

UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

School of Global Studies



Why Overlapping Regionalism?

Drivers of Zambia's dual memberships in COMESA and SADC:

A pluralism of perceptions

Master Thesis in Global Studies 30 hec

Fall Semester 2019

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Word Count: 19,867

Abstract

In contrast to current global trends, Africa seems more determined than ever to come together. But as African governments and political leaders recurrently cite regional integration as a top priority, their persistent commitment to multiple overlapping regional organizations (ROs) seems perplexing. Overlapping regionalism, when ROs share both members and mandates, is considered a hindrance to deepened integration, and yet it remains a defining feature of Africa's institutional landscape.

This thesis aims to better understand what drives overlapping regionalism in Africa by focusing on the country case of Zambia. Through the analysis of available documentation and more than two dozen semi-structured interviews this study sets out to answer *what the main actors perceive to be the reasons driving Zambia's dual memberships in COMESA and SADC?*

I draw on five theoretical explanations to develop an analytical framework that captures key drivers of overlapping regionalism. The framework structures the empirical data and makes for a theory-driven analysis. The empirical findings show that perceptions of what drives Zambia's dual memberships vary extensively. After analyzing the drivers' relative importance, I argue that *political considerations* reign supreme. *Functional needs*, often said to matter most, plays a secondary or even tertiary role, sometimes behind *collectivist ideals* and *ruling elite gain*, which gain importance as drivers to overlapping regionalism in the African context. I conclude that while the different driving logics covary, it is possible to identify differences and similarities with overlapping regionalism in other parts of the world. This study contributes to the field of comparative regionalism.

Keywords: *overlapping regionalism, overlapping memberships, regional integration, Africa, Zambia, COMESA, SADC, spaghetti bowl*

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to extend a great thank you to all the people that were willing to take part in this study. While your opinions and ideas about Zambia's dual memberships have been used to various extent in this thesis, I dare say that I found all conversations incredibly interesting and inspiring. I am impressed with your willingness and openness to share your time and knowledge to help a foreign student with his research.

Secondly, I would like to thank my supervisor Fredrik Söderbaum for going above and beyond what was required of him to guide me through the arduous process of trying to make sense of regionalism.

Thirdly, thank you friends and family for standing by me.

Lastly, thanks to the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) for the financial contribution that made this field study possible.

Abbreviations

AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
EAC	East African Community
ECA	(United Nations) Economic Commission for Africa
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MCTI	Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry (in Zambia)
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (in Zambia)
PTA	Preferential Trade Area
REC	Regional Economic Community
RO	Regional Organization
SACU	Southern African Customs Union
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADCC	Southern African Development Community Conference
TFTA	Tripartite Free Trade Agreement

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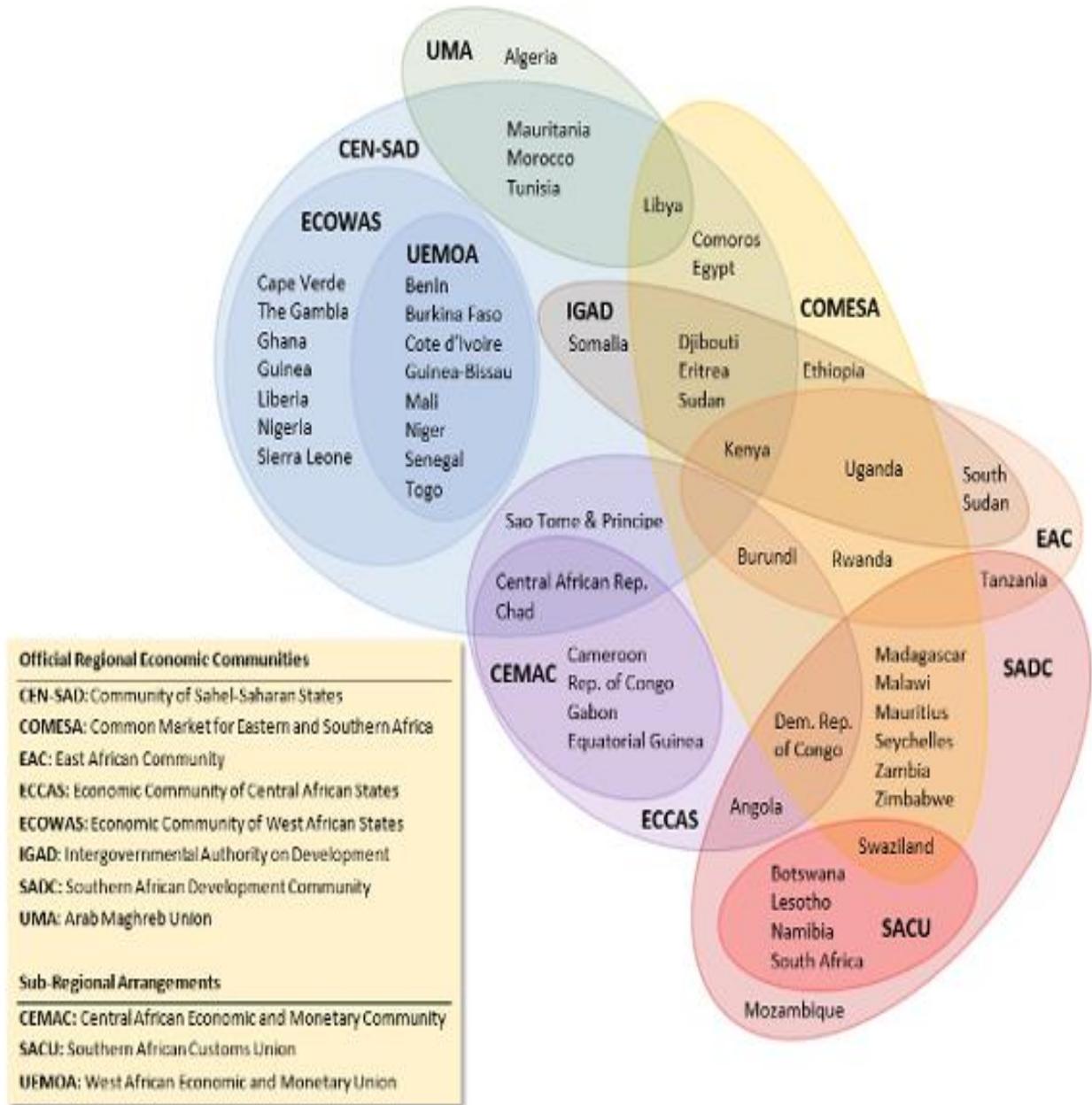
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Figure 1: Map of Overlapping Regionalism in Africa



Note: Reprinted from "The TFTA And Intra-regional Trade In Africa", by Ng, J. & Mumford, J., (2017, April 6). Retrieved from <https://www.howwemadeitinafrica.com/tfta-intra-regional-trade-africa/58187/>

Introduction

Africa's institutional landscape is defined by overlapping regionalism, which occurs when countries commit to multiple regional organizations (ROs) that overlap in both members and mandates. With approximately 40 ROs on the continent, according to one estimate, African countries are members of an average of eight (Byiers et al., 2019, p.4). Due to the unusual extent of Africa's crisscrossing overlapping memberships, the phenomenon is commonly metaphorized as the 'spaghetti bowl' (see Figure 1). As academic and policy research increasingly views overlapping regionalism as having negative effects on trade (eg., Chacha, 2014), regional integration (eg., Khandelwal, 2004; Dirar, 2010; Tavares & Tang, 2011), and the overall economic development of the African continent, the question of why countries persistently commit to overlapping memberships becomes perplexing.

Overlapping regionalism in Africa is often portrayed as a serious challenge due to its negative effects, especially on regional integration. Regional integration is, as Odumbura (2002) vividly defines it, "a fusion of two national economies into one" (p.187). It is an agreement to deepen cooperation through common institutions and rules. It is often achieved through a step-by-step process that starts with a free trade area (FTA), which is followed by deepened cooperation in the form of a customs union (CU) and a common market (CM) (see Appendix B for more detailed information) (Hartzenberg, 2011).

In contrast to current global trends, Africa views regional integration as a top priority (van Staden, 2018). However, while Africa has established its fair share of FTAs, deeper regional integration in the form of CUs and CMs is notably absent (Hartzenberg, 2011).¹ Overlapping regionalism is recurrently cited as one of the main challenges and reasons for Africa's failure to integrate (ECA, 2004; AU, 2015; ECA, 2019). This is mainly because countries can only belong to

¹ SACU and EAC are exceptions. SACU established the world's first customs union in 1910 (Dirar, 2010, p.225). EAC signed a CU treaty in 2004 as well as a CM protocol in 2009 (Buigut, 2012). Currently the EAC CU faces serious issues with internal politics and the EAC is a CM in name only.

one CU,² but also because it leads to confusion, duplication, and administrative and membership costs (ECA, 2007, p.3; ECA, 2019). The gridlock that overlapping regionalism causes in the integration process has been a key motivator for the establishment of larger FTA's, like the Tripartite Free Trade Agreement (TFTA) and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), that are set to resolve the issues of overlapping memberships (COMESA, 2013). That will not happen anytime soon.

