

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE ORIGIN AND NATURE OF REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS

#### 3.1 Introduction

Within the context of the preceding theoretical background, the study of regional organisations that follows on this will provide greater clarity on the position and potential of the conduct of international co-operation in regional organisations. The framework that will be created through this will play a key role in the later study of the former Organisation of African Unity (hereafter referred to as the OAU) presented in the following chapters.

In the first chapter (see section 1.2), the point was made that regional co-operation in political, cultural and social spheres in Africa is crucial for Africa's survival. The establishment of international and regional organisations constitutes one of the most important attempts made during the twentieth century to address and promote stability and co-operation between states with regard to the above spheres (*Cf.* Hastedt & Knickrehm 1994:207-208).

Also in Chapter One (see section 1.7), it was stated as an objective that an attempt would be made **“to determine the nature and origin of regional organisations in order to provide a theoretical and practical basis for analysing regional co-operation in the OAU”**.

As regional co-operation was one of the main reasons for the founding of the OAU, it is appropriate to consider the nature and reasons for existence of regional organisations. Underlying any such an organisation is the concept of regionalism. This is a complex concept that has been internationally applied in diverse functional areas of government and administration. An overview of the historical origins and development of regionalism, as well as an overview of the characteristics peculiar to regional groupings are provided in this chapter to serve as a background for the rest of the thesis. This chapter also sets out to explain the concepts “regionalism”, “regional

organisation”, “regional grouping”, “regional institution” and “regional system” to serve as a frame of reference. Furthermore, an exposition is provided of the functions, membership and structure of regional groupings. This is followed by a discussion of co-operation in regional organisations, the role of sovereignty and supra-nationalism in regional organisations, regional co-operation in an institutional system and the influence of international politics on the nature of regional organisations. This is followed by six classifications of regional organisations, as well as an explanation of the influence of functions on the classification of regional organisations. The characteristics of three types of classification of regional IGOs are discussed. Finally, the information presented in this chapter is briefly summarised.

### **3.2 Historical origins and development of regionalism**

Although international and regional organisations are primarily a characteristic of especially the twentieth century after World War II, they are based on age-old ideas and practices. The international and regional organisations of today can be traced to ideas for the resolution of disputes between states and the promotion of co-operation between governments (*Cf.* Bennett 1991:8-13).

Inter-state relations in the twentieth century were essential for the survival of any sovereign state. The interdependence between states in economic, social and cultural affairs, as well as the continuous technological development of communication systems and aids made absolute state independence and non-alignment impossible. An international relational network was created as a result, which served, in turn, as an inter-state bargaining forum leading to both co-operation agreements and initiatives with conflicting aims (*Cf.* Bennett 1980:6).

The origin of regional organisations can be ascribed, among other things, to the greater emphasis placed on international and regional co-operation. Some of the regional institutions were established as a result of the increasing interdependence between states, as well as a result of the expansion of national boundaries (*Cf.* Bennett 1991:12-13 and Williams 1989:206).

The role of inter-state actors should not be under-estimated in the process of international public administration. States in the modern world are compelled to co-operate in a variety of areas. This requires them to adapt, negotiate and accommodate one another and to enter into mutual agreements in order to promote their own well-being, solve all kinds of social problems and prevent inter-state conflicts. As a result of these activities, no stone is left unturned in the pursuit to establish comprehensive agencies that can act on behalf of international organisations in this regard (Bennett 1980:4). However, the international environment is already characterised by the involvement or not in the following kinds of state relationships:

- alliances;
- co-operation agreements or treaties;
- leagues or commonwealths of states and nations;
- a policy for the independence of states; and
- non-alignment (*Cf.* Holsti 1974:102).

It is also clear that the sovereign state is the primary role-player in international co-operation. This role-play has an impact on all aspects that influence the inhabitants of the specific state. Wessels emphasised this reality when he remarked that, “at the basis of the study of international politics is the sovereign national state as a normative given, the Holy Trinity, which is essential to the correct functioning of inter-state relational communication” (Wessels in Barnard 1978:21) (own translation).

Although states are still the primary role players in the international system, the international scene is presently dominated by the activities of various international and especially regional organisations. The purpose of these institutions is not to replace the existing international system, but to assist it to function better. Today, institutions like the OAU are important non-state role players in the sphere of international politics and administration (*Cf.* Bennett 1991:8 and Hastedt & Knickrehm 1994:207).

The replacement of the distinction between national public administration and international public administration as a result of the greater interdependence between

entities in the international community and the trans-national nature of co-operation issues are particularly noticeable in present times (Smith 1990:147, 149). It can thus be expected that greater interdependence will also lead to improved co-operation between states. Regional organisations are the logical consequence of this.

Regions as role players in international public administration are playing an increasingly important role. The increase in the number of regional organisations is a phenomenon that has manifested itself since 1945 (*Cf.* Bennett 1991:215; Couloumbis & Wolfe 1990:311 and Nye 1987:3). According to Bennett (1991:215), twice as many regional organisations have been established compared to international institutions since 1945. The following are examples of the former type of institution:

- the EU (since 1992)
- the Pacific Rim (Singapore, South Korea, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Japan)
- the North American Free Trade Association – the US, Canada and Mexico (NAFTA)

During the past decades, the international economic order has increasingly been restructured according to regional groupings. In Africa, such economic blocks include the following institutions among others:

- Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)
- Southern African Development Community (SADC) – the continuation of the former SADCC (Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC))
- Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) – the continuation of the former Preferential Trade Area (PTA)

According to Yalem (1965:1), modern developments that resulted from regional involvement culminated in something unique after World War II. He remarked:

“the balance of power system changed from a complex and flexible structure of several equally powerful units into a single and rigid confrontation of two major powers exacerbated by diametrically opposed ideologies. The

formation of mutually antagonistic regional systems so prominent since 1945 is therefore less the cause of international instability as it is the reflection of changes in the structure of world power and ideology that displayed the earlier patterns of the international state system.”

With reference to the above, the greatest part of Europe, the Middle East and the Americas are all involved in some kind of regional grouping. The Commonwealth of Nations, NATO, the former Warsaw Pact, Benelux, the OAS, the Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty (ANZUS), the Arab League and the OAU all represent international structures that influence world politics in several ways (*Cf.* Tharp 1971:185-186).

### **3.3 Characteristics of a regional grouping**

In order to gain greater clarity about the substance of regional groupings, it is necessary to turn the attention to their characteristics.

International regional divisions are difficult to establish in a standardised manner, as boundaries that are applicable to one specific aim might not be acceptable with a different purpose in mind (Claude in Yalem 1965:15). There are various points of view – often confusing and contradictory – about regionalism. Regions were often classified in the past as geographic areas, cultural units, economic units, political entities and/or a combination of all these elements (Claude in Yalem 1965:15).

