attitudes of member states towards integration and absence of sanctions against states that disrespect community norms. The chapter sustains that such diverse political, economic, and socio-cultural impediments could only be halted through a joint approach, for remedial renewal by all stakeholders for a truly integrated economic CEMAC sub-region. This investigation shall be based on secondary and primary data, interpreted qualitatively and presented thematically.*

**Keywords:** *Enigma, Economic integration, CEMAC, Sub-regionalism, Africa.*

## Introduction

Regional and sub-regional integration in Africa emerged during the immediate postcolonial period, in an effort to construct viable geographic, economic and politically cohesive entities on the continent.<sup>1</sup> This initially

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<sup>1</sup> Jens Haarlow, *Regional Cooperation and Integration within Industry and Trade in Southern Africa: General Approaches, SADCC and the World Bank*, Aldershot: Avebury, 1997, p. 16.

was aimed at working towards preserving African independence and fighting neo-colonialism.<sup>2</sup> It later shifted towards economic cooperation, with the ultimate aim of establishing an African Economic Community (AEC) as laid down by the Lagos Plan of Action in 1980, which called on all African countries to strengthen their regional economic communities and establishing new ones before 1990.<sup>3</sup> This idea spurred the formation of the wider Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in 1983. It was in this same framework that the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) was created in 1994, to replace the Customs and Economic Union of Central Africa (UDEAC) that had been instituted in 1959 just before independence by four members: the Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Congo and Gabon.<sup>4</sup>

The UDEAC treaty was signed in 1964, to strengthen regional solidarity and promote the gradual creation of a common market.<sup>5</sup> Cameroon joined it that same year and Equatorial Guinea adhered in 1983. By its creation, the heads of state and Government had committed themselves to establishing a closer union between their people in order to fortify regional cohesion and promote the gradual creation of a common market in Central Africa.<sup>6</sup> They considered this as a means to greater regional development and a way through which the region's economy could be integrated into the global economic system, thereby giving it more economic power in the international arena.<sup>7</sup> After thirty years of existence (1964-1994), the UDEAC

<sup>2</sup> Sergiu Mişcoiu, Dan Petrică, "The New EU-Africa Relations' Strategy: Soft Power or Neoliberalist Power?", in Adebowale Akande (ed.) *Politics Between Nations. Contributions to International Relations*, Cham: Springer, 2023, pp. 539-560.

<sup>3</sup> Margaret Lee, "Regionalism in Africa: A Part of Problem or a Part of Solution?", in *Polis / R.C.S.P. / C.P.S.R.* Vol. 9, Numéro Spécial, 2002, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Victor Essien, "Regional Trade Agreements in Africa – A Historical and Bibliographic Account of ECOWAS and CEMAC", 2019 [[https://www.nyulawglobal.org/globalex/cemac\\_ecowas1.html](https://www.nyulawglobal.org/globalex/cemac_ecowas1.html)], 10<sup>th</sup> May 2022.

<sup>5</sup> Bela A. Balassa, *The Theory of Economic Integration*, Homewood, Illinois: Richard Dale, Inc., 1961, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Guy Marcel Nono, "Integration Efforts in Central Africa: The Case of CEMAC," UNO-CRIS Working papers, United Nations University, Institute on Comparative Regional Integration Studies, 2014, p. 8 [<https://cris.unu.edu/integration-efforts-central-africa-case-cemac>], 8<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

<sup>7</sup> Communauté Européenne, "Région de l'Afrique Centrale : Document de stratégie de coopération régionale et Programme indicative régional," *Stratégie de Coopération Régionale Avec L'Afrique Centrale-9ème FED*, 2001 [[http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/print\\_r8\\_rsp\\_fr.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/print_r8_rsp_fr.pdf)], 12<sup>th</sup> May 2022.

could not achieve these goals. As a result of the economic crisis which broke out in the late 1980s and 1990, the member states of UDEAC became highly concerned with a vision to establish a customs union and the need to create a more efficient integration initiative, leading to its replacement in March 1994 by the CEMAC.<sup>8</sup> Its principal mission was, completing the process of economic and monetary integration of the sub-region that was started by its predecessor.<sup>9</sup>