Academic and policy interest in Africa's overlapping regionalism spiked in the 2000s, not least in Southern and Eastern Africa. The reason was that the region's largest and most overlapping regional economic communities (RECs), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), announced plans to form CUs. At the same time, the European Union (EU) forced countries to pick one REC to be able to negotiate European Partnership Agreements (EPAs) (Khandiagala, 2012). The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), backed by the African Union (AU), published a report in 2006 that argued that if countries did not rationalize their overlapping memberships, "it would [at best] bring the integration process to a virtual standstill and at worst it would split the African integration space" (p.127). Policy commentators agreed there was a need to change the status quo (e.g., Jakobeit et al., 2005; Draper et al., 2007; Hess & Hess, 2008; Braude, 2008). But despite the debates and external pressure from powerful international institutions almost no countries wanted to give up their memberships.³ The status quo remains.

This leads one to ask why overlapping memberships remain persistently popular in Africa. The research problem that this study seeks to address is that we have a limited understanding of what the reasons driving overlapping regionalism are. While it is understood that a mixture of political, economic, historical, and cultural reasons are factored into a country's decision to join

² It is technically impossible to belong to more than one CU because that would demand more than one common external tariff (CET) schedule, and the point of having a CU is for the members to have one CET (see Appendix B for more detailed information).

³ Exceptions: Namibia left COMESA in 2004, and Angola left COMESA in 2007. Rwanda left another REC, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), in 2007 but rejoined again in 2016 because "membership was no longer seen as an either-or decision" (Byiers et al., 2019, p.5-6).

and maintain overlapping memberships (ECA, 2006, p.54), there is little to no details about what such reasons entail or how they are linked. Recent research projects have helped increase our understanding of what drives overlapping regionalism (e.g., Vanheukelom et al., 2016; Byiers et al., 2019), yet questions remain.

Having a limited understanding has theoretical and practical implications. Within academia, rational functionalist theories of integration and cooperation, widely applied to explain institutional overlap in Europe (Hofmann, 2011) and Asia (Haggard, 2011), appear woefully inadequate (Börzel, 2016, p.55). At the same time, African regionalism is often portrayed to be steered by informal norms and processes (e.g., Söderbaum, 2010; Bach, 2015), which contributes to notions that Africa is uniquely different from other regions. It risks perpetuating potentially harmful ideas about African regionalism as being primitive, unsophisticated and hopeless. Moreover, a lacking understanding risks leading to uninformed and inefficient decision-making by misleading policymakers, donors, civil society, and other stakeholders (Byiers et al., 2019, p.1).⁴ This problem calls for a more nuanced understanding of what drives African countries to commit to overlapping memberships.

In order to better understand what drives overlapping regionalism in Africa, this study zooms in on the country case of Zambia to explore what the main actors perceive to be the reasons driving the country's dual memberships in COMESA and SADC. By creating an analytical framework, based on previous research and five theoretical perspectives, the study illuminates a variety of different driving logics and concrete drivers – a pluralism of perceptions – that are perceived to motivate Zambia's commitment to overlapping memberships.

⁴ The EU's decision to force African countries to only belong to one REC during EPA negotiations, without fully understanding why they belong to multiple RECs, can be interpreted as one such example. As Byiers et al. (2019) notes: "While anecdotally some [EU] officials have in the past suggested that 'each country should just choose one region', what may be more important is to understand what countries and their leaders seek from each of these regional blocs" (p.4).

Aim and Research Question

This study aims to better understand *what drives overlapping regionalism in Africa* through an in-depth case study on Zambia's dual memberships in COMESA and SADC.

To do so, the thesis attempts to answer the following research question:

- ❖ *What do the main actors perceive to be the reasons driving Zambia's dual memberships in COMESA and SADC?*

There is an intuitive connection between the aim and the research question that needs further clarification. The first premise is that overlapping regionalism is a result of states deciding to commit to multiple ROs (Nolte, 2018). The second premise is that the states' decisions to commit to one, two, or more ROs are based on the perceptions of the main actors, who are the people that have influence in government decision-making. Thus, to find what drives overlapping regionalism it is necessary to find what the main actors within the member states perceive to be the reasons driving the overlapping memberships.

Delimitations

Due to a combination of temporal, practical, and methodological factors this study has been limited to explore the *perceptions of main actors* in *one* African country and *one* set of two overlapping ROs. This section will both clarify and motivate these limitations as well as address potentially important ideas, actors and approaches that are excluded in this study.

First, the decision to focus on perceptions of the main actors within member states hinges on the premise that these perceptions matter most for why states commit to multiple overlapping ROs. In this study, perceptions are how a phenomenon is *understood or interpreted*. Perceptions can be misperceptions, but that does not make them less relevant since, it is assumed, these perceptions influence decision-making.

Second, the decision to focus on the *main* actors within member states excludes other potentially relevant actors. The main actors are people that have influence in government decisions. In the African context, different parts of the government bureaucracy and the ruling political elite are widely cited to play a crucially important role for decision-making. While many interviews were conducted with actors outside government, such as people affiliated with think tanks, foreign embassies, and international institutions, this was because they possess knowledge and experience of what the main actors perceive to be the reasons driving overlapping memberships. Due to factors of time and scope, the focus on the main actors' perceptions leaves the perceptions of other relevant actors, such as the private sector, unexplored.

Relevance to Global Studies

The academic field of Global Studies concerns itself with the study of globalization, to which the topic of overlapping regionalism is intricately connected. The 'spaghetti bowl' of crisscrossing trade agreements and institutional memberships (see Figure 1) is not only a visual illustration of overlapping regionalism but also an indirect consequence of globalization. It was when globalization accelerated in the 1990s that Africa's institutional landscape really assumed the form of a 'spaghetti bowl' (Udombana, 2002).

In the face of globalization, Africa viewed regionalism both as a political response (Bøås, 2001), and a way to gain access in a globalized economy (Oyejide, 1997). It was about "securing an appropriate place in a world that is characterized by brutal competitions" (Udombana, 2002, p.188). In this view, regionalism in Africa is more of a defensive maneuver against the threat of globalization than an offensive strategy to seize its opportunities.

As this study aims to understand what drives overlapping regionalism in Africa, globalization is tacitly understood as a relevant structural driver. In official rhetoric, African leaders continuously cite the need for regional integration to tame the marginalizing effects of globalization. "There is no room for the weak," announced the Chairperson of the AUC when he

signed the AfCFTA (The African Union, Directorate of Information and Communication, 2018). However, considering how important regionalism is portrayed to be in the face of globalization, its failure to materialize in the African context raises more questions than it provides answers.

The empirical findings in this study highlight the concerns and perceptions of national political elites. This provides valuable insights to Global Studies as a discipline that grapples with the local, national, and regional effects and responses to globalization. One may ask why regionalism, as a defense against the injustices of globalization, has so far been ineffective. In rhetoric, globalization is a major concern for Africa, yet in practice, as this study will show, other concerns take precedence.

Thesis Structure

The thesis is structured in eight chapters. The **first** chapter has introduced the topic of overlapping regionalism and clarified the underpinning aim. The next, **second**, chapter defines overlapping regionalism and presents the most relevant empirical research that focuses on why countries join and maintain overlapping memberships. Because it is limited to only the most relevant literature the second chapter is short and should be read as a preparation for the analytical framework. The **third** chapter summarizes how five theoretical perspectives explain overlapping regionalism before it lays forth the analytical framework used in this study. Chapter **four** presents and motivates the applied methodology and chapter **five** describes the background to Zambia and its dual memberships in COMESA and SADC. Chapter **six** presents and structures the findings of the empirical study in line with the analytical framework. Chapter **seven** analyzes and discuss the dynamics and relative importance of the main driving logics to Zambia's overlapping memberships. Chapter **eight** concludes the thesis.

Previous Research

Surprisingly little academic research has been conducted on what drives member states to commit to multiple ROs. Among the existent research on overlapping regionalism, efforts have mainly focused on analyzing its consequences and effects, especially in the area of trade and economics (e.g., Dirar, 2010; Afesorgbor & van Bergeijk, 2014; Chacha, 2014). As such questions remain relevant, technocratic assessments inevitably promote notions that overlapping regionalism in Africa is irrational and that African regionalism is a failure (Clapham, 1998; Bøås, 2001; Qobo, 2007). While this may not be technically incorrect it certainly does not tell the full story of the underlying rationales that drive overlapping regionalism. More in-depth research on *why* African countries persistently commit to overlapping memberships is wanting to provide a more nuanced understanding.