The practical implication of the variety of points of view that have been used in the classification of regions is illustrated by the situation of Western Europe versus that of Africa. Here are two regions – each showing in itself relative homogeneity in its political and social foundations – which differ significantly from each other. The question that arises now is how to draw the boundaries of these regions in such a way that the individual internal homogeneity can still be maximised. In an article, for example, the question was raised: **“Where is the Middle East?”** (Russett 1967:1) There is more than just one possible answer to this question. The absolute or natural boundaries of a region are not the only criteria for the determination of the geographical boundaries of regions. Regional aims can also be the primary criteria for

the demarcation of regions. In one instance, the security of the region may be the driver for regional co-operation. In another case, economic conditions can motivate regional group formation. In each of these aims, different sets of variables can play the decisive role. Against this background, an international region can be broadly defined as a limited number of states bound together through a specific geographic relationship and a degree of interdependence among its members. Further technical issues remain around the concept of a region (Nye 1968:VII). Despite the efforts to define it, the available definitions are still not specific enough. For example, the North Atlantic region would not have been referred to or defined as a region (McLellan, Olson & Sondermann 1960:469).

Regional organisations can be defined in several ways, usually linked to the geographical location of their members. Definitions based on this, however, are subject to demarcation problems, which are unique to the geographical location of specific regions. These problems are the result of the absence of a general agreement on the natural division of the earth in clear and generally appropriate regions. For this reason, geographic location in itself is not decisive for the membership of a regional organisation (Bennett 1984:366-367).

A universally acceptable definition of the concept ‘regional grouping’ is clearly not possible as it is mainly structured by means of a myriad of variables, which change continuously in form, content and impact (Bennett 1984:375-376).

The concept and means of regionalism will be considered in greater detail below.

### **3.4 The concepts “regionalism”, “regional organisation”, “regional grouping”, “regional institution” and “regional system”**

The field of study of regional politics and administration – that is, the study of a part of international politics and international public administration – is sometimes referred to as: regional studies; the study of regions; a study of the regional level; regional analyses; international regionalism; or regionalism.

These different designations indicate that the terminology that is used has not been clarified. Reference is sometimes made to "regionalism", "regional organisation", "regional integration", "regional co-operation", "regional system", "regional structure" and "region". These terms are often used divergently, ambiguously or inconsistently, to the great confusion of many a researcher.

The concept "regionalism" refers to the inclination of states to co-operate within specific regional context in the fields of economics, the military, politics and many more. Such co-operation can take a variety of forms. These forms often structure themselves in a significant number of entities. Examples of these entities include international organisations, regional agreements and arrangements, as well as trans-national movements and individuals. Usually emanating from these entities are specific relationships that are clearly discernible in the political sphere of international public administration. In practice, they manifest themselves as bargaining measures, for example, the arbitration of disputes through the intervention of third parties, and the signing of multilateral agreements with regard to disarmament, weapon control and economic development programmes. These examples are methodologically aimed at a utopian world order of eternal peace and order, probably one of the highest ideals that can be harboured in this regard. As a result, the prevailing opinion is held that such a utopia can only be attained if certain world order criteria can be satisfied:

- The total eradication of violence;
- The establishment of perfect social and economic welfare;
- The optimisation of social and political equity;
- The establishment of an absolute ecological balance; and
- The application of voluntary and totally self-motivated participation in the daily processes of governance (Falk & Mendlowitz 1973:1-6).

Regionalism is clearly seen in the modern age as an important means to an end in the quest for everlasting world peace and is mainly based on the premise of human intervention. Regional groupings, however, are nothing new. The erstwhile Greek city-states already pursued collective security as an aim (Von Glahn 1981:541). These groupings initially came into being as so-called cult associations, but later became

involved in the area of international law, particularly as a result of the fact that Greek tribes experienced insurmountable difficulties in their movement towards a Greek unitary state. Pierre Dubois already formulated theories about regional groupings in the thirteenth century, which later inspired Marini and the Duc de Sully (1560-1641). These theoretical models of regionalism only found practical expression during the twentieth century in Europe (Pfeifenberger in Barnard 1978:69-70).

Regionalism can also be seen as an association of states, based on geographic proximity. This geographic relationship has often given rise to communal involvement and inter-state spill over in terms of history, climate and culture. Regional boundaries are sometimes decided by ideological factors (e.g. Western and Eastern Europe) or by means of homogenous ethnic frames of reference (e.g. the Arabic world), and must be considered as such (Falk & Mendlowitz 1973:3).

In the literature, regional organisations are frequently associated with the term "regionalism". According to Russett (1975:2), "Regionalism is not one thing, but many things". Often, regionalism means merely an interest in regions (Spiegel 1989:18). According to most definitions of regionalism, it is the study of attempts to bring about integration in a region, particularly in respect of organisational aspects (Adeniji 1993:211; Asante 1985:7-10; Banks 1969:351; Groom & Taylor 1990:158-169; Nye 1968:vi-xii; Onwuku & Sesay 1985:1257 and Stoessinger 1975:338).

Sometimes, "regionalism" is used exclusively to describe regional organisations (Bennett 1991:215-249; Burton 1961:73-87; Cantori & Spiegel 1970:1; Claude 1971:102-117; Padelford *et al.* 1976:469 and Yalem 1973:218-230). Plano and Olton (1988:309), for example, define it as follows: "Regionalism [is] [t]he concept that nations situated in a geographical area or sharing common concerns can co-operate with each other through a limited-membership organisation to meet military, political, and functional problems."

Bennett (1991:218-221) focuses on the provision which is made in the UN Charter for the role of regional organisations in maintaining international peace and security (Cf. Bennett 1991:218-221; Archer 1992:49; Padelford *et al.* 1976:470 and Ranney 1975:646-647.)



Regional organisations however represent only one facet of regionalism. Integration is closely related to the concept "regional organisations" and is used equally confusingly in the literature. Here it refers to either the process or the end product of the political unification of separate national units (states) (Couloumbis & Wolfe 1990:298). When integration has been implemented fully, it will mean that individual states will cease to exist (as happened with the unification of the US and in the case of Switzerland or Germany). In most cases, integration is incomplete and consists of economic or military rather than political unification. Where regional organisations are relevant, reference is sometimes made in the literature to integration, but often from different points of departure. Integration may be viewed as the dynamics underlying the establishment of regional organisations (Hughes 1994:262). Sometimes, studies refer to the experience gained in regions as a result of the creation and development of regional organisations. Such experience will, it is hoped, result in a better understanding and appreciation on the part of governments and individuals of the benefits of international integration. This can also result in appropriate political customs and techniques being developed which can be applied on a larger scale and to a broader range of tasks (Deutsch 1988:245). As regards regional organisations, particular emphasis is placed on two forms of integration, namely federalism and functionalism (See Chapter Two, sections 2.10.2 and 2.10.3).

Reference is sometimes made in the literature to regional organisations as limited-purpose or single-purpose organisations (see section 2.7), (Padelford *et al.* 1976:465) or as particularistic international organisations (Deutsch 1988:245). These institutions are also defined and interpreted in various ways, because different forms of integration are relevant. Two such forms are the consolidation of states on a geographical basis (based on the physical proximity of members) and functional consolidation, which does not necessarily occur on a geographical basis. The EU is an example of the former type whereas NATO is an example of the latter. (NATO is a military alliance and is thus unified by a common function, but consists of members who are geographically widely distributed, such as the US, Western Europe and Turkey).