The Treaty creating the CEMAC identified four important community institutions that would assist in achieving its objectives: the *Union Economique de l'Afrique Centrale* (UEAC); *Union Monétaire de l'Afrique Centrale* (UMAC); *Parliament Communautaire* (P.C.); *Cour de Justice Communautaire* (C.J.C.) and the Supreme Audit Court of CEMAC.<sup>10</sup> This sub-regional organisation thus constituted a link between the Monetary Union, Bank of Central African States (BEAC), Customs Union, and the Customs and Economic Union of Central Africa (UDEAC). These institutions were further assisted by a range of organs: the Conference of Heads of States (COHS), described as the supreme body of the Community; the Council of Ministers (COM), charged with the responsibility of directing the UEAC and made up primarily of the Ministers in charge of Finance and Economic affairs of member states; the Ministerial Committee (MC), composed of two Ministers per member state with the minister of finance as head of delegation; CEMAC Commission; Bank of Central African States (BEAC); the Development Bank of Central African States (BDEAC); Banking Commission of Central Africa (COBAC) and others.<sup>11</sup> This chapter focuses on the objectives, achievements and challenges for sub-regional integration in Central Africa. It argues that, CEMAC efforts were strained by a range of constraints.

## **Objectives and means to achieve**

The CEMAC was established as a means of creating a more defined and dominant integration initiative, aimed not only at promoting the

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<sup>8</sup> CEMAC treaty [<http://www.worldtradelaw.net/fta/agreements/cemacfta.pdf>], 18<sup>th</sup> October 2022.

<sup>9</sup> *Traité constitutif de la CEMAC*, (1994), art 1 [[http://www.internationaldemocracywatch.org/attachments/173\\_CEMAC%20Treaty%20\(French\).pdf](http://www.internationaldemocracywatch.org/attachments/173_CEMAC%20Treaty%20(French).pdf)], 20<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

<sup>10</sup> Essien, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> Nono, *op. cit.*

harmonious socio-economic and cultural development of all its member states, but creating a true common Central African market and implementing disciplines on the free movement of persons, goods, capital and services.<sup>12</sup> It was also out to adopt common policies in many areas amongst which were good governance and human rights (promote peace and regional safety in accordance with the spirit of the Abuja and the AU Treaties). Moreover, CEMAC regional policies were focused on the development and interconnection of transport infrastructure, a water and energy environmental pool of central Africa (PEAC), the sub regional hydroelectric potential, implementation of a functioning customs union, regional food security programme (PRSA) and a common agricultural policy (PAC).<sup>13</sup>

To achieve its mission, the CEMAC set-up a series of objectives under two of its institutions: the *Union Economique de l'Afrique Centrale* (UEAC) and the *Union Monétaire de l'Afrique Centrale* (UMAC).<sup>14</sup> These institutions had as missions, the following: set up a multilateral device of monitoring the economic and financial policies of member states; ensure a stable management of the Franc CFA; make safe its economic activities and businesses in general; harmonize the regulation of the sectoral policies in the essential fields, as prescribed by the Treaty, such as: agriculture, fisheries, industry, trade, tourism, transport and telecommunications, energy and environment, research, teaching, vocational training and creating a common market, based on the freedom of movement of persons, goods, services and capital.<sup>15</sup> These objectives were supposed to be completely achieved within three years after the entry into force of CEMAC's Revised Treaty of 2008. It was also agreed under this treaty that in the event of a state failing to fulfil its obligations under community law, its

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<sup>12</sup> Essien, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> African Development Bank Group, "Central Africa Regional Integration Strategy Paper 2019-2025", Edited version, 2019, p. 24

[[https://www.afdb.org/sites/default/files/documents/strategy-documents/central\\_africa\\_risp\\_2019-\\_english\\_version\\_0206\\_19\\_final\\_version.pdf](https://www.afdb.org/sites/default/files/documents/strategy-documents/central_africa_risp_2019-_english_version_0206_19_final_version.pdf)], 12<sup>th</sup> April 2022.

<sup>14</sup> Christian Lambert Nguena, "The Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa, EMCCA", Africa Housing Finance Yearbook, 2019, p. 1

[<http://housingfinanceafrica.org/app/uploads/V8-CEMAC-PROFILE.pdf>], 14<sup>th</sup> October 2022.

