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A Multilevel Analysis of Public Attitudes toward Regional Integration in Africa

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Supervisor:
Professor Rod Alence



A research report submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the field of e-Science

in the

Faculty of Humanities
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

18 May 2022

Declaration

I, Fritz Nganje, declare that this report is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the field of e-Science at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.



Fritz Nganje

18 May 2022

Abstract

This study aimed to analyse the determinants of public attitudes toward regional integration in Africa. Mixed effects binary logistic regression was used to test the hypothesis that socio-economic factors are the most important predictors of public attitudes toward regional integration in Africa. Data for the study was sourced mainly from Afrobarometer's round 6 survey. The results of the regression analysis confirm the central hypothesis of the study that socio-economic factors predominantly explain the attitudes that the African public holds toward regional integration policies and institutions. For instance, while socio-economic status correlates positively with a favourable attitude towards regional integration policies and institutions, being a citizen of a wealthy country reduces the odds that an individual would support regional integration or the institutions that promote it. Theoretically, our findings are in consonance with research conducted in the context of the European integration project, which has explained public attitudes toward the European Union and its policies mainly from a utilitarian perspective. With regard to their policy implications, the findings and conclusion of this study reinforce the need for a bottom-up and developmental approach to regional integration in Africa, recognizing that the more ideological impulses that inspired earlier forms of regionalism no longer have a strong appeal on a continent characterised by extensive socio-economic, political, and ideological diversity.

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List of Abbreviations

AU	**A**frican **U**nion
OAU	**O**rganization of **A**frican **U**nity
LPA	**L**agos **P**lan of **A**ction
REC	**R**egional **E**conomic **C**ommunity
ACFTA	**A**frican **C**ontinental **F**ree **T**rade **A**rea
SMME	**S**mall **M**edium and **M**icro **E**nterprise
ECOWAS	**E**conomic **C**ommunity of **W**est **A**frican **S**tates
SADC	**S**outhern **A**frican **D**evelopment **C**ommunity
EAC	**E**ast **A**frican **C**ommunity
IGAD	**I**nter- **G**overnmental **A**uthority on **D**evelopment
GDP	**G**ross **D**omestic **P**roduct
WDI	**W**orld **D**evelopment **I**ndicators
VIF	**V**ariance **I**nflation **F**actor
IMF	**I**nternational **M**onetary **F**und
EU	**E**uropean **U**nion
AUC	**A**frican **U**nion **C**ommission
UNECA	**U**nited **N**ations **E**conomic **C**ommission for **A**frica
AfDB	**A**frican **D**evelopment **B**ank

To Javea and Johannes

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

In his now renowned speech at the inaugural ceremony of the organization of African Unity (OAU) in May 1963, Ghana's first president and famous Pan-Africanist, Kwame Nkrumah, made a passionate plea for the newly independent African countries to unite as a strategy to withstand the onslaught of neocolonialism and promote the continent's socio-economic development. Nkrumah reasoned that a balkanized Africa would be unable to undo the colonial legacy of underdevelopment and exploitation, given the threat of continued Western influence and the weak economic base of individual African states. He likened African unity to a Political Kingdom that was indispensable for the continent's socio-economic development and political independence (NewAfrican 2013). However, Nkrumah's vision of an immediate united Africa was not shared by many of his contemporaries, with the continent's leadership instead opting for greater cooperation through strengthening common institutions, norms and values. Even so, the ideal of Pan-African unity and integration has remained a corner stone of the envisioned African renaissance. Thus, from the 1980 Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) to the recent Agenda 2063, successive frameworks for the continent's socio-economic development have been hinged on greater continental integration and cooperation.

The contemporary integration agenda in Africa is premised on the role of eight regional economic communities (RECs), which are recognized as the building blocks of the African Union and an envisaged African Economic Community.[1] Progress

1. The eight RECs are Arab Maghreb Union (UMA); Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA); Community of Sahel–Saharan States (CEN–SAD); East African Community (EAC); Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS); Economic Community of West

towards regional integration varies considerably among the RECs, but there is a general sense that the continent as a whole has fared rather poorly in its pursuit of integration. For example, intra-African trade remains very low, with the continent's economies largely disjointed from one another. The free movement of people across the continent that was promised in the LPA also remains a pipedream. Meanwhile, as evinced in the diverse political cultures and regimes on the continent, decades-long attempts to forge common political institutions, norms and values through the OAU/African Union (AU) and the various RECs have amounted to little. The sluggish pace of integration in Africa has been blamed mainly on the weak domestic legitimacy of many of the continent's governments, which, in the context of continental cooperation, often manifests in a crude resort to narrow nationalism and the corresponding reluctance of African governments to pool sovereignty for the common good of the African people. Mismanagement of Africa's socio-cultural diversity, together with the divisive geopolitics of Western powers such as France and the US, have also been cited as obstacles to continental integration (Shivji 2010).

In March 2018, AU member states signed an agreement adopting the African Continental Free Trade Area (ACFTA), which officially came into force in May 2019. This momentous initiative is indicative of a renewed impetus towards African integration in recent years. However, even these efforts have been found wanting in at least two respects. Firstly, concerns have been raised about the growing prominence of neoliberal free market thinking and policies in the African integration agenda, which appear to have displaced the Pan-Africanist and developmental impulses that had motivated initial aspirations for integration. Some observers have also argued that present-day integration schemes in Africa have largely been designed to serve the interests of the ruling elite, in what Söderbaum (2012) refers to as "regime-boosting regionalism". In this regard, social integration and cohesion have received little attention in the integration efforts of the AU and its RECs, even though they are recognized as important components of the African integration agenda (Akokpari 2013).

African States (ECOWAS); Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD); Southern African Development Community (SADC).

1.2 Problem Statement and Research Questions

The adoption of the ACFTA has been hailed as a major milestone that brings closer to reality the dream of first generation Pan-Africanists, such as Kwame Nkrumah, for a united and prosperous continent (Williams 2019). In the heyday of the 20th century Pan-Africanist movement, African integration and solidarity were conceived as both a strategy and a necessary condition for the political, socio-economic, and cultural liberation of the African people both on the continent and in the diaspora. In other words, like the Pan-Africanist ideal itself, African unity and integration was envisaged as a people-centered project intended to create conditions for the restoration of the dignity of all people of African descent. However, in the post-independence period, the integration agenda has taken on a predominantly statist and elitist character, almost to the exclusion of the voice and interests of "ordinary" Africans. This can be observed not only in the market-driven and intergovernmental approach to regionalism on the continent, but also to the scant attention that has been given to questions of social integration and cohesion in the contemporary integration agenda of the African Union (AU) and its regional economic communities (RECs)(Shivji 2010; Söderbaum 2012; Akokpari 2013).

At the same time, a growing tide of intra-African migration and informal cross-border trading, interlaced with sporadic episodes of xenophobic violence, suggest that the African masses are not mere passive observers of the integration phenomenon on the continent. Not only are they involved in parallel bottom-up regionalization processes of their own, but in an effort to make their voices heard and protect their interests, citizens in various African countries have sometimes resorted to actions, such as attacks on migrants, which have worked against the spirit of Pan-African unity and solidarity. Moreover, with the growing convergence of domestic and international issues, unpopular regional integration policies have the potential to provoke electoral backlash against incumbent governments, a possibility that further underscores the salience of public opinion in Africa's regional integration efforts.

The experience of the European integration project attests to the increasing importance of public opinion in the discourse and practice of regional integration. In this regard, Christina Schneider (2017) and Konstantin Vossing (2020) argue that while the early stages of European integration were shielded from public scrutiny

and influence, overtime integration has become increasingly politicised to the point where public opinion about European integration has started to affect votes. This has in turn forced politicians to remain sensitive to the views of the public when negotiating and cooperating in regional integration arrangements. The study was thus motivated by the following two research questions:

1. What attitudes does the African public hold about the regional integration project in Africa?

2. What are the determinants of public attitudes toward regional integration in Africa?

As a concept, public opinion denotes the aggregate of the individual views, attitudes, and beliefs held by a significant proportion of a population about a particular topic (Davison 2020). For the purpose of this study, the focus was on public attitudes as a component of public opinion.

1.3 Aim and Rationale for the Study

The aim of the study was two-fold. First, the study sought to describe and interrogate public perceptions of regional integration policies and institutions in Africa. Second, the study analysed the determinants of public attitudes toward contemporary regional integration efforts on the continent. A study of this nature is significant to the extent that it seeks to fill a very critical gap in the academic literature on African integration by foregrounding the often-neglected voices and perspectives of "ordinary" people in the scholarly discourses of the subject. Despite its increasing significance for the prospects of a developmental and people-centered regionalism on the continent, public opinion has hitherto remained a largely understudied subject in the literature on African integration. As the literature review documented in the second chapter suggests, the study of regional integration in Africa has generally been conditioned by the predominantly statist and top-down manifestation of the phenomenon. The few studies that have ventured into the domain of public opinion on regional integration (Olapade, Selormey, and Gninafon 2016; Gordon 2016; Alence 2019) have largely been exploratory in nature or have been limited in both their thematic and geographic scope. This study built on these pioneering efforts to conduct a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of public attitudes toward regional integration in Africa from a cross-national perspective.

1.4 Chapter Outline

This research report is structured in six substantive chapters as follows:

Chapter One: Introduction. This chapter introduces the topic, delineates the research problem, and outlines the aim and rationale for the study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review and Analytical Framework. This chapter discusses the relevant literature, defines the study's key concepts and variables, and postulates the expected relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology. This chapter discusses the research design, the sources of data, as well as the methods and procedures for collecting and analyzing the data. It is also used to communicate the limitations to the study.

Chapter Four: Public Attitudes toward Regional Integration Policies. This chapter analyses and discusses the results of the regression models estimating the relationship between the selected predictors and public attitudes toward regional integration policies.

Chapter Five: Public Attitudes toward Regional Integration Institutions. This chapter analyses and discusses the results of the regression models estimating the relationship between the selected predictors and public attitudes toward regional integration institutions.

Chapter Six: Conclusion. This chapter draws inferences and conclusions from the research results, and reflects on their implications for theory and practice. The chapter also suggests areas for further research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review and Analytical Framework

2.1 Summary of Literature Review

An extensive body of academic and policy literature has emerged over the decades on the question of African integration. This is not surprising given that debates and policies on the socio-economic and political renewal of the continent have been premised on the centrality of African unity and integration, as both a means and an end. The scholarly interest in African integration has also been inspired by the post-Cold War discourse and theorizing on "new regionalism". As a concept, new regionalism seeks to capture the new wave of regionalization efforts whose advent coincided with the end of the Cold War. Regional integration in this context is characterized by a broadened integration agenda that goes beyond the traditional focus on economic and security issues, the involvement of a range of actors other than states, and a mutually constitutive relationship with the forces of globalization (Buzdugan 2020; Hettne and Söderbaum 1998). Arguably, the predominant theme in the literature on African integration over the past decades has been attempts to lay bare and explain the shortcomings of these efforts. Within this broad theme, three strands of literature can be identified.

The first category appears to be firmly rooted within the neoliberal paradigm of integration and is exemplified by the works of Hartzenberg (2011), Melo and Tsikata (2015), as well as Tuluy (1998). It thus focuses its critique on the shortcomings of the continent in living up to the principles of market integration. From this perspective, the failure of regional integration in Africa is largely a function of factors

such as significant overlap of membership of regional integration arrangements, weak policy environments and coordination, as well as a poor regional infrastructure base. The second category of scholarship that assesses the African integration effort is developed outside of, and in some instances, as a critique of the neoliberal paradigm. For example, scholars such as Shivji (2010) and Evans (1998) have decried the abandoning of the Pan-Africanist and developmental objectives that animated earlier visions of African integration in favour of a neoliberal market approach to integration. Likewise, Lavergne (1997), Qobo (2007), and Jiboku (2015) have blamed the failure of regional integration in Africa on the mismatch between the grand gestures and abstract visions of the African leadership on the one hand, and the socio-economic realities and needs of the continent on the other hand.

