

From Disintegration to Integration in Africa: The Case for African Regional Integration and Unity

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Abstract

This article examines why African regional integration has failed, and it makes the case for continental African unity. It argues that the historical record shows that gradual/functional integration has been a dismal failure and that continental integration informed by a Pan-African perspective is the ideal solution to solve the African predicament. More specifically, this article seeks to understand and explain why, more than seven decades after independence, African states are at a lower level of economic and social development than they were at the time of independence, and also why the trend in Africa is toward greater division/disintegration and establishment of new states rather than larger states or integration, as abundantly documented by the cases of: Somalia/Somaliland/Puntland, Ethiopia/Eritrea/Tigray; Sudan/South Sudan/Darfur; United Republic of Cameroon/Ambazonia; Democratic Republic of the Congo/DRC/Kivu/Ituri; Guinea-Bissau/Cape Verde, Northern Mali/Azawad & Mozambique/Northern Mozambique. The article then goes on to propose African regional integration leading up to African continental integration as the most appropriate policy and strategy to counter the move toward greater division/disintegration and the creation of new states in Africa.

Keywords: Disintegration, Regional Integration, African Unity, Continental Integration, Pan-Africanism

Introduction

As clearly enunciated by American scholar Marina Ottaway, the preferred, but unstated, Western power's policy is to encourage African leaders themselves—fronting for the Western powers-- to become the main agents of division/disintegration in Africa (Ottaway 1999.) Also, British scholar Jeremy Keenan abundantly documents the establishment of “false flag” or “fake” terrorist groups in Africa, notably in Algeria and in the Sahel, to justify United States/Western countries' military interventions in Africa under the pretense of the so-called Global War on Terror (Keenan, 2009, 2013). This article examines two contending ideological perspectives and strategies of African regional integration and African Unity: (1) gradualism/functionalism versus (2) Pan-Africanism. The first strategy prevailed during the first six decades of Africa's independence, leading to the

establishment of five sub-regional organizations in each African sub-region: (1) North, (2) West, (3) East, (4) Central, and (5) Southern.

In addition, an African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) became effective in 2025 under the auspices of the African Union (AU). The historical record shows that the most passionate and resolute Pan-African leaders—Congo’s Patrice Lumumba, Ghana’s Kwame Nkrumah, Burkina Faso’s Thomas Sankara, and Libya’s Muammar Gaddafi—were all victims of an early demise—in 1961, 1966, 1987, and 2011, respectively—engineered by a coalition of Western powers led by the United States (Blum, 2014). The article concludes by arguing that the ideal restructuring of Africa would be the five-state Federation of African States (FAS)—(1) Kimit, (2) Mali, (3) Kongo, (4) Kush, and (5) Zimbabwe—proposed by Mueni wa Muiui and Guy Martin (2009).

Purpose and Rationale for Division/Disintegration and Establishment of New States in Africa

One should keep in mind the fact that the current boundaries of the African states were drawn not by the African leaders themselves but by the major European colonial powers—France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Belgium, and Portugal—at the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885. This conference determined the rules of colonial territorial occupation in Africa. Due to this colonial legacy, the African continent is divided into far too many states, 55; by comparison, South America only has 12 states. Additionally, too many of the African states are too small for independent and sustainable economic development. The smaller African states include Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Sao Tome and Principe, Equatorial Guinea, Djibouti, Comoros, Mauritius, Lesotho, and Swaziland. In addition, due to multiple interstate conflicts and civil wars, the current trend in Africa is toward increased division/disintegration and the establishment of new states rather than integration.

It is important to note that two pre-eminent Pan-African leaders—Ghana’s Kwame Nkrumah and Libya’s Muammar Gaddafi—advocating bold continental African plans (1) the Union of African States/United States of Africa and (2) the Gold Dinar, respectively, were targeted for overthrow and elimination by major Western powers—notably the United States and the United Kingdom—in February of 1966 (Nkrumah) and October of 2011 (Gaddafi), respectively. Similarly, another Pan-African leader: Patrice E. Lumumba became Congo’s first President in June of 1960. But, in December of 1960, Lumumba was captured and murdered by a coalition of Western powers including Belgium, the United States and the United Nation that had been actively plotting his demise ever since he took office (Devlin, 2007). It should be noted that most of the countries identified which are subject to African division and disintegration have an abundance of natural resources, mostly oil and gas, mined and exploited by foreign multinational corporations (MNCs). Hence, the characterization of the civil wars occurring in these countries is dubbed as “resource wars” (Klarem, 2001).

