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REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN CENTRAL AFRICA

Opportunities and challenges

by Durrel N. Halleson

The SAIIA Trade Policy Briefing Series is intended to elicit debate on critical issues relating to South Africa's overall trade strategy. The broad focus of the series is on the political economy of the international trading system and South Africa's strategic responses to it. This covers the full spectrum of our trade strategy, from the multilateral trading system, to strategic regional and bilateral partnerships, and particular issues within the trade agenda.

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Regional integration is heralded as a viable path to development for Africa. This view was first postulated during the early days of independence when newly independent states keen on consolidating their sovereignty engaged in promoting Pan-Africanism. The creation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 attests to the above fact. At the same time where the OAU was created there were efforts at different regions of Africa to establish regional groupings, in most cases devoted to facilitate intra-regional trade and coordinate their development efforts. While most regional integration agendas were colonial remnants, there were cases where regional groups adopted more ambitious plans than those inherited from colonial rule.

Central Africa is one of the main strategic regions in Africa endowed with a wide variety of natural resources. This endowment has however been at the core of the main conflicts that have engulfed the region for so long. Political stability remains a luxury enjoyed by very few of the countries. The region has one of the biggest surface areas in Africa, comparable to India. However, its population is dwarfed by those of other regions in Sub-Saharan Africa. Its population is estimated at about 32 million inhabitants and the population density varies enormously from high concentration in south western Cameroon (33.2 inhabitants per square km) versus 5.9 inhabitants in the Central Africa Republic, 4.9 in Gabon to near zero in the Sub-Saharan portion of northern Chad[1].

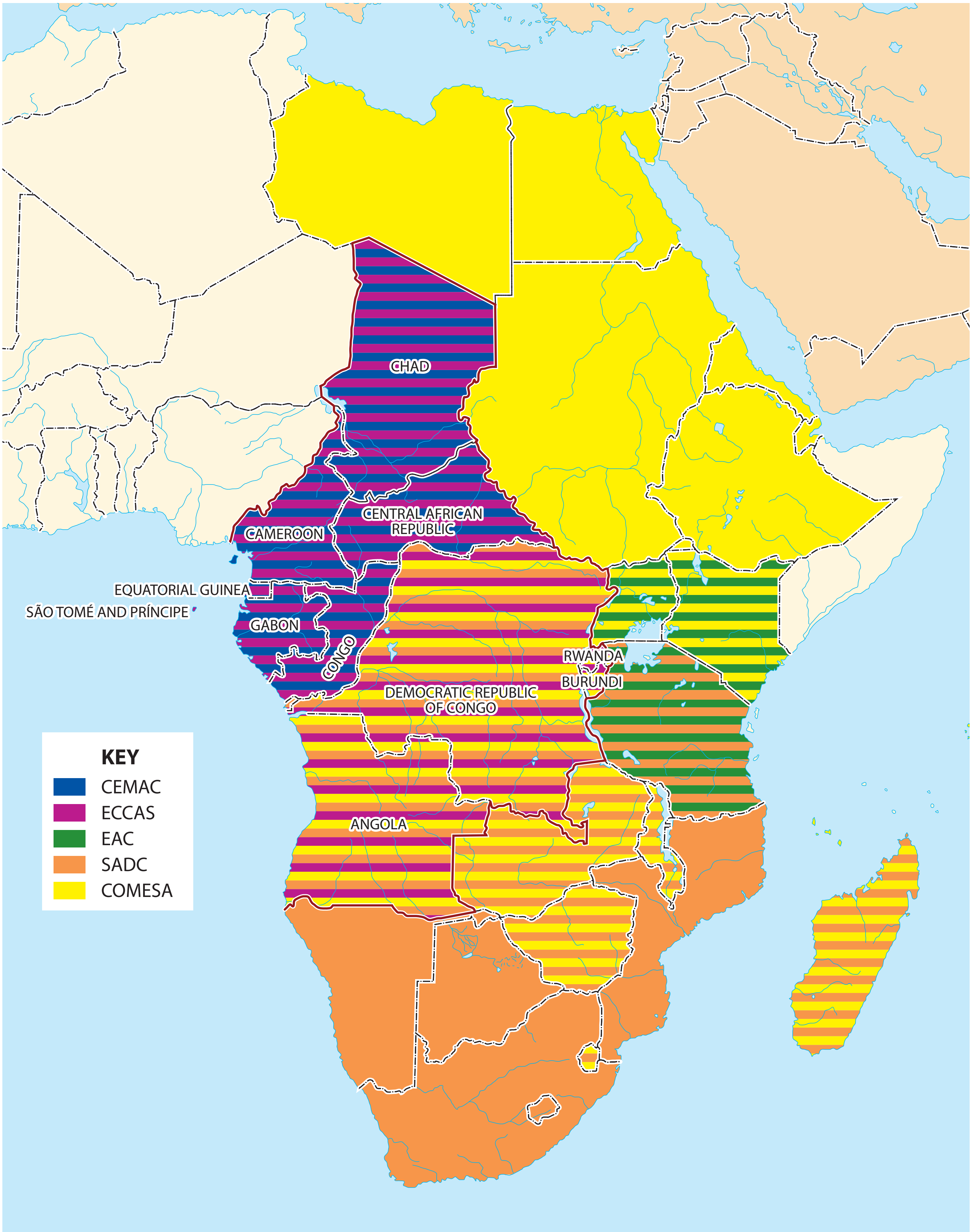
The region comprises eleven countries stretching from the Saharan north of Africa including Chad, the Central Africa Republic, Cameroon, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Rwanda, Burundi, Sao Tome & Principe and Angola in the south. The two dominant economic regional groupings are the Central Africa Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) ,formerly UDEA and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)[2]. These countries to a great extent share membership of these two RECs and other RECs like COMESA (Burundi, Rwanda and DRC), SADC (DRC and Angola), and the East African Community (EAC: Burundi and Rwanda). All the countries are oil producers except the Central African Republic.