<sup>15</sup> United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, "Harmonisation of Economic Communities in Central Africa: Experts Re-engage"

[<http://www.uneca.org/stories/harmonisation-economic-communities-central-africa-experts-re-engage>], 20<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

international responsibility would be called into question and subject to adjudication before the court of justice of CEMAC.<sup>16</sup>

## **Achievements**

After its inception in 1994, CEMAC realised a series of achievements leading to the economic integration of the sub-region. These achievements have particularly been in the domains of monetary integration; free trade zone efforts: free movement of persons; infrastructural development and the harmonisation of sector policies, as shall be seen developed subsequently.

### **A) Monetary Integration**

As concerns CEMAC achievements, monetary integration has been one of its principal achievements, marked by the use of a common currency: the Central African francs CFA created by France for its former colonies in 1945, in the absence of a sub-regional integration policy.<sup>17</sup> This is in spite the monetary integration system is being headed by France, which plays a vital role in its functioning as a whole and of BEAC, an instrument to control the monetary sovereignty of all member states of the Franc zone.<sup>18</sup> Again, BEAC plays an important role in organising and managing the monetary system, banking, financial and exchange rate regime (International Monetary Fund, 2016), while COBAC (Banking Commission of Central Africa), established in 1993, monitors and controls the performance of banking activities in the CEMAC zone.

Still within the framework of monetary integration, the Central African States' Development Bank (BDEAC) has promoted the economic and social development of the CEMAC Sub-region.<sup>19</sup> It has further assisted in financing member states, sub-regional organisations, financial institutions and economic operators in their effort to mobilize financial resources and

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<sup>16</sup> Nono, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>17</sup> Kai Koddenbrock *et al.*, "Towards a Political Economy of Monetary Dependency: The Case of the CFA Franc in West Africa", MaxPo Discussion Paper, No. 19/2, Max Planck Sciences Po Center on Coping with Instability in Market Societies (MaxPo), Paris, 2019, p. iii [<https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/202323/1/1671513134.pdf>], 20th September 2022.

<sup>18</sup> Nono, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>19</sup> Central African States Development Bank, "41st Annual Report Financial Year 2017", p. 9 [[https://www.bdeac.org/upload/docs/application/pdf/2019-06/rapport\\_bdeac\\_210x297\\_us.pdf\\_27052019.pdf](https://www.bdeac.org/upload/docs/application/pdf/2019-06/rapport_bdeac_210x297_us.pdf_27052019.pdf)], 16<sup>th</sup> August 2022.

financing projects. In the same vein, a Central African stock exchange known as the “*Bourse des valeurs mobilières d’Afrique Centrale*” (BVMAC), established in 2003, precisely in Gabon, supports business capitalisation and the development of an investment portfolio in the sub-region.<sup>20</sup>

### **The Free Trade Zone efforts**

CEMAC Free Trade Zone efforts is one of its accomplishments, specifically through the implementation of a preferential tariff for products originating in Central Africa, also known as *Generalised Preferential Tariff (GPT)*.<sup>21</sup> Again, the rate of customs duties on goods of regional origin has been zero since 1998. *Indeed, this makes CEMAC a customs union and an incubator for the free movement of goods.* In short, CEMAC has made very significant progress in its trade liberalisation by creating a customs and monetary union. The customs union is ensured by the existence of a CEMAC Common External Tariff and use of the Franc CFA. Due to the rampant failures in market integration, regional integration, coupled with regional cooperation, is perhaps a more viable strategy for Africa.<sup>22</sup>

### **Free Movement of Persons**

The free movement of people across borders has been high on the regional integration agenda in the CEMAC zone, primarily because of the prospective trade gains that were associated with it. It was therefore a prerequisite that sufficient liberalization be implemented among member states for unrestricted movement of people and enhanced cross-border investments. Many positive steps have been made in this direction notably the implementation of the CEMAC digital passport since 2010.<sup>23</sup> This has made it easy for CEMAC citizens to travel to Cameroon, Congo, CAR, and Chad without a visa as they can simply move across borders with their

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<sup>20</sup> Règlement General du BVMAC, (2008), p. 4 [<https://www.bvm-ac.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Reglement-BVMAC.pdf>], 16<sup>th</sup> August 2022.

<sup>21</sup> Economic Community of Central African States, “CEMAC Economic and Financial Reforms Programme (PREF-CEMAC)”, Foundation for International Development Studies and Research (FERDI), 2017, p. 13.