African Division/Disintegration: Country Case Studies

In Algeria, from January of 1992 to February of 2002 (called “The Black Decade”), a bloody civil war pitted the Algerian government against various Islamist rebel groups, including the Islamic Armed Movement (MIA), the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS), the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC)—an Al-Qaeda affiliate, and Al-

Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)—in fact, a re-naming of the GSPC in 2007. According to Jeremy Keenan, there is evidence of collusion between AQIM, Algeria's *Departement du Renseignement et de la Securite* (DRS) and Western—especially United States—intelligence services (Keenan 2013). Keenan goes as far as to assert that Algeria's DRS is actually running AQIM (Keenan 2013). Algeria's "dirty war" resulted in up to 200,000 deaths. Algeria ranks number 16 in the world in terms of oil reserves, with 12 billion of proven oil reserves.

In August of 2011, in Libya, the government of Muammar Gaddafi was overthrown, and on October 20, 2011, Gaddafi was killed by a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-led intervention initiated in March of 2011. This NATO-led intervention was spearheaded by the United States, the United Kingdom and France. These events occurred when Gaddafi was poised to launch a continent-wide African currency, the Gold Dinar, backed by Libya's vast oil and gold reserves, as an alternative to Africa's dependency on the International Financial Institutions (IMF) and World Bank. Since then, Libya's Government of National Accord (GNA) and the Libyan National Army (LNA) have been fighting various Islamist groups, most notably Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and ISIS-Lyba; the latter seeks to establish an Islamic caliphate in the country. Due to the GNA's lack of control over the national forces and its diminished geographical reach, Libya is in a state of endemic anarchy with AQIM and ISIS-Libya exerting control over various regions of the country. The United States military provides logistical support to the LNA and has conducted strikes on ISIS-Libya (US Department of State, 2019). It should be noted that Libya holds the largest oil reserves in Africa, ranking number ninth in the world with 48.3 billion barrels of proven reserves. The major foreign MNCs exploiting Libya's oil include ENI (Italy), Total (France) and Repsol (Spain), thereby replacing The Oasis Group, a United States consortium of three major companies.

In Darfur (Western Sudan), indigenous African groups—the Fur, Masalit, and Zaghawa—organized into two liberation movements, the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) and Justice and Equity Movement (JEM), have, since 2003 been waging a war of national liberation against the Sudanese government operating as the Janjaweed militia. Due to the extremely high number of deaths and internally-displaced persons (IDPs), 200,000 deaths and two million IDPs at a minimum, this war has been declared a war of genocide by the United Nations and the International Criminal Court (ICC). A new civil war started in April of 2023 pitting the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) against the United Arab Emirates (UAE)-backed para-military Rapid Support Forces (RSF). So far, this conflict has resulted in 15,000 people killed and 8.2 million IDPs. The war has spilled over into West Darfur, where ethnic cleansing has occurred. Thus, from April to November of 2023, Human Rights Watch (HRW) documented a brutal campaign of ethnic cleansing by the RSF against the Massalit and other indigenous ethnic groups in and around El Geneina (Human Rights Watch, 2024).

In Central Africa, one of the largest countries in Africa (1,284,00 square kilometer), Chad has, since 1979, been plagued by an inter-communal conflict between northern nomadic herders and southern sedentary farmers over scarce resources (land and water). This conflict has exacerbated the division between the north and the south of the country. More recently, Chad separated into multiple autonomous zones led by different factions. The country has an abundance of minerals, notably 1.5 billion of proven oil reserves.

Since July of 2009, the Boko Haram Islamist group has terrorized communities in the Lake Chad Basin: i.e. Northeast Nigeria, Northwest Cameroon, Southern Niger, and Southern Chad. Boko Haram, meaning "Western education is prohibited," is a Sunni jihadist Islamist movement that seeks to overthrow the Nigerian government and replace it with an Islamic state

based on Sharia. The main site of this on-going ethnoreligious conflict is northeastern Nigeria. Thus, in April of 2014, Boko Haram kidnapped 287 primary and secondary school students in Kunga, Kaduna State. Also, on February 29, 2024, Boko Haram abducted 200 IDPs in Ngola, Bornu State. Garoua, North Cameroon is the site of a United States army base named Contingency Location Garou used to support military operations against Boko Haram. Since its inception, Boko Haram's operations in the region have resulted in the death of 300,000 children and in 2.3 million IDPs (Adeboji, 2010; Smith, 2015). In 2015, Boko Haram pledged allegiance to the Islamic State, becoming the Islamic State's West African Province (ISWAP). Nonetheless, in 2016, the group split into two separate entities: (1) ISWAP and (2) Boko Haram.