Apart from these two main regional groupings, there are focused regional groupings with specific objectives such as the development or conservation of certain shared common natural resources.

CEMAC's institutional architecture

All CEMAC countries are members of a single monetary union[3] with a regional Central Bank, BEAC (Bank of Central Africa States) whose main task is to ensure regional fiscal discipline within the region. The institutional reforms

Figure 1: Central African countries and their regional affiliations



introduced in the central Africa sub-region were ushered in by the 1994 devaluation of the CFA franc. The reforms were multi-dimensional including overhauling the trade regime; strengthening the central bank; introduction of macroeconomic surveillance and the establishment of regional umbrella organisations. Inspirations for institutional reforms were drawn from the experiences of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMAO), which groups countries of French West Africa, and the reforms were in most cases sponsored by the World Bank, IMF and France on behalf of the EU. The four new institutions of CEMAC emerging from the CEMAC N'Djamena Treaty include:

- The Economic Union of Central Africa (UEAC) which integrated the UDEAC existing CU;
- The Central Africa Monetary Union (UMAC) which specifies the responsibilities of the Central Bank (BEAC) and the Central African Banking Commission (COBAC), and also oversees the macroeconomic convergence policies of the region;
- The Regional Parliament; and
- The Regional Court of Justice with two chambers (The Audit Chambers and the Judicial Chambers).

These four new institutions remain distinct but for the first two, who have every reason to coordinate their policies, especially if focus is on regional economic development. In recent years BEAC has issued reports on the economic performance of the region taking into consideration the fiscal impact of the intra-regional trade evolution[4]. Other regional institutional organs aimed at both capacity building of the member states, especially in areas of trade, macroeconomic convergence and development. These specialised institutions are;

- L'Institut Sous Régional d'Analyse Multisectorielle et de Technologie Appliquée (ISTA) (Sub-Regional Institute of Multisectoral Analysis and Applied Technologies);
- L'Institut Supérieur des Statistiques et d'Economie Appliquée (ISSEA) (Higher Institute of Applied Economics);
- L'Ecole Inter-Etats des Douanes (Regional School of Customs);
- La Banque de Développement des Etats de l'Afrique Centrale (Central African Development Bank).