This chapter summarizes a selection of empirical studies that specifically focus on what drives overlapping regionalism. It starts with a definition of the concept of overlap before summarizing the main academic and policy research that explores the why of overlapping regionalism. The chapter should be read as a preparation for the upcoming analytical framework that is applied in this thesis.

Defining Overlapping Regionalism

Before exploring what drives overlapping regionalism it is necessary to clarify what it means. As stated in the introduction, overlapping regionalism occurs when two or more regional organizations share *members* and *mandates* (Weiffen et al., 2013; Panke & Stapel, 2018). This is the most commonly used definition and while some scholars have proposed adding other dimensions, such as overlap in resources (Hofmann, 2011, p.104), this study sticks to the standard definition. The term overlapping regionalism is however rarely used in policy literature, which commonly refers to it as dual/multiple memberships or overlapping memberships. Such terms emphasize the factual overlap in members without implying that there is an overlap in mandates, which, as briefly discussed later in this section, can be a contentious inference.

Within the standard definition of overlapping regionalism, *members* refer to the states that have signed up and agreed to follow the requirements of membership set out by the regional organization. A *mandate* refers to the task and function that the regional organization has authority to carry out. It is the organization's "functional dimension" (Weiffen et al., 2013, p.374), which the members have formally approved of.

Recent scholarship on overlapping regionalism further complicates overlap in mandates by separating the theoretical from the empirical. For example, Nolte (2014) recurrently critiques the notion that overlapping mandates are problematic. Instead, the focus needs to be on whether it leads to conflict or cooperation (ibid.). To study the effects of overlapping regionalism empirically, Nolte (2018) examines nine cases of what he calls *overlap in action* between two ROs in Latin America. He finds that overlap in action can have both a positive and negative effect on regional cooperation, mostly depending on the strategies of the involved member states (Nolte, 2018, p.148). This leads to the assertion that "overlapping might be more of a theoretical problem than a practical challenge" (Nolte, 2018, p.129). Overlap in action helpfully draws attention to the potential difference between overlap on paper and overlap in reality (Nolte, 2018, p.129). It is important to be mindful of this less rigid conceptualization of overlapping regionalism, as it connects to perceptions held by some main actors in this study.

The 'Why' of Overlapping Regionalism in the World

Overlapping regionalism is a global phenomenon that has been explored more in-depth in other regions. Weiffen et al. (2013) focus on the causes of one particular overlap in South America. They categorize the causes of overlap as either linked to the membership (*relational*), to the mandates (*evolutionary*), or to functional aspects. Examples of relational causes of overlap are member state conflicts and rivalries, bargaining issues, and balancing hegemonic powers (Weiffen et al., 2013, p.374). The evolutionary cause is the organization's "vision for the future", which can differ or compete with the vision of another organization. Functional causes

relate to the drive to “find more adequate and efficient solutions for regional problems” (ibid., p.375-6). After analyzing the overlap the authors conclude that the overlap is an “intentional political act” (ibid., p.384). The empirical evidence shows the overlap is due to relational causes – it is part of a strategy to counterbalance the hegemony of the United States – but with evolutionary causes being intertwined (ibid.).

Table 1: Yeo’s Analytical Framework East Asia

Inspired by Weiffen et al. (2013), Yeo (2018) extends the analytical framework to find the causes of overlap in East Asia. Yeo constructs a typology of six different causes for overlap, which he categorizes as either *material* or *normative* (see Table 1). The material causes are functional needs, geopolitical rivalry, institutional survival, and bargaining failures, and the normative causes are future vision and norms of informality (Yeo, 2018, p. 168). It is

Material	1.Functional needs and preferences of members 2.Geopolitical conflict and rivalry between members 3.Organizational/Institutional Survival 4.Bargaining failures, problems of distributional bargaining
Normative	5.Future vision/idea of region 6.Institutional and cultural norms of informality

Note: Reprinted from “Overlapping Regionalism in East Asia: Determinants and potential effects”, by Yeo, A. I., 2018, *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 18, p.168.

notable that the six determinants that Yeo applies to the East Asian context largely correlate to those identified by Weiffen et al. (2013) in South America. However, in order to adapt to the East Asian context Yeo adds institutional survival and norms of informality to the analytical framework.

Weiffen et al. (2013) and Yeo’s (2018) previous scholarly work on the causes of overlapping regionalism in South America and East Asia constitute the foundation for the analytical framework created in this thesis. But like Yeo’s framework for East Asia differed from Weiffen et al.’s framework for South America, it is necessary for the analytical framework in this study to incorporate what previous research has found to be drivers for overlapping regionalism in Africa. The next section provides a brief summary of the limited previous research that focuses on exploring those drivers.

The 'Why' of Overlapping Regionalism in Africa

There is only a limited understanding of what drives overlapping regionalism in Africa. While it is understood that many factors are relevant, the more intricate dynamics of such factors remain either unexplored or generalized. This is not without reason. Hartmann (2016) points out that one of the challenges facing the study of African regionalism is a lack of empirical data of decision-making processes (p.272). Some reasons cited are that governments lack transparency, presidents do not write memoirs, the ROs have little permanent staff and many tasks and responsibilities are outsourced to consultants (ibid.).

Under a section that explores the driving factors of regionalism (but not *overlapping* regionalism), Hartmann (2016) summarizes six important drivers. Put concisely, the drivers are the RO bureaucracies striving for influence, the hegemon and big powers striving for power, the influence of ideas and norms, civil society and private sector striving for utility, and external actors striving for influence (Hartmann, 2016, p.276-279). The final driver, which, he specifies, “convincingly” accounts for *overlapping* regionalism, is the ruling regimes and elites striving for power and legitimacy (ibid., p.278). Most of these drivers of regionalism are to various degrees included in the upcoming analytical framework.

In policy literature, ECA’s 2006 report, *Assessing Regional Integration in Africa II*, is perhaps the most cited assessment of Africa’s overlapping regionalism. In preparation for the report, ECA sent out a questionnaire to ask national policymakers from 26 African countries and the RECs about their views on overlapping memberships.⁵ The top five reasons that the policymakers themselves cited as drivers of their overlapping memberships were strategic and political reasons (50% of respondents), economic reasons (35%), complementarity (~28%), historical reasons (~21%), and geographical proximity (~21%) (ECA, 2006, p.54). While one can criticize the use of a survey method (and allowing respondents to list up to five reasons without

⁵ I reached out to the people responsible for the report to get hold of the raw data from the questionnaire, but the raw data was unfortunately not found.

indicating the order of importance), the results clearly show that reasons vary between states and that political reasons are, by a margin, most popular.

Another important study that focuses on reasons why overlapping regionalism is popular in Africa was conducted by the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM), a think tank. ECDPM's analysis is comprehensive and arguably the most successful attempt to explain and untangle the complexity of Africa's 'spaghetti bowl'. The ECDPM study finds that a range of factors, such as "origins, histories, allegiances among leaders, regional balances of power and influence, levels of integration reached, and the overall sense of belonging created," often matter more "in practice" than economic factors and efficiency (Byiers et al., 2019, p.3). The study further emphasizes the importance of political factors when dealing with ROs and questions of regional integration in Africa. The ECDPM project, together with Hartmann's (2016) drivers of regionalism and ECA's (2006) questionnaire, represents the main research that deals with the drivers of overlapping regionalism in Africa. The next chapter presents the main theoretical perspectives and the analytical framework that will be used for this study.

Theoretical and Analytical Framework

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. The first section sets out to summarize how five key theoretical perspectives explain overlapping regionalism. The second section will incorporate previous research and the theoretical explanations into an analytical framework. The analytical framework will be used to structure the empirical data and make for a theory-driven analysis of what drives Zambia's overlapping memberships.

Theoretical Perspectives

The purpose of this section is to briefly summarize the main theoretical perspectives that explain overlapping regionalism. Among the vast theoretical literature covering regionalism as a subject, I have decided to focus on three mainstream theories in international relations – liberal/functionalism, realism, and constructivism – with an addition of two mid-range theories – regime-boosting and institutional theory – that are more specific for overlapping regionalism. The three mainstream theories are used because they are the main international relations theories on regionalism (Hurrell, 1995). The two mid-range theories are chosen because they emphasize different actors and driving logics that have been cited as drivers of overlapping regionalism (see Hartmann, 2016; Byiers et al., 2019).

The overview of the five theoretical perspectives covers two key aspects: Who are the main actors and what are the driving logics. Liberal/functionalism emphasizes plural states influenced by the private sector and interest groups with the logic of utility maximization. Realism emphasizes unitary states and the logic of power maximization based on national interest. Constructivism covers the normative dimension, accounting for the perceptions of an aggregate of people and emphasizes a logic of community. Regime-boosting emphasizes the ruling elites and the logic of power maximization based on regime interests. Institutional theory emphasizes the RO bureaucracies and the logic of institutional survival.