In 2013 in the Central African Republic (CAR), Seleka forces—an armed Muslim group—overthrew the government of President Francois Bozize. In response, Christian “anti-balaka” fighters launched violent attacks on Seleka fighters and Muslim civilians. Since 2012, seven attempted peace agreements between the CAR government and various armed groups have failed. This conflict has, according to the United Nations, resulted in 3,000 to 6,000 deaths between 2013 and 2014. In addition, 3.4 million people are currently in need of assistance. In April of 2014, a United Nations peacekeeping force (MINUSCA) was established (Council on Foreign Relations, 2024). Since December of 2021, Russia's Wagner Group has become the preferred ally of the CAR's government—replacing France—in its fight against the insurgency. The CAR has a wealth of mineral resources, including diamonds, gold, uranium, copper, iron ore, nickel and cobalt. These mineral resources are exploited by China, Russia's Wagner Group, and foreign companies, including France's state-owned MNC Areva, involved in uranium mining.

In October of 1961, British Cameroon (in the West) and French Cameroon were unified into a single Federal Republic of Cameroon (FRC). The FRC became the United Republic of Cameroon (URC) in 1972. In 2017, in the Southwestern regions of Cameroon, a conflict erupted between that region and the central government: the Anglophone Crisis. The separatists aimed at establishing Ambazonia, or the *State of Ambazonia*, as a distinct political entity seeking independence from Cameroon. This movement is currently engaged in a war of secession against Cameroon's armed forces. It should be noted that significant proven off-shore oil reserves estimated at 1.2 billion are located in Southwest Cameroon near the Nigerian border (Rio del Rey Basin). Also, since 2018, France has been exploiting newly-discovered uranium deposits in the north of Cameroon.

Two eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), North and South Kivu, controlled by the Rwandan Defense Forces (RDF) and the Rwanda-backed M-23 rebel group—with logistical support from the United States, the United Kingdom and the the European Union—have become de-facto autonomous regions within the DRC. On January 31, 2025, the M-23 launched an offensive, taking over Goma, a city of two million, and also the provincial capital of North Kivu. On February 15, 2025, the M-23 took over Bukavu, a city of one million, and also the capital of South Kivu. On February 4, 2025, the M-23 declared a unilateral cease-fire. According to some estimates, up to 2,000 people were killed in this offensive. Since 1996, this conflict has resulted in six million deaths and four million IDPs (CFR, 2025). It is important to note in this regard that both North and South Kivu are extremely rich in minerals—notably beryllium, bismuth, cassiterite, diamonds, gold, pyrochlore, tin, tungsten, tantalum, uranium, wolfram (a particularly rare and valuable mineral), columbite-tantalite (col-tan)—that are mined and exported by Rwanda and various foreign MNCs to the detriment of the local Congolese people. It is significant to note in this regard that in 2024, M-23 seized control of many lucrative

col-tan, tin, tungsten, tantalium and gold mines in Kivu, including the largest col-tan mine in the world near Rubaya (Mukpo, 2025). This has led to the characterization of Congo's war in the international medias as a typical "resource war" (Klare, 2001).

In West Africa, Guinea-Bissau, including the Cape Verde (Cabo Verde) archipelago in the Atlantic Ocean, following a 12-year liberation struggle, gained independence from Portugal in July of 1975. Following a military coup d'état in 1980, Cape Verde effectively broke up from continental Guinea-Bissau, already a small state by African standards, thereby becoming a separate independent state.

Northern Mali is now under the control of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), which renamed it the Republic of Azawad. The MNLA was deliberately engineered by France under Nicolas Sarkozy's presidency. In June of 2012, French Prime Minister Alain Juppe evoked an "independent Azawad." After a decade-long military intervention, France withdrew from Mali on August 15, 2022. The MNLA also acknowledged that it has received "logistical support" from the United States (Keenan, 2013). In January of 2022, Russia's Wagner Group established a military base in Timbuktu (Northern Mali). Since then, it has been supporting Mali's armed forces in its fight against the insurgency. But, in June of 2025, the Wagner Group withdrew from Mali, claiming to have completed its mission; its personnel were replaced by the Africa Corps, a para-military force under direct Russian government control. Besides the MNLA, other Islamist groups operating in northern and central Mali include the National Front for the Liberation of Azawad (FNLA), an ally of the MNLA; the Arab Movement of Azawad (MAA); Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM); Ansar al-Din, an al-Qaeda affiliate; the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO); Ganda Koy, a Songhay ethnic militia; and Ganda Izo, a Fulani ethnic militia. As abundantly documented by Keenan, in 2008, a prominent leader of AQIM, Abou Zaid, moved, on instructions from Algeria's DRS, from Algeria to the Tigharghar mountains in northern Mali (Keenan, 2013). It should be noted that, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), northern Mali has an abundance of minerals, including oil, gas, gold, iron ore, manganese, uranium, and phosphates. These minerals are exploited by French and foreign MNCs.