It is unfortunately beyond the scope of this briefing to assess the effectiveness of these institutions in fostering the regional integration agenda.

Regional integration in Central Africa has for quite a long period been dominated by countries of the former French Equatorial Africa (AEF) put in place in 1910 by France. This group at independence was transformed into UDEAC (Custom and Economic Union of Central Africa) in 1964 and later CEMAC (Central Africa Economic and Monetary Community) in 1994. One of the main objectives of UDEAC at creation was to couple intra-regional trade liberalisation and protection of its sub-regional markets through scale economies to attain a higher level of industrialisation. As precursor to integration in the region, CEMAC which came into existence through the N'Djamena Treaty of 1994 was part of a broader reform agenda to boost and deepen regional integration and policy effectiveness in conjunction with the devaluation of the CFA Franc in 1994. The 1994 reforms were geared towards deepening integration and first steps taken by the countries introduced the following measures:

- a common external tariff,
- phasing out of all tariffs on intra-regional trade expected to be completed by 1998;
- harmonisation of indirect taxation with the introduction of VAT in 1999; and
- the replacement of quantitative import barriers by temporary import surcharges (this was expected to be phased out by 2000).

All these measures are aimed at the establishment of a Central Africa Common Market. There is no indicative date when the common market would be operational.

The established customs and a broad based economic union are to be trailblazers for the common market[5]. The CEMAC common external tariff is applicable to imports from outside the CU territory. The applicable CET is based on a four band product categorisation[6]. The percentage according to Article 10 of the UDEAC Treaty is the prerogative of the Council of Ministers.

Type of goods	Customs duties (%)
Essential products	5%
Raw materials and capital goods	10%
Intermediate goods	20%
Finished consumer goods	30%

The CEMAC CET

The applicable CET provided by the UDEAC Customs Code of 1993 was intended to convert the custom union into an outward-oriented functioning CU. The 1994 reforms, despite their broad liberalisation agenda, practically remained difficult to implement as the countries kept in place very strict policies to protect their domestic markets. Also instituted by the UDEAC revised treaty of 1991 in Libreville was a preferential tariff regime which according to Article 28 was to apply to all industrial products imported into a consumer member state from within the CU. According to the custom code this preferential tariff was to be abolished by January 1998, allowing for the free circulation of products considered as of being of CEMAC (UDEAC) origin. There was also an instituted uniform tax regime for companies operating in the region and producing industrial products consumed in the region[7]. The uniform tax regime was supposed to be in conformity with the generalised preferential tariff and will be applicable only to companies considered as producing with raw materials fully obtained from within the region[8].

The 1993 CEMAC rules of origin have also been problematic and impede greatly on the region's internal trade. Thus in 2006 the CEMAC Secretariat commissioned a study to address the problems concerning the application of the 1993 Rules of Origin. The present RoO distinguishes among raw

ECCAS has appended to its treaty 18 protocols related to trade and economic development which if fully implemented may place the region on a deeper integration trajectory

goods, goods manufactured in CEMAC with local content of at least 40%, and outside manufactured goods[9]. It is hoped that the study shall help in simplifying the rules of origin and facilitate trade in the region.

Deep vs wide integration – CEMAC and ECCAS

Until the 1990s UDEAC-CEMAC dominated the integration agenda in the sub-region. Here we shall highlight the convergence and divergence of CEMAC's integration agenda and that of ECCAS. It should be noted that in the process of RECs rationalisation in Africa, toward the attainment of an Africa Economic Community (AEC) by 2028, it was ECCAS that was selected by the African Union as a building block from the Central Africa sub-region.

