



# Executive Summary



Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press

## FROM CHAOS TO COHESION: A REGIONAL APPROACH TO SECURITY, STABILITY, AND DEVELOPMENT IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

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Conflicts and extremism are nearly certain to continue to rise in Africa, especially with instability resulting from the cascade of unrest across North Africa and the Middle East, the burgeoning youth bulge in Sub-Saharan Africa, rising Islamic extremism, mercenaries, and the myriad wild, ungoverned spaces and increasing resource shortages across the Continent. In order to protect our interests and ensure stability in the region, U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) is expanding its role in not only military-to-military coordination and assistance, but also with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) that are the emerging forces for regional stability.

From its inception, AFRICOM has been criticized for taking a piecemeal and uncoordinated approach to relationship-building in Africa. However, the RECs provide this Joint Command with a unique opportunity to continue to consolidate its own efforts and resources. Additionally, the RECs also emphasize the cooperation of their individual partners and the sharing of their own resources in order to contribute to their regional stability, security, and economic development.

RECs have moved beyond their initial purpose of a loose confederation of trading partners to become increasingly effective supranational bodies promoting financial, political, and

security stabilization in each of their regions. In a departure from the Organisation of African States (OAS), RECs are increasingly willing to work collectively and to intervene directly within member states to halt or prevent conflict diplomatically, economically, and even militarily.

Looking at each of the RECs' power centers and areas of weakness, policymakers can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the sometimes symbiotic and often destructive dynamics within and among African states to seek strategic and regional rather than national approaches. These efforts can assist in determining which approaches are likely to have the most positive effects. Then some planning can be developed based on these initial "pilots" to create a continental, Pan-African approach to stability, security, and economic development across the board.

Prevention is the key to effective policies in Africa, whether the issue is equitable resource exploitation, ethnic conflict, infectious diseases, or famine. This monograph suggests AFRICOM is uniquely positioned to help design a path to spearhead a pan-African strategy highly likely to have the net long-term effect of attaining considerable competitive advantage for the U.S. economically, militarily, and politically, with a corresponding increase in stability, security, and economic opportunity for the entire continent.

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