Since 2019, and intensifying in 2023-2024, several Islamic terrorist groups—including ISIS-Sahel, Islamic State West Africa (ISIS-WA), Jama' al Nasr al-Islam wal Muslim (JNIM) and Boko Haram—have been wreaking havoc in Niger. In 2022, the country became the hub of French military counter-terrorism operations in the Sahel. In 2013, Operation Juniper Shield was launched by the United States military to support the Niger government's counter-terrorism operations. In August of 2023, Niger's military junta asked Russia's Wagner Group for military assistance. The United States, France and Turkey have military bases in the country (US Department of State, 2023). Nonetheless, on December 22, 2023, the last French troops deployed in Niger to fight the Islamist insurgency permanently left the country. Niger hosts a wealth of mineral resources, including uranium, gold, coal, gypsum, tin, and phosphates. Significantly, Niger is the world's fourth largest producer of Africa's highest-grade uranium. Niger's uranium is mined by the Societe des Mines de l'Air (SOMAIR). It is noteworthy that the French MNC ORANO owns 63% of SOMAIR (World Nuclear Association, 2024).

Since 2019, Burkina Faso has witnessed endemic internal conflict across all regions of the country. The two most active terrorist groups operating in the area are ISIS-Sahel and Jama' at Nusrat al-Islam wa Muslimeen (JNIM). Burkina Faso now ranks first in the Global Terrorism Index, accounting for a quarter of all terrorist deaths globally (20,000 killed plus two million IDPs in ten years). From August 1983 to October 1987, Burkina Faso was ruled by a young and

charismatic populist leader named Thomas Sankara, who was also a dedicated Pan-African leader quite popular throughout West Africa. Sankara was eventually overthrown and killed in a bloody military coup d'état engineered by France, with the complicity of Côte d'Ivoire's Felix Houphouët-Boigny, in October of 1987 (Martin, 2012). Another populist military leader named Ibrahim Traore took power in September of 2022. Unfortunately, as of August 2025 and due to Western sanctions, Burkina Faso's security, economic and humanitarian conditions continue to deteriorate (Congressional Research Services, 2025).

For the past ten years, the Sahel Region—particularly Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad and the Lake Chad Basin—has witnessed conflict engineered by multiple extremist Islamist groups, including ISIS-Sahel, JNIM, the Islamic State in Greater Sahara (ISGS), the Islamic State in the West African Province (ISWAP), and Boko Haram (Smith, 2015). As a result of Gaddafi's demise in Libya, Tuaregs who were members of his Pretorian Guard returned heavily armed to Mali and Niger in October of 2011 and started an Islamist insurgency. More recently, Russia's Wagner Group has become active in the region. The Liptako-Gourma region (adjoining Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger) was a particular area of terrorist activity (CFR, 2024). As Keenan rightly observes about the Sahel, "the region has served the U.S. as an instrument in its imperial grand design" (2013, 280; see also FPRI, 2025).

From 2002 to 2007, Côte d'Ivoire experienced its first civil war between incumbent President Laurent Gbagbo, representing Christian southerners, and his opponent Alassane Dramane Ouattara, leader of the rebel Forces Nouvelles de Cote d'Ivoire (FNCI), representing the northerners. Gbagbo was elected Côte d'Ivoire's President in October of 2000. Presidential elections scheduled in October and November of 2010 resulted in Laurent Gbagbo's victory. But, Ouattara refused to accept the results and engaged, with military support from France and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), in an armed conflict with Gbagbo. This started the country's second civil war (2010-2011). In November of 2004, a joint French-United Nations' intervention, resulting in 3,000 deaths, overthrew Gbagbo and installed Ouattara as President. As a result, Gbagbo was captured and transferred for trial to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague (The Netherlands). Gbagbo's trial for sedition at the ICC began on January 28, 2016. On January 15, 2019, the ICC formally acquitted Gbagbo of all charges. Since then, the 24,000-strong Republican Forces of Côte d'Ivoire (RFCI) have been fighting various Islamist rebel groups coming from eastern Burkina Faso and northern Ghana, Benin, and Togo. This contributed to further exacerbation the North/South division in Côte d'Ivoire (Wikipedia, 2007, 2011).