Where regional organisations are characterised by the geographic proximity of their members, it can be asked what constitutes a region, and how regions must be

demarcated (Archer 1992:46-47 and Bennett 1991:216)? From the literature it is clear that the various criteria that are employed to identify regions result in regions that are constituted differently (Coulombis & Wolfe 1990:300-301 and Cantori & Spiegel 1970:1-40).

A regional structure (see section 1.9) can be defined as any long-term agreement between two or more states according to which provision is made under specific circumstances for collective political, military and economic action. An important condition is that a circumscribed area of joint action with specific requirements to establish priorities must be captured in a legal contract (Haas 1964:494). Regionalism is thus the formation of inter-state associations or groupings based in specific geographical regions. Based on this, these structures can be held up as the doctrines or tenets of regionalism (Nye 1968:VII).

Regional groupings can also be defined as practical long-term schemes of objectives because they can be classified as organisations with a permanent nature within a circumscribed geographical region. The presence of common interests and relationship within such a grouping lead to the formation of a mutual association among the groupings members aimed at the preservation of peace and security, as well as the development of economic, social and cultural co-operation in their region. The eventual purpose of this association is to create a unique unitary political entity within a regional context (Falk & Mendlowitz 1973:3).

The clear demarcation and specific definition of regional and sub-regional groupings, however, cannot easily be achieved. This is made more difficult as a result of the availability of a large number of alternative and/or potential definitions of international groupings. These subordinate structures are usually based on the point of departure that every nation-state, regardless of its political power, is in one or other way a member of a subordinate system (Falk & Mendlowitz 1973:3).

While geographic location can assist in determining the regional nature of an institution, the fact that states are not situated close to one another, or that the institution's membership does not correspond to a generally recognisable and demarcated geographical area, does not necessarily mean that such an institution

cannot be classified as a regional institution. The US, for example, is a member of various regional organisations encountered in different parts of the world, for instance in the North Atlantic region, in America and in South East Asia. Not one of these regions corresponds to a natural region. The North Atlantic area instinctively makes one wonder whether an ocean is a unifying or divisive factor in determining a region. On the other hand, the inclusion of a number of West European states in NATO raises the question whether regional boundaries can be regarded as a determining factor in the classification of an institution as regional. The former South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) was intended to protect countries in South-East Asia, but it was controlled by a majority of non-Asian countries. The OAS includes all states in North, South and Central America, with the exception of Canada. However, geographers have never regarded these two continents as a region. Another example of an institution that does not correspond to any natural region is ANZUS, which comprises Australia, New Zealand and the US. The Commonwealth is also often classified as a regional institution, although its members are distributed world-wide (with most of them being former British colonies) (Bennett 1991:216; Nye 1987:6-7; Deutsch 1988:245 and Hopkins & Mansbach 1973:208).

According to Bennett (1991:216), a regional institution whose parts are bound together by common purposes which are based on one or more of the following is regarded as a grouping: geographic, social, cultural, economic or political ties. Such an institution has a formal structure and provides for formal intergovernmental agreements. It can have as little as three members who are closely bound together, or it can have an unlimited number of members from different continents. Where an organisation is in theory open to all states, but in practice has limited membership, this does not however detract from its global nature, since its purposes will still indicate universality. A regional institution is intended to involve only a specific category of states (less than global in scope and often limited in its functions) (Archer 1992:48-50). There are no fixed guidelines as to what is regional and what is not. According to Padelford *et al.* (1976:470), "[t]he term regional is usually applied to a co-operative arrangement among a group of states if the parties so designate their arrangement."

A distinction must also be drawn between the terms "regional institution" and "regional system". A regional institution is a narrower concept than a regional system and may be defined as "a regular pattern of interaction among independent political units in a region" (Nye 1987:5). The concept "regional system" thus refers more to the collection of interactions between states in a region. A system does not therefore have to be organised into a specific structure, as for example in the case of the Pacific Rim where states function as a (economic) regional system. A further distinction between a regional system and an institution is that the decision of states to become members of a regional organisation is a political one, which is based on the purposes of regional organisation. However, a state is obviously part of the specific regional system in which it finds itself geographically (Nye 1987:5-7). South Africa could, for example, decide whether it wants to be a member of SADC, but it is automatically part of the Southern African system (region), merely because it is geographically situated in the region.

### **3.5 Functions of regional groupings**

Functionally, regional groupings are generally inclined to trespass on the sovereign functional areas of modern governments (see sections 2.8.3 and 3.13). Some groupings focus particularly on single speciality areas, such as the economic, political, military or cultural spheres. And yet, the one cannot be separated from the other. In order to arrive at a more meaningful classification structure, regional groupings can be divided into multi-purpose institutions (see section 2.7), alliances and functional organisations (Bennett 1984:375-376). Another form of division focuses on three general groups: that of co-operative groups, functional groups and alliances (Miller in Bennett 1984:354). It can also be said that regional organisations are not formed to fulfil their own aims, but to promote specific national interests of particular member states. These national interests usually culminate in the establishment of some or other form of alliance. Self-preservation often requires the combination of the power of a variety of divergent partners. This often occurs in situations where the policy makers of a specific state fail, in their own right, to establish and maintain their positions of power (Haas & Whiting 1956:160).

Many other scholars are of the opinion that the main aim of such a regional organisation should be the creation of interregional peace, security and wealth (Haas & Whiting 1956:160). This point of view seems to be wishful thinking, as history points to the fact that regional groupings are only effective and efficient as security institutions if they are protected by superpowers. This emphasises the uneven power balance that already exists between the smaller and larger members of a regional grouping (Yalem 1965:11,18). The implication is thus that a polarisation of power takes place, with superpowers in opposite camps, and that it leads to a heightening in international tensions and a reduction of wealth. Mitrany and Garnett (in Haas & Whiting 1956:454) point to the necessity to defuse this situation: "...we are not likely to get peace by trying to argue nations into giving up what divides them, but only by striving practically to strengthen what unites them."

It is with this aim in mind that the proponents of functionalism in regional groupings strive towards the collective utilisation and co-ordination of international communications, standardisation, co-operation and the orchestrated attainment of objectives in the areas of agriculture, culture, labour, transport and finance. Haas and Whiting (1956:454,492) remarked further about such a functional model: "Such a system must possess permanent organs and fixed procedures...regional systems possess the potentiality of developing into supra-national communities, either in terms of their institutions or because of their ideology and motivating spirit. Yet they need no written constitution: a traditionally accepted 'understanding' sometimes suffices to create real ties and form symbols of loyalty. Regional systems, then, may be regarded as possible steppingstones for the integration of national communities into larger entities of some kind, short of ...global unity..."

The interests of states can be divided into two categories: political and non-political (Wright 1955:4-5). However, this distinction does not have much meaning, as daily inter-state activities like communication – for example, through postal services – include both these categories (Haas & Whiting 1956:455). The question arises whether these activities are politically or non-politically centred. The practical peripheral positioning of these activities is clearly not easily done. A large number of unknown variables flow continuously from one category to the next.