ECCAS was created in 1981 under an agreement signed by the heads of State of the two existing RECs: UDEAC and CEPGL (Economic Community of the Countries of the Great Lakes). The 1981 Agreement was based on the 1980 OAU Lagos Plan of Action and it was intended to foster and consolidate the integration process in the region with the creation of one enlarged single REC. ECCAS did not only restrain its membership to the two RECs but brought to its confines other countries such as Angola which maintained observer status until 1999 when it finally signed the treaty and became a full member, together with the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sao Tome & Principe.

It is not clear whether ECCAS could absorb the existing RECs (CEMAC and CEPGL). ECCAS also intends evolving from a customs union into a common market though there is no indicative date. Its free trade agreement is expected to be in place in 2007 but whether that is feasible is still not clear. However, with an existing and fully functional CEMAC CU, and should an ECCAS CU finally become operational, it would be legally and technically impossible for any of the member countries to apply more than one CET. This may be a great drawback to an ECCAS integration agenda especially as the member states already enjoy relative economic benefits under their present RECs i.e. CEMAC,COMESA (Burundi, Rwanda and DRC) and SADC (Angola and DRC).

The CEMAC integration agenda unlike that of ECCAS extend to some of the Singapore Issues considered contentious by most developing countries within the multilateral trade arena. The integration of these new issues is aimed at deepening regional integration. For instance, intellectual property rights are regulated by the 1977 Bangui Agreement creating the Organisation of African Intellectual Property (OAPI) headquartered in Yaoundé. Its application in CEMAC is institutionalised by Articles 10 and 12 of the CEMAC Investment Code. The OAPI Treaty extends beyond TRIPS[10] placing onerous obligations on member countries to protect intellectual property rights. According to the CEMAC Investment Code, under which this Treaty is incorporated, scrupulous protection of intellectual property rights will encourage investment in the region.

Other regional initiatives institutionalised by CEMAC legal texts include the OHADA Treaty on the harmonisation of business law in francophone Africa countries. It is believed that the harmonisation of the legal systems would help promote trade and development. There is specific uniform legislation (Uniform Acts) under the OHADA institutional framework such as on competition and investment regulated under the General Commercial Law of January 1998 – the Company and the Security Laws of 1998. For example, CEMAC has adopted the Uniform Act on the Law of Commercial Companies and Economic Interest Groups – a competition policy expected to regulate the behaviour of firms doing business in the region, especially with regard to mergers, spin-offs and acquisitions. There are also laws that are applicable to trade in services as provided under GATS such as the law regulating the contract for the carriage of goods by roads adopted in 2004. Still on services trade, the countries of the sub-region are all members of Conference Interafricaine des Marches d'Assurance (CIMA) (Inter-African Conference of Insurance Markets)[11] Treaty signed in Yaoundé in 1992 which seeks to integrate insurance markets in Francophone Africa. The CIMA Code allows for insurance companies of member states to freely establish their businesses in the territories of other member states. All CEMAC countries are members of CIMA, OHADA and OAPI, whilst within ECCAS only the DRC is in the process of adhering to the OHADA Treaty. The membership of these countries to these regional initiatives helps to consolidate and deepen their integration.

Despite the many protocols to the ECCAS Treaty, its move towards deepening integration remains limited. Its institutional framework resembles that of CEMAC, such as the establishment of a Community Court of Justice; a regional parliament (REPAC) which is a loose network of parliamentarians from the region, and a consultative commission including the traditional organs like a permanent secretariat and the council of Heads of State. During the Malabo Heads of State Summit in 1999, which was considered a revival summit for four priority areas which were considered as a way forward in fostering the integration process:

- develop capacities to maintain peace, security, and stability as essential prerequisites for economic and social development;
- develop physical, economic and monetary integration; and
- develop a culture of human integration;
- establish an autonomous financing mechanism for ECCAS.