The liberal/functionalist perspective, spearheaded by Mitrany (1948) and Ernst B. Haas (1961), says that states group together in regional arrangements because there is a need for it.

Regionalism is a “response” to needs arising from interdependence (Hurrell, 1995, p. 348). Decisions to create or join multiple ROs come from institutions within society on the domestic level. Interest groups and the private sector are actors that are driven by the *logic of utility maximization*. Formal regional institutions have a regulatory function to lower transaction costs and serve economic activity.

For realists, states join regional organizations in pursuit of their own national interests of power and state survival (Mearsheimer, 1995). States’ abilities to cooperate in an anarchical international environment is a matter of alliance-creation and balancing the power of more powerful states. It is driven by the *logic of power maximization* and is influenced by dynamics from outside state borders.

In breaking with the two previous materialistic theories, constructivism explains regionalism as driven by ideational commonalities, such as shared ideas, norms, and identities. Deutsch et al. (1957) can be cited as inspiration for the constructivist approach when they emphasized values and community as key causes of regionalism. Constructivist explanations highlight the “logic of community” (Hurrell, 1995, p.358). It gives importance to notions of ‘regional awareness’ as well as language, discourse, and the role of history to understand where a sense of community comes from (Hurrell, 1995, p.352). From this theoretical perspective, overlapping regionalism is a social construct that often arises from *competing* ideational factors.

Overlapping regionalism can more cynically be explained by regime-boosting, which is a theory that accounts for narrower interests (Söderbaum, 2004, 2007). Multiple memberships in ROs are driven by a *logic of power maximization for the ruling elites*. Overlapping regionalism provides opportunities for ruling elites to embolden patronage networks as well as boost legitimacy, image and status through summitry and international appearance (ibid.). The theory is related to neopatrimonialism in that it critiques Eurocentric assumptions about *unitary* states and *national* interests.

Lastly, institutional theory explains overlapping regionalism by pointing to the agency of the RO bureaucracies. It focuses on intra-regional interactions (Hurrell, 1995, p.357). The proliferation of overlapping regionalism has fed a growing set of literature exploring the role of secretariats, commissions, and organizational interplay, which is becoming increasingly relevant (Hartmann, 2016, p.277; Brosig, 2011). This perspective emphasizes the *logic of institutional survival* as a driver (Brosig, 2011, p.160). In the face of resource scarcity and competition, ROs expand their mandates in ways that create overlapping regionalism.

In summary, this section provided theoretical backing to explain the drivers of overlapping regionalism in Africa. Hurrell (1995) notes that, “it is far from clear that even the main lines of any historical example of regionalism can be plausibly understood by focusing on a single level of analysis” (p.357). Combined, the five theoretical perspectives include multiple levels of analysis and they cover much of what previous research finds to be the drivers of overlapping regionalism (e.g., ECA, 2006; Hartmann, 2016; Byiers et al., 2019). This theoretical framework plays a foundational role in the next section, which presents the analytical framework created to help find what drives overlapping regionalism in Africa.

Analytical Framework

After having summarized previous research and the main theoretical perspectives that explain overlapping regionalism in Africa, I will in this section present the analytical framework that guides my empirical study. The overall aim of the analytical framework is to serve as a bridge between the theoretical perspectives and the empirical reality. The five theoretical perspectives, each focusing on their own main actors and driving logics to overlapping regionalism, are concretized into five analytical categories (see Table 2).

While inspired by analytical frameworks used in the context of South America (Weiffen et al., 2013) and East Asia (Yeo, 2018) (see Table 1), this analytical framework is redesigned to better account for the African context. For example, by

Table 2: Analytical Framework

-
1. Functional Needs
 2. Political Considerations
 3. Ruling Elite Gain
 4. Institutional Survival
 5. Collectivist Ideals
-

incorporating *ruling elite gain* as an analytical category, which is tied to regime-boosting theory, it covers actors and logics that are referred to in previous research (eg., Hartmann, 2016, p.278). This results in a more comprehensive framework that captures the main drivers of overlapping regionalism in Africa.

Other notable adjustments to Yeo's (2018) analytical framework (see Table 1) is that the fourth and fifth determinants, *bargaining failures* and *future vision/idea of region*, have been subtracted. The reason for that is the limited scope of this study coupled with the addition of *collectivist ideals*, which is a broadened category that captures the normative drivers that fit in Yeo's two normative analytical categories. Consequently, Yeo's (2018) categorization of material and normative drivers has also been withdrawn from the analytical framework. However, because it remains a potentially useful categorization of different types of drivers the material and normative distinction will be commented on in the analysis (see chapter 7). Despite these adjustments, because the foundation of the analytical frameworks remains similar it allows for interesting cross-regional comparisons. The following sections present a wide selection of existent research that defines and further supports the inclusion of the categories in the analytical framework.

Functional needs

This analytical category captures explanations that view overlapping regionalism as driven by the liberal/functionalist logic of utility maximization. From this perspective, it is mainly the interests of the private sector and domestic interest groups that drives overlapping regionalism. Overlapping memberships benefit the economic interests of the private sector partly by providing greater market access, and complementarity. The proliferation of ROs and the subsequent overlapping regionalism follow the logic that "institutional [gaps]" are filled with institutions that fulfill certain needs (Jupille et al., 2013, p.47). Thus, overlapping regionalism is seen to be driven by an aim towards efficiency in an increasingly complex and interconnected world (Weiffen et al., 2013, p.372).

This is a popular explanation for overlapping regionalism, especially in the European context (Hoffmann, 2011) but also in other regions (see Haggard, 2011; Chacha, 2014). Traditional economic integration theory postulates that for African states to productively take part in the global economy it is necessary for the small and fragmented domestic markets to group together (Oyejide, 1997; Bøås, 2001). Weiffen et al. (2013) and Yeo (2018) include, to various degrees, a similar analytical category in their respective frameworks.

Political considerations

This analytical category captures explanations that view overlapping regionalism as driven by the realist logic of power maximization. From this perspective, it is mainly the national interests of the state that drive overlapping regionalism. Overlapping memberships benefit states by providing political access – a ‘seat at the table’ (Vanheukelom et al., 2016, p.19) or diplomatic channels (de Waal & Ibreck, 2016) – peace and security (Dirar, 2010, p.221), and strategic options to pursue national interests of power and influence (Mearsheimer, 1995).

This is a popular explanation for overlapping regionalism both in Africa and in other regions. ECA (2006) referenced political strategy as the main driver to overlapping regionalism in Africa (p.54). In Latin America, overlapping regionalism is characterized by a “counterbalancing” of hegemons, such as the United States or Brazil (Weiffen et al., 2013; Gomez-Mera, 2016). In territories of the former Soviet Union, ROs serve to offset Western influence (Russo & Gawrich, 2017). Other related concepts such as “rival regionalisms” have been applied to explain Asia’s so-called ‘noodle bowl’ (Frost, 2014, p.21). This analytical category is broadly defined to capture a variety of political drivers of overlapping regionalism.

Ruling elite gain

This analytical category captures explanations that view overlapping regionalism as driven by the regime-boosting logic of power maximization for ruling elites. From this perspective, it is mainly narrower interests of ruling elites – Heads of State, political parties, ministers in government – that drives overlapping regionalism. Overlapping memberships benefit ruling

elites by offering various forms of legitimacy and support that aids the incumbent political leadership (Söderbaum, 2004, 2010; Bach, 2015; Hartmann, 2016, p.278). Gray (2015) sums up the usefulness of this category stating that any “discussion of the benefits of international organizations is incomplete without the awareness of the ability of those organizations to reward not just member states, but also individual politicians” (p.5).

This explanation is commonly referred to in the African context. Söderbaum (2004) introduced concepts of *regime-boosting* and *shadow regionalism* as explanations for Africa’s ‘spaghetti bowl’ (p.68). He suggests political leaders or elites can use ROs to promote narrow interests of regime survival and personal enrichment (ibid.). The work of Bach (2015) and Lemarchand (2016) persuasively show that ROs can be venues for foul play. In Central Africa, ROs have “done little more than ensure the regular payment of salaries and perquisites for hundreds of civil servants, translators and service personnel enlisted in the ranks of its regional bureaucracy” (Lemarchand, 2016, p.240). This analytical category is, however, not uniquely African (see Malamud, 2013, p.9), and it is necessary to include in any analytical framework that aims to better understand the reasons for overlapping regionalism.

Institutional survival

This analytical category captures explanations that view overlapping regionalism as driven by the logic of institutional survival. From this perspective, it is the interests of the ROs themselves that drive the overlap. It draws inspiration from institutional theory which views ROs as bureaucracies with agency, driven by logics of institutional survival (Brosig, 2011; Gray, 2018). In accordance with research from Barnett and Finnemore (1999), the underlying assumption is that RO bureaucracies, “exercise power autonomously in ways unintended and unanticipated by states at their creation” (p.699). This means that it is not only decisions made by national policymakers that drive overlapping regionalism, but the institutions are also responsible.