Ultimately, a regional grouping is nothing more than a component of the world, which is bound by a set of collective objectives and mainly based on geographic, social, cultural, economic, or political relationships. It also has a formal structure, which also provides for informal inter-state agreements. For this reason, a regional grouping would only be attractive to a specific group of states (Bennett 1984:348). From the above it is clear that the expectations and eventual functions of a regional grouping may coincide with the model of a sovereign state, that it may be able to accept the responsibilities and obligations of a state and execute its functions, thus giving rise to the practical duplication and the incorporation of states.

### **3.6 Membership of regional groupings**

A regional grouping can consist of a minimum of two and an unlimited maximum number of member states (see section 2.8.1). In the latter case, several variables in the specific region may be the decisive factor. The membership of such a regional grouping is usually determined by its stability and homogeneity (Haas & Whiting 1956:492). The difference in the number of members of the Commonwealth of Nations (fifty-nine) and that of ANZUS (three) is an example of this. A state can also be the member of more than one regional grouping, including full membership or observer status. An example of this is member states OAS that are also included in the Organisation of Central American States (OCAS).

McLaren (1980:2-3) points out that international organisations which seek the maximum number of members such as the UN, are ‘universal’ in nature whereas those institutions which seek to limit their membership, such as the OAU, are ‘selective’; and that selectivity can either be ‘associative’ to bring nations together, such as the OAU and OAS, or ‘dissociative’ to oppose other nations, such as NATO and the former Warsaw Pact.

McLaren’s reference here to selective or limited membership underscores a major problem of classification when looking at non-universal or regional organisations. Regions are, in fact, as noted before, very difficult to define. Where does one region end and another region? What size should a region be? At one stage does a regional organisation become global? Perhaps the problem of determining when an

organisation qualifies as being regional as opposed to global or universal resides in the use of a classification formula. (see Chapter Two, section 2.1.3).

According to Russett (1965:8), the influence of environmental factors on regional groupings must not be underestimated: “Regional, cultural, political, and geographic patterns have profound effects on the nature of a particular national political system and on the behaviour of states in world politics.”

The potential success of regional groupings is also bound to deeper-seated elements, rather than just simply to homogenates. National movements within states were forced in the past to embrace all kinds of historical-social and emotion-evoking assimilations to stoke the fires of fear for an external threat and to maintain the momentum of this fear. However, a greater task awaits regional groupings (Mitrany in Nye 1971:47).

Membership (see section 2.8.1) of a regional organisation can be obligatory on states as a result of a variety of external factors, despite substantial inter-state heterogeneity that would otherwise have made coherence impossible. One of the most controversial issues in the formation of regional groupings probably remains the delegation of state authority that directly affects state sovereignty internally. The degree of this delegated authority is usually determined based on specific circumstances. In some instances, the central regional organisation has greater authority in certain areas as the governments of the member states involved. For this reason, it is important to distinguish between different kinds of regional groupings, i.e. international and supra-national regional organisations (Russett 1965:18).

The position of supra-national regional organisation shows characteristics of a situation in which federal authority over the citizens of member states is awarded to the regional organisation without specifically taking into account the jurisdiction of the governments of these member states (Pfeifenberger in Barnard 1978:59). This did not apply to international organisation; it also does not apply in the case of the OAU as a regional organisation. For this reason, it is understandable that regional organisations take on the colours of international organisations. State sovereignty remains a primary condition in the international community.

### **3.7 The structure of a regional grouping**

Regional groupings have unique characteristics and structures (see section 2.4). Their wider aims and more clearly delineated policy objectives distinguish them from mere defence alliances. The existence of permanent institutions in a regional grouping, which promote the collective interests of member states while pursuing common objectives, gives the grouping a clearly autonomous structure. Accordingly, international law has already granted autonomous international legal subjectivity to regional organisations for some decades. The periodic meetings of member states, whether through conferences or summits, are also a general characteristic of regional groupings. The structure of such a regional grouping usually consist of the following basic elements:

#### **3.7.1 Conference or summit of member states**

Diplomatic delegates of national governments (of member states) gather during these conferences or summits. These meetings normally do not have any legislative authority and, in their conduct, are limited to the application of general principles and guidelines that apply to the specific regional organisation and its members. These conferences or summits are also not permanently in session.

#### **3.7.2 An office or secretariat**

An office or secretariat is usually established to arrange the periodic meetings of the conference or summit of member states and provides appropriate administrative services. Such an office or secretariat is normally a permanently functioning organisation and usually has a permanent headquarters and, in some instances, representative regional offices.

#### **3.7.3 Ministerial council**

The executive tasks of the ministerial council include, among others, to make important political decisions and recommendations in this regard to the summit or conference of member states. The council is supported in these activities by the



permanent office or secretariat of the organisation. Regional groupings are also often supported in their daily operation activities by affiliated agencies and subordinate institutions (Pfeifenberger in Barnard 1978:59).

The structures of the OAU as a regional grouping will be discussed in Chapter Five.

### **3.8 Co-operation in regional organisations**

As already indicated the number of regional organisations increased tremendously after 1945. In Africa, there are presently a considerable number of such institutions, for example:

- the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the African Union (AU)
- the Southern African Development Community (SADC)
- the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)
- the Inter-governmental Agency for Development (IGAD) – East Africa and the Horn of Africa
- the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)
- the Maghreb Union (North Africa)

Co-operation within regional organisations is based on common interests and agreed-upon principles. The reason for the great variety of regional organisations is that states believe that regional rather than global or universal institutions can often better address their specific interests. National self-interest (see section 2.6) is the primary motive for states wishing to become members of regional organisations, although there are often other circumstances that can give rise to the establishment and continued existence of regional organisations. Geographic location is one of these, although the institutions concerned do not necessarily originate or continue to exist because states are geographically in close proximity to one another. Cultural and political ties, trust, communication, and consensus regarding values and purposes between states in a region usually constitute the driving force.

Deep-seated hostility among states in close proximity to one another, such as in the case of Israel and the Arab states, can for example make co-operation impossible, but it can bring the hostile camps together, as in the case of the Arab League that united against Israel. Another example is that of the Front Line States uniting against South Africa in the former SADCC (Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference). Shared aspirations and problems, or an external threat can also give rise to the origin of a regional institution. Examples of this are NATO, the former SEATO, ANZUS and the Warsaw Pact countries. International co-operation has become more significant as a result of the greater interdependence of states.

The conduct of member states in any regional institution is however based mainly on their national interests. Changes in the international environment frequently result in tension in regional organisations that cannot comply with the new demands of members. An example of this was France's withdrawal from NATO. The ability of regional organisations to remain viable depends on the extent to which they succeed in promoting national interests of their members.