ECCAS has appended to its treaty 18 protocols related to trade and economic development which if fully implemented may place the region on a deeper integration trajectory. The protocols cover issues such as rules of origin, non-tariff trade barriers, re-exportation of goods within ECCAS, transit, customs, compensation for loss of revenues from trade liberalisation, movement of persons, industrial development and cooperation, transport and communications, simplification and harmonisation of trade documents and procedures and landlocked, semi landlocked, island states and LDCs[12]. These countries have signed several conventions with regard to trade facilitation especially in the domain of goods movement by road. For instance, some regional conventions include the inter-state convention for the transportation of miscellaneous goods by road (CIETRMD); the inter-state convention for multimodal freight transport; the regulation on transportation of dangerous goods, and the Inter State Transit agreement for Central African countries (TIPAC). CEMAC countries have also adopted a community highway code and a civil aviation code; created an international commission for the Congo, Oubangui and Sangha Basin; and signed a protocol on maritime cooperation as well as an agreement on air transport between member states. With regard to ECCAS, a community road network was adopted in 1988. In 2003, a transport master plan was also adopted in the sub-region.

CEMAC with a more advanced integration agenda may possibly take the front row in the integration process in Central Africa. This situation may be likened to that highlighted in the GTZ study on the problem of overlapping membership in COMESA, EAC, SACU and SADC, which recommended that SACU and EAC act as fast tracking groups for SADC and COMESA[13]. Thus CEMAC could serve as a fast-tracking group for ECCAS. This entails that those countries not belonging to the CEMAC CU could remain within the ECCAS FTA when it finally becomes operational.

The role of donors (France and the EU) and neighbouring countries (Nigeria) in the Integration process in central Africa

The critical role of major international donors, especially the European Union, France, the World Bank, the IMF and, to an extent, Nigeria are of fundamental importance to the integration process in central Africa. France, former colonial master of more than 80% of the countries of this region, has been a particularly important player in the general integration process whose present configuration matches that of the colonial period (the AEF of 1910 or the Equatorial Customs Union (UDE) of 1959). France's role in continuing to direct the integration process in the region did not cease after independence. It continues to play a predominant role mostly through its control of the monetary union by the French Treasury in Paris[14]. Furthermore, all the countries of the region's main export market remain France and the EU. Central Africa imports from the EU are dominated by wheat and cereal products which account for about 25% of total imports followed by alcohol and meat at 12%.

Apart from the critical role of France, the EU and the Brettonwoods Institutions also occupy predominant positions in shaping the socio-economic evolution in the region, especially with regard to monitoring the region's macroeconomic policies. The EU in concluding a loan agreement with both CEMAC and ECCAS in 2003 and conditioned the loan on the merging of the two RECs. Though this has not occurred, there have been strides in the possible harmonisation of the trade instruments of the two RECs. The need for such harmonisation was re-echoed in a recent meeting of trade experts of the two RECs in Douala in January 2007. The agreement also provided amongst other conditions that ECCAS should take responsibility for peace and security of the sub-region through its Mutual Security Pact in Central Africa – COPAX. The extent of the EU's role is further highlighted by the EPA negotiations between the region and the EU (discussed below). For the IMF and the World Bank their role is multidimensional including, most importantly, monitoring national and regional fiscal policies. The role of these institutions was evident in the years leading to the devaluation of the CFA franc and thereafter, and the implementation of the structural adjustment programmes.