In East Africa, the Somali National Movement (SNM) of Somaliland engaged in a war of liberation against the Somali government in 1978. The SNM declared the independence of Somaliland from **Somalia** in 1991 and has functioned as a de-facto nation-state ever since. The SNM is convinced that the United States under President Donald J. Trump is poised to become the world's first country to recognize Somaliland's independence. In return, Somaliland would allow the United States to have a military base at the Berbera port, strategically located along the Gulf of Aden. It is noteworthy that Somaliland has an abundance of natural resources, including oil, gas, iron ore, tin, gypsum, and gemstones. In April of 2024, Puntland, a province of northeastern Somalia, declared that it would operate as an independent state and broke off all relations with Somalia. In January of 2019, Said Abdullah Deni was elected President of Puntland. Somaliland and Puntland have been fighting over such territories as Sool, Sanag, and Cayn of Togdheer. In November of 2024, Puntland launched a large-scale military offensive against the Islamic State in Somalia (ISIL) and al-Shabaab militants code-named Operation

Hilaal (Wikipedia, 2024). Puntland is also a mineral-rich territory. In addition to vast oil and gas reserves, 1 billion barrels of oil, it has gold, bauxite, copper, and uranium.

Following a 30-year war of national liberation led by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), Eritrea gained independence from Ethiopia on May 24, 1993. Following a war of liberation waged by the Anya-Nya since 1956, South Sudan became independent from Sudan in 2011. Since November of 2020, the ruling party of Tigray, Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), a province of Ethiopia, has been engaged in a war of secession against the Ethiopian government. In 2011, Mayotte—one of four islands that make up the Comoros—left the Federation and became once again an overseas department of France. It thereby joins the Indian Ocean island of Reunion with the unenviable title of “last bastions of French colonialism in Africa.” Djibouti, a former French colony, is host to no less than seven foreign military bases: (1) a United States military base (Camp Lemonnier opened in 2002), the only permanent United States military base in Africa; (2) a French air base; (3) a Chinese naval base; (4) an Italian support base, as well as (5) German, (6) Spanish and (7) Japanese bases. In addition to the United States, three African countries—Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Kenya—are providing military assistance to the Somali government in its 16-year war against al-Shabaab, designated by the international community as a “terrorist group” and an ally of al-Qaeda. In the Indian Ocean, the island of Diego Garcia has, since the 1970s, been a British territory and home to a joint United Kingdom-United States military base. But, a May 22, 2025 treaty transferred sovereignty of the island from the United Kingdom to Mauritius, with the proviso that the military base remains under United Kingdom's control for 99 years.

In 2006, the Islamist group Al-Shabaab initiated an armed conflict in southern and central Somalia and northeastern Kenya, peopled by Somali communities, against the Somali and Kenyan armed forces, backed by the United States. Al-Shabaab aims at establishing an Islamic state in the region. In 2011, Kenya launched Operation Linda Nchi in southern Somalia designed to counter Al-Shabaab's terrorist activities in Kenya. Since 2011, the group has been somewhat weakened by internal divisions. Nevertheless, it remains capable of carrying out massive attacks in Somalia, Kenya and beyond. Thus, in 2013, it killed 67 people in a Nairobi shopping mall; and in 2015, it killed 148 people at a university in Garissa (northeastern Kenya). It is noteworthy that Al-Shabaab has recently been increasingly active in other Eastern African counties. Thus, in 2010, suicide bombings by Al-Shabaab militants killed 74 people in Uganda's capital, Kampala. In mid-2022, the group launched an offensive in eastern Ethiopia (Klobucista, Masters and Sergie, 2022). Exploration activities in northeastern Kenya and southern Somalia indicate possible reserves of oil and natural gas; nevertheless, development of these resources is hampered by political instability.

Starting in October of 2017, and intensifying in 2024, in northern Mozambique (Cabo Delgado province), an Islamist armed group linked to Al-Qaeda, ISIS-Mozambique, locally known as Al-Shabaab (or Ansar-al Sunna or Ahlu Sunna wal Jammah) aims at establishing an Islamic state and has been fighting a broad military coalition including the Mozambican defense and security forces, Rwanda, South Africa, and the Southern Africa Development Community Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM). This conflict has resulted in a minimum of 6,000 deaths and about 420,000 IDPs (Human Rights Watch, 2024). In August of 2025, an ISIS-M attack on Cabo Delgado led to 60,000 more IDPs. Over the last 18 years, Russia has been increasingly cooperating with Mozambique in various sectors. Thus, in June of 2007, the two countries concluded an agreement on economic cooperation. Other areas of Russia-Mozambique cooperation include counter-terrorism military assistance, arms trade, mining sector, election

monitoring, and education. In addition, Russia's Wagner Group tried to fight Islamists insurgents in Mozambique, but withdrew in 2020 (SAIIA, 2020). In addition to graphite and rubies, Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province (Rovuma Basin) holds the largest proven offshore reserves of liquified natural gas (LNG) in Africa, estimated at 180 trillion cubic feet (TCF). Discovered in 2010 and operated by the French oil corporation Total-Energies, this basin was the object of a United States \$ 20 billion investment in 2019 (Mozambique LNC, 2015).