A third strand of literature that tries to make sense of the weak integration record on the continent is firmly rooted in the discourse of an alternative regionalism that is driven from below. Regionalism from below puts individuals, civil society and other representative and participatory institutions such as parliaments at the centre of the regional building process (Adar, Finizio, and Meyer 2018). For example, through their analysis of the marginalization of small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) and the informal sector in regional integration projects on the continent,Lehloenyai and Mpya (2016) show how inadequate public participation in regional integration initiatives means that grassroots communities have benefited very little from these activities. This line of argument is developed further by Crush and Pendleton (2004), as well as Evans (1998), who assert that by neglecting the interests and voices of "ordinary" citizens in regional integration discourses and policies, African governments are effectively eroding the social cohesion and harmony that is needed for sustainable integration on the continent. It is also in this context that Fioramonti (2012, 1) has argued for regional integration efforts in Africa to abandon "the classical top-down elite-driven process adopted by the EU founding fathers" in favour of a bottom-up approach to region building. For their part, Zajontz and Leysens (2015) contend that civil society has the potential to assume a catalytic role in making regional integration more attuned to the interests and aspirations of the African people, although they also concede that this potential is constrained by challenges within the civil society fraternity itself.

While there is a growing body of work focusing on analysing the shortcomings

of the dominant regional integration paradigm, and making the case for an alternative bottom-up approach to integration in Africa, little academic attention has been given to interrogating and explaining the views of African citizens on the subject. Most of the studies in this regard have focused on analysing the attitudes of citizens of individual African countries towards immigrants and cross-border migration (Mattes et al. 1999; Crush and Pendleton 2004; Gordon 2016, 2017), or public perceptions of African regional organizations (Alence 2019). A notable exception is a report by Olapade, Selormey, and Gninafon (2016), which explores the current state of public opinion on regional integration in Africa. The report, however, falls short of explaining the observed attitudes toward regional integration.

This study contributes to addressing this blind spot in the literature on African integration by going a step further to analyse the determinants of public attitudes toward integration using a multilevel regression method. This method of statistical analysis allowed us to not only identify and isolate the most important factors that shape public opinion on regional integration in Africa, but also to estimate the relative strength of the effect of these factors on public attitudes. A multilevel analysis also has the advantage of generating rich insight into how individual and country level variables interact to shape the attitude of the public towards regional integration in Africa.

2.2 Research Hypotheses and Analytical Framework

The study attempted to explain public attitudes toward regional integration in Africa (the dependent variable) by examining the relationship between these attitudes with a host of socio-economic and geopolitical factors (the independent variables). The concept of attitude is used to denote the sum-total of an individual's inclinations, feelings, bias and convictions about a particular subject, in this case regional integration in Africa (Ortmeyer 1949, 280). Because attitudes are evaluations, they are commonly expressed as an opinion about an object along a dimension ranging from extremely positive to extremely negative (Petty, Wegener, and Fabrigar 1997). Thus for the purpose of this study, attitude toward regional integration is understood as an individual's inclination to support or disapprove of regional integration policies and the institutions that embody and promote these policies.

The study draws insight from the literature on citizens attitude toward cross-border immigration to test the central hypothesis that socio-economic factors are the main determinants of public attitudes toward regional integration in Africa. Studies conducted in this area suggest a strong association between economic competition and socioeconomic exclusion on the one hand, and anti-immigrant sentiments on the other hand (Mattes et al. 1999; Crush and Pendleton 2004; Gordon 2016, 2017). We can therefore expect to find little support for regional integration among citizens of a low socio-economic status or those who feel they are not benefiting enough from the economy of their country. Citizens who are socially disadvantaged would be wary of inbound migration that is associated with regional integration policies for fear that it will exacerbate their poor socio-economic condition by increasing competition for scarce resources and economic opportunities (Mewes and Mau 1997; Poutvaara and Steinhardt 2018). At a macro level, the socio-economic hypothesis suggests that citizens in economically wealthier African countries will also be averse to regional integration. The assumption here is that by virtue of their perceived economic opportunities, these countries tend to attract a significant number of migrants, with the possibility of fueling resentment towards regional integration schemes that are seen to encourage immigration.

To control for other possible explanations of attitudes toward regional integration, the analysis also estimated the effects of a set of other individual and country-level variables on the dependent variable. These include the individuals' gender and age, with the expectations that women will be more inclined to support regional integration than men do, while older citizens would be more averse to regional integration than their younger and more cosmopolitan counterparts would. We also controlled for the individual's perception of the performance of the economy, assuming that those who are satisfied with the state of the economy will be more supportive of regional integration than those who are dissatisfied. Another economic variable that was controlled for is whether respondents receive remittances from abroad, projecting a positive relationship between this variable and support for regional integration. A fifth factor that was controlled for is the urban/rural residence of respondents. We expected to find higher support for regional integration among urban residents compared to their rural counterparts. An individual's support for democracy or lack thereof is another variable that can influence their attitude toward regional integration. The expectation is that those

who hold a positive view of democracy domestically are also more likely to favour a strong regional role in the promotion of democratic principles and ideals. Finally, we also controlled for an individual's perception of the ease to travel across national borders in Africa, as a possible explanatory factor for attitudes toward regional integration institutions. The expectation was that people who believe it is easy to cross Africa's borders would hold a positive view of regional integration institutions, as the latter are credited for this favourable policy environment.

Three country-level socio-economic factors were also controlled for in an attempt to explain public attitudes toward regional integration in Africa. These include a country's level of socio-economic inequality, its proportion of migrant population, as well as it trade openness. Societies with high levels of inequality tend to be breeding grounds for anti-immigrant sentiments, thus creating an aversion for regional integration schemes. Similarly, the presence of a large migrant population in a country can generate resentment for regional integration policies and institutions, driven by the fear of domination or takeover by outsiders. Conversely, because of the benefits and sense of cosmopolitanism that comes with trade openness, people in countries with high levels of international or cross-border trade relative to the size of their economies will be more inclined to support regional integration schemes than their counterparts in fairly closed economies.

The second set of macro-level factors that were controlled for is country size. Alence (2019) found that citizens of larger African countries (measured by either population or total economic output) tend to see African regional organizations to be of little utility. It can be inferred from this finding to suggest a negative correlation between country size and public support for regional integration, given that these organizations are the very embodiment of the integration agenda on the continent. The country size hypothesis is based on the expectation for countries that are regional economic powerhouses to provide public goods and leadership for regional integration and cooperation. This in turn may create resentment among their citizens who may feel resources for national development are unjustifiably diverted for region building without any immediate tangible benefits.

A third cluster of country-level variables sought to control for political and institutional factors, notably the quality of liberal democracy in a country as well as its level of political stability. In terms of the former, it is assumed that societies with

TABLE 2.1: Independent and Control Variables

Individual Level Variables	**Group Level Variables**
Socio-economic Status	Level of economic development
Perception of economic performance	Level of inequality
Receipt of remittances	Country size
Age	Proportion of migrant population
Gender	Level of democracy
Urban/rural residence	Political stability
Ease of crossing borders	
Support for democracy	

strong liberal democratic values and institutions tend to aspire for cooperative relations with neighbouring states. Consistent with the solidarist understanding of international society, such societies are also expected to support a strong interventionist role for regional organizations. Meanwhile, a negative relationship is expected between political stability and support for regional integration. This is based on the assumption that citizens in countries that are relatively stable, with little risk of political violence and instability, are less likely to support regional integration for fear of contagion, especially if they find themselves in an unstable neighbourhood. Conversely, residents of countries prone to instability would be more inclined to support regional integration policies and institutions because of expectations of regional support to stabilize their countries. A summary of the study's independent and control variables is provided in Table 2.1.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This was an explanatory study. The explanatory research design is used when the overarching purpose of a study is to explain, control, and predict the relationship between variables. Put differently, explanatory research goes beyond description to explain the reason for a phenomenon by attempting to demonstrate how one set of variables (the independent or predictor variables) affects or is responsible for change in another variable (the dependent or outcome variable) (Consultores 2020). It is thus suitable for our analysis of the determinants of public attitudes toward regional integration in Africa.

3.2 Data and Measurement

3.2.1 Dependent Variables

The data that were used to measure the dependent variables came from Afrobarometer's Round 6 survey. Afrobarometer is a pan-African research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues across Africa. Surveys take the form of face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice. Respondents are usually adults above the age of 18, drawn from nationally representative samples of 1200 or 2400. Afrobarometer employs a random, clustered, stratified, and multistage area sampling design, which yields country-level results with a margin of sampling error of +/-2% (for a sample of 2,400) or +/-3% (for a sample of 1,200) at a 95% confidence level. Round 6 interviews were conducted in 2014 and 2015, with about 54,000 citizens in 36

countries, thus representing the views of more than three-fourths of the continent's population (Afrobarometer 2016, 1). The survey included a set of questions that probed respondents' knowledge and attitude towards various aspects of regional integration in Africa. Two sets of questions were of particular interest to this study. The first set relates to regional integration policies while the second was used to measure regional integration institutions.

Survey questions relating to regional integration policies

Question 76: Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose Statement 1 or Statement 2.

Statement 1: People living in [West/South/East/North/Central] Africa should be able to move freely across international borders in order to trade or work in other countries.

Statement 2: Because foreign migrants take away jobs, and foreign traders sell their goods at very cheap prices, governments should protect their own citizens and limit the cross-border movement of people and goods.

Question 77: Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose Statement 1 or Statement 2.

Statement 1: The governments of each country in [West/South/East/North/Central] Africa have a duty to try to guarantee free elections and prevent human rights abuses in other countries in the region, for example by using political pressure, economic sanctions or military force.

Statement 2: Each country in this region should respect the independence of other countries and allow them to make their own decisions about how their country should be governed.

For both questions, respondents had the following six options: Agree very strongly with Statement 1, Agree with Statement 1, Agree very strongly with Statement 2, Agree with Statement 2, Agree with Neither, Don't know. Two dummy variables were created from the responses to Questions 76 and 77 to measure the first set of

dependent variables (support for free movement across borders and support for regional responsibility to promote democracy and human rights), both of which capture support for regional integration policies. All "Agree very strongly" or "Agree" responses to statements 1 of both questions were coded as 1, to indicate support for free movement or regional responsibility, while all other responses were coded as 0, to indicate the absence of support for these policies.

Survey questions relating to regional integration institutions

Question 79A: In your opinion, how much do each of the following do to help your country, or haven't you heard enough to say?

[Regional organization (ECOWAS / SADC / EAC/ IGAD / or regional equivalent in North Africa)]

Question 79B: In your opinion, how much do each of the following do to help your country, or haven't you heard enough to say?

[African Union]

For this second set of questions, respondents were asked to choose from five possible answers: Don't help, Help a little, Help somewhat, Help a lot, Don't know. Here also, two dummy variables were created from the responses to Questions 79A and 79B to measure the second set of dependent variables (perceptions of the helpfulness of regional economic communities (RECs) and perceptions of the helpfulness of the African Union(AU). For both questions, all responses in the categories of "Help a little", "Help somewhat" or "Help a lot" were coded as 1, corresponding to a positive perception of the helpfulness of Africa's regional integration institutions, while all other responses were coded 0, to indicate a negative perception of the utility of these institutions.

3.2.2 Individual-level Predictors

Data for the individual-level independent and control variables were also obtained from Afrobarometer's round 6 survey. The main independent variable, socio-economic

status was measured as an individual's level of education, using Question 97 from the survey. Afrobarometer's education variable was re-coded to create a numerical variable (socio-economic status) ranging from 0-9. The individual-level control variables are all dummies (0, 1), created from various survey questions. Table 3.1 presents the coding scheme for the individual-level control variables.