Another salient player in the region is Nigeria, with its huge population of more than 100 million. It borders Cameroon in the East and Chad in the North; is proximate to Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome & Principe in the South; and has historical ties with the English part of Cameroon, the administration of which was managed by British Nigeria until 1953. Its influence in the region, unlike in West Africa, is economic rather than political. Its only political (military) presence in the region was its invasion of the Cameroonian peninsula of Bakassi in 1994, a case peacefully resolved under the auspices of the International Court of Justice in October 2002. Nigeria is not a member of either of the two Central Africa main economic RECs though it shares membership with some of the countries in other regional groups notably: Cameroon and Chad in the Lake Chad Basin Commission[15]; and Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, DRC, Congo, Sao Tome & Principe and Angola in the Gulf of Guinea Commission[16]. All these countries have established either formal or informal trading relationships with Nigeria. Cameroon for instance, trades more with Nigeria than with any of the countries of the two RECs in which it has membership. For instance, Nigeria is second after the EU as Cameroon's major import partners with 12.5%; 14th as Cameroon's major export partner with 0.8% and 2nd main trade partner with 5.5% after the EU. This trend is to an extent reflective of the region's trading relationship with Nigeria.

EU-Central Africa trade in 2003 (in millions of euros)

	Central African exports to the EU	Central African imports from the EU
Agricultural products	589	526
All products	3 794	3 313
Share of agricultural products	15,5%	15,9%

Source: COMEXT, data for 2003

The EPA negotiations

The configuration of the negotiations for the EPA in Central Africa may seem less complex than one finds in other regions with high levels of overlapping. In Central Africa, CEMAC was designated as the flagship for EPA negotiations and apart from Sao Tome & Principe and the DRC the countries have minimal distortions, as in the case of eastern and southern Africa where the question of membership overlap is an issue. The question now is whether with Angola (SADC minus negotiating group), Burundi and Rwanda (ESA group) negotiating the EPA under different banners this may have an impact on the evolution of the integration process in Central Africa. The daunting challenge to the region is the unequal levels of development and therefore the EPA negotiations need to adopt the asymmetry approach so as not to impose the same adjustment burden on the different countries. Five of the six countries constituting the CEMAC EPA negotiating group are LDCs and qualify under the EU EBA Initiative which means they are not obliged to offer reciprocal market access. This raises some doubts about the possibilities for ensuring a single, coherent tariff offer, notwithstanding the fact that CEMAC, unlike most other EPA negotiating groups, purportedly has a CET.

Underpinning the negotiations in Central Africa has been development issues ranging from agriculture, to compensation for revenue loss and fiscal adjustment and capacity building. In June 2006 negotiations stalled owing to fundamental differences on the political scope of the EPA between the EU and Central Africa, notably the way in which the Cotonou Agreement principles would be integrated into the EPA. Another possible drawback to the negotiations has been the CEMAC countries' proposal to the EU for a transition period of fifty years which they explain is necessary to allow them to build on their production capacities. This is highly unlikely to pass the WTO's admittedly loose criteria regulating FTAs.

Import taxes remain a principal source of revenue for all the countries of the sub-region and trade liberalisation under the

Breakdown of GDP by sector (CEMAC + DRC and STP) (as a %)

Country	GDP for the agricultural sector	GDP for the industrial sector	GDP for the tertiary sector
Cameroon	43.8	20.3	39.9
Central African Republic	54.1	19.6	26.3
Congo	5.4	71.8	22.7
Gabon	3.5	53.2	43.3
Equatorial Guinea	7.0	88.0	5.0
DR Congo	57.0	16.0	27.0
Sao Tomé	19.0	18.0	63.3
Chad	37.6	13.3	49.1

EU-Central Africa trade in 2003 (in millions of euros)

	Central African exports to the EU	Central African imports from the EU
Agricultural products	589	526
All products	3 794	3 313
Share of agricultural products	15,5%	15,9%

Source: Eurostat, 2003 data

Customs duties applicable to products exported to the EU with and without an EPA, for the non-LDCs, with effect from 1 January 2008

	With EPA	Without EPA
Cocoa beans	0%	0%
Cocoa butter	0%	4.2%
Cocoa paste	0%	9.6%
Cocoa powder	0%	2.8%
Bananas	0%	€176 per tonne
Cotton	0%	0%
Coffee	0%	0%
Gum Arabic	0%	0%
Sugar	0%	Depends on the current reform currently €339 per tonne
Pineapples	0%	5.8%
Canned green beans	0%	19.2%

