

Emergent Africa

Evolution of Regional Economic Integration

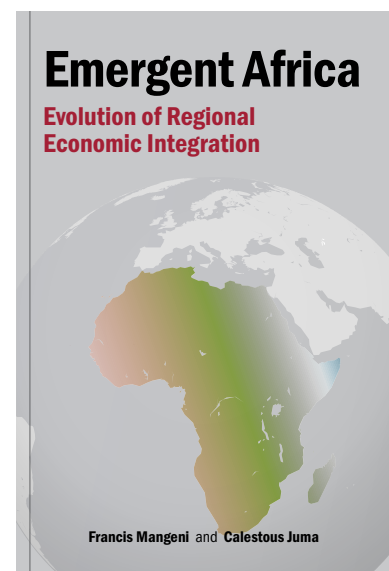
Francis Mangeni and Calestous Juma

Africa is a paradoxical continent. On the one hand, it is endowed with abundant natural resources that have defined its image and place in the global economy. But on the other hand it has some of the poorest nations on earth. One would assume that, given the circumstances, newly independent African states would have aggressively sought to uplift their economic performance and improve the wellbeing of their people through adding value to their natural resources. Yet proposals for resource-led industrial transformation were not developed until much later in the evolution of Africa's economic integration. They opted instead to promote a Pan-African agenda for regional economic integration.

Emergent Africa argues that unlike other integration initiatives that focus almost entirely on trade, Africa's efforts include infrastructure development and industrialization. The integration is a way to facilitate development by consolidating national and regional markets to reap the benefits of larger economies. Trade is thus viewed as a tool for promoting prosperity through industrial development.

The book stresses that Africa has pursued its integration efforts through experimentation and learning. The lessons learned from Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have been applied in negotiations for the Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA) and the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA). It adopts a far-from-equilibrium approach and examines the original vision of Pan-Africanism outlined by its founding fathers. It underscores the primacy of trade as the currency of regional economic integration. Trade, however, is broadly viewed as development. The developmental approach to integration in Africa has at least three main pillars: market integration, industrialization, and infrastructure development.

This book is divided into three parts reflecting the path followed by African countries in charting a new regional integration path. Part I of the book lays out a theoretical framework for understanding the origins and involution of Africa's economic integration from a systems perspective. Part II analyses Africa's experimentation with regional integration, placing emphasis on the emergence of trade as a key force. It uses the case of COMESA to illustrate how trade served as an entry point into pursuing regional integration to promote overall development. Part III covers the consolidation of lessons learned from regional experimentation as part of a broader effort to manage economic complexity.



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