TABLE 3.1: Coding Scheme for Individual-level Control Variables

Variable Name	**Coding Categories**
Perception of economic performance	Positive perception = 1
	Negative perception = 0
Receipt of remittances	Some remittances = 1
	No remittances = 0
Age	35 years and below = 1
	36 years and above = 0
Gender	Female = 1
	Male = 0
Urban/rural residence	Urban = 1
	Rural = 0
Ease of crossing borders	Soft borders = 1
	Hard borders = 0
Support for democracy	Democracy is best = 1
	Democracy is dispensable = 0

3.2.3 Group-level Predictors

The geopolitical and socio-economic clusters of independent and control variables were measured using 2015 data from the World Bank's World Development Indicators (WDI). *Country size* was operationalized as both a country's gross domestic product (GDP) and its total population, while *level of economic development* was measured using GDP per capita as a proxy. For its part, *inequality* was operationalized as a country's GINI Index, which is a score between 0 and 100, measuring the levels of income inequality. A score of 0 represents perfect equality, while a score of 100 suggests perfect inequality. The *migration* variable was measured as the percentage of a country's total population that are foreign-born residents, using the WDI's

"International migration stock (% of population)" indicator. Meanwhile, the *trade* variable was operationalized as a country's trade openness ratio (calculated as the sum of exports and imports divided by GDP). To measure *level of democracy*, we used data from the Varieties of Democracy dataset (specifically the liberal democracy component), while the World Governance Indicator's "Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism" indicator was used as a proxy for the *political stability* variable. Summary statistics of all the variables used in the regression are presented in Table 3.2.

TABLE 3.2: Summary Statistics of Regression Variables (N=52.739)

Statistic	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Pctl(25)	Pctl(75)	Max
Free movement	1	0	0	0	1	1
Regional Responsibility	0	0	0	0	1	1
AU utility	1	0	0	0	1	1
REC utility	1	0	0	0	1	1
Socio-economic status	4	2	1	3	6	10
Perception of economy	0	0	0	0	1	1
Remittances	0	0	0	0	0	1
Female	1	0	0	0	1	1
Urban	0	0	0	0	1	1
Youth	1	0	0	0	1	1
Support for democracy	1	0	0	0	1	1
Ease to cross border	0	0	0	0	1	1
GDP per capita	2,190	2,093	306	710	3,043	9,260
Gini.index	42	8	28	35	45	63
Political stability	-1	1	-2	-1	-0	1
trade	66	26	19	44	84	130
Migration	2	3	0	1	3	16
Population (millions)	30.7	37.9	0.5	10.2	38.2	181.1
GDP (billions)	69.7	122.4	1.6	9.7	48.6	494.6
Liberal democracy	0	0	0	0	1	1

3.3 Method of Data Analysis

The analysis for this study was conducted using the R statistical package, which is a programming language and open-source software environment for statistical computing and graphics. Given the hierarchical structure of the data and the binary nature of the response variables, the study made use of multilevel logistic regression to estimate the effect of the individual-level and country-level predictors on the outcome variable. In regression analysis, multilevel models, also known as hierarchical or mixed-effect models, are generally used when the cases to be analyzed are nested in groups or clusters, such that while cases in the same group may share similar characteristics, they are generally assumed to be independent from those in other groups. In the case of the present study, clusters represented higher-level units (countries) and observations represented individual survey respondents. When analysing hierarchical data, mixed models allow us to explore the relationship between predictor and outcome variables both within and between groups (Fox and Weisberg 2019, 336-337). Multilevel models produce two main estimates - fixed and random effects coefficients - that are useful in explaining the relationship between the predictors and outcome variables. The fixed effects component of multilevel models estimate the relationship between the predictors and the response for all observations across all groups. The random effects component, meanwhile, captures the between-group variation in the effects of the predictors on the response.

For its part, logistic regression is used to analyse and predict the relationship between a set of independent variables and a binary or dichotomous response variable. Binary logistic regression is based on three key assumptions, all of which were satisfied in this study. In addition to the requirement for the outcome variable to be dichotomous in nature, it is also assumed that there is a linear relationship between the logit of the outcome and each predictor variable, and that there are no outliers in the data. This was ensured by log transforming highly skewed continuous predictors. While *socio-economic status* was transformed using square root transformation, *GDP, GDP per capita, gini index, population, migration*, and *trade* were all log transformed.

Binary logistic regression also assumes the absence of multicollinearity among

the predictor variables. In other words, there should be no high correlations among the independent variables. We ran three tests: a correlation matrix, a principal component analysis, and a variance inflation factor(VIF) to rule out any form of collinearity among the predictors included in the various regression models. Logistic regression results are generally expressed as the odds ratio of an event occurring based on the effects of a predictor. For dummy predictors, the odds ratio compares the odds of the event occurring at 2 levels of the predictor, its presence (1), and its absence (0). Odds ratios that are greater than 1 indicate that the event is more likely at level 1, while odds ratios that are less than 1 indicate that the event is less likely at level 1. For continuous predictors, odds ratios that are greater than 1 indicate that the event is more likely to occur as the predictor increases, while odds ratios that are less than 1 indicate that the event is less likely to occur as the predictor increases (Mintab 2020).

In terms of the procedure that was followed, we started with basic descriptive analyses of the survey results associated with the four dependent variables to appreciate the current state of public attitudes toward regional integration policies and institutions. The next stage entailed running a set of random intercept models, which allowed us to estimate the effect of the predictors on the outcome, assuming that this effect is the same across all countries, although accounting for specific country characteristics. We then ran a second set of random intercept and random slope models, to determine how variations in the individual level variables across countries affect the relationship between these variables and the outcome variable.

3.4 Delimitation and Limitations of the Study

The scope of the analysis was limited to the views of citizens in the 36 countries that were covered in Afrobarometer's Round 6 survey, with the exception of Sao Tome and Principe that had to be excluded from the analysis for statistical reasons. This means that in effect only 35 out of the total 54 countries in Africa formed part of the analysis. The limited scope of the study has implications for the results of the statistical analysis, as well as the interpretation and conclusions that could be drawn from them. First, given the small number of countries, some of the models failed to converge, despite various attempts to troubleshoot the problem such

as using different optimizers. The statistical results reported in chapters 4 and 5 must, therefore, be interpreted against the backdrop of this convergence challenge. Second, the limited number of countries also calls for caution in generalizing the findings of the analysis and the conclusions drawn from them. Moreover, because the analysis was based on data that was collected in 2015 (more than six years ago), there is a possibility that some of these data may not reflect the current views of the African public on regional integration.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

No major ethical dilemmas were encountered in the course of conducting this study, given that the analysis relied exclusively on preexisting datasets that are in the public domain, and which have been carefully processed under strict data management policies and procedures. However, care was taken to abide by the respective organizations' data use policy, including the requirement to acknowledge these organizations is all publications resulting from the use of their data. Moreover, a conscious effort was made to cite and reference correctly all secondary sources that were used in the study. The methodological limitations that may have a bearing on the interpretation of the study's findings have also been accurately and honestly reported in the preceding section of this chapter.

Chapter 4

Determinants of Public Attitudes toward Regional Integration Policies

4.1 Introduction

The integration agenda championed by the AU and Africa's regional economic communities finds expression mainly in a raft of legal frameworks and policies that are designed to facilitate greater and seamless interaction among African people and governments, unencumbered by national borders. Africa's integration policies cover a wide range of areas, but can be subsumed under two broad rubrics: socio-economic integration on the one hand, and politico-security integration on the other hand. In the context of the current neo-liberal orthodoxy, the former has almost become synonymous with market integration policies, as witnessed in the recent adoption of the ACFTA. Even so, the discourse on African integration has also recently been marked by a fervent policy and social debate on the status and desirability of the free movement of persons across national borders. With the Grand Debate on the appropriate trajectory of African integration now seemingly settled in favour of the gradualist bloc, politico-security integration has generally taken the form of efforts to promote shared norms of democratic governance and establish a security community, including through the intervention of the AU and RECs in their member states when there are gross violation of human rights.

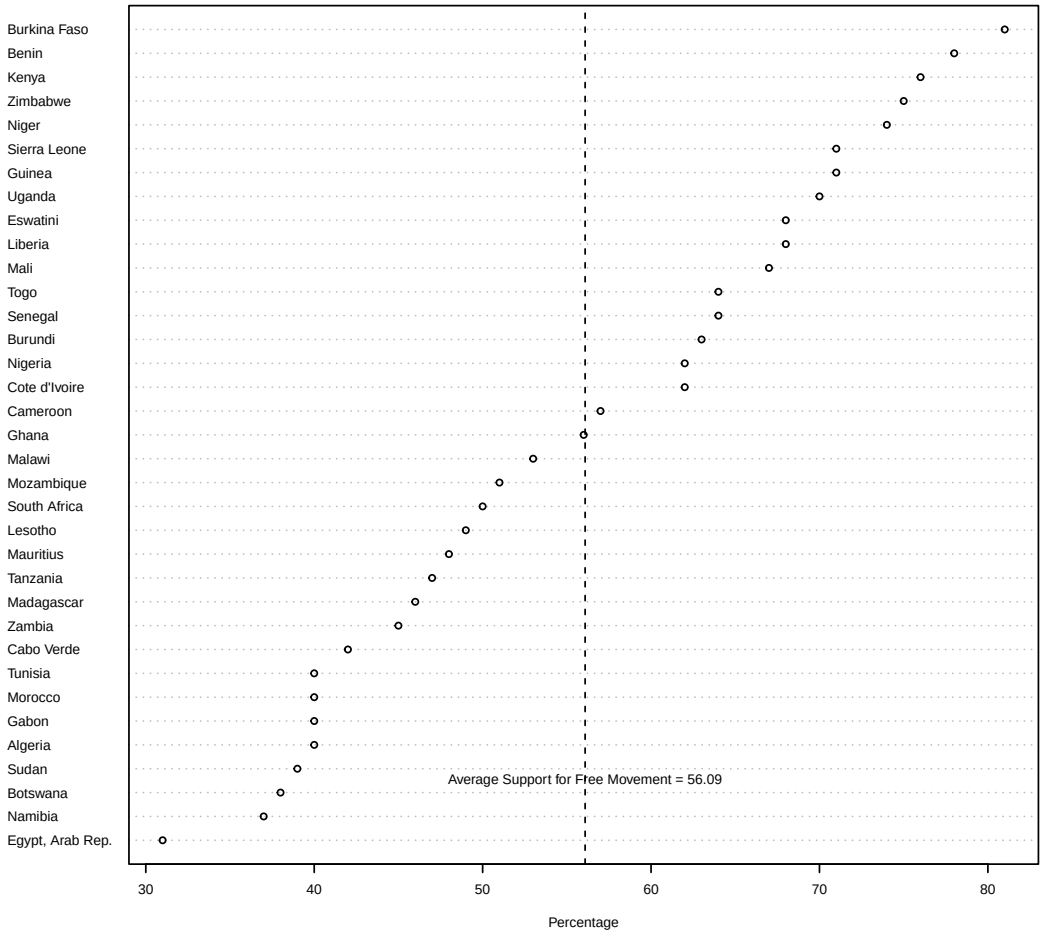
Against this backdrop, this chapter presents and discusses the research findings on the determinants of public attitudes toward regional integration policies, with a specific focus on the issues of free movement of people across national borders and the shared responsibility for a regional democratic and security community.

The chapter begins with a descriptive overview of what the African public thinks about the twin regional integration policy areas, before presenting and discussing the results of the regression analysis of the determinants of the public's attitudes toward regional integration policies.

4.2 Public Perceptions of Regional Integration Policies

This section of the chapter provides a descriptive analysis of the survey results used to measure the two response variables - free movement of people across borders and regional responsibility to promote democracy and human rights - which, in the context of this research, are indicative of public attitudes toward regional integration policies. The graph in Fig.1 reveals a highly polarized public debate on the subject of free movement of people across Africa's national borders, which is used here as a proxy for policies that seek to foster socio-economic integration in Africa. While there seems to be strong support for free movement across the continent, a significant 43% of the sampled population does not support this dimension of the African integration agenda. This is hardly surprising giving the huge socio-economic inequalities both within and between African countries. While some Africans embrace free movement as an expression of the longstanding dream of pan-African unity and solidarity, others see it as a driver of unwelcome competition over limited socio-economic resources and opportunities. These findings resonate with the dominant narrative around recurrent xenophobic violence in South Africa, where foreign nationals from other African countries have been accused of depriving locals of employment opportunities. Figure 1 further suggests significant cross-national variation in support for free movement of people in Africa. In countries such as Burkina Faso, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Niger and Benin, support for socio-economic integration is well above 70%, while in others such as Egypt, Botswana, Namibia and Sudan, support for socio-economic integration is below 40%. From a sub-regional perspective, support for this aspect of integration is generally stronger among West African countries and weakest among their counterparts in North Africa. This sub-regional variation can be attributed to the absence of a functional regional economic community in North Africa, as opposed to the relatively strong integration role played by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in West Africa.