<sup>22</sup> Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>23</sup> Serge Loungou, “La libre circulation des personnes au sein de l’espace de la C.E.M.A.C : entre mythes et réalités” in *Revue Belge de Géographie*, 2010, p. 315.

community passport. Free movement of people across Africa represents a powerful boost to economic growth and skills development, especially when people can travel with ease for business, tourism or education.<sup>24</sup> Everyone benefits from a country that opens up their borders, as can be seen in remittances growth in recent years.<sup>25</sup> Improved infrastructure and transport facilities are said can ease the process and further stimulate cross-border mobility that boosts economic growth and development in Africa.<sup>26</sup>

Furthermore, “free movement of people and the rights of residence and establishment” comprises the fifth phase of the Abuja Treaty under the auspices of the African Union that is projected to be realized by 2023.<sup>27</sup> To achieve a freer movement of people, the African Union has advocated for the “single African passport” as a part of its Agenda 2063.<sup>28</sup> CEMAC countries and region need to encourage positive reciprocity, applying the treatment they receive from more visa-open countries; and look at promoting a visa-on-arrival approach or regional bloc visas.

### **Infrastructural Development and Harmonisation of Sector Policies**

Apart from promoting the free movement of people, the CEMAC has embarked on the development of Central Africa’s infrastructure, in order to link Cameroon, Chad and the Central African Republic, through roads and rail. The Community Road infrastructure, that cut across national boundaries such as the Touboro (Cameroon)-Moundou (Chad), Yaoundé-Ebolowa, Ambam (Cameroon)-Oyem (Gabon), the Ebolowa, -kye Ossi (Cameroon) - Ebébiyin (Equatorial Guinea) and the proposed Sangmélina (Cameroon)-Congo border road projects have been put under construction.<sup>29</sup> This much-

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<sup>24</sup> Lude A. Djam, and Therese Z. Elomo, “Governance, Infrastructure and Regional Integration: The Case of CEMAC” in *Scientific Research*, Vol 11, No. 11, 2020 [<https://www.scirp.org/journal/paperinformation.aspx?paperid=104476>], 18<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

<sup>25</sup> African Union Commission, “African Development Bank and ECA, Africa Regional Integration Index Report”, 2016 [<http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Generic-Documents/A>], 13<sup>th</sup> October 2022.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>28</sup> African Union, “Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want”, 2014

[<http://archive.au.int/assets/images/agenda2063.pdf>], July 18<sup>th</sup> 2022.

<sup>29</sup> Forbinake Nkemdem, “Integration Imperative” in *Cameroon Tribune*, 9th December 2009, p. 3.

needed infrastructure investment is boosted by the macroeconomic stability that the CEMAC region enjoyed due to the high tide of oil prices.<sup>30</sup>

There has been the harmonisation of regional sector policies in the CEMAC Zone in domains such as energy, transport, agriculture and the environment.<sup>31</sup> Thus, among some of the efforts made in free circulation, one can make mention of the elaboration of the Regional Economic Programme (PER), that has made the sub-region a viable economic actor in Africa. In the transport sector, the introduction of CEMAC registration numbers, which are connected to a database that permits the security forces of Member States and Interpol to conduct searches, especially concerning vehicle theft have been so commendable.

In addition, vehicles displaying these registration numbers can move freely between member countries without having them changed. A common vehicle insurance scheme known as the “Pink card” has also been introduced in the sub-region.<sup>32</sup> This card allows drivers traveling in one or more countries in the sub-region, to be properly insured in the case of accident in the destination country. CEMAC countries have also adopted a community Highway Code for roads that are open to traffic. Despite these inroads, the CEMAC has encountered several challenges in an effort to meet its objectives.

### **CEMAC Challenges**

Notwithstanding CEMAC’s successes, sub-regional economic integration in Central Africa has been limited on account of several factors. These let-downs have not been related to the quality of its treaties, but the limited technical capacity within its institutions, the divergent attitudes of member states towards regional integration and sometimes, absence of sanctions against states which do not respect Community norms.<sup>33</sup> These challenges are characterised by restraints in CEMAC’s monetary integration system, free trade zone; free movement of persons; weak basic infrastructures and inadequate interconnection of national transport

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<sup>30</sup> Christina Lagarde, “CEMAC: A Stronger Community for Stronger and More Inclusive Growth”, IMF, 2016 [<https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2015/09/28/04/53/sp010816>], 18<sup>th</sup> October 2022.