No institution can avoid the internal pressure resulting from the interdependent nature of the current international political system. Sometimes, disagreements arise among members in regional organisations regarding for example economic co-operation or independence (see section 6.4). The same can happen regarding matters affecting national security. A state is continually confronted by the need to co-operate with other states as a result of interdependent needs on the one hand, and a need for freedom of action on the other (Padelford *et al.* 1976:468-491).

Despite greater interdependence, states still put their national interests above those of international institutions. States are prepared to co-operate in regional organisations if co-operation can occur voluntarily (Bennett 1991:4-8,13). The question of sovereignty is thus important in any regional institution.

### **3.9 The role of sovereignty and supra-nationalism in regional organisations**

Despite the number, roles and importance of regional organisations in the international arena, few of them have brought about a greater degree of political

integration. In many cases, the establishment of regional organisations is not an indication of dissatisfaction with national sovereignty, or rather the state. The charters of regional organisations such as the OAS, the OAU and the Arab League all contain clauses ensuring the political sovereignty of their members. It is clear that the principal function of these institutions is not to prejudice the final political decision-making authority (sovereignty) of states, but to unify or integrate them on the basis of common functions or needs (such as security). For some states the attraction of regional organisations is precisely that they appear to "maximise the values of independence, unity, and development, and avoid the problems inherent both in nationalist isolation and ambitious unification." Accordingly, the primary function of regional security institutions is to strengthen the security of their sovereign members and not to bring about a greater degree of economic or political integration (Nye 1987:21-22).

Regional organisations originate because (as mentioned above) they satisfy the needs of states (Hughes 1994:262 and Padelford *et al.* 1976:468-491). For example, during the first 15 years of NATO's existence, interests and activities were closely related because members had common values and expectations. However, after the former President De Gaulle came to power in France, co-operation came to an end. French officers no longer participated in certain of NATO's activities and the former President De Gaulle requested American and Canadian forces and NATO headquarters to leave French territory. His main reason for this course of action was that the "integration" of forces prejudiced French honour and sovereignty (Padelford *et al.* 1976:473). At the end of the nineties, however, NATO's power once again became evident as a result of its efforts to restore and maintain peace in Central and Eastern Europe. The organisation did not become involved in the affairs of member states, but rather endeavoured to contribute to the peace process in the Balkans for the sake of neighbouring countries.

The international system that originated in 1945 had as its basis the sovereignty of states (Archer 1992:27). According to Labuschagne *et al.* (1993:iii), sovereignty is the existence of a legal authority that recognises no (other) supreme authority. The state thus possesses the highest or final decision-making authority. Sovereignty is primarily applicable to political decisions, since economic interdependence does not encroach

as much on the sovereignty of states. To state that the international system is based on the sovereignty of states thus implies that there is no authority in the international system that can make laws and enforce them on states.

Although the state is still the most important political unit in the international system, regional organisations fulfil certain important functions on behalf of states. States must co-operate increasingly in various fields for the sake of the common welfare. Often, problems are encountered not only within national boundaries. The unified voice of a number of states that are moulded together in one organisation frequently carries more weight than the voice of a single state. International and regional organisations thus originate in order to satisfy such needs. The variety of functions that the different institutions must fulfil reflects the complex nature of relations between states in this stage of history (Bennett 1991:4).

Regional organisations are established by way of agreement between states. To guarantee the sovereignty of states, these institutions function on the basis of agreement, consensus, recommendation and co-operation rather than force (Bennett 1991:3). For such institutions to function effectively and efficiently, it is necessary for states to voluntarily relinquish some of their sovereign powers to the organisation (Papp 1988:71). In the unique case of the EU, the institution has been granted powers to take decisions that are enforceable on the members themselves even where no unanimity can be achieved. This is known as "supra-nationalism". Supra-nationalism means the transfer of decision-making authority by members to the central body with regard to specific fields. Members must accept the supra-national decisions or withdraw from the body (Papp 1988:52 and Plano & Olton 1988:310). The EU has, however, received its supra-national authority from member states themselves (Papp 1988:70). States agreed to voluntarily relinquish elements of their economic sovereignty (Hughes 1994:287). The consenting member states felt that their sovereignty would not be affected in such cases, because the institution would be receiving its authority as a result of the consent of member states. The institutions of the EU, such as the ECSC and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom or EAEC), are the best examples of supra-national IGOs (Papp 1988:52; Plano & Olton 1988:327 and Coulombis & Wolfe 1990:304).

However, few states are willing to relinquish a significant part of their sovereignty (especially in the political and military spheres) to any international body (Rourke 1986:320). As already indicated, states will not readily transfer functions to an institution that may influence their powers of self-determination (Hopkins & Mansbach 1973:208). The opposition of Norway and Britain to the Maastricht Treaty that brought about the EU was for example based on their belief that the organisation would affect the sovereignty of members in the future. Such sovereignty entailed both economic and political aspects since the European Parliament in Brussels would diminish the parliamentary power of individual states.

Supra-nationalism is the exception rather than the rule. States are unwilling to relinquish their sovereignty to supra-national entities, and, as a result, most regional organisations usually function by virtue of consent, consensus, recommendation and co-operation. If it sometimes appears as if regional organisations place restrictions on the sovereignty of members, it must be remembered that membership of these institutions is voluntary and that member states are willing to abide by the rules of such institutions – if not they can withdraw (Archer 1992:401 and Hastedt & Knickrehm 1994:210).

### **3.10 Regional co-operation in an institutional system**

Organised co-operation requires political motivation and institutional mechanisms in order to give effect to programmes of action. Relations between states can, at the one end of the integration spectrum, assume the form of political consultation and accommodation. At the other end, they can give rise to the establishment of institutions and procedures, and to the development of operational activities. Consultation and accommodation are loose forms of co-operation that do not occur within a formal structure created for that purpose. In contrast, the development of operational activities points to a higher level of integration at which member states integrate their activities thoroughly. An example of this is NATO's decision in 1993 to act collectively against the Serbians should they fail to hand over their weapons in Sarajevo to the UN. For an institution to function effectively and efficiently, competent officials and technicians are required (a type of international "public service").

This integration is reciprocal. The mechanism that brings about co-operation is influenced by the members, who, in turn, are influenced by the mechanism. If members cannot agree on basic concepts and values, little power will be delegated to the central institutions of co-operation or integration. Mutual influence will thus also be limited. In contrast, sufficient trust and consensus between the respective parties cause decision makers to be more inclined to delegate functions to the central structure and to allow officials and technicians freedom of action (Padelford *et al.* 1976:471). Nye (1987:23-24) summarises this situation as follows: “In general, the institutional authority of international organisations follows a 'law of salience' – the less important the task politically, either because of its technical nature or limited impact, the greater the prospects for the growth of the organisation's authority *vis-à-vis* the member states. Conversely, the more important the task by nature of impact, the weaker the authority of the organisation will be.”

Regional organisations usually have professional staff who act as secretariats. They are supposed to be loyal to the regional institution rather than to their states of origin. The objectives of these institutions are determined during regular conferences and meetings attended by the representatives of all the states. There are also executive institutions that are responsible for developing practical plans designed to achieve such objectives. The secretariat must implement the plans that are drawn up by the executive body. Regional organisations display certain similarities to governments, but only have as many powers as members are prepared to relinquish to them. In the final instance, sovereignty is always vested in the member states themselves and not in the institution (Papp 1988:51 and Jacobson 1989:212, 220).