This is another explanation for overlapping regionalism that has received attention globally. Both Breslin and Wilson (2015) and Yeo (2018) refer to organizational competition and survival

as a driver for the overlapping institutional landscape in Asia. While Weiffen et al. (2013) excludes this category from their analytical framework on the basis that state actors are more important in the Latin America region (p.374), Yeo (2018) includes ‘institutional survival’ in his framework because it helped explain the “mandate expansion” of ROs in East Asia (p.168). In the African context, one perception is that RO bureaucracies have a life of their own (Hartmann, 2016, p.277), and that overlap in mandates partly stem from “agenda inflation” (Byiers et al., 2019, p.8). Panke and Stapel’s (2018) comprehensive study of overlap further shows that ROs generally extend mandates and, thus, create overlap during their lifetime. This analytical category is included in the analytical framework to account for the role that institutions themselves may play in the creation of Africa’s ‘spaghetti bowl’.

Collectivist ideals

Lastly, this analytical category captures explanations that view overlapping regionalism as driven by the constructivist logic of community. From this perspective, it is the normative and ideational concerns – shared history, shared ideas, shared identities – of an aggregate of people in a country or region that drives overlapping regionalism.

This explanation highlights ideational aspects, such as regional identity and norms of solidarity. Yeo (2018) finds the constructivist logic relevant in the context of East Asia, which, he argues, has developed different regionalisms because of “competing visions” in the region (p.170). Latin American regionalism is also associated with the importance of competing ideologies (Malamud, 2013, p.5). In the African context, arguments emphasizing the importance of identity for region-building is championed by Hartmann (2018). According to Hartmann (2018) it is understandable that countries participate in multiple (sub-)regional initiatives because the continent’s heterogeneity and vast size naturally lead to multiple identities (p.61). Conversely, Franke (2007) suggests that overlapping memberships are partly a result of the “absence of regional identities” (p.44). In that sense, African states’ remaining obsession with sovereignty and nationalism hampers the construction of regional identities and thus lays no foundation for the construction of effective regional integration (Franke, 2007, p.44). This analytical category is

a necessary inclusion for the analytical framework as it accounts for the role of norms, identity, and culture to understand what drives overlapping regionalism in Africa.

Summary analytical framework

The analytical framework created in this study is firmly rooted in theoretical perspectives and previous research that explains what drives overlapping regionalism. The use of five analytical categories that are tied to five theoretical perspectives allows for a theory-driven analysis of the empirical data.

The summary below (see Table 3) outlines the key defining features of each analytical category. Each category captures theoretical explanations of overlapping regionalism and each theoretical perspective, in turn, emphasizes the main actors, or the actors whose interests matter most, and logics driving overlapping regionalism. Because not one single theory can explain why overlapping regionalism occurs, the incorporation of many theories give attention to factors that provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. The next chapter shows the methodology that was applied to find what the main actors perceive to be the reasons driving Zambia’s dual memberships in COMESA and SADC.

Table 3: Summary Analytical Framework

Analytical Category	Theoretical Perspective	Actors: Whose Interest?	Driving Logic
1.Functional needs	Liberal/functionalist theory	Pluralist State; interest groups, private sector	Maximize Utility/Economic Benefits
2.Political Considerations	Realist theory	Unitary State/Government	Maximize Power/Influence (national interest)
3.Ruling Elite Gain	Regime-boosting theory	Ruling Elite (self-interest)	Maximize Power/Influence (self-interest)
4.Institutional Survival	Institutional theory	Regional Organization	Institutional Survival/(Relevance)
5.Collectivist Ideals	Constructivist theory	People (Aggregate)	Community/Shared Ideas

Research Design and Methods

Because the research question of this study strives to explore the main actors' perceptions – their understandings and interpretations – of a phenomenon, this thesis adopts a qualitative interpretive research approach. The main sources are qualitative semi-structured interviews with current and former government officials and representatives of think tanks, civil society, international institutions, and foreign embassies. Writings and official documents from national political elites will give complementary insights into the perceptions of the main actors.

To gain a better understanding of what drives overlapping regionalism in Africa this study adopts a single case study design. A case study “consists of an in-depth inquiry into a specific and complex phenomenon (the ‘case’), set within its real-world context” (Ying, 2013, p.321). The single case study approach was preferable because it allows for an in-depth and properly contextualized exploration of what the main actors perceive to be the reasons driving overlapping regionalism (Seawright & Gerring, 2008). While it would have been interesting to conduct a comparative case study to find differences and similarities between two or more cases, such an approach would sacrifice the depth of the study as it prevents a full contextualization of the case. The following section will explain the case selection process.

The Case Selection

The selected country case of overlapping regionalism in Africa is Zambia, with its overlapping memberships in the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The remainder of this section sets out to explain what motivated this case selection.

To better understand what drives overlapping regionalism in Africa, the goal was to select a country case that is a member of two African RECs that overlap in both members and mandates. The parameters for the case selection were defined in two steps: First, to find a set of two of the most overlapping African RECs; and second, to find a state that is a member of both RECs, which is a) of moderate politico-economic stature, and b) an *active* member. A

country of moderate politico-economic stature is a country that is neither too significant nor too insignificant in terms politico-economic size and influence. While the heterogeneity of African countries makes it practically impossible to find an overall 'typical' case, where the findings may be more generalizable (Bryman, 2016, p.62), it is possible to find a more or less typical case within the politico-economic dimension. An active member is a country that ranks highly on regional integration indicator.

Finding a set of two of the most overlapping African RECs was straightforward. In Africa's 'spaghetti bowl', Eastern and Southern Africa is routinely cited as the region most troubled by overlapping regionalism (Dirar, 2010, p.222; Hartmann, 2016, p.274). In the region, COMESA and SADC demonstrate significant overlap of both members (they share eight members), and mandates (both are at similar stages of the integration agenda as they strive to establish customs unions). Ongoing efforts to harmonize their overlap through the TFTA shows their relationship is topical and active. COMESA and SADC were selected in the first step of the case selection because of their shared membership base, similar agenda, and topicality. The next step is to select one out of the eight countries that are dual members in COMESA and SADC.

The eight countries that are dual members in COMESA and SADC are the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Comoros, Malawi, Mauritius, Seychelles, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The first selection criteria, a country of moderate politico-economic stature, excludes the island nations (Comoros, Mauritius, Seychelles) as well as Malawi and Swaziland from the selection because of their small size. The second selection criteria, a country that is an active member in regional affairs, suggested that Zambia appeared a better alternative than both Zimbabwe and DRC. According to the Africa regional integration index, Zambia ranks as the second most integrated country in the COMESA region and fourth in the SADC region – higher than both Zimbabwe (7th and 6th) and DRC (10th and 15th) (www.integrateafrica.org/rankings/country-profiles/zambia).

In addition to theoretical concerns of politico-economic size and regional activity, practical concerns were also factored into the selection of Zambia. Questionable security conditions in Zimbabwe and DRC made it difficult to conduct a field study. Zambia is accessible, relatively politically stable, and English is the official language. The capital, Lusaka, is also home to the COMESA secretariat, and the SADC secretariat in neighboring Botswana is relatively close.

The fact that Zambia hosts the COMESA secretariat was also a theoretical reason. While it makes Zambia more unique as a case study, which decreases the potential for wider generalizations, it also opens for interesting questions about the importance of hosting regional institutions. I would further argue that the heterogeneity of African states makes it difficult to find a 'typical' case without unique traits. While being mindful of the uniqueness of the case and the diversity of the region, I maintain that it is possible to generalize findings to an extent.

In summary, Zambia was a good case to study what drives overlapping regionalism in Africa because it plays an active part in two of the most overlapping RECs in Africa. The next section will present the methods that were used to empirically answer what the main actors perceive to be the reasons driving *Zambia's* dual memberships in *COMESA* and *SADC*.

Methods: Semi-Structured Interviews

The use of semi-structured interviews was deemed the most efficient method because it allows for proper exploration of the main actors' perceptions of Zambia's overlapping memberships. Because publicly available information is both scarce and superficial, any attempt to gain a more in-depth understanding needs information provided by key actors and informants with the relevant knowledge and experience of Zambia's dual memberships.

Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to flexibly collect in-depth, detailed information. It gives the interviewees room to express their opinions and thoughts, which may lead to an unexpected exchange of information. This gives the researcher more leeway to improvise and explore the topic (Bryman, 2016, p.468).

Conversely, the use of a survey or a *structured* interview method could have been useful, but it would have severed the detail and depth of the information. In a structured interview or survey method new information that deviates from the interview guide or the questionnaire would be difficult to account for and it would not allow for further exploration. It would be too rigid and fail to provide information that falls outside the researcher's frame of reference. The use of semi-structure interviews was thus both preferable and necessary.