On September 10, 2014, the United States government announced the establishment of a Global Coalition to Defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in 88 countries by tracking ISIS on all fronts, smashing its networks, degrading its capacity, and countering its global ambitions. African members of the coalition include Burkina Faso, Niger, Cameroon, CAR, Chad, DRC, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia. Among the major Western powers are the United States, Japan, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, the European Union and the NATO (Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, 2014).

Over the last five years, France has progressively withdrawn its military bases in and military assistance to many African states in the Sahel, including Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and the CAR. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that, since 2017, and intensifying in mid-2024, Russia's Wagner Group has replaced France as the preferred ally of the armed forces of no less than seven African countries—CAR, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Libya, Sudan, Mozambique—in their fight against various Islamist rebel groups. The Wagner Group provides security services and military assistance to these African countries. Thus, the Wagner Group has de facto replaced France as the preferred military ally in the CAR, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger (Rampa, 2024; Congressional Research Services, 2025; FPRI, 2022).

Purpose and Rationale for Division/Disintegration and the Establishment of New States in Africa

What explains the trend towards division/disintegration and the establishment of new states in Africa? As clearly exemplified by the multiple preceding country case studies, the official, but unstated, policy of the major Western powers (the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and the European Union) is to actively and deliberately promote and encourage the division/disintegration and establishment of new states rather than integration in Africa. The following statement by Marina Ottaway is quite revealing in this regard:

There is no more state in the Congo and there is a power vacuum. It is therefore normal that Rwanda and Uganda intervene there militarily. When the state does not exist, the principles of independence and sovereignty do not apply...The United States could intervene militarily to redraw the boundaries of Africa and create new political entities but it could be costly. It is preferable to let African civil wars develop and to allow Rwanda and Uganda to intervene militarily in the Congo. In this way, it is the African themselves who will divide up Congo and Central Africa will reach a new stability (Ottaway, 1999).

Indeed, this deliberate policy of division/disintegration and establishment of new states allows the major Western powers, via the agency of their MNCs, to exploit the vast and valuable mineral resources of the African countries victims of this divide-and-rule policy.

In *The Dark Sahara* (2009) and *The Dying Sahara* (2013), Jeremy Keenan exposes the

collusion between the United States and some African countries, notably Algeria and Mali, in fabricating “false flag” (or fake) terrorist organizations in order to justify Western countries’ interventions in Africa under the pretense of “The Global War on Terror.” Keenan further shows that the United States and its agency (Africa Command/AFRICOM), far from bringing security, peace and development, have established a self-fulfilling prophecy of terror and instability in Africa (Keenan, 2009, 2013). Typical examples of such “false flag” terrorist organizations include northern Mali’s National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) established by France and backed by the United States and the M-23 Movement in eastern DRC backed and financed by the United States and the United Kingdom (in addition to Rwanda and Uganda, fronting for the Western states). Further evidence of United States-terrorist groups’ collusion was provided by United States Congressman Scott Perry’ statement of February 13, 2025 at the inaugural meeting of the House Subcommittee on Delivering on Government Efficiency. In his statement, Perry (R-PA) made the startling revelation that the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), in addition to financing terrorist training camps, has been funding various terrorist groups in Africa and the Middle-East, including Al-Qaeda, ISIS, and Boko Haram, to the tune of \$697 million annually (US-AID, 2025).

The Rationale for African Regional Integration and Unity

For the sake of perspicuity, the analysis in this section is segmented into two interrelated subsections. The first subsection deals with the contending ideological perspectives on African regional integration and unity, and the second subsection broaches the benefits of African regional integration and unity.