EPA could substantially reduce this important revenue source. Hence the CEMAC countries have also proposed setting up a system for financial adjustment costs[17]. However the effect of revenue loss and adjustment would differ as certain countries such as Cameroon, Gabon and to an extent Equatorial Guinea expect to witness a decrease in the contribution of tariffs to total government revenues to about 8.2% over time. According to Mathew McQueen (1999) its comprehensive study adjustment may be slow and difficult to achieve[18]. Other countries such as Chad, Congo, CAR and Sao Tome & Principe may face a minimum decrease in revenue of about 14.1% and given their very limited capacity to design and implement fiscal reforms, it would be entirely possible that the EPA alternative tax policies would create greater distortions than the tariffs they are about to replace[19]. The adjustment cost may be undermined if consideration is given to the benefits of the increasing world oil prices as all the countries except CAR are oil producing countries[20].

Though the CEMAC, STP and DRC countries are wary of the new generation issues, they are sufficiently covered under the present regional legal dispensation which consists of the various regional legal frameworks on trade, intellectual property rights and investment.

Conclusion

Regional integration in Central Africa is dominated at two levels with CEMAC being pivotal in trade and economic issues while ECCAS remains the focus of political issues. For instance, CEMAC has signed a Trade and Investment Treaty (TIFA) with the USA and a free trade agreement with Sao Tome & Principe. Also in the pipeline is a possible FTA with Nigeria and ECOWAS. However, like other RECs in Africa, regional integration in Africa remains both problematic and challenging especially on issues of overlapping membership. Also, any effective regional integration in central Africa could only be achieved if issues of trade facilitation are addressed, such as reducing non trade barriers between the countries. For instance, the duration for clearing goods from the Douala Port in Cameroon which remains a major gateway for landlocked countries (Chad and CAR) is quite long (19 days). Though there have been efforts to facilitate free movements of both persons and goods through the institution of a common CEMAC passport, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea have declared their non readiness for its effective implementation. It seems their greatest fear is the influx of people from other member states and a possible threat to their own citizens especially in the search for employment. The political and economic domination of the RECs by Cameroon and Gabon, and now Angola with the creation of the Gulf of Guinea Commission, may scare the other weak economies to adopt policies that may limit intra-regional trade (which is below 5% in any event). With Rwanda and Burundi already members of the EAC and COMESA, plus DRC and Angolan membership in SADC, future efforts to widen integration will remain political choices. The inability of ECCAS to produce a clear-cut integration agenda may impact on its efforts and undermine its potential role as an AEC pillar. Regional integration in Central Africa seems clouded more with political ambitions than the need for socio- economic development. The move towards rationalising the integration agenda in the region may be feasible and to an extent hinges on the outcome of the EPA negotiations. But with relatively fully functional institutional organs, CEMAC may for a long period dominate the integration agenda in Central Africa.

Finally, though it seems as if the two RECs are keen to consolidate the integration agenda in the region, mistrust amongst the countries and the fighting for pole position between Cameroon and Gabon within CEMAC will undermine the process. For instance, despite the creation of a CEMAC stock exchange market in Libreville, Cameroon went ahead to open its own national stock exchange market in Douala on the belief that Douala remains the economic hub of the region. The failure of all the countries to adhere to the recently adopted CEMAC passport, intended to facilitate free movement of persons and the massive expulsion of Cameroonians from Equatorial Guinea in early 2005, demonstrates some of the problems that may undermine the regional integration process in the region. However, the new regional integration configuration would depend much on the general outcome of the EPA negotiations upon which hinges future integration processes in Africa. The conclusive questions wanting answers focus on what happens to the DRC, Rwanda and Burundi if the SADC, COMESA and EAC CUs finally enter into force in 2008 and 2010 and whether Angola would consider its membership in ECCAS compatible with its new socio-economic objectives easily achievable in SADC or an expanding SACU.