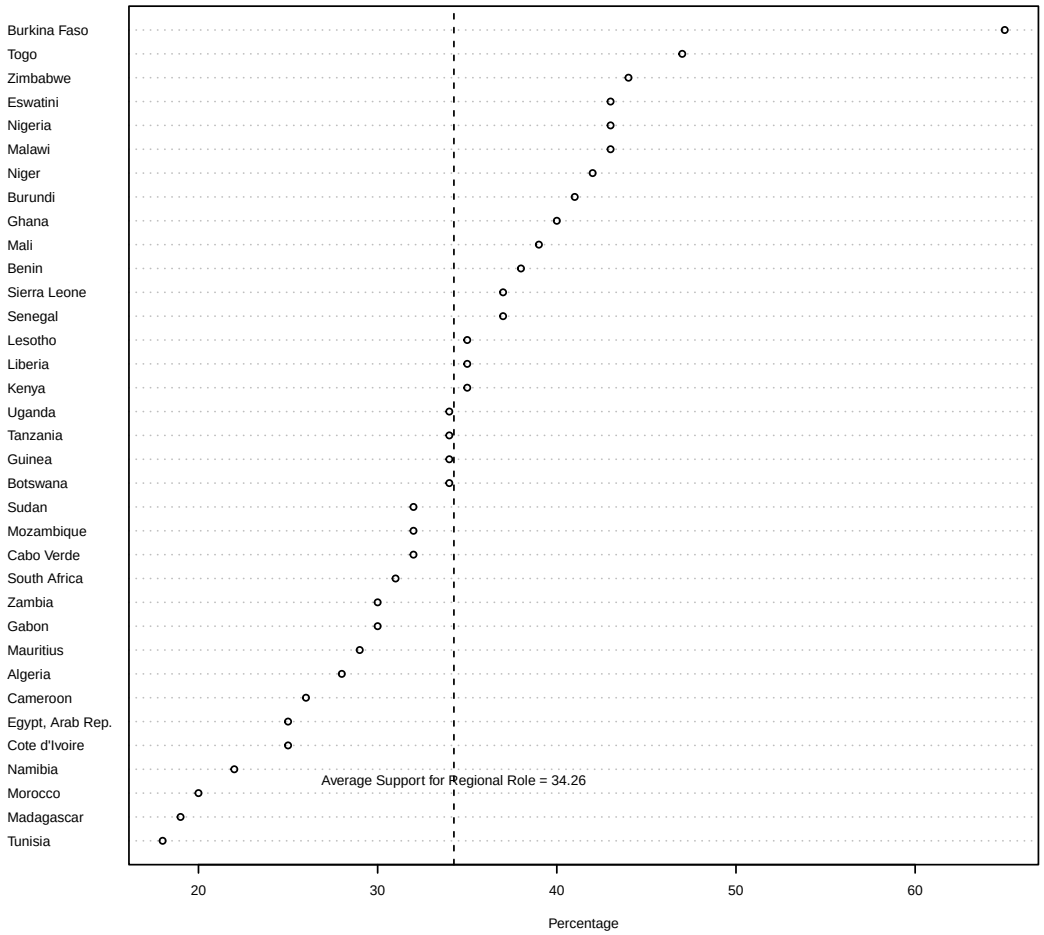
FIGURE 4.1: Support for Free Movement across Borders



Through his now famous "Seek ye first the political kingdom and all else shall be added onto you" statement, Kwame Nkrumah had argued that Africa's independence would be meaningless without political unification. Half a century later, it seems this approach to integration does not resonate with the African masses. The graph in Fig.2 suggests that less than half of the people in Africa support a regional role in the promotion of democracy and human rights. There is also very little variation across countries and regions. This is the case, even though, as discussed

above, there is considerable public support for socio-economic integration on the continent. These findings seem to suggest a waning of the historical pan-Africanist ideological underpinnings of the African integration project, in favour of a more pragmatic and market-led approach to integration.

FIGURE 4.2: Support for Regional Responsibility to Promote Democracy and Human Rights



4.3 Determinants of Public Attitudes toward Regional Integration Policies

The objective in this section is two-fold. First, we present the results of the multilevel logistic regression analysis of public attitudes toward regional integration policies. This is followed by a discussion and interpretation of the regression results.

4.3.1 Presentation of Results

Support for Free Movement of People across Borders

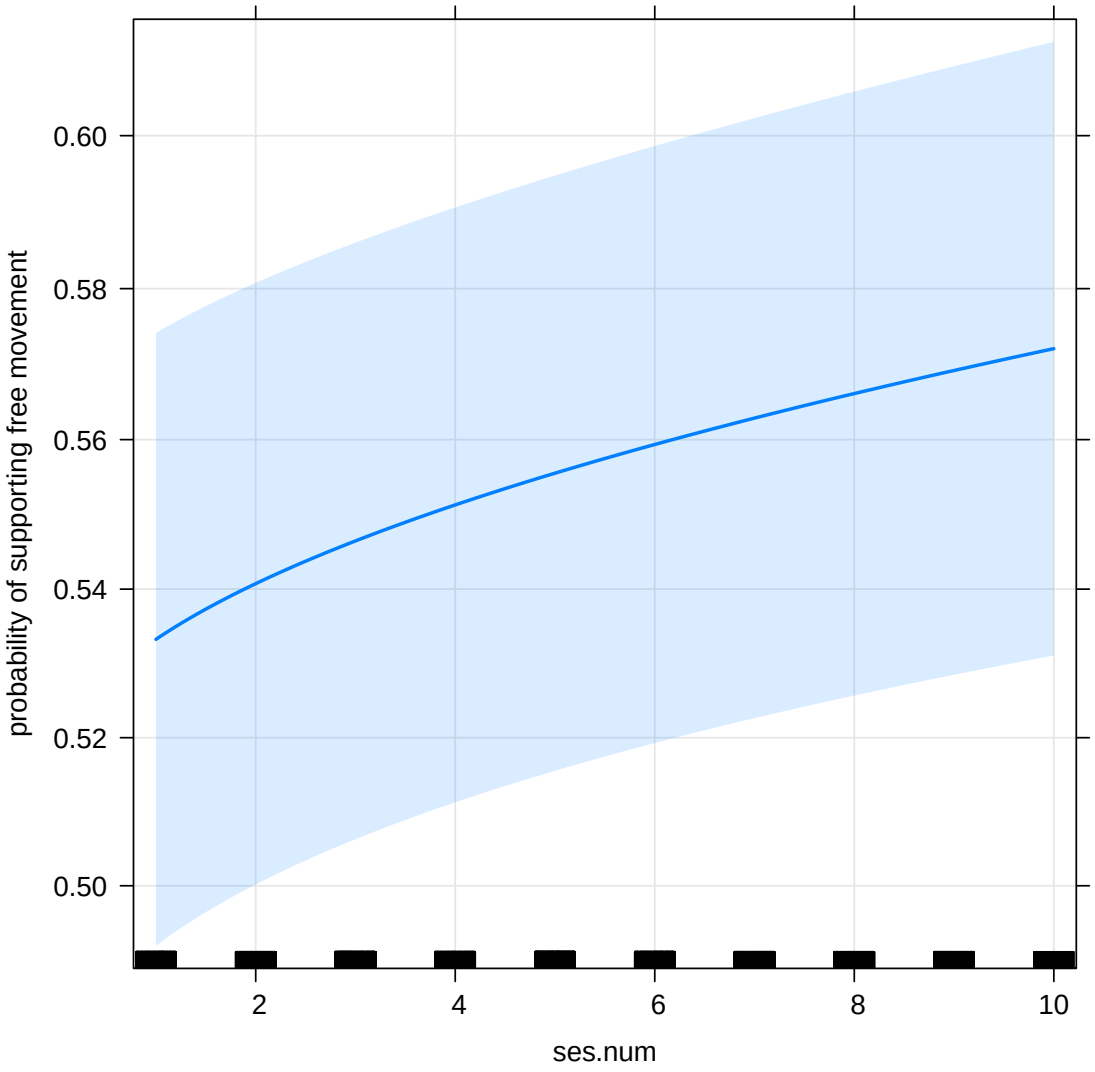
Table 4.1 presents the coefficients and corresponding standard errors for the random intercept (M1) and random slope (M2) models that regressed public attitudes toward socio-economic integration in Africa against a set of individual and country-level predictors. As discussed in Chapter 3 (section 3.3) of this report, for the purpose of this study, the estimated effects reported in these and subsequent models are interpreted in terms of the likelihood of an individual supporting this aspect of regional integration as a result of the presence or absence of a predictor variable. To facilitate this interpretation, we converted the regression estimates into odds ratios by exponentiating the former. The odds ratios for M1 and M2 on support for free movement are reported in Table A.1 in Appendix A.

The regression estimates and their corresponding odds ratios in both models confirm the hypotheses outlined in the introduction of this report with regard to the significant role of socio-economic factors in determining public attitudes toward regional integration in Africa. As postulated, the results suggest that, controlling for other factors, socially advantaged individuals are more likely to support socio-economic integration policies such as the free movement of people across borders than their socially disadvantaged counterparts. This finding is underscored graphically in Figure 4.3, which shows that the probability of an individual supporting economic integration rises as their socio-economic status improves.

TABLE 4.1: Support for Free Movement (mixed effect, binary logit)

	Dependent variable:	
	Free Movement	
	(M1)	(M2)
Socio-economic status (sqrt)	0.073^{***}	0.075^{*}
	(0.019)	(0.044)
Economic performance	0.102^{***}	0.085^{**}
	(0.021)	(0.036)
Remittances	0.060^{**}	0.060^{**}
	(0.024)	(0.027)
Female	-0.105^{***}	-0.105^{***}
	(0.018)	(0.022)
Urban	0.025	-0.002
	(0.021)	(0.040)
Youth	0.019	0.010
	(0.019)	(0.024)
GDP per capita (log)	-0.452^{***}	-0.451^{***}
	(0.083)	(0.073)
Gini index (log)	-0.348	0.063
	(0.371)	(0.279)
Trade (log)	-0.046	-0.136
	(0.175)	(0.158)
Migration (log)	0.272^{***}	0.210^{***}
	(0.076)	(0.072)
Observations	52,739	52,739
Log Likelihood	$-34{,}108.910$	$-33{,}977.400$
Akaike Inf. Crit.	68,241.820	68,032.800
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	68,348.300	68,378.850
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