Contending Ideological Perspectives on African Regional Integration and Unity: Gradualism/Functionalism versus Pan-Africanism

Of all the developing regions of the world, Africa is, by far the poorest, least developed, and most foreign-trade and market dependent; it is also the least regionally integrated and the slowest growing in terms of mutual interdependence. Historically, Africa has witnessed two contrasting and competing ideologies and strategies of African regional integration and unity. The first is the gradualist/functionalist approach, informed by a liberal ideology, which advocated a gradual economic integration as well as common transport and infrastructure projects as a prerequisite to eventual political integration. Political leaders of the post-independence era advocating such an approach included Côte d’Ivoire’s Felix Houphouet-Boigny, Senegal’s Leopold S. Senghor, and Kenya’s Jomo Kenyatta. A second ideology and strategy of African regional integration and unity, informed by a Pan-African perspective, advocates immediate and total continental political integration as a prerequisite to economic integration (Martin, 2002). Post-independence African leaders advocating such an approach included Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Modibo Keita of Mali, Ahmed Sekou Toure of Guinea, Patrice Lumumba of the Congo, and Muammar Ghaddafi of Libya.

In his *Africa Must Unite*, Nkrumah makes a passionate and convincing case for the total and immediate political, military and economic integration of Africa. More specifically, Nkrumah advocated the establishment of a Union of African States or United States of Africa, including an African Common Market leading to an African Economic Union. Eventually, this would lead to a single currency for Africa (African Monetary Union), as well as a single African army (African Defense Command) (Nkrumah, 1963). Nkrumah’s bold plan for African

continental unity, first proposed at the inaugural summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in May of 1963, died when he was overthrown by a United States-backed military coup d'état in February of 1966 (Blum, 2014). It is imperative to note in this regard, as mentioned earlier, that another prominent Pan-Africanist leader, Gaddafi, was overthrown and killed in October of 2011 by a coalition of Western countries while planning to introduce an African continental currency, the Gold Dinar, backed by Libya's vast oil and gold reserves. Similarly, Congo's Lumumba was overthrown and killed by his own countrymen backed by a coalition of Western powers and the United Nations (Devlin 2007).

The historical record as exemplified by the establishment of the OAU in May of 1963 shows that during the first five decades of Africa's independence, it was the gradualist/functionalist approach encouraged and promoted by the major Western powers that became the dominant ideology and strategy of African regional integration unity (Martin, 2023).

Benefits of African Regional Integration and Unity

The benefits of African regional integration and unity include larger states; greater population; greater ethnic homogeneity and, thus, reduced risk of conflict; greater economic size favoring economies of scale and independent development; more powerful states backed by greater military power; and reduced dependency on foreign economic and military aid. African unity, therefore, should be based on the ideology of Pan-Africanism, which advocates for the political, economic and cultural unity of all Africans, including those in the Diaspora, united in their fight against foreign political domination and economic exploitation. More specifically, and according to Esedebe "Pan-Africanism is a political and cultural phenomenon that regards Africa, Africans and African descendants abroad as a unit. It seeks to regenerate and unify Africa and promote a feeling of oneness among the people of the African World. It glorifies the African past and inculcates pride in African values" (Esedebe, 1944, 5).

In the spirit of Pan-Africanism, Africans from other states and from the Diaspora should be afforded the same constitutional and legal rights and privileges as the citizens of each African state. Additionally, free movement of people across African states boundaries should be the norm rather than the exception. This will contribute to reduce interstate and ethnic conflict in Africa.

Plans for African Regional Organizations Proposed by the Organization of African Unity, the African Union, and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

Both of Africa's continent-wide organizations, the OAU (established in 1963) and its successor organization the AU (established in 2001), are flawed organizations and exemplars of an imperfect union. In both, key decision-making power resides with the individual member states rather than with the organization. Unlike Nkrumah's vision, the OAU was a loose and powerless federation of African states in which the individual states retained key decision-making power. As for the AU, it was deliberately modelled after the EU and remains almost totally operationally and financially dependent on the latter (Karbo and Murithi, 2018).

A first realistic step toward African regional integration unity could build on the United Nations ECA plan to re-structure Africa into five regional economic units: (1) North Africa, (2) West Africa, (3) East Africa, (4) Central Africa, and (5) Southern Africa. Political integration would in time follow economic integration.

The OAU Treaty of Abuja (1991) mandates the establishment in stages of an African Economic Community (AEC). Five sub-regional Free-Trade Areas (FTAs) and Customs Unions would merge into a single African Common Market (ACM) by 2025. Currently, there are five African regional organizations: (1) the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), comprising five States and established in 1989; (2) the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), entailing 16 states and launched in 1975; (3) the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), comprising ten states and established in 1983; (4) the East African Community (EAC), comprising three states and launched in 1967 and then revised in 1999; and (5) the Southern African Development Community (SADC), having 13 states and established in 1992. All five regional organizations have achieved the first stage of economic integration: i.e. a Free Trade Area (FTA).