Leadership in the case of organised co-operation is usually exercised by the member with the greatest interest in the realisation of the institution's objectives. Egypt, for example, assumed the leadership role in the Arab League, and the US in the case of NATO. Claude (in Yalem 1965:15) is of the opinion that "regional organisations tend to be built around the local great power, and thus take on the character of a solar system." If this is taken too far, it can give rise to "spheres of influence". However, the nature of the relationship is determined by the attitudes of the members and by the environment in which they operate (Padelford *et al.* 1976:472).

### **3.11 The influence of international politics on the nature of regional organisations**

An international system is not rigid or static. A study of international politics clearly reveals the dynamic nature of the international system.

Regional organisations do not develop in a political vacuum, but are part of the international system. Their nature and purposes reflect the interests of states that are also part of the international system. The course of development of regional organisations clearly indicates that international politics at a given stage determines the type of regional institution that is established (Archer 1992:27-33; Papp 1988:52-55).

The nature of international politics since World War II can be divided into three specific phases, namely the Cold War, the period of decolonisation and liberation and the new-world order.

#### **3.11.1 The Cold War**

After World War II (i.e. by 1946), the relationship between the former USSR and the US had deteriorated to such an extent that there was talk of a Cold War. This term describes an ideological confrontation based on hostility, fear, suspicion and uncertainty, although the relationship never resulted in direct military conflict. It did however divide the international system into two camps, the East and the West, which were characterised by the high priority assigned to security. Two of the most important regional organisations established during this period, namely NATO and the Warsaw Pact organisation, reflected the two poles of international politics at that stage (Archer 1992:30-31).

#### **3.11.2 Decolonisation and liberation**

By the early sixties, independence and liberation movements were the order of the day in the developing world. The increasing number of independent states clearly influenced the nature of international politics. A group of states that wished not to be

part of the division between East and West established NAM (Archer 1992:31), and nonalignment as an international phenomenon came to the fore. Other regional organisations were established to reflect this phenomenon. The NAM is however not a formal institution, although heads of state come together annually to discuss matters of common concern and one state is designated as the leader of the movement for the ensuing year (*Cf. Deutsch 1988:268*).

The newly acquired independence of countries in the developing world gave rise to the origin of the following regional organisations:

- The OAU, whose purpose it was to unify the newly independent African states, especially against former colonial governments.
- The Commonwealth, whose purpose it was to keep together the countries formerly constituting the British Empire, albeit in a looser form.
- The French Community, which wished to keep the Francophone African countries together in a similar way.
- The Arab League, which endeavoured to unite Arab countries against Israel.

### **3.11.3 The new world-order**

By the late eighties, little remained of the bipolar international order that had characterised the Cold War. Military strife between the big powers made way for diplomatic co-operation with the decline of communism. The collapse of socialist structures in Eastern Europe and the former USSR, and the change in the latter's foreign policy, dramatically changed the international context (*Adeniji 1993:211*). The emphasis now began to fall sharply on economic groupings such as the following:

- the EU (the integration of Western Europe)
- the Pacific Rim (not institutionalised)
- various Africa groupings, for example the SADC, Comesa, ECOWAS, the SACU, ECCAS, IGAD, Maghreb
- G-7, the top seven industrialised nations in the world (the US, Japan, Canada, Britain, Germany, Italy and France)
- NAFTA (the US, Canada, Mexico)



### **3.12 Classification of regional organisations**

There is no single, acceptable classification (see section 2.13) of regional organisations (Padelford *et al.* 1976:466). Consequently, such institutions are measured against different criteria, and there is also no clear separation between the different classifications. Because of this, one regional institution may fall into different categories. Such a classification is therefore always arbitrary and subjective.

Six classifications of regional organisations are given here and are used as examples of the divergence between regional organisations. These classifications are those of Nye, Coulombis and Wolfe, the International Relations Dictionary, Bennett, Padelford *et al.*, and Ranney. It is however clear that the common denominator in most classifications is the functions of a specific institution.

**(1) According to Nye (1987:5), regional organisations can be distinguished on the basis of:**

- their formal functions (e.g. military/security, political, economic development)
- the number of functions which they fulfil in practice
- the controversies surrounding these functions (e.g. technical as opposed to political)
- the number of members
- the geographic location of members
- various other criteria

**(2) According to Coulombis and Wolfe (1990:301), regional organisations can be divided into two main types and a third, hybrid type:**

- Regional defence institutions, such as NATO and the Warsaw Pact organisation.
- Economic institutions (also termed functional institutions) such as the EU in its formative years, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance

(CMEA), the Latin American Free Trade Association (LAFTA) and the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

- Hybrid regional organisations that are multifunctional. It is difficult to determine whether the functions performed by these institutions are mainly political, economic, military or cultural. Examples of this hybrid type are the OAS, the OAU, the EU in the 1980s, the Arab League and the Commonwealth. Hybrid Regional organisations comprise elements of political and economic, and sometimes military and cultural co-operation.

**(3) In the International Relations Dictionary (Plano & Olton 1988:309-310), regional organisations are divided into:**

- Military-alliance types, with NATO and the former Warsaw Pact organisation as examples
- Economic types, with the European Community, the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), Benelux, the Latin American Integration Association (LAIA), the Central American Common Market and the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON or CMEA) as examples
- Political groupings such as the OAS, the European Council, the Arab League and the OAU and the AU

**(4) According to Bennett (1991:221-222), regional organisations can be classified on the basis of the nature or scope of their functions or membership, or on the basis of the ultimate degree of integration desired:**

- Multipurpose institutions such as the OAS, the OAU and the AU and the Arab League
- Alliance-type institutions such as NATO and the Warsaw Pact organisation
- Functional institutions such as the EU, COMECON, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the UN Regional Commissions

**(5) Padelford *et al.* (1976:466) propose four broad categories of regional organisations:**

- Orthodox regional organisations: Such organisations are geographically determined and represent a narrowly demarcated region. Examples are the OAS, the EU, the OAU, the Warsaw Pact organisation, the SADC, the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), Comesa, the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Arab League.
- Macro regional organisations: These institutions have reasonably specific territorial objectives, although member states come from different regions. Examples are ANZUS, NATO, COMECON, and the former SEATO.
- Non-localised political associations: These institutions have limited or no geographic ties and their membership is based on historical, political, cultural or other ties. Examples are the Commonwealth, the French Community and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).
- Multilateral functional arrangements: These institutions are functionally determined, based on objectives that are often economic in nature. Examples are OPEC, the OECD, G-7, the European Productivity Agency (EPA), the European Civil Aviation Conference and the Colombo Plan.