<sup>31</sup> Nono, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>32</sup> Nkemdem, *op. cit.* p. 3.

<sup>33</sup> Nono, *op. cit.*, p. 4.



networks between states; overlapping regional organisations; lack of respect for democratic principles and established institution to ensure their respect; insecurity and overdependence on oil revenues, as seen consequently.

### **Monetary Integration Constraints**

The CEMAC monetary policy is one of the main factors restraining integration in the sub-region. It should be noted that this aspect has been championed by France, through a host of mechanisms, used to control the monetary sovereignty of member states. These are: the *Union Monétaire de l'Afrique Centrale (UMAC)*, which plays an important role in regulating the financial system of all CEMAC member states, through the following institutions: the *Bank des Etats de L'Afrique Centrale (BEAC)* that does not only guarantee the issuance of the CFA francs, but organises and manages the monetary system, banking, financial and exchange rate regime; the Banking Commission of Central Africa (COBAC), established in 1993, to monitor and control banking activities in the region and the Central African stock exchange, to support business capitalisation and development of an investment portfolio in the sub-region. Indeed, with the foregoing set-up, the sub-region's monetary system is such that the Franc CFA is ascribed as boosting more integration with France than among member states.<sup>34</sup>

### **The Free trade Zone and Movement of Persons' Constrictions**

Despite the economic *raison d'être* of the free trade zone, intraregional trade within Central Africa has remained relatively low, even with its common currency. This low and waning levels of trade among member states means restricted economic interdependence and diminutive interest among economic and political actors in the sub-region.<sup>35</sup> This mission has been overturned by nontariff barriers such as excessive taxing of goods and the lack of adequate roads and others, which have remained major obstacles to intra-regional trade.<sup>36</sup> The lack of fiscal policy coordination among members and absence of discipline enforcement has greatly worked down on the putting in place of a free trade zone in the sub-region. Although there

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<sup>34</sup> Oscar V. Kuikeu, "Convergence des niveaux de vie de la Communauté économique et monétaire de l'Afrique Centrale (CEMAC) : quelle vitesse de convergence ?" in *African Integration and Development Review*, Volume 10, November 2017, p. 28.

<sup>35</sup> Loungou, *op. cit.*, p. 315.

<sup>36</sup> Sabrina Lando *et al.*, "CEMAC: A Regional Approach to Enhancing Governance" [<https://www.elibrary.imf.org>], 16<sup>th</sup> May 2022.

are policies such as the common CEMAC passport, which has allowed the movement of goods from one member state to another without any visa requirements, it has however not been fully implemented, as such, non-official barriers to migration and capital mobility have also been limited.<sup>37</sup>

It is nevertheless argued that even though this EU model of market integration, has failed in spurring integration on the continent and sub-region in particular, African governments have not stopped adopting it, believing this will enhance growth and development.<sup>38</sup> CEMAC's economic challenges are said to be compounded by a timid sub-regional cooperation.<sup>39</sup> This lack of cooperation among its member states, makes national investment regimes to be open to foreigners, whose companies, sometimes in partnership with the state, enjoy, monopolies or exclusive rights, which result in anti-competitive practices and the persistence of price controls.<sup>40</sup> Despite the CEMAC Community Investment Charter of 1999, and the existence of Community provisions concerning exemptions, the States maintain numerous autonomous fiscal and customs privileges which could well be streamlined.

Concerning the free movement of people, despite the progress made by CEMAC, through the implementation of the digital passport, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea have continued to require obtaining a visa for entry into their respective countries from nationals of other member states, citing security concerns.<sup>41</sup> In addition, freedom of movement in Central Africa is often characterised by acts of intolerance of the populations towards immigrants. In the sub-region, businesses have not been able to attract, move or retain professionals because of restrictive immigration laws, hampering the mobility of professional services, causing limited regional skills pooling throughout the continent.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Loungou, *op. cit.*, p. 316.

<sup>38</sup> Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>39</sup> International Monetary Fund, "Central African Economic and monetary Union (CEMAC), Common Policies of Member Countries," Press Release, Staff Report, and Statement Country Report No. 15/308, 2015, Washington DC.