Endnotes

1 Ali Zafar & Keiko Kubota (2003), "Regional Integration in Central Africa : Key Issues" Africa Region Working Paper Series No 52 World Bank.

2 CEMAC member states are Cameroon, Central Africa Republic (CAR), Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Republic of Congo, and Gabon while member states of ECCAS include all the six CEMAC countries plus Angola, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda and Sao Tome & Principe.

3 The Monetary Union is provided under Article 2 of the 1994 CEMAC Treaty and elaborated under a separate convention establishing the Central Africa Economic Union under which the Central Bank of Central African States is regulated.

4 BEAC – Evolution Economique et Financiere des Pays de la CEMAC en l'an 2005 et Perspectives pour 2006 20 Avril 2006

5 The UDEAC Treaty of 1964 or the revised Treaty adopted in Libreville Gabon in December 1991 and the 1998 Plan of

Action do not give any indicative date for the establishment of the Central Africa Common Market.

6 Article 30 of the revised 1991 UDEAC Treaty.

7 Article 42.

8 Article 9 of the Customs Code of UDEAC, (Acte No 7/93-UDEAC-556-SE1).

9 There have been some moves to increase the local content requirement to 50% as from 2008. The present Rules of Origin also considers certain goods manufactured with raw materials wholly obtained from the region as originating in CEMAC and certificates of origin have to be issued to this regard by customs officials closest to the producer. The lack of expertise by customs officials in certifying which goods qualify as originating in CEMAC has been problematic as certificates issued by a member state could be rejected by another state. For instance, whether wine bottled in Equatorial Guinea from imported Spanish wine would be considered as originating in CEMAC or a product of Spain is unclear to the author.

10 The OAPI Treaty apart from treating the traditional issues under TRIPS goes far beyond in integrating the UPOV Treaty on New Plant Varieties and the Protection and Promotion of Cultural Heritage which it defines as all material and immaterial human productions that are characteristics of a nation over time and space. Cultural Heritage comprises folklore, monuments and ensembles. Article 68 of the Bangui Revised Treaty of OAPI.

11 There is no official English translation and the translation is that of the author.

12 The extent to which these protocols have been implemented is difficult to ascertain as access to official documentations is difficult and the ECCAS official website is still under construction.

13 Jakobeit C et al (2005), "Overlapping Membership in COMESA, EAC, SACU and SADC: Trade Policy Options for the Region and for EPA Negotiations" GTZ November 2005

14 At independence, the French government undertook through its Central Treasury in Paris to guarantee the external convertibility of the CFA Franc in return for which the African countries would pool all their foreign earnings in Paris and use the French franc as a transaction currency for buying and selling other currencies. This arrangement survived the institution of a European single currency. In the years leading up to the institution of the Euro, France guaranteed the pegging of the CFA franc to the Euro and it was expected that 65% of the foreign reserves of the CFA franc countries will be kept in an account held by the French Treasury.

15 The Lake Chad Basin Commission is an intergovernmental organisation created in 1964 by Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria, Niger and later Central Africa Republic on the regulation and planning of the uses of the water and other natural resources of the Lake Chad conventional basin. The lake is the fourth largest in Africa.

16 The Gulf of Guinea Commission, according to the Treaty, is to regulate and harmonise the exploitation of the natural resources of the Gulf of Guinea especially with regard to fishing and oil exploration and exploitations and also to enhance the common pooling of technological know-how for the development of the common heritage of the region and reduce costs of exploitation of all resources.

17 EPA Negotiations, Central Africa: Executive Brief 1 August 2006 available on http://agritrade.cta.int/en/layout/set/print/content/view/full/2884.

18 Mathew McQueen (1999) "The Impact studies on the effects of REPAs between the ACP and the EU" Study Commissioned by Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

19 Ibid

20 Export tariffs and other taxes are a major source of income for all the countries; hence higher world oil prices could minimise the impact of revenue loss as a result of trade liberalisation.