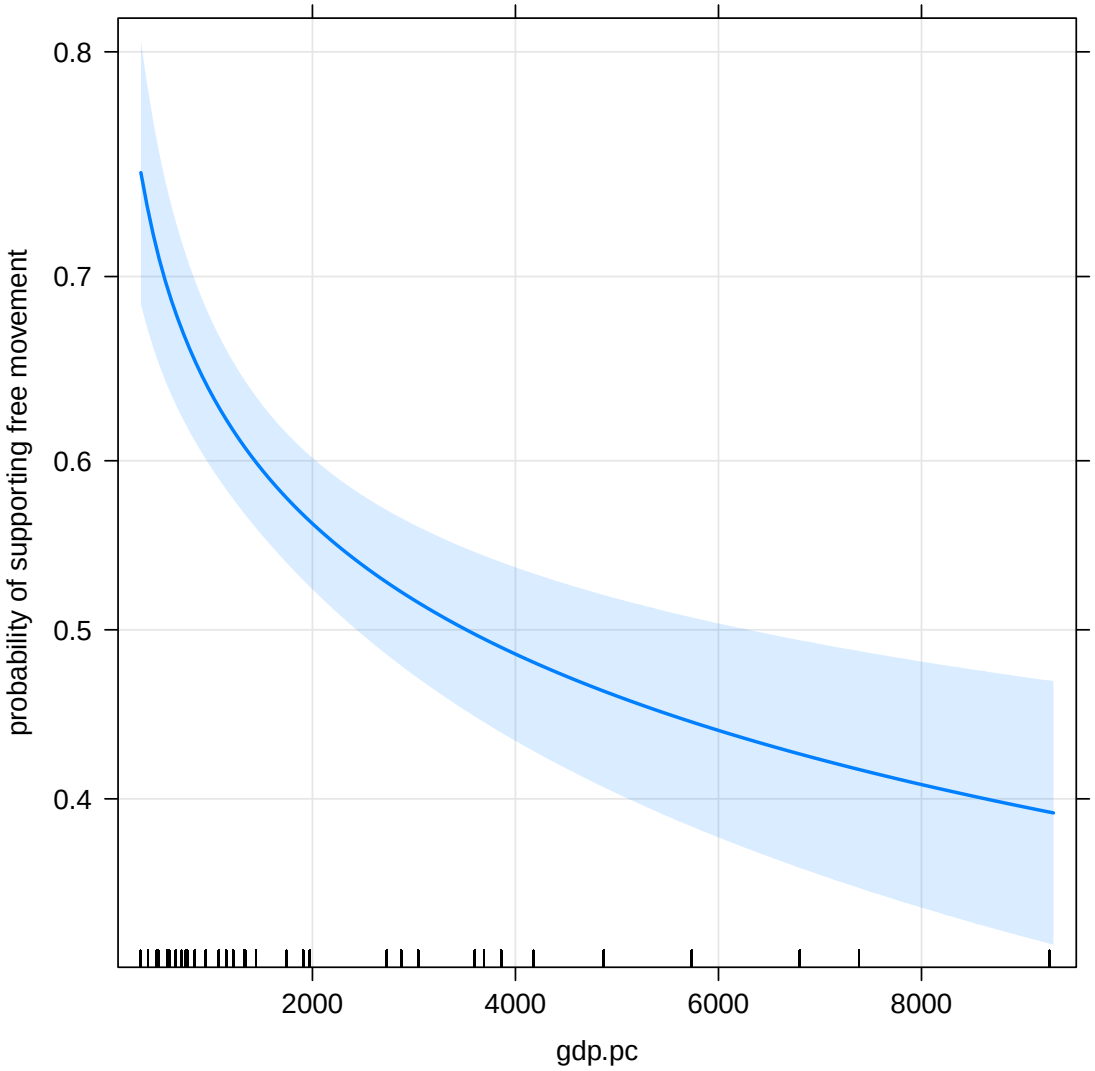
FIGURE 4.3: Effect of socio-economic status on support for free movement



In terms of the effects of the other individual-level variables, the results presented in Table 4.1 and Table A.1 in Appendix A further suggest that individuals' perceptions of the well-being of their country's economies as well as their gender also have a bearing on their attitude toward policies that promote free movement of people across borders. On the one hand, people who believe their national economy is performing well are more likely to support free movement than those who are despondent about the state of the economy. On the other hand, being female

reduces the odds that an African would support free movement policies. Meanwhile, support for unfettered cross-border movement is more likely among those who are beneficiaries of remittances from abroad. The same cannot be said of the age or place of residence of individuals, both of which appear to have no effect on whether people would support or disapprove of free movement across national borders.

FIGURE 4.4: Effect of level of economic development on support for free movement

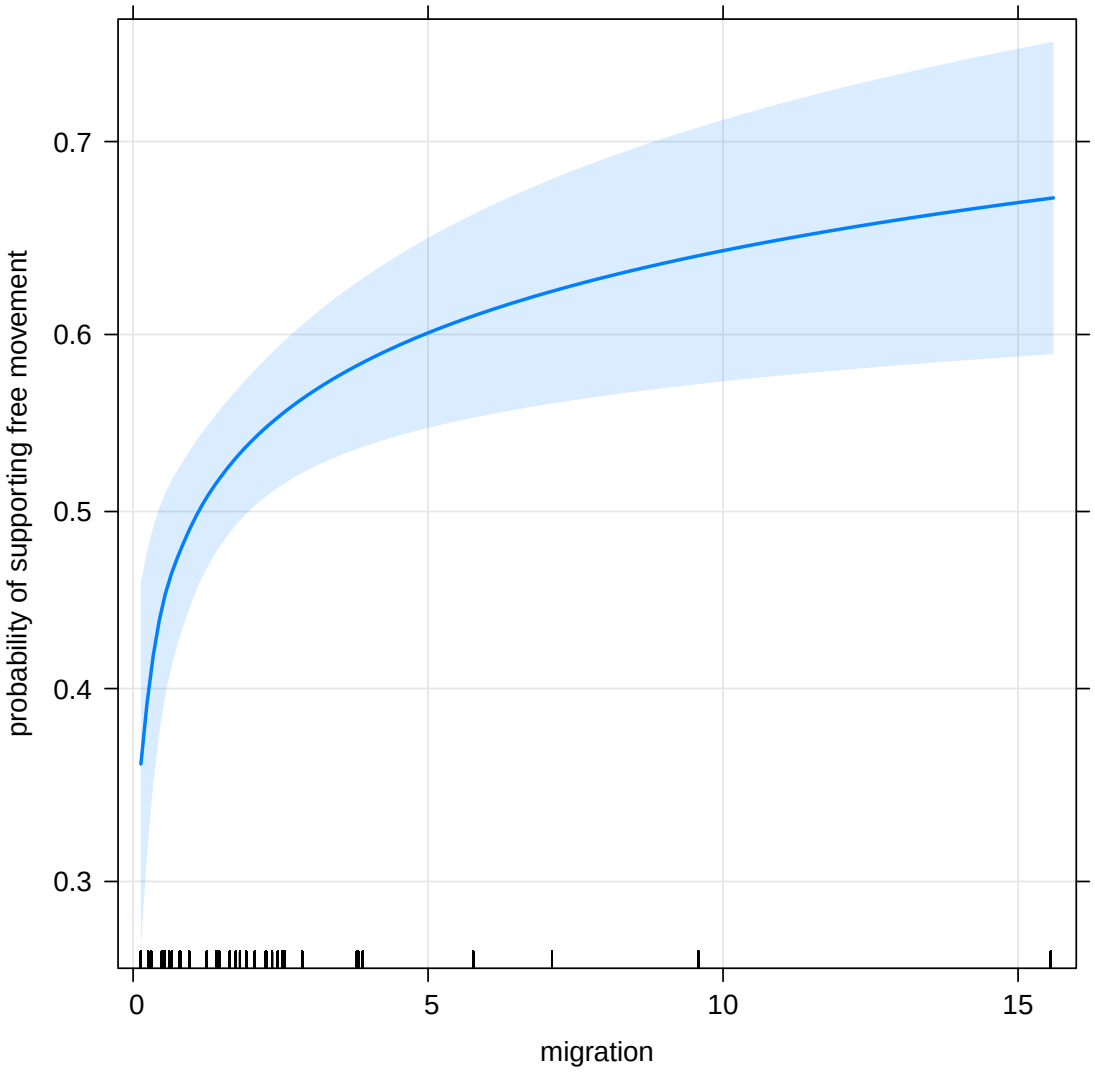


The estimates of the country-level predictors tell a similar story about the significance of socio-economic factors in explaining the public's attitude towards regional integration policies. The results suggest that individuals who live in economically wealthy African countries are less likely to support regional integration policies that promote the free movement of people. As revealed in Figure 4.4, a one unit increase in a country's GDP per capita results in a decrease in the probability that its citizens would support regional policies that encourage the free movement of people.

Of the three group-level control variables, it seems only the proportion of a country's migrant population has a statistically significant effect on individuals' perceptions of regional integration policies that favour the free movement of persons across borders. People living in countries with a large migrant population have a higher chance of supporting free movement than their counterparts in countries where migrants constitute only a small proportion of the total population (see Figure 4.5). This finding is inconsistent with the expectation that the presence of a large migrant population in a country would generate resentment for regional integration policies among its citizens. It is equally surprising that a country's level of inequality and trade openness appear to have no statistically significant effect on an individual's attitude towards socio-economic integration in Africa.

Two key observations can be made from the random effects component of both models. First, the relatively significant standard deviation values of the intercept (see Table B.1 in Appendix B) confirms the observation made from the descriptive analysis above that there is significant cross-country variation in support for free movement of people across borders. However, this between-groups variation becomes almost insignificant when the effects of the predictors is taken into consideration, as suggested by the random effects component of M2. Judging by their corresponding standard deviation values, it seems the effect of socio-economic status and perception of the performance of the economy on support for free movement varies only slightly between countries, while for remittances and female that variation is negligible.

FIGURE 4.5: Effect of migration on support for free movement



Support for Regional Responsibility to Promote Democracy and Human Rights

The estimates and odds ratios of the fixed effect components of the regression models reported in Table 4.2 and Table A.2 in Appendix A respectively describe a similar picture with regard to the determinants of public attitudes toward the politico-security dimension of regional integration, which is represented here by public support or lack thereof for a regional responsibility to promote democracy and human rights.

Beginning with the individual-level predictors, we can observe that socio-economic status, support for democracy, and female all appear to have a statistically significant effect on whether an individual would support a regional role to promote democracy and human rights in African states. Similar to the relationship between socio-economic status and free movement across borders, the fixed effect estimates and their corresponding odds ratios suggest that socially advantaged individuals have a higher chance of supporting a regional role in the promotion of democracy than those who are socially disadvantaged. According to the estimates and odds ratios reported in Table 4.2 and Table A.2 in Appendix A, support for political integration is also more likely among individuals who believe democracy is the best form of government than among those who do not support democracy. In terms of the relationship between gender and support for political integration, the findings suggest that being female reduces the odds that an individual will support policies that seek to foster a regional democratic and security community. However, an individual's age or place of residence do not seem to have any statistically significant effect on their perception of regional political integration policies.

At the country level, it can be observed that people in relatively wealthy African countries are less inclined to support regional intervention in the promotion of democracy and human rights than those living in economically poor countries. None of the other two country-level predictors - a country's level of political stability and liberal democracy - appear to have any meaningful effect on an individual's attitude towards the political dimensions of regional integration. These findings go against the expectations that people living in liberal democracies would be inspired by solidarist values to display a strong inclination towards regional interventionist policies, while citizens of relatively stable countries would generally shun such policies for fear of regional contagion.

What is more, the small standard deviation values of the predictors, relative to that of the intercept in the random slope model(M2)(see Table B.2 in Appendix B), suggest that the effect of socio-economic status, support for democracy and being female on support for political integration policies does not vary much between countries.

TABLE 4.2: Support for Regional Role in Promotion of Democracy and Human Rights (mixed effect, logit)

	Dependent variable:	
	Regional Responsibility	
	(M1)	(M2)
Socio-economic status (sqrt)	0.142***	0.142***
	(0.020)	(0.032)
Youth	0.002	0.004
	(0.019)	(0.025)
Support for democracy	0.125***	0.116***
	(0.021)	(0.035)
Urban	0.011	−0.020
	(0.021)	(0.047)
Female	−0.079***	−0.080***
	(0.019)	(0.020)
GDP per capita (log)	−0.229***	−0.189***
	(0.073)	(0.060)
Political stability	−0.005	−0.082
	(0.101)	(0.089)
Liberal democracy	0.161	0.216
	(0.417)	(0.362)
Observations	52,739	52,739
Log Likelihood	−33,301.940	−33,224.680
Akaike Inf. Crit.	66,623.890	66,509.370
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	66,712.620	66,775.560
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

4.3.2 Discussion of Results

The results of the regression models on the determinants of public attitudes toward regional integration policies hold a number of interesting insights about the African integration project. Perhaps the most significant is the observation that economic considerations appear to play a major role in conditioning perceptions of regional integration policies on the continent. As suggested above, support for regional integration policies is less likely among individuals in lower socio-economic groups, as well as citizens of wealthier African countries. These findings are in line with existing research that has made a connection between the fear of socio-economic competition and anti-immigrant sentiments in countries receiving a large influx of economic migrants and refugees. They also suggest a strong link between public support for economic integration policies and the patterns and incidence of cross-border migration in Africa. It can be inferred from these findings that most of the misgivings toward economic integration policies are related to concerns about the tendency for such policies to encourage the flow of economic migrants from poorer to economically more developed African countries, thus exacerbating the socio-economic plight of individuals who are already marginalized economically. It is not surprising, therefore, that support for economic integration is also more likely among individuals who perceive their national economies to be doing well, as such perceptions are associated with a sense of economic security, which in turn dilutes any negativity towards migrants and the policies that facilitate their cross-border activities.