**(6) Ranney (1975:647-649) distinguishes the following three types of regional organisations:**

- Military: NATO and the Warsaw Pact.
- Economic: the EU, EFTA, COMECON, the Latin American Common Market, and NAFTA.
- Collective security plus another focus: Two examples of regional organisations which are chiefly concerned with collective security, but which have also developed security, political and cultural ties, are the OAS and the Arab League.

### **3.13 Functions as a defining influence on the classification of regional organisations**

In Chapter Two (see sections 2.8.3 and 2.13) it was stated that IGOs could be grouped into various categories according to their functions. Thus far, there is no classification that is universally accepted as a single model. Classifications to date appear to be the result of the focus of a particular author for the purposes of his/her study. Classification of regional IGOs implies an investigation of the various facets of the institution, such as objectives, functions, and membership, geographic and functional scope, and authority (see sections 2.8.3, 2.13, 3.6 and 3.12).

From the analyses above (see sections 3.6 and 3.12) as well as in Chapter Two (section 2.7 and 2.13), of the classification of the types of regional organisations it became clear that functions constitute a criterion that is common to almost all the types. The first type focuses on military matters and the institutions concerned are referred to as "regional defence organisations" (Couloumbis & Wolfe 1990:301-303). They are also termed "alliance-type regional organisations" (Bennett 1991:232-238), or alliances: "Alliances are coalitions of states that have primarily military or national security goals" (Ray 1992:394-399).

The second type which is distinguished have to do mainly with economic matters and are termed "economic organisations" by Couloumbis and Wolfe (1990:301) (also referred to in the literature as "functional organisations"). Bennett (1991:238) refers to them as "functional regional organisations" and Ray (1992:399) describes them as follows: "Since World War II, numerous coalitions have been formed by states whose goals are more economic in nature."

The third type is the multi-functional or hybrid regional organisation (Couloumbis & Wolfe 1990:301). Bennett (1991:221) terms this category "multi-purpose regional organisations" and Diehl (1993:210) calls them "general-purpose (including security matters), comprehensive-membership, regional organisations."

Apart from the classifications of international and regional organisations that have already been indicated above, there are three main types of classification of regional IGOs, which will be discussed in the following sections.

### **3.13.1 Characteristics on which the classification of regional defence organisations or alliance-type regional organisations are based**

These organisations largely originated as a reaction to the Cold War between the USSR and the US. Their basis was mistrust and hostility between states, with security against external hostility as their objective. The number of security agreements which were concluded during this period pointed to a feeling of uncertainty by the parties regarding actual or supposed threats by other states or groups of states. They were also indicative of the conviction of the parties that these threats required a collective rather than an individual reaction. Consequently, the agreements made provision for joint military action in the event of an attack on any member of the alliance so that the use of force could be countered with tremendous force in return (Bennett 1991:232; Couloumbis & Wolfe 1990:301-302 and Ray 1992:396).

In the years after World War II, the US concluded the most formal alliances in the history of the world: the Rio Pact in Latin America, the British-driven Middle East defence mechanism (1955), which was first called the Baghdad Pact, and, later (1959), CENTO (of which the US was not formally a member), the former SEATO in Asia and ANZUS in the South Pacific. NATO was undoubtedly the cornerstone of the US's alliance system. It was established in 1949 and was centred in Western Europe. As a counter force to NATO, the USSR signed the Warsaw Pact with Communist China in 1955 (Couloumbis & Wolfe 1990:302 and Ray 1992:396), but conflict between the USSR and China in the early sixties limited the Pact to the USSR and Eastern Europe.

The structure of the alliance network that originated after the World War II changed dramatically after 1991. The US never joined CENTO, which was dissolved in the seventies. SEATO was also dissolved in the seventies. In the confrontation between the US and the USSR, NATO and the Warsaw Pact were undoubtedly the most important alliances to these two superpowers. The end of the Cold War and collective

agreements on disarmament and arms control (for example, the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT); and the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) caused experts to predict that regional defence institutions would gradually fall into disuse. In 1991, the Warsaw Pact was dissolved. The dissolution of the coalition between the Soviet Union and its East-European neighbours naturally gave rise to questions about the continued existence of the major opponent of the former Warsaw Pact, namely NATO (Ray 1992:397).

Supporters of NATO insist that the alliance should receive the credit for maintaining peace in Europe since 1945, and that it would be a mistake to dissolve it despite the termination of the Warsaw Pact. Critics, however, argue that the USSR never planned to attack Western Europe and that NATO should be disbanded. Others, again, are not in favour of NATO being dissolved and believe that the Soviet Union and other former members of the now-dissolved Warsaw Pact should be allowed to become members (Ray 1992:397). Recent events in the Balkan states have however indicated that NATO as an organisation occupies an important place in the international system. As a defence alliance, the organisation has acted strongly to restore and maintain peace and security on behalf of neighbouring members in Europe. Its actions have also revealed interesting possibilities for co-operation between various groupings, such as the UN.

There is uncertainty regarding the usefulness of alliance-type institutions (Bennett 1991:233-234 and Couloumbis & Wolfe 1990:302-303). According to Bennett (1991:233-234), these types of institutions display elements of instability because the threat that was initially perceived to exist at the time of the establishment of the institution was seen to be greater than it turned out to be in reality. Changes in the nature of the international system and in international relations often cause the reasons for the establishment and support of the organisation to become blurred, and, with the passage of time, the unit of members increasingly finds itself under pressure. The maintenance of hostile relations in respect of the external forces against whom the treaty is aimed is thus increasingly questioned. Scepticism concerning the scope and depth of the alliance parties' commitment to comply with their obligations becomes more and more apparent, especially when their own national interests are not really affected thereby. Parties become disillusioned because the dominant party in the

alliance often acts unilaterally without first consulting the other party or parties, and without determining the effect of its actions on the other parties in the alliance. France's withdrawal of its forces from NATO and the dissolution of SEATO are two of the more dramatic examples of this built-in element of instability in alliances.

Other questions regarding regional defence organisations, or alliance-type regional organisations, include the following:

- Is participation in these institutions equally beneficial for all participants?
- Is the defence burden distributed equally among all the members?
- Is participation voluntary, or is it forced upon the smaller and weaker members?
- Will membership of such an alliance increase or decrease the occurrence of conflict for each participant?
- Are such alliances generally supported, or is there considerable national support (i.e. within the state of origin) for neutrality or demilitarisation?

Since it is extremely difficult to answer these questions on the basis of empirical data, one can merely speculate about them (Coulombis & Wolfe 1990:303).

### **3.13.2 Characteristics on which the classification of economic or functional regional organisations are based**

Most institutions may be typified or classified as functional regional organisations. Their purpose is to promote economic, social or political co-operation without involving security factors. The aim of most of these institutions is to realise the economic objectives of their members (Bennett 1991:223). Co-operation among members has mutual economic benefits that cannot be realised by way of individual policy.

These institutions serve as the best examples of the functional approach to regional integration. According to theoretical premises, co-operation in the functional sphere (i.e. non-political) will filter through to the political sphere and will result in the

breaking down of political divisions between states. If these theories are in fact valid, their operation is unclear because the conduct of states clearly indicates that they continue to protect their political independence. Even in the economic sphere, states are unwilling to relinquish their sovereignty.