The African Unions African Continental Free Trade Area

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) was approved by the AU's Assembly of Heads of States and Governments in January in 2012, entered into force in May of 2019 and became effective on January 1, 2021. The AfCFTA is a trade agreement between 55 African countries and eight regional economic communities (RECs) establishing a single market for the continent by removing trade barriers and increasing intra-African trade. Specifically, the AfCFTA establishes a single market for goods and services, as well as free movement of persons within the area. The AfCFTA constitutes the first step toward the further economic integration of the African continent in accordance with the Pan-African ideal and vision (African Union-Af.CFTA, 2021). Thus, fully 62 years after it was first proposed in *Africa Must Unite*, Nkrumah's vision of African economic integration has, at long last been partially realized.

Toward a Federation of African States

The ideal restructuring of African states would be the five-state FAS: (1) Kimit, (2) Mali, (3) Kongo, (4) Kush, (5) Zimbabwe proposed in *Fundi wa Afrika* (Muiu and Martin, 2009). In *Fundi wa Afrika*, meaning "tailor, or builder of Africa" in Kiswahili, Mueni wa Muiu and Guy Martin introduce a new paradigm to study the African state. According to this paradigm, the current African predicament may be explained by the systematic destruction of African states and the dispossession, exploitation and marginalization of African people through successive historical processes: the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, imperialism, colonialism, and globalization. In this book, the authors argue that a new, viable and modern African state based on five political entities, the Federation of African States (FAS), should be built on the functional remnants of indigenous African political systems and institutions and based on African values, traditions, and culture (Muiu and Martin, 2009). In the FAS, Africa will have one constitution and a common foreign defense policy. Instead of the current 55 states, Africa will be divided into five super-states (Muiu and Martin, 2009). The new state of Kimit will include Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia, and Western Sahara, plus the Arab population of Mauritania, Northern Sudan, and Northern Chad. Mali will include Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo, plus the African population of Mauritania. Kongo will include Congo (DRC), Congo Republic, Cameroon, Southern Chad, Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, São Tomé and Príncipe, Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi. Kush will include South Sudan, Ethiopia,

Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia/Somaliland, Kenya, Tanzania, Zanzibar, Seychelles, and Comoros. Zimbabwe will include Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Malawi, Mozambique, Madagascar, Mauritius, Lesotho, Swaziland, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The new federal capital city will be called Napata. It will not belong to any of the five states. Each region will have a key player based on population and resources: for example, Kongo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and South Africa.

Also, FAS will be protected by a federal army made up of diverse members from the five states. All external economic relations will be conducted by the federal government. Economic and political power will be decentralized, giving people more input in the day-to-day activities of the federation. In FAS, power will be decentralized and start from the village councils made up of the local representatives. This will be followed by a regional council of elders, then a national council that will be followed by the federal council of presidents. Each of the five regions of FAS will be governed by five rotating presidents on the basis of a federal system. Africa will have a popular democracy based on accountability and responsibility that will be organized from below. Since each section of the population will have representatives at all levels of government, power will be decentralized and the people will determine their destiny based on their interests, priorities and needs (Muiu and Martin 2009).

Conclusion

This article has explained why African regional integration has failed, and it makes the case for African unity. It argues that the historical record shows that gradual/functional integration has been a dismal failure, and that African continental integration informed by a Pan-African ideology is the ideal solution to solve the African predicament. More specifically, this article sought to understand and explain why more than five decades after independence, African states are at a lower level of economic and social development than they were at the time of independence, and also why the trend in Africa is toward greater disintegration/establishment of new states rather than the establishment of larger states/integration. A number of factors explain this situation. They include continuing economic, political and military dependence on the major Western powers; deliberate and active promotion and encouragement of division/disintegration by the major Western powers; lack of vision and political will and failure of African political leadership. In spite of some modest and limited achievements (five sub-regional African organizations and the AfCFTA), the African founding father's dream of African regional integration and unity has yet to be realized. In addition, the ideal re-configuration of Africa could take the form of the five-state FAS proposed by Muiu and Martin. It should be noted that these authors' FAS is an ideal project, viewed in a long-term historical perspective. Nonetheless, realistically, what can the African leaders and people do to jumpstart this process in the short- and med-terms? In a recent co-edited volume titled *Cambridge History of Democracy in Africa: Views from Below* (2025), Mueni wa Muiu makes a cogent and convincing argument that the multiple case studies of civil wars in Africa, as abundantly documented earlier in this article, reveal the division/disintegration and the establishment of new states in Africa, and also offer a unique historical opportunity for African leaders and people to drastically re-draw Africa's colonial boundaries. Who is ready to accept this challenge?

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