<sup>40</sup> United Nations Development Programme, "Central Africa: A Sub-Region Lagging Behind?", 2007 [[www.afdb.org/sites/default/files/documents/strategy-documents/central\\_africa\\_risp\\_2019-\\_english\\_version\\_020619\\_final\\_version.pdf](http://www.afdb.org/sites/default/files/documents/strategy-documents/central_africa_risp_2019-_english_version_020619_final_version.pdf)], 18<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

<sup>41</sup> Essien, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>42</sup> African Development Bank, "Visa restrictions and economic consequences in Africa", 2013 [<http://www.afdb.org/en/blogs/afdb-championing-inclusive-growth-across-af>], 20<sup>th</sup> August 2022.

According to Loungou,<sup>43</sup> three great myths underlie the apparent reluctance of Gabon and Equatorial Guinea to apply the principles of free movement of people: the myth of demographic invasion and myths of economic and social perversions, associated with the crime of foreign origin. Such practices have made the CEMAC free movement of persons' objective, an uphill task.<sup>44</sup> It is therefore imperative for all CEMAC member states to give up on such attitudes thereby respecting the recommendations of the 2008 revised treaty.

### **Weak basic Infrastructure and Inadequate Interconnection of National Transport Networks between CEMAC States**

Weak infrastructure, especially poor interconnection of national transport systems between CEMAC states, remain obstacles to achieving economic and physical integration in the sub-region.<sup>45</sup> Integration between states resides in the ease with which people, goods, services and capital can interchange between its members. But when a country or sub-region does not have sufficient transport infrastructure, it no longer fulfils its connectivity function and the economy suffers.<sup>46</sup> The CEMAC Sub-region is so poorly connected by road and railway systems. In fact, Railway systems are not connected, superseded and underused. In terms of maritime transport, major ports are ill-equipped to handle its activities in that region.

### **Overlapping Regional Organisations**

The Central African region contains two integration organisations: CEMAC and ECCAS. All CEMAC members are members of ECCAS, but some ECCAS members also have overlapping memberships in other sub-regional organisations like Angola, Burundi, Rwanda and DRC which are COMESA members, while Burundi and Rwanda are EAC members and so on.<sup>47</sup> These parallel and often competing groupings, divert the needed economic and

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<sup>43</sup> Loungou, *op. cit.*, p. 315.

<sup>44</sup> E. G. Samnick, "De la difficulté de circuler librement en Afrique centrale" in *Enjeux*, n° 24, 2005, pp. 20-23.

<sup>45</sup> African Development Bank Group, "Central Africa Regional Integration Strategy Paper 2019-2025", Edited version, 2019 [[https://www.afdb.org/sites/default/files/documents/strategy-documents/central\\_africa\\_risp\\_2019-\\_english\\_version\\_020619\\_final\\_version.pdf](https://www.afdb.org/sites/default/files/documents/strategy-documents/central_africa_risp_2019-_english_version_020619_final_version.pdf)], March 2022.

<sup>46</sup> Djam *et al.*, *op. cit.*

<sup>47</sup> African Development Bank Group, *art. cit.*

political will to succeed.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, because of the lack of commitment from member states and their inability to move away from national and short-term interests, the establishment of a common currency and an institutional framework have failed to enable CEMAC member states to attain the expected level of economic and monetary integration.<sup>49</sup> In addition, good governance remains a task in this region as all member states have a low grade on the World Bank's good governance pointers.

### **The Lack of respect for Democratic Principles and established Institution to ensure their respect.**

The lack of respect for democratic principles has always led to deeply afflicted conflicts in Africa, emanating from coup d'états, like that which led to the subsequent political turmoil in Central African Republic, *supplemented by the* political and military volatility in Chad, notwithstanding the disputed electoral processes in Gabon and Cameroon.<sup>50</sup> It has also been deduced that some heads of state use regional cooperation as a guarantee of support and confirmation of their authority by their colleagues, whenever their power is compromised by civil insurrections, rebellions or putsch attempts, or by foreign pressure. Even though CEMAC treaties envisage a common policy in the domain of good governance and human rights, no institution has so far been created to ensure their respect.

The foregoing examples show that the human rights situation in the CEMAC Sub-Region is precarious. This is so because contrary to other Courts and Tribunals of African regional economic communities that have widened their competences to include human rights, the judicial chamber of the Court of Justice of CEMAC, does not have any competence in the domain of human rights. This idea of adopting common policies on the respect of human rights and good governance, is far from being achieved in the sub-region and this because member states are not sanctioned in cases of non-compliance with these principles. Thus, the lack of a viable sanctioning institution in case of the non-respect of agreed principles among CEMAC member states is a great obstacle to integration efforts in the sub-region.

