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**L'Afrique et les défis du XXIème siècle  
Africa and the Challenges of the Twenty First Century  
A África e os desafios do Século XXI  
إفريقيا وتحديات القرن الواحد والعشرين**

*Interregionalism: a New Mechanism for Regional  
Governance and Integration in Africa*

**Bappah Habibu Yaya**  
Ahmadu Bello University Zaria

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## **Abstract**

*'Multiple regionalism' is a problem in Africa's integration process. The existence of several sub regional groupings, whose objectives and programmes in many instances conflict, complicates the process of integration of the continent. Most countries in Africa hold membership in at least two different regional arrangements. There are presently 14 regional groupings in Africa. Seven are recognized by the UN Economic Commission for Africa and the African Union as the building blocks of the Africa's integration. The others exist alongside, and compete with, the recognized regional groups on the continent. In West Africa, ECOWAS contends with the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) and the Mano River Union (MRU); in East Africa, the East African Community (EAC) compete with the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC); Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), in North Africa, contests with the Community of Sahel Saharan States (CEN-SAD) and; Southern African Customs Union (SACU) rival the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in Southern Africa. The multiplicity of these sub regional groupings has caused operational problems in governance and administration of the African integration process. There is firstly, the issue of dispersal of scarce diplomatic, economic and human resources. The mostly poor member states have had to contend with making commitments to these organizations. Secondly, the multiplicity of the groupings has created an environment for high politicization of the African integration process. Effective regional governance for integration is hampered by clashes between leading members within the different regional groupings. Thus, this paper argues that interregionalism, i.e. the institutionalization of relations between regional groupings, is a mechanism that can help overcome the challenges of multiple regionalisms in Africa, and accelerate regional integration of the continent.*