Examples of institutions which fall into this category are the Central American Common Market (CACM), the Latin American Free Trade Association (LAFTA), the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA or COMECON), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation (OECE) and the well-known Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) (Bennett 1991:238-239 and Couloumbis & Wolfe 1990:303).

The most advanced group of regional functional institutions is to be encountered in Western Europe. The EU is the result of other developments and is a unique regional institution. It represents the greatest progress towards supra-national integration. In the economic sphere, broad decision-making powers have been voluntarily transferred by member states to collective agencies of the EU, and economic integration with regard to a broad range of activities has been taken further than in any other regional institution. As regards political functions, the integration process has not assumed the same dimensions as in the economic sphere. However, economic and political functions cannot be completely separated from each other, for economic decision making is often part of the political process – in reality, certain sovereign powers have thus been relinquished (Couloumbis & Wolfe 1990:304; Bennett 1991:239).

Until now, the EU has not been very successful in attaining political integration. For the functionalists, however, the institution represents the most concrete hope that economic integration will eventually lead to political integration. Despite its successes in specific spheres, the EU has not been able to amalgamate itself into a political unit (Couloumbis & Wolfe 1990:304 and Bennett 1991:239).

In the light of the above, it is clear that the nature of economic or functional regional organisations still challenge experts to come up with satisfactory answers to the following issues:



- Is integration mutually beneficial for the economic interests of participating states?
- Is the economic integration achieved in these institutions an upward-moving process that will lead to political unification, or are there cyclical phases of integration and disintegration?
- Does economic integration reduce the occurrence of conflict both within and between integrated regions?
- What is the effect of integration on the cultural, legal, political and economic systems of participants?
- Is integration more or less effective when it occurs among relatively equal (in terms of size, population, and economic and military capacity) national role players?
- Is it better to begin to co-operate in the economic, social, political or military spheres if it is hoped that integration will spill over into other areas, thereby increasing the possibility of unification?

Answers to these questions are divergent, tentative or evasive, and, at times, are even unconvincing (*Cf.* Couloumbis & Wolfe 1990:306-309).

States that are members of functional regional organisations have strong economic growth rates. It can therefore be deduced that integration is mutually beneficial for members of such institutions. However, non-members sometimes also have impressive growth rates. Both Japan and Canada, for example, experienced significant industrial and economic growth in the sixties without being formally integrated into larger economic communities.

The European experience points to a positive relationship between economic co-operation and reduced conflict both within and between integrated areas. Sceptics argue that peace in Europe is the result of other factors, such as the shift of the primary military power away from Europe to the US and the former USSR. Furthermore, the European experience does not apply in other parts of the world. In the Middle East, South East Asia, East Asia and Southern Africa, for example, the occurrence of conflict, both internal and international, has been far greater since

World War II than it has been in Western or Eastern Europe. It can therefore be argued that these regions have not yet achieved the same degree of integration as in Europe.

It is difficult to determine the effect of integration on the social, cultural, economic and political systems of participating states. There is little doubt that integration has a long-term effect on the political and cultural characteristics of participants. In the case of the former EC (now the EU), Western Europe exerted considerable moral and material pressure on Portugal and Greece's authoritarian governments until they finally collapsed in 1974 and were replaced by functional democracy. The aim of such pressure was to compel the two governments to adhere to human rights norms that applied throughout Western Europe.

Integration between industrialised and non-industrialised states sometimes results in weak states becoming economically dependent on strong states. This perpetuates and even increases the gap between rich and poor partners. It can therefore be argued that integration works the best between states that are on an equal footing economically, and works the worst between states that are not economic equals.

Lastly, there is considerable overlapping in the membership of NATO and the EU, and thus it cannot be stated that there is a more significant spill over effect in the case of economic or functional institutions than in the case of military/defence institutions.

Bennett (1991:239) is of the opinion that, "without achieving a broader political community, regional economic organisations may contribute modestly to the maintenance or restoration of peace and the integration of policy."

### **3.13.3 Characteristics on which the classification of multi-functional regional organisations are based**

Multi-functional regional organisations are characterised by their variety and scope of functions, purposes and activities. Examples of these institutions are the OAS, the Arab League and the OAU.

The OAU was one of the largest multi-functional regional organisations. The OAU was established in 1963 in order to mould together various former sub-regional groupings of African states. Since its charter did not allow states from outside Africa to be members, all its members were from Africa. Only independent and sovereign states could become members, and admission occurs by way of application, which is either accepted or rejected by way of an ordinary majority vote of members of the OAU. New members must indicate that they will abide by the Charter of the OAU.

In the following chapters, the origin and historical development of the OAU (Chapter Four), the objectives and structural-functional analysis (Chapter Five), and the role in regional co-operation (Chapter Six) will be analysed in-depth.

### **3.14 Conclusion**

In order to provide an appropriate background for the following chapters on the nature and role of the OAU as a regional IGO, the range of core practical fields has been reviewed in this chapter. The chapter also provided an overview of the nature, origin and characteristics of regional organisations. It considered the numerous problems encountered in defining and classifying regional organisations. Attention was paid to the concepts “regionalism”, “regional organisation”, “regional grouping”, “regional institution”, and “regional system” from a conceptual angle. This chapter also discussed the functions of regional groupings, the membership of regional groupings, as well as the structure of regional groupings on the basis of co-operation in regional organisations in a following section. The question of sovereignty and supranationalism in regional organisations was also explored. The influence of international politics on the nature of regional organisations founded on the basis of co-operation was also dealt with. When considering the different methods of classifying regional organisations, six types of regional organisations were distinguished and examples of each were provided. Finally, the functions that influence the nature of regional organisations were distinguished with the focus on those characteristics on which three types of regional organisations can be distinguished. These characteristics are common to all the classifications, including regional defence organisations or alliance-type regional organisations, economic or functional regional organisations

and multi-functional regional organisations such as the OAU (in introducing the discussion in Chapter Four).

The establishment of international organisations is one of the most important attempts in international public administration to restrict conflict and promote co-operation between states, in other words, to cope with the problems of international and regional co-operation. Co-operation in international organisations is based on an awareness of common interests and mutually agreed-upon values. The reason for the many diverse regional organisations in international public administration is the belief of states that their specific interests will be better served in regional than in global or universal organisations.

In spite of the number, roles and importance of regional organisations in the international arena, few of them have yet resulted in a greater degree of political integration. In many cases, the establishment of regional organisations is not an indication of dissatisfaction with national sovereignty, in other words, with the state, but an attempt to find a greater power base in combining efforts in a regional context.

The Charter of the OAU contained a clause that ensured the political sovereignty of their members. It is clear that the main function of these organisations is not to detract from the final political decision-making authority (sovereignty) of states, but to unite or integrate states on the basis of one or more shared functions or needs (such as economic co-operation or stability).

The next chapter will focus on the historical origins and development of Pan-Africanism as a forerunner of the OAU. It will discuss events leading up to the establishment of the OAU in 1963 as a regional IGO.