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<sup>48</sup> Loungou, *op. cit.*, p. 315.

<sup>49</sup> Laurens, *art. cit.*

<sup>50</sup> International IDEA Policy Dialogue, "Deepening the Transition to Democratic Governance in Central Africa, 2015, p. 8 [<https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/deepening-the-transition-to-democratic-governance-in-central-africa.pdf>], 18th April 2022.

## **Insecurity**

Insecurity has been one of the factors discouraging integration in the CEMAC zone. Boko Haram terrorist activities in the Lake Chad region have led Cameroun and Chad sacrifice significant budget resources to counter their danger and risks.<sup>51</sup> This high incidence of terrorism in the Lake Chad Basin, political and military crisis in the Central African Republic, continued armed conflicts in the Great Lakes region, and the activities of the Ugandan rebel movement (the Lord's Resistance Army) in the Central African Republic and Democratic Republic of Congo are greatly working down on economic integration in the sub-region.<sup>52</sup> For instance, due to the risks of disruption to Chadian trade routes by Boko Haram, President Idris Déby placed himself at the forefront of tackling regional security threats, from Mali to northern Nigeria. These threats particularly affected livestock trade, which is Chad's second largest export earner after oil and the source of livelihoods for large numbers of its people.<sup>53</sup> Insecurity is hugely draining CEMAC countries' budgets thereby reducing their economic commitments to sub-regional integration.

This insecurity in the sub-region is caused by the lack of team spirit, in meeting its good governance, and the Regional Economic Programme missions aimed at working toward consolidating common policies in the energy; agriculture, forestry; mining and metallurgy domains has not sufficiently transformed the sub-region's economies. This has rather reduced their added value and increased unemployment and poverty in the sub-region. At the same time, security related disruptions are taking an additional toll, not only on economic activity and fiscal resources but emotionally as well.<sup>54</sup>

## **Overdependence on Oil Revenues**

Over reliance on oil revenues has retarded integration among central African states, as petroleum accounts for 86 percent of its exports. Such overdependence exposes the whole region to the risks of oil price fluctuations.

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<sup>51</sup> International Monetary Fund, "Central African Economic and Monetary Union (CEMAC)".

<sup>52</sup> African Development Bank Group, *art. cit.*

<sup>53</sup> Lagarde, *art. cit.*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem.*

An oil-price shock took a toll on CEMAC's five oil exporting members, since June 2014.<sup>55</sup> Oil prices have declined by more than 55 percent, with oil representing more than three-quarters of the region's exports and half of fiscal revenues and most countries are facing budgetary pressures.<sup>56</sup> While the sector's performance was rewarding in some member states in as early as 1999, where their per capita growth increased like Equatorial Guinea, there was a severe contraction of the Gabonese economy that same year.<sup>57</sup> This fall in crude oil prices has often disrupted macroeconomic balances in member states and deteriorated short- and medium-term growth prospects, triggering a worsening of deficits in national and regional balance of payments and a sharp decrease in foreign exchange reserves. This situation highlights CEMAC's great vulnerability.<sup>58</sup>

## Conclusion

CEMAC was established, to promote sub-regional integration in Central Africa. This chapter has focused on examining the enigma of this process in the region, CEMAC objectives, achievements and impediments. From these, challenges and threats to peace, security, stability and governance have been diagnosed as a multifaceted reality against regional integration in the sub-region. It is argued that although, the CEMAC has made immense efforts, the purpose for which it was instituted has not been sufficiently achieved, due to the lack of a joint approach towards economic integration principles in the sub-region. For this to be effective, there is need to merge the CEMAC and ECCAS into a single organisation. This would ensure the operational harmonisation of integration policies, programmes and instruments, since both organisations have similar origins, overlapping membership and similar mandates. In all, if CEMAC is to play a real role in the central Africa Sub-Region's economies, it has to be embedded into Central Africa's real-life context and not on regional schemes from the North.

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<sup>55</sup> International Monetary Fund, *art. cit.*

<sup>56</sup> Lando *et al.*, *art. cit.*

<sup>57</sup> International Monetary Fund, *art. cit.*

<sup>58</sup> Central African States Development Bank, "41st Annual Report Financial Year 2017".

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