If, as suggested by the regression results, a large proportion of migrant population and being beneficiaries of remittances are associated with better odds of individuals supporting economic integration policies, then the argument associating cross-border migration and the dislike for regional integration policies needs to be nuanced. The positive association between remittances and a large migrant population on the one hand, and support for regional integration on the other hand, invites the possibility that migration does not necessarily breed resentment for integration policies. It is when it interacts with other factors such as relative deprivation and the absence of effective national social integration policies that it becomes a threat to regional integration. This understanding raises questions about the appropriateness of the predominantly market-led model of integration on the continent, which pays little attention to the unequal distribution of the spoils of integration and does

not include policies to foster cross-border social integration.

The observation that support for political integration is also conditioned to a significant extent on socio-economic considerations raises important questions about the continued relevance of the more ideological and solidarity impulses that motivated earlier integration discourses on the continent under the rubric of Pan-Africanism. As Samuel Oloruntoba (2020) correctly points out, the question of regional integration in Africa flows from the logic of Pan-Africanism, which in the heyday of the decolonization process provided the rallying point and ideological blueprint for the liberation of the continent. Seen this way, the African integration project was inseparable from questions of socio-economic development, African solidarity, as well as collective self-reliance and self-sufficiency. However, over the decades the Pan-Africanist roots of regional integration in Africa have been gradually eroded and replaced by the logic of the market and statism. It seems this has in turn given rise to a pragmatic attitude towards regional integration on the part of the African people. In other words, the African citizenry is willing to support the continental integration agenda only to the extent that it serves their immediate socio-economic needs, and with little interest in the more ideological and political manifestations of integration. It is not surprising, therefore, that the descriptive analysis presented in the previous section of this chapter puts support for socio-economic integration at 57%, while only 35% of the African public seems to be in support of the political dimension of integration.

This line of argument is also supported by the observation that a country's level of trade openness does not seem to have any statistically significant effect on an individual's support or lack thereof for economic integration policies. This can be interpreted as a consequence of the disconnect between the formal predominantly market-led integration policies and the integration expectations and experiences of the African masses. In principle, trade liberalization as a defining feature of market-led integration policies has been associated with higher economic growth and poverty reduction by institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). However, when trade openness generates economic growth but fails to transform the socio-economic reality of a majority of the people, as has been the case in many African countries, it, together with issues such as the promotion of democracy and human rights, becomes a weak concern in the imagination of a people preoccupied with questions of bread and butter.

Taken together, these findings generally resonate with the utilitarian perspective of pubic support for regional integration developed in the context of the European integration project. This account holds that support for European integration is often the result of an individual cost-benefit analysis, thus privileging socio-economic factors, notably education, as major determinants of public support for European Union (EU) policies. Similar to our research findings, the utilitarian argument posits that while the less educated and people with low skills sets are becoming less supportive of the European integration project because of the increased job insecurity that comes with it, citizens with higher levels of income and human capital are more supportive of European integration, which is seen to offer numerous economic opportunities (Hobolt and Vries 2016).

It is also important to reflect briefly on the study's findings regarding the effects of gender on public attitudes toward regional integration policies. That women are less likely to support regional integration policies in Africa may be a refection of what appears to be a disconnect between these policies and the lived experience of this constituency. It has been extensively documented that women constitute the majority of informal cross border traders in Africa (Afrika and Ajumbo 2012, 2). Yet, despite its pervasiveness on the continent, and the fact that it is a source of income to about 43% of Africa's population, informal cross border trade is generally not catered for in regional integration policies. On the contrary, it is often treated as an illegal activity and subjected to numerous restrictions (Afrika and Ajumbo 2012; Bensassi, Jarreau, and Mitaritonna 2019). This means that as the main informal cross border traders, the majority of African women find themselves outside of the continent's formal integration processes. Thus, the observation that women are less likely to support regional integration policies such as the free movement of people across borders and a regional role in the promotion of democracy and human rights may have little to do with the merits of these peoples. This could instead be read as an indication of women informal traders' disinterest in and rejection of a continental integration project that largely discriminates against their interests.

Chapter 5

Determinants of Public Attitudes toward Regional Integration Institutions

5.1 Introduction

Formal integration in Africa has evolved under the auspices of the AU (including its predecessor, the OAU) and a host of regional economic communities, which have provided the institutional framework for harmonizing national policies and coordinating regional integration initiatives. As articulated in the 1980 Lagos Plan of Action (LPA), the AU and the respective RECs were formed to institutionalize the Pan-Africanist vision and thus champion the cause of socio-economic renewal and integration for the benefit of all the people of Africa. However, with the faltering of the continental integration and renewal project over the decades, the role and continued relevance of these institutions has also become a subject of public debate. While scholars such as Thomas Kwasi Tieku (2012, 2020) continue to see the AU as a force for continental transformation, others such as the former Botswana President, Ian Khama, hold the view that Pan-African institutions such as the AU and SADC have become a liability to the African people (Vinga 2020). It is in this context that the study also sought to analyse the determinants of public attitudes toward the institutions that have been set up to drive the African integration project. This chapter of the report presents and discusses the findings of the analysis.

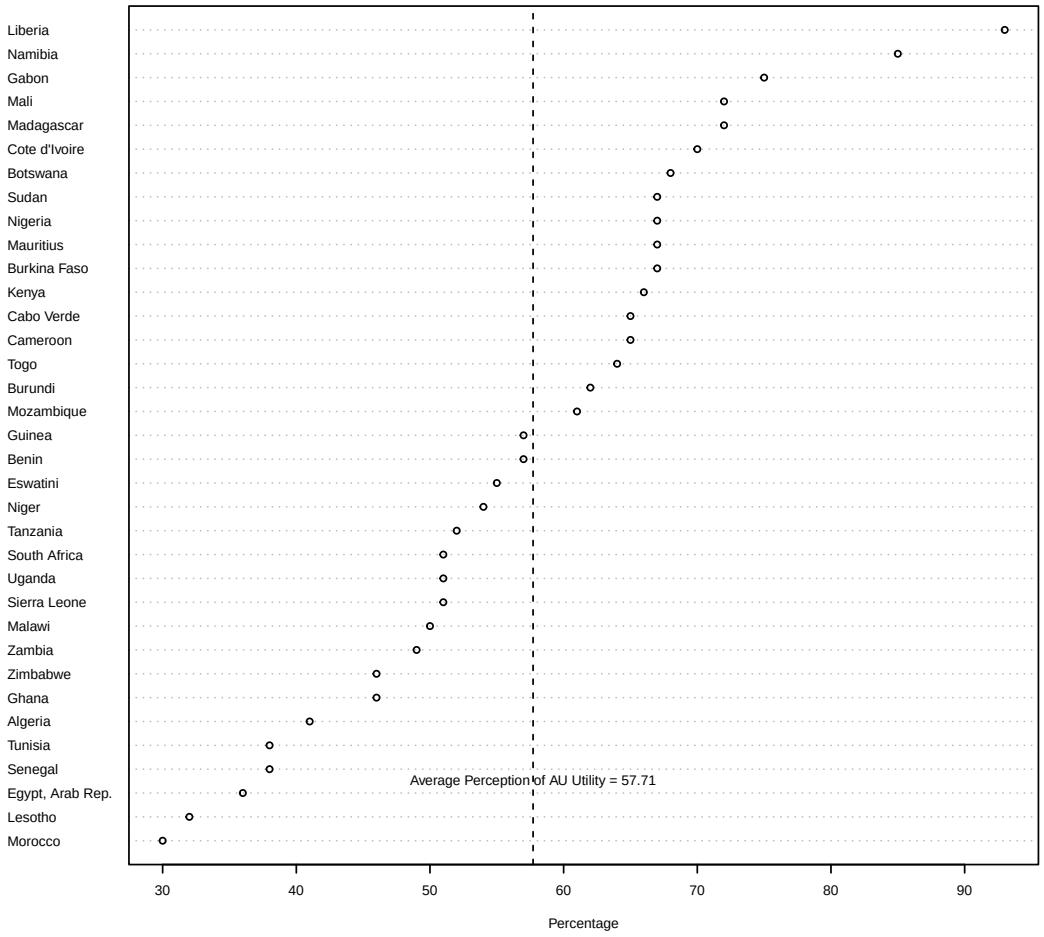
5.2 Public Perceptions of Regional Integration Institutions

In this section of the chapter, we describe briefly the survey results used to measure public attitudes toward regional integration institutions in Africa, namely the African Union and the relevant regional economic communities. We will begin with the results for the AU before examining those for the RECs. As suggested by the graph in Figure 5.1, there seems to be a positive attitude towards the AU among a large part of the African population, with 57% of the sampled public believing the Pan-African institution has been helpful, albeit in varying degrees. Even so, a significant 43% of the sampled population does not believe the AU is of any use to the continent. It should be underscored that this latter group also includes individuals whose awareness of the AU is so weak that they are unable to form an opinion on its helpfulness. In a sense, these results are reflective of the enduring debate on whether the transformation of the continental institution from the OAU to the AU in 2002 has lived up to the expectation that this would usher in a sustainable African Renaissance moment. On the one hand are those who see the AU as little more than an untransformed club of power-hungry rulers, which only pays lip service to the Pan-African ideals of integration, autonomy and solidarity. On the other hand, some are willing to give the AU the benefit of the doubt, pointing to examples such as its peace operations in Somalia and most recently the adoption of the ACFTA, to argue that for all its shortcomings, the AU still carries the hopes of the continent.

Another key observation from the results presented in Figure 5.1 is the significant cross-country variation in public perceptions of the usefulness of the AU. As depicted in the graph, the AU enjoys support mostly among West Africans, with more than 80% of citizens in Liberia holding the view that the AU is helpful. The reverse seems to be the case in North Africa, where the regional average support for the AU is below 50%. The reduced support for the AU among North African citizens may be partly attributed to the region's geography and historical link to Europe, which has until recently made countries such as Morocco and Tunisia cooperate more with the European Union (EU) than the AU (Aggad and Abderrahim 2017). Similarly, it can be argued that the absence of functional RECs in North

Africa to serve as anchors for the activities of the AU has in no small measure contributed to engendering perceptions of the unhelpfulness of the AU in this part of the continent.