Additionally, semi-structured interviews were preferable because of the people that I wanted to interview. Most people with knowledge and experiences of what drives Zambia's overlapping regionalism are so-called *elite* members of society. They are current or former professionals and experts that all have a background in higher-level education. Bernard (1995) recognizes that semi-structured interviews is an efficient method when interviewing elite members of a community (p.210). The semi-relaxed and not-so-strict use of an interview guide suggests a level of professionalism and preparedness as well as interest in hearing what the interviewee deem important to talk about (Bernard, 1995, p.210). Semi-structured *elite* interviews have their own set of challenges, which will be discussed more thoroughly in the following section.

Data Collection

To describe the data collection process, this section is chronologically divided in three parts: The first part describes how interview participants were selected; the second part shows how the interview process unfolded; and the third part overviews the gathered empirical data.

Sampling: Participant selection

For participant selection I used methods of purposive sampling and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling is when participants are selected strategically so they are relevant to the research question (Bryman, 2016, p.408). This thesis sets out to find what the *main actors* perceive to be the reasons driving Zambia's dual memberships. There are two ways to find the answers to this research question through interviews: Either ask the main actors what their

perceptions are or ask informants with experience or knowledge of what the main actors' perceptions are. Because these groups of people are relatively hard to reach and they are so-called elites in society, purposive sampling and snowball sampling were the most effective methods (Bernard, 1995, p.97; Bryman, 2016, p.415).

The first step was to find the main actors and informants with relevant experience or knowledge. Because of the relative scarcity of such people, I initially cast a rather broad net over key institutions that work with issues of regional integration in Zambia. An online search rendered a list of possible contacts, including government ministries, international organizations, think tanks, civil society organizations, foreign embassies, donor institutions, and COMESA/SADC secretariats. Especially relevant institutions were targeted within government ministries, such as the Regional Integration Unit, an arm within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. E-mails from the websites and social media services like LinkedIn were good entry points for contact.

Once I gained access to relevant actors and informants, the selection process flowed naturally using a method of snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is a strategy whereby participants refer the researcher to other potential participants through their networks (Bryman, 2016, p.415). The advantage of such an approach is that it can allow insider access to a network of individuals that may be difficult to reach from the outside.

Snowball sampling proved to be the most efficient sampling method because people tended to be more responsive to messages they received on their private emails or phones, and more willing to meet when they were recommended by their acquaintances. In fact, most interviewees were happy to either directly contact friends and acquaintances on my behalf or share private email addresses and WhatsApp numbers.

The interview process

A field study took place over a period of ten weeks in Lusaka between February 5th and April 16th, 2019. The data collection period extends beyond those dates because interviews were conducted via skype before (January 28th) and after (May 1st) that period. By using purposive sampling and snowball sampling, I managed to conduct 22 interviews with 27 interviewees. All interviews were between 40 minutes and 2 hours long. They were recorded through the 'voice memos' application on my phone and transcribed in detail shortly thereafter. There was no language barrier since English was always used.

The interviews were conducted using an interview guide, which was prepared before my departure to Lusaka. The key questions were open-ended so that the interviewee would not be led in any specific direction, and I sought to make them explorative and humble in character. More specific follow-up questions were crafted to prepare for different possible answers. I did, however, update the interview guide throughout the data collection process. This did not get me off track since the main research question remained constant.

The main challenge in the interview process was to access the right people. I was trying to find the main actors, who were people with influence in government decision-making, or informants with experience and knowledge of those people. I admittedly doubted whether they would be willing to spend their time answering questions from a Swedish master student and discuss Zambian foreign policy. In the end, such concerns proved unfounded. In fact, at times I felt that my identity as a curious outsider was advantageous. People were generally very open and my identity often evoked curiosity on the interviewee's part as well.

Conversely, while my outsider identity may have eased the tensions and perhaps even helped me gain access to people, my role as a student occasionally conjured patronizing behavior. To be fair, it is normal that the interviewee is not aware of the interviewer's knowledge of the topic beforehand. However, I often had to subtly move the interview forward, past assumptions that I lacked very basic knowledge of Zambia's overlapping memberships. In the

grand scheme of things, this was a minor challenge that was pronounced in the initial stages of each interview. It is unlikely that it had a significant impact on the data collection.

There was also no such thing as ‘interview/research fatigue’. Some interviewees commended the choice of topic and welcomed more domestic debate and introspection about their dual memberships. Luckily, Zambia’s signing of the AfCFTA on February 11th was perfectly timed since it created a certain regional integration hype during my stay in Lusaka. This undoubtedly increased the relevance of my thesis and helped me gain access to people who found it to be an interesting topic to discuss.

Data and material

In the end, a rich quantity of qualitative data was gathered from a total of 22 interviews (14 in-person, five via skype, and three via email) (see Annex A). Since four out of the 14 in-person interviews were group interviews (with two or three participants) the total number of interviewees was 27.

The 27 interviewees constitute a comprehensive sample that covers a range of experiences and perspectives (see Appendix A for more detailed information). Their commonality is that they all have either direct experience or knowledge of what the main actors perceive to be the reasons driving Zambia’s overlapping memberships in COMESA and SADC. Naturally, there is considerable variety in the experience and knowledge that the interviewees possess. Some (notably interviewee #3, #5, #14, #19, #20) were former high-level employees, either in Government or COMESA, with insider knowledge and hands-on experience with Zambia’s main actors. Others (see interviewee #4, #12, #13, #16, #17, #18) were current government employees of low- and medium-level positions working at either the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry (MCTI) or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). They generally provided a perspective that was less critical and more representative of the official reasons provided by the Zambian government. The remaining 16 interviewees constitute a broad variety of people

with experience working or having worked (except one or two) with the Zambian government on issues pertaining to regional integration, COMESA and/or SADC.

In addition to semi-structured interviews, I also applied a method of document analysis. This was more so for complementary purposes. Relevant high-level opinions and perceptions were gathered from publicly available documents in the form of presidential speeches, parliamentary debates, news reporting, and past reports on Zambia's overlapping memberships. Zambia's government website publishes a selection of eleven presidential speeches (from between 2009 and 2019), and many dozen parliamentary debates, which were systematically searched for key terms, such as 'overlap', 'membership', 'COMESA', 'SADC', and 'regional integration' (www.parliament.gov.zm/publications). It was notable how few hits those searches rendered considering how important it is portrayed to be in other fora. News reports, both online articles and YouTube-clips, were reviewed to see how Zambia's Heads of State and government ministers, at least publicly, viewed the issue of overlapping memberships. Finally, reports, two of which unfortunately cannot be found online, that focus on Zambia's overlapping memberships were accessed through contacts (see Kasanga, 2007; Bwalya, 2008; Cheelo et al., 2012). While those reports focused more on the effects of multiple memberships, they also presented relevant findings of what key actors perceive to be the reasons for Zambia's overlapping regionalism.

The sampled empirical data used in this study was deemed enough to answer what the main actors perceive to be the reasons driving Zambia's overlapping memberships in COMESA and SADC. Strauss and Corbin (1998) says that the general rule to data gathering is that it is enough once "no new or relevant data seem to emerge" (p.212). Bryman (2016) points out that a lack of new or relevant data is not the same as interviewees saying the exact same things, but more about what is called theoretical saturation: That the data "no longer suggest new theoretical insights" (Bryman, 2016, p.412). I argue that was the case in this study where the last couple of interviews added more empirical detail than theoretical substance.

Data Analysis

To identify the relevant information from the vast amount of empirical data, I used a qualitative thematic analysis method. Thematic analysis was the most preferable method as my research question asked what the interviewees perceive to be the reasons for Zambia's dual memberships. I was looking to find and analyze patterns, or themes, of the interviewees' *perceptions* in the data, which thematic analysis allowed me to do (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.79).

To structure my analysis, I imported the transcribed interviews to the coding software NVivo before commencing the coding process. Coding refers to the "analytical processes" whereby data are "fractured, conceptualized and integrated to form theory" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.3). Accordingly, the starting point in the coding process was to identify (fracture) the data that was relevant for the research question. This was a tedious but necessary first step (Bryman, 2016). Because this first round of coding needs to be detailed it rendered a long list of different-colored codes.

The next step was to merge the fractured data into wider themes. The result of this process is seen in the results chapter where the themes are presented as the specific drivers of Zambia's dual memberships. At this point, one of the key challenges was to distinguish which code belongs to what theme. For example, while quantitative occurrence surely matters, I also needed to consider the qualitative occurrence of a theme in the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.82). The themes are also not mutually exclusive: One code could belong to several themes.

Lastly, the different themes were linked to theory through the analytical framework (see Table 2). The five analytical categories represented five theoretical perspectives, to which the different themes could be linked. It was noteworthy how comprehensive the analytical framework was, since most themes could be captured in one of the five categories. The analytical framework played a crucial role linking seemingly unimportant pieces of data to the different theoretical perspectives.

Ethical Considerations

Because the methodology used in this study involved interviews with other individuals, it was necessary to be mindful of some ethical considerations (Kvale, 2007, p.23). In accordance with Bryman (2016, p.138) and Kvale (2007, p.29), the interviewees were informed about the purpose of the interview, as well as my research question. I asked for permission to record and consent to use their statements in the study. Since my topic deals with government foreign policy, it was precautionarily assumed that it could be politically sensitive. While no interviewee directly asked for anonymity, I took precautions to the small yet conceivable risks by keeping the interviewees anonymous.

As for the power relations between interviewer and interviewee, Smith (2006) suggests that positions of power do not necessarily transfer to the interview space and calls for further reflection on the part of the interviewer (p.651-652). This was acknowledged as I needed to be conscious of my answers and interpretations, which amount to a form of power for the interviewer. The next chapter provides necessary background before the results.

Zambia and Overlapping Regionalism

This chapter aims to provide a descriptive overview of Zambia's (see Figure 2) experience with overlapping regionalism. It serves to provide necessary historical background and context on three historical aspects: Zambia's nation-building project; Zambia's role in the founding of COMESA and SADC and the evolution of overlap; as well as past and current efforts to ameliorate the effects of overlapping memberships.

After gaining independence from Britain in 1964, Zambia set out to unify a country made up of dozens of ethnicities, each with their own languages and customs. This was no easy task. The first democratic elections were marred by ethno-linguistic competition (Simson, 1985, p.15). In response to the instability and with the hopes of bringing national unity, President Kaunda declared Zambia a one-party state. Zambia's sovereignty was sacred, and nation-building was the top priority. To this day, 'One Zambia, One Nation' – a national motto and principle coined by Kaunda – is echoed throughout Zambia. Especially by the political elite (Prokopenko, 2018; Nsehe, 2016).

Parallel to Zambia's efforts to build a nation, there was a push to unite with other African countries through various regional integration initiatives.⁶ Out of the many initiatives, the arguably most ambitious are the two RECs: COMESA and SADC. They stand out as playing an important role with mandates ranging from trade and market integration to national resource management and peace and security. However, dual memberships in both COMESA and SADC create challenges both for Zambia and for the regional integration agenda at large.

The first important point is that Zambia has strong historical ties to both COMESA and SADC as a founding member. The history of COMESA goes back to the founding of its predecessor, the Preferential Trade Area (PTA), almost four decades ago. The PTA treaty was signed in Lusaka

⁶ In the six decades after independence, Zambia joined many ROs. In Africa alone, Zambia is a member of seven (ECDPM, 2017): The African Union (AU); Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA); Southern African Development Community (SADC); Southern African Power Pool (SAPP); International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR); Lake Tanganyika Authority (LTA); Zambezi Watercourse Commission (ZAMCOM).

1981 and the formal inauguration was, again, in Lusaka 1982 (Anglin, 1983, p.685). Zambia's ties to the PTA were notably strong at the time (ibid., p.691). Similarly, Zambia came to play a big role in the founding of SADC's predecessor, Southern African Development Community Conference (SADCC), which was also formed in Lusaka 1980.

Both the PTA and SADCC were political in their objectives and both cared for economic development. However, the two RECs also differed fundamentally in key aspects: The PTA treaty called for development through economic integration, market integration and trade liberalization, while SADCC aimed for development through more informal and flexible means of cooperation (Dirar, 2010). SADCC was founded by the so-called frontline states and was primarily involved in trying to break the economic dependence from apartheid South Africa. At their origin, SADCC was deemed as more political and the PTA as more economic. The two organizations overlapped more in members than in mandates. That would come to change.

In 1991, African leaders gathered in Nigeria to adopt the Abuja Treaty. It was a plan that articulated the formation of a united African Economic Community (AEC) built on the pillars of eight sub-regional organizations, known as regional economic communities (RECs).⁷ The Abuja Treaty outlined a plan for the RECs with deadlines for different stages of market integration that would eventually lead up to an integrated African continent. At the same time, South Africa freed itself from apartheid, thus making SADCC's main objective of countering South African hegemony redundant (Ng'ong'ola, 2000). These two events precipitated a "profound transition" for SADCC as it adopted a new treaty, which broadened the mandate to incorporate market integration, and became SADC (Vanheukelom & Bertelsmann-Scott, 2016, p.47). Simultaneously, the PTA made slighter revisions to its treaty in 1994 to become COMESA. A political commentator at the time anticipated what was to come: "It is difficult to envisage how SADC and COMESA, given their convergence to both sectoral cooperation and trade integration, can live and prosper with the overlapping membership of the Southern African countries"

⁷ It is worth noting that in the beginning there were more than eight RECs. The proliferation of RECs meant that the AU had to cap it at eight, which are known to be the 'recognized' RECs (ECA, 2019, p.38).

(McCarthy, as cited in Aryeety & Oduro, 1996, p.28). Southern Africa now had different organizations following the same agenda.

In the past 20 years, discussions about overlapping memberships have come and gone. As mentioned in the introduction, the 2000s was an especially eventful decade with both CUs and EPA negotiations pushing countries like Zambia to assess its overlapping memberships (e.g., Kasanga, 2007; ECA, 2007). Tellingly, neither the CUs nor the EPAs materialized. COMESA launched a CU in 2009 but it is yet to be operationalized, much thanks to overlapping memberships (COMESA, 2013). SADC's plans to establish a CU by 2010 have been put on ice, also citing the issue of overlapping memberships. The EPAs are commonly cited as disastrous (Khadiagala, 2012). Overlapping regionalism remains salient.

Figure 2: Map of Zambia and Southern Africa



Results

This chapter presents the empirical findings from the data collection process. It is structured after the analytical framework (see Table 2) with each analytical category receiving its own section. Matching key drivers are presented under the analytical categories. This chapter is followed by an analytical chapter that will delve deeper into the dynamics of the different analytical categories and clarify their relative importance as driving logics to Zambia's overlapping memberships.

Functional Needs

This analytical category explains Zambia's overlapping memberships in COMESA and SADC through the liberal/functionalist logic of utility maximization. Following this logic, two key drivers emerged in the empirical data: Market access and functional differentiation. These two rationales were commonly cited as the main reasons for Zambia's overlapping memberships. They also represent Zambia's official rationale for dual memberships, which is provided by the government. From this perspective, it makes economic sense for Zambia to belong to both COMESA and SADC because it increases the market size and they are complementary.

Market access: Size matters

When asked what the main benefits of dual memberships in COMESA and SADC are, most interviewees referred to the advantage of market access. Zambia gains preferential market access to many countries in Eastern and Northern Africa through the COMESA FTA, and to countries in Southern Africa through the SADC FTA.

Market access also seems to be the driver to dual memberships if you ask the Zambian government. It is routinely pitched as a major benefit for potential investors in order to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) (Interview #10, Foreign Embassy Analyst). Almost all government officials that were interviewed *first* named market access as the main driver for Zambia's dual memberships (Interview #4, MCTI; Interview #12, MCTI; Interview #13, MCTI;

Interview #17, MFA). One interviewee in a management position at the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry (MCTI) put it like this:

My understanding from the Zambian perspective (...) is that it is most importantly looked at from the private sector growth point of view. (...) The population of Zambia is too small to support private sector growth, so a deliberate policy was made to say, 'look we are going to expand our market if we are going to get both local and foreign investment'. Because of that aspect of the domestic market being too small we see Zambia now starts engaging in both bilateral, regional, and multilateral trade arrangements. (Interview #12, MCTI)

From this perspective, the most important actor and beneficiary of Zambia's multiple memberships in COMESA and SADC is the private sector – “the traders” (Interview #13, MCTI) – whose products get the chance to reach more people. It is the combined populations of COMESA and SADC – the markets – that is the main “motivation for holding on to the two” (Interview #17, MFA). When Benedict Musengele, a Senior Research Fellow at COMESA, was asked on Zambian television whether overlap with SADC was an issue, he confidently answered that it was not:

What COMESA has done is to enlarge the free trade market, and therefore it gives the participating member states a larger market for their products. And the larger the market is, the higher appetite you have for production, because you have a ready market. (COMESA Secretariat, 2019)

The quote captures the common perception that market size matters as a driver to Zambia's overlapping memberships in COMESA and SADC. Forsaking either the COMESA FTA or SADC FTA is not perceived to be an option for economic reasons. Many interviewees say it would shrink the market size, lower FDI, and cut the cord to big economic players in the two ROs.

Functional differentiation: “COMESA is for trade and SADC is for politics”

Another important liberal/functionalist rationale for overlapping regionalism is functional differentiation, which means that the dual memberships are rather complementary because COMESA and SADC have different strengths and areas of expertise. From this perspective, the issues of overlapping regionalism are exaggerated because overlap that exists on paper differs from overlap in reality.

The common perception that emerged from the empirical data was that Zambia’s dual memberships in the two organizations is rather unproblematic: “COMESA is for trade and SADC is for politics,” many interviewees said. As one lower-level government official put it: “COMESA is more of the economic driven agenda so it’s purely trade and regional integration. Whereas SADC has a political component, a political arm to it. That is welcome for Zambia” (Interview #4, MCTI). One civil society representative even said that COMESA and SADC had “different mandates” (Interview #6, Civil Society):

I think COMESA and SADC have two different mandates. SADC is not so much into trade related issues. It is more about governance in the Southern African region, although trade comes in. (...) For COMESA, its main focus is on trade. (Interview #6, Civil Society)

The view that COMESA and SADC do different things for Zambia extends beyond government and civil society. Representatives of two European embassies had a similar understanding of the complementary function of COMESA and SADC:

From our perspective we don’t see COMESA and SADC as necessarily overlapping each other. We perceive them to be active in different sectors and they thus rather complement each other. (...) If you look specifically at the mandates they might seem overlapping. However, as it de facto works, I don’t think the member states perceive of the multiple memberships as very problematic. (Interview #24, Foreign Embassy Diplomat)

I think we are looking at SADC as a political organization and COMESA as an economic one. (...) Whenever we talk about COMESA we talk about one-stop border posts, harmonization of standards, certificates – we basically talk about trade. When we talk about SADC we talk about taking positions on the actions in DRC, about the organ on peace, security and politics. We talk about political aspects. (Interview #9, Foreign Embassy Diplomat)

The understanding that the dual memberships are complementary is further reflected in the fact that the Zambian government uses different ministries as focal points to coordinate their activities with the two ROs. While Zambia communicates with SADC through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), all communication with COMESA is handled through the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry (MCTI) (Interview #4, MCTI). This has been the division of labor in government since the founding of COMESA and SADC in the 1980s, when the mandates of the two ROs did not nearly overlap to the extent they do today.

But far from all interviewees agreed with the statements that COMESA is for trade and SADC is for politics and that multiple memberships are not that big of an issue. The ones who disagreed and viewed the overlapping memberships as an important issue that needs further introspection were generally more inclined to emphasize another key driver: Politics.

Political Considerations

This analytical category captures explanations that say Zambia's dual memberships in COMESA and SADC is driven by the realist logic of power maximization. This section shows how political considerations are perceived to be the reasons driving Zambia's dual memberships in COMESA and SADC. The three key political drivers that emerged in the empirical data are Zambia's desire to have 'a seat at the table', host the COMESA secretariat, and counterbalance South Africa. Combined, the three drivers illustrate the Zambian government's underlying political motivations as key to better understand overlapping regionalism.

Having a seat: “It’s like a game”

One frequently mentioned political driver to Zambia’s dual memberships in COMESA and SADC was the desire to be part of regional politics and have a ‘seat at the table’. This provides both insight into domestic and foreign affairs of other member states and opportunities for Zambia to state their opinions. The former Chief of Regional Integration at ECA said that overlapping memberships are often a matter of political strategy:

It’s like a game to find out what enemies are doing in that regional economic community. (...) When you have political considerations coming in then every country asks, ‘what is the strategic advantage of belonging to this regional economic community’, not only based on economics but also based on political interests.

(Interview #1)

This point was reiterated by a think tank employee: “When you first asked the question of perceived benefits my thought was that there is all this geopolitics that you consider: Who is in which REC?” (Interview #23, Think Tank). Similarly, a Lusaka-based EU official said memberships in ROs partly serve “to emulate strategy of neighbors” (Interview #15, EU Official): “For Zambia, if Tanzania or DRC is not part of one then it matters for Zambia” (ibid.).

More was said about what having ‘a seat’ does for Zambia. A Zambian academic explained that “[multiple memberships] fosters peace and security for Zambia, particularly that we are surrounded by eight neighboring countries who are either in SADC or COMESA or both” (Interview #25, Academic). From this understanding, a ‘seat at the table’ is more than a strategy of power politics where Zambia can follow what neighbors are saying behind the closed doors of a Heads of State summit. Having ‘a seat’ is also about having a diplomatic channel to other states and an opportunity to further the national interests of Zambia. After attending to meetings in several ROs, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Harry Kalaba, told parliament that the, “active participation of [the president] in regional, continental and global affairs, (...)

will continue to advance Zambia's standing on the international stage and serve to promote Zambia's national interests" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016). That the president furthers Zambia's national interests in regional fora is not controversial by any means, but it highlights a potential driver of overlapping memberships. In the words of a former ECA official: "Every time you go to an event it gives you a seat at the table to state your view. (...) No matter how useful it is, it gives [the government] a venue to present their country's opinions" (Interview #8, Former ECA). A civil society representative said there is a notion that, "conversations will be happening without us so let's be there so we can be part of the discussion" (Interview #11, Civil Society).

Many interviewees noted that COMESA connects Zambia with states in Eastern and Northern Africa, and SADC connects Zambia with states in Southern Africa. The two RECs thus offer opportunities for the Zambian political elite to engage diplomatically with other leaders from south, east, west, and north of Zambia. A Zambian SADC employee argued that this political consideration was the main reason for Zambia's dual memberships. The interviewee saw little to no economic rationale for Zambia's overlapping memberships. In fact, the persistence to remain in COMESA were for "political reasons really," and by 'political reasons' he clarified that COMESA "has linked part of North Africa and East Africa [to Zambia]" (Interview #22, SADC). The political game is perceived as a key driver of Zambia's overlapping memberships.

Hosting COMESA: "It's power politics"

The second political driver is the Zambian government's desire to gain political influence by hosting institutions. From this perspective, more memberships in ROs translate to more opportunities to host institutions, which serve Zambia's political standing in the region.

Virtually all interviewees at least mentioned the positioning of the COMESA secretariat in Lusaka as a key driver to overlapping regionalism. Hosting the secretariat, they said, makes it practically impossible for Zambia to withdraw from COMESA. Several experienced interviewees

noted that hosting the secretariat was a decisive factor when there were actual discussions in government about leaving either COMESA or SADC:

Discussions have been there, where [the dual memberships] were brought under the spotlight (...), and the answer was, 'look, we should only belong to SADC, but because we are already hosting the COMESA secretariat...,' They left it at that. (Interview #26, SADC)

While there is a consensus that Zambia benefits from hosting the secretariat, different actors emphasize different types of benefits. Current government officials tend to point out the economic benefits of hosting the secretariat. Meetings are close so there is no travel costs (Interview #4, MCTI), the secretariat employs Zambian nationals (Interview #16, MFA), the secretariat buys services (i.e. consultancies, car hire, internet, insurance) from the Zambian private sector (ibid.), and the secretariat employs rich foreigners who immigrate and spend their money in Lusaka (ibid.).

But while government actors focus on the economic benefits of hosting, other experienced interviewees emphasized that it serves political motives. One former high-level government employee said hosting COMESA was an opportunity too good to forfeit. It provides “more influence” and “all these member states are clamoring for an opportunity to host” (Interview #20, Former MCTI). A think tank employee rephrased similar sentiments, saying that hosting is all about “power politics,” and it “raises your profile from a power perspective” (Interview #23, Think Tank).

An experienced former COMESA employee viewed the hosting of institutions as “power playing,” where Zambia’s “political muscles are validated by [its] ability to attract some of these institutions” (Interview #19, Think Tank/Formal COMESA). When asked to specify *how* Zambia increases its influence and power by hosting COMESA, he highlighted the benefits of access to its leadership. With the Secretary General residing only minutes away, it makes it possible for the president to “pick up the phone and ask ‘can you come to the state house, we have a

meeting about A and B, and C is on our mind” (Interview #19, Think Tank/Former COMESA). This, in turn, makes for greater access “to the region through the Secretary General,” and an increased ability to influence for example “where a meeting will be hosted, and therefore which decisions will be taken” (ibid.).⁸

It is no secret that there are political benefits of hosting international institutions. When Zambia won the right to host the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), an AU institution, in 2016, President Lungu triumphantly declared to parliament that it would “enhance [Zambia’s] standing on the African continent” (The Government of the Republic of Zambia, 2016). The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Joseph Malanji, indiscreetly said it was, “high time that Zambia is accorded the status it deserves for liberating the African continent,” adding that, “once the country shows prowess in hosting such secretariats it will be given other secretariats to host” (Lusaka Times, 2018). One can expect Zambia to be on its toes with more TFTA and AfCFTA institutions being doled out in the near future.

The role of South Africa

The third political driver of Zambia’s dual memberships is the hegemonic role of South