FIGURE 5.1: Perception of the Utility of the African Union (AU)

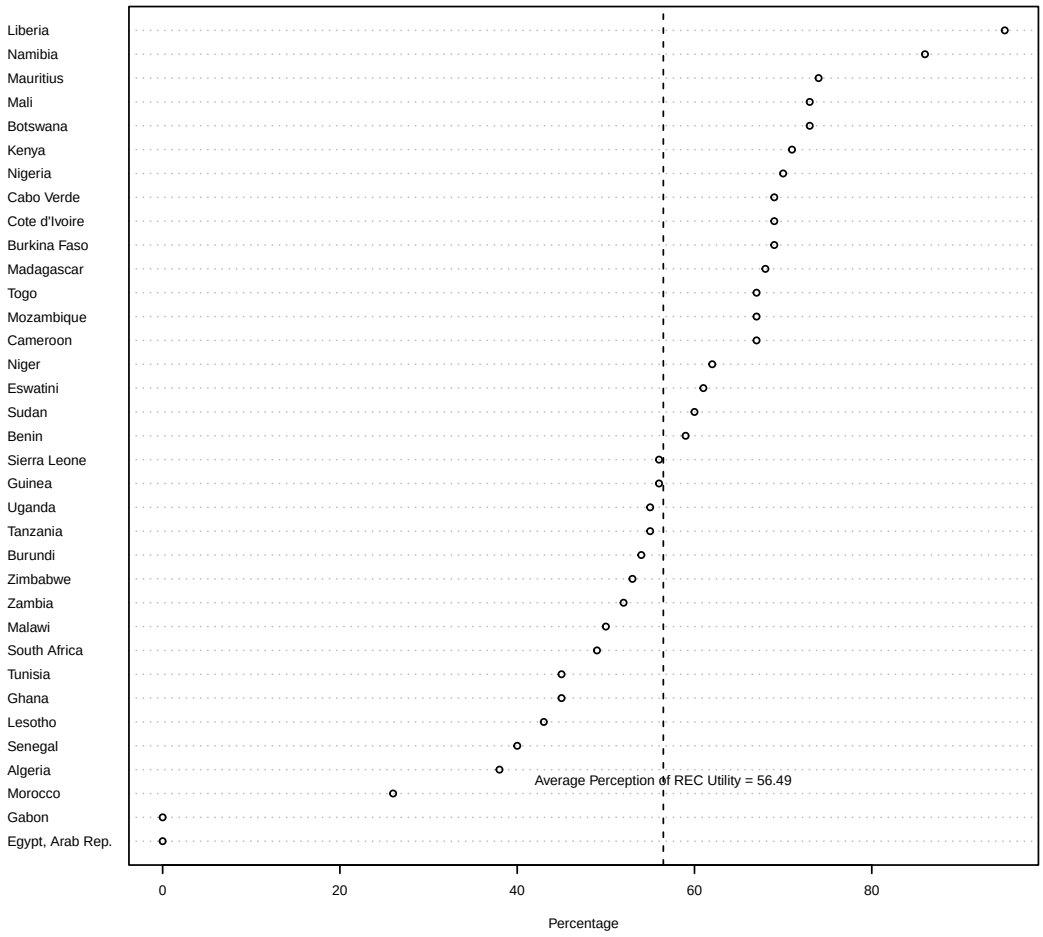


The survey results on public perceptions of Africa's RECs presented in Figure 5.2 generally mirror those for the AU discussed above, with 57% of the sampled population expressing the view that RECs have been helpful. This comes as no surprise, given that public debates on the performance and relevance of regional

organizations often do not make a distinction between the AU and RECs. After all, the latter are envisioned as the building blocks of the continental integration project, with the AU assuming more of a coordinating, harmonizing, norm-setting and oversight role, guided by the principles of subsidiarity and complementarity. It is, therefore, possible for individuals to associate the failings or achievements of either of these institutions with the performance of the other, even though in reality the AU and individual RECs have had fairly different experiences in the execution of their respective mandates.

Having said that, it should be pointed out that the cross-country and regional distribution of the responses displayed in the graph in Figure 5.2 is largely reflective of the performance of the RECs on the question of regional integration. Countries with a large proportion of citizens expressing approval of RECs generally hold membership of one of the best performing RECs. According to the 2016 Africa Regional Integration Index jointly compiled by the African Union Commission (AUC), the African Development Bank (AfDB), and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the East African Community (EAC), ECOWAS and SADC were the best performing RECs in Africa, including in the area of facilitating the free movement of people across national borders (AUC, AfDB, and UNECA 2016).

FIGURE 5.2: Perception of the Utility of Regional Economic Communities (RECs)



5.3 Determinants of Public Attitudes toward Regional Integration Institutions

Following the descriptive analysis above, this section of the chapter presents the results of the multilevel logistic regression analysis of public attitudes toward regional integration institutions, that is, the African Union and its regional economic communities, in that order. This is followed by a discussion and interpretation of the regression results.

5.3.1 Presentation of Results

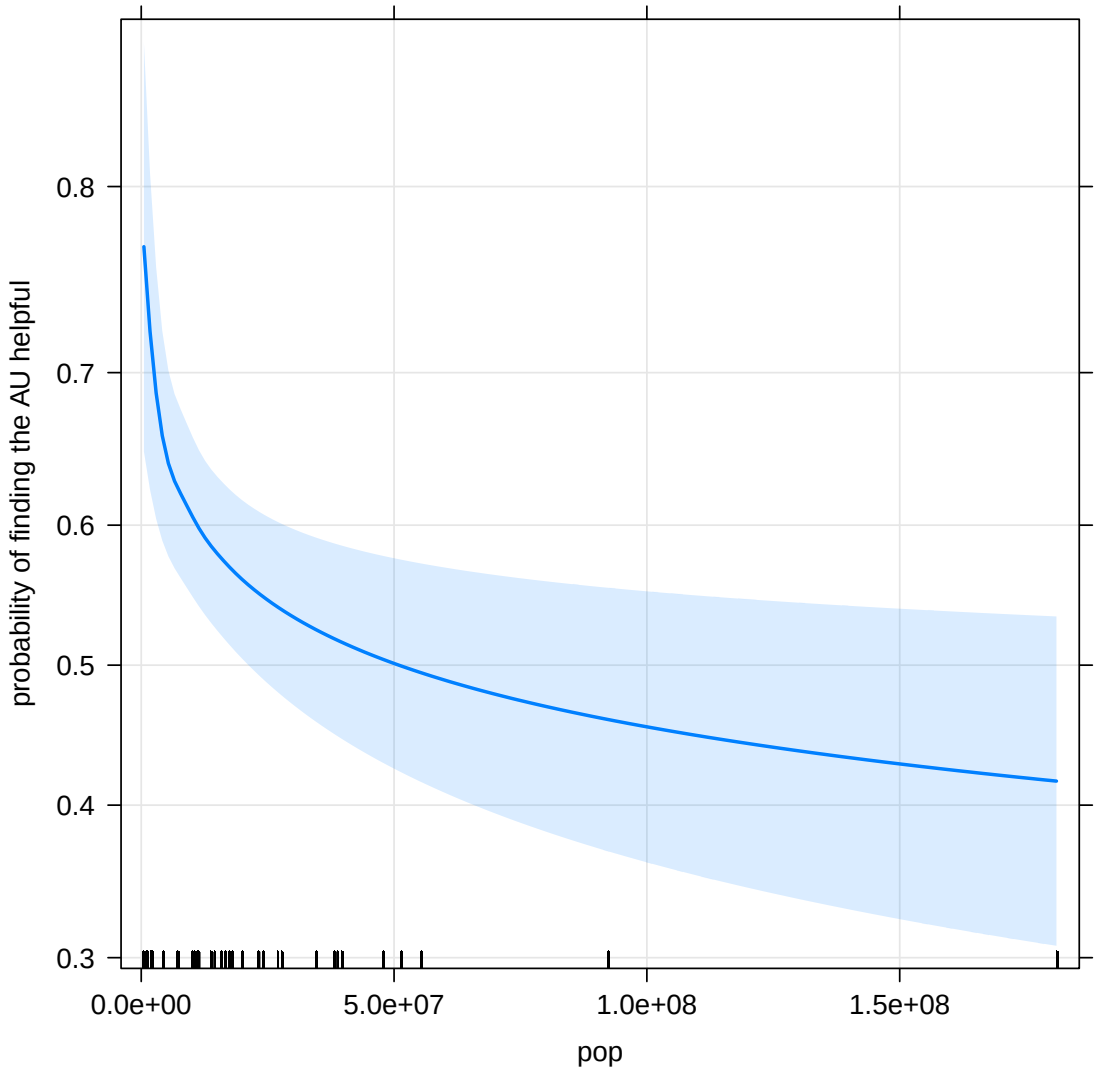
Perceptions of the Helpfulness of the African Union

Table 5.1 and Table A.3 in Appendix A present the coefficients and corresponding odds ratios for the random intercept (M1) and random slope (M2) models on the determinants of public attitudes toward the AU. The results are generally aligned with the findings on the factors that shape public perceptions of regional integration policies. As hypothesized, the estimates and odds ratios suggest that an individual's socio-economic status is a key explanatory factor for the attitude they hold towards the African Union. People of a higher socio-economic status are more likely to view the AU as being helpful than those of a lower socio-economic status. The results further show that there's a positive correlation between an individual's perception of democracy and their attitude towards the AU. People who believe democracy is the best form of government are more likely to see the AU as being helpful than those who are skeptical of the concept. As expected, individuals who have found it easy to move across Africa's borders also have a higher chance of seeing the AU as a helpful organization than those whose border crossing experience has been fraught with difficulties. It seems that being female reduces the odds that an individual would deem the AU to be a useful institution for continental integration. Moreover, the results suggest that young people and individuals living in urban areas would be more inclined to hold a positive view of the AU's performance than their older and rural counterparts.

TABLE 5.1: Perceptions of the Utility of the African Union (AU) (mixed effect, logit)

	Dependent variable:	
	AU Helpfulness	
	(M1)	(M2)
Socio-economic status (sqrt)	0.789***	0.794***
	(0.020)	(0.066)
Youth	0.051***	0.052
	(0.020)	(0.037)
Support for democracy	0.280***	0.283***
	(0.021)	(0.037)
Urban	0.071***	0.070
	(0.021)	(0.045)
Female	−0.337***	−0.320***
	(0.019)	(0.040)
Ease to cross borders	0.430***	0.447***
	(0.022)	(0.070)
GDP per capita (log)	−0.262**	−0.378***
	(0.116)	(0.130)
Political stability	−0.320	−0.235
	(0.205)	(0.228)
Liberal democracy	0.738	0.724
	(0.711)	(0.696)
Population (log)	−0.265***	−0.265***
	(0.085)	(0.075)
Observations	52,739	52,739
Log Likelihood	−32,436.550	−32,099.630
Akaike Inf. Crit.	64,897.110	64,277.260
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	65,003.580	64,623.310
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

FIGURE 5.3: Effect of socio-economic status on support for free movement



With regard to the country-level variables, the coefficients and their corresponding odds ratios suggest that as a country's level of economic development increases, the odds that its citizens would find the AU useful become smaller. Put differently, citizens in wealthy African countries are less likely to have a positive perception of the usefulness of the AU than their counterparts in poorer countries. Going by the regression results, the size of a country, in this case measured by its total population, is a significant explanatory factor for how individuals perceive the AU as a

driver of the African integration project. As the effect plot in Figure 5.3 show, the larger a country's population, the less likely that its citizens would express satisfaction with the contribution of the AU to regional integration efforts on the continent. Contrary to our expectations, the regression estimates suggest that a country's level of political stability or liberal democracy do not influence the odds of whether an individual perceives the AU to be helpful or not.

The random slope model(M2) further suggests some between-country variation in the effect that socio-economic status, support for democracy, gender, and ease to cross borders have on public perceptions of the utility of the African Union. Going by the standard deviation values in the random effects component of this model (see Table B.3 in Appendix B), this cross-country variation is more significant with the effect of socio-economic status and ease to cross borders than with the other two variables.

Perceptions of the Helpfulness of Regional Economic Communities

The results of the regression models in Table 5.2 and their corresponding odds ratios in Table A.4 in Appendix A portray a similar account with regard to the public's perception of the utility of regional economic communities. Both models confirm the study's central hypothesis that socio-economic factors play a key role in shaping public attitudes toward regional integration in Africa. Similar to its effect on the public's view of the AU, the estimates in Table 5.2 and Appendix A suggest that socially advantaged individuals have a higher chance of believing RECs are helpful than those who are socially disadvantaged. The effects of support for democracy, urban residence, being female, and the ease with which individuals are able to cross borders on public perceptions of the helpfulness of RECs are similar to the effects that these variables have on perceptions of the helpfulness of the AU. With the exception of being female, which decreases the odds of an individual finding RECs to be useful, the presence of the other three variables leads to higher odds of individuals affirming the usefulness of RECs.

The effects of the country-level variables on perceptions of the utility of RECs are not different from those discussed in the previous section of this chapter. In this regard, the higher a country's per capita income, the less likely that its citizens would find the relevant REC to be of any use to them. While this finding resonates

TABLE 5.2: Perceptions of the Utility of Regional Economic Communities (RECs)

	Dependent variable:	
	REC Helpfulness	
	(M1)	(M2)
Socio-economic status (sqrt)	0.812***	0.837***
	(0.021)	(0.079)
Youth	0.018	0.023
	(0.020)	(0.033)
Support for democracy	0.290***	0.304***
	(0.022)	(0.043)
Urban	0.043*	0.053
	(0.022)	(0.054)
Female	−0.335***	−0.344***
	(0.020)	(0.042)
Ease to cross borders	0.506***	0.506***
	(0.023)	(0.074)
GDP per capita (log)	−1.083***	−1.564***
	(0.258)	(0.238)
Political stability	−0.489	0.076
	(0.444)	(0.429)
Liberal Democracy	5.020***	5.816***
	(1.349)	(1.293)
Population (log)	−0.308**	−0.361**
	(0.148)	(0.155)
Observations	52,739	52,739
Log Likelihood	−30,552.470	−30,170.060
Akaike Inf. Crit.	61,128.950	60,418.120
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	61,235.430	60,764.180
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

with what has been observed in the relationship between level of economic development and the other three dimensions of regional integration discussed above, it should be underscored that the effect of GDP per capita on public perceptions of the utility of RECs appears to be smaller than the effect it has on public perceptions of the utility of the AU or support for regional integration policies. In the same vein, while political stability or lack thereof does not seem to have any meaningful effect on public perceptions of RECs, country size, measured by total population, appears to have a negative correlation with how the public perceives the usefulness of RECs. The odds of individuals seeing RECs as useful institutions to drive regional integration decrease as population size increases.

Finally, the between-country variation in the effect that socio-economic status, support for democracy, gender, and ease to cross borders have on public perceptions of the utility of RECs is similar to what has been reported above with regard to the AU (see standard deviation values in Table B.4 in Appendix B).

5.3.2 Discussion of Results

The results of the regression analysis presented in the previous section of this chapter, similar to those discussed in chapter 4, underscore the primacy of socio-economic factors in explaining public perceptions of Africa's regional integration institutions, in this case, the AU and RECs. This finding is not unexpected, considering that these institutions have become synonymous with the integration project itself, and that expressing opinion on the utility of the AU or any of the eight recognized RECs is in effect an exercise in assessing the desirability or value of the African integration agenda, as discussed in the previous chapter. Seen this way, the positive correlation between socio-economic status and public perceptions of the the AU and RECs can be interpreted first and foremost from the perspective that these institutions, like the integration project they champion, have become elitist in nature and far removed from the every day experiences of the African masses.

There are two dimensions to this argument. The first, which resonates with the utilitarian theory of public support for regional integration, is rooted in the idea that without perceiving any direct benefits from an integration project that increasingly caters for the interests of the highly skilled and socially mobile in society, people from lower socio-economic status groups would logically tend to disapprove of the

institutions that drive integration. The second dimension of the argument is not based on the performance of the AU and RECs per se, but rather on the level of awareness that exists in society about the work of these institutions. Studies elsewhere have found that public knowledge of regional integration institutions is generally low, and that this is especially the case for the socially disadvantaged who tend to have little direct personal experiences with these institutions (Hobolt and Vries 2016). This argument is reinforced by research that has shown a positive link between individuals' socio-economic status and their levels of public affairs knowledge, with those of a lower socio-economic status believed to hold little knowledge of public affairs owing to factors such as limited cognitive competency, low interest in such information and its perceived utility, as well as weak exposure to news media (Mcleod and Perse 1994). Without any significant knowledge of Pan-African institutions and their activities, it is no wonder that people of a lower socio-economic status would be less likely to express support for these institutions.

The findings on the effects of the level of a country's level of economic development and country size on public perceptions of regional integration institutions is also worth reflecting on here. Going by the results presented above, being a citizen of a wealthy or large African country reduces the odds that one would find either the AU or the RECs of any value. These findings are consistent with previous research that has postulated that geopolitical factors such as country size measured in terms of total population or gross domestic product is negatively correlated with support for international organizations (Alence 2019). The argument here is that, by virtue of their relative economic and political might, citizens of wealthy and geopolitically significant countries generally do not feel they need these institutions. If anything, these organizations are seen to be a drain on the resources and attention of their wealthy and powerful member states, considering it is commonly expected of them to bear the financial burden of maintaining these organizations. This then generates misgivings among the citizens of these countries over the relevance and worth of international organizations.

Brutger and Clark (2021) have qualified this argument with the observation that citizens in wealthy and powerful countries are not always motivated by financial cost to become distrustful of international organizations. They often tend to weigh considerations about the financial burden associated with the leadership role that their countries play in these organizations against the influence that funding affords

these countries over policy-making. In other words, citizens of wealthy and powerful countries would be inclined to support international or regional organizations if they believe that these organizations allow their countries to achieve their foreign policy objectives. However, in the context of African multilateralism, where solidarity and consensus are cherished political values, and attempts by so-called regional hegemons to flex their muscles is often frowned upon, it is not difficult to see why, as suggested by our research findings, citizens of these powerful states tend to be wary of regional organizations. While regional heavyweights such as South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya are indeed major influences on the policies of the AU and their respective RECs, this behind-the-scene policy influence is often not apparent to large parts of their populations, which tend to base their judgment of the utility of these organizations on the much publicized financial and other contributions that these countries make as part of their leadership role in these organizations.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to analyze the determinants of public attitudes toward regional integration in Africa. The study was motivated by an evident dearth of research on the role of public opinion in Africa's integration project. The study thus contributes to addressing a major blind spot in the academic literature on regional integration in Africa. It sought to test the hypothesis that socio-economic factors are the most important explanatory factors for public attitudes toward regional integration policies and institutions in Africa.

Mixed effects binary logistic regression was used to analyze the data for the study, which was sourced mainly from Afrobarometer's round 6 survey. Additional data for the study came from the World Development Indicators and the World Governance Indicators databases, as well as the Varieties of Democracies database.

The results of the regression analysis presented and discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 confirm the central hypothesis of the study that socio-economic factors predominantly explain the attitudes that the African public holds toward regional integration policies and institutions. An individual's socio-economic status and the level of economic development of their country both have a statistically significant effect on their attitudes toward regional integration policies and the institutions that drive these policies, notably the African Union and its regional economic communities. While socio-economic status correlates positively with an individual's attitude towards regional integration policies and institutions, being a citizen of a wealthy country reduces the odds that an individual would support regional integration or the institutions that promote it. The central role that socio-economic factors play in

explaining public attitudes toward regional integration in Africa is further underscored by the significant effect that similar individual-level and country-level predictors have on the response variables. As discussed above, an individual's perception of the performance of their national economy, their border-crossing experience, as well as whether they are recipients of remittances from abroad or not, all have a statistically significant effect on their attitudes toward regional integration policies and institutions. Likewise, our findings suggest that the proportion of a country's migrant population, with all its socio-economic implications, also has a significant effect on public perceptions of regional integration policies and institutions.

As argued above, the significant effect that demographic and geopolitical predictors such as gender and population have on the response variables can best be interpreted from a socio-economic perspective. With women dominating the informal cross-border trading sector in Africa, which in turn is highly discriminated against by formal integration policies, it is not difficult to see why being female correlates negatively with the odds of one holding favourable views about Africa's integration policies and institutions. In the same vein, the misgivings about regional integration institutions on the part of individuals living in large and geopolitically significant African countries such as South Africa and Nigeria, as suggested by our findings, can best be understood in the context of the huge socio-economic burden that these countries have to bear on account of their regional leadership role.

Theoretically, our findings are in consonance with research conducted in the context of the European integration project, which has explained public attitudes toward the EU and its policies mainly from a utilitarian perspective. The utilitarian argument suggests that individuals would express support for regional integration schemes only to the extent that they benefit economically from them, or at the very least, integration policies do not threaten their economic or livelihood security. Political and identity considerations do not seem to have a strong bearing on how individuals perceive contemporary integration projects.

From a policy perspective, the findings and conclusion of this study reinforce the need for a bottom-up and developmental approach to regional integration in Africa, recognizing that the more ideological impulses that inspired earlier forms of regionalism no longer have a strong appeal on a continent characterised by extensive socio-economic, political, and ideological diversity. To engender much-needed public support, contemporary integration projects must be designed, and be seen,

to result in tangible socio-economic benefits for the African masses. They must also be owned and driven by the people themselves.

It is in this context that further research is required to understand how the many processes of informal integration taking place across the continent interface with the more institutionalised forms of integration. This will shed light on how specific constituencies of "ordinary" Africans, including women, the youth, and unemployed, experience the continental integration project, and thus contribute to a critique of the latter from the perspective of those who currently find themselves on the margins of this process. This would further the debate on, and efforts toward, a new regionalism from below in Africa. Given significant variations in the performance of RECs as alluded to above, another promising line of inquiry would be to analyse and compare public attitudes across the different sub-regions to ascertain the extent to which these attitudes are conditioned by the level of progress in regional integration.

Appendix A

Odds Ratios of Regression Coefficients

TABLE A.1: Support for Free Movement(odds ratios)

Predictor	**Odd ratio (M1)**	**Odd ratio (M2)**
Socio-economic Status	1.075***	1.078*
Economic performance	1.107**	1.088**
Remittances	1.062**	1.061**
Female	0.900***	0.900***
Urban	1.025	0.998
Youth	1.019	1.010
GDP per capita	0.637***	0.637***
Gini index	0.706	1.065
Trade	0.955	0.873
Migration	1.312***	1.234***

TABLE A.2: Support for Regional Role to Promote Democracy (odds ratios)

Predictor	**Odd ratio (M1)**	**Odd ratio (M2)**
Socio-economic Status	1.153***	1.152***
Youth	1.002	1.004
Support for democracy	1.134***	1.123***
Urban	1.011	0.980
Female	0.924***	0.923***
GDP per capita	0.795***	0.828***
Political stability	0.995	0.922
Liberal democracy	1.174	1.241

TABLE A.3: Perceptions of the Utility of the African Union (odds ratios)

Predictor	**Odd ratio (M1)**	**Odd ratio (M2)**
Socio-economic Status	2.200***	2.213***
Youth	1.052***	1.053
Support for democracy	1.324***	1.327***
Urban	1.074***	1.073
Female	0.714***	0.726***
Ease to cross borders	1.537***	1.564***
GDP per capita	0.769**	0.685***
Political stability	0.726	0.791
Liberal democracy	2.092	2.064
Population	0.767**	0.767***

TABLE A.4: Perceptions of the Utility of Regional Economic Communities (odds ratios)

Predictor	**Odd ratio (M1)**	**Odd ratio (M2)**
Socio-economic Status	2.251***	2.309***
Youth	1.018	1.024
Support for democracy	1.336***	1.355***
Urban	1.043*	1.054
Female	0.716***	0.709***
Ease to cross borders	1.659***	1.659***
GDP per capita	0.338**	0.209***
Political stability	0.613	1.079
Liberal democracy	151.323***	333.279***
Population	0.734**	0.697**

Appendix B

Standard Deviation Estimates

TABLE B.1: Support for Free Movement (standard deviations)

Predictor	**SD (M1)**	**SD (M2)**
Intercept	0.4268916	0.67953738
Socio-economic status		0.23109278
Economic performance		0.17061321
Remittances		0.05917372
Female		0.07170304
Urban		0.19690433
Youth		0.07377711

TABLE B.2: Support for Regional Role to Promote Democracy (standard deviations)

Predictor	**SD (M1)**	**SD (M2)**
Intercept	0.3716987	0.45692988
Socio-economic status		0.14315715
Youth		0.08774549
Support for democracy		0.15693902
Urban		0.24398973
Female		0.02757886

TABLE B.3: Perceptions of the Utility of the African Union (standard deviations)

Predictor	**SD (M1)**	**SD (M2)**
Intercept	0.6187148	0.9988341
Socio-economic status		0.3670271
Youth		0.1788910
Support for democracy		0.1743409
Urban		0.2281393
Female		0.2003539
Ease to cross borders		0.3898584

TABLE B.4: Perceptions of the Utility of Regional Economic Communities (standard deviations)

Predictor	**SD (M1)**	**SD (M2)**
Intercept	1.466517	1.9894762
Socio-economic status		0.4224511
Youth		0.1394297
Support for democracy		0.2021316
Urban		0.2694882
Female		0.2072289
Ease to cross borders		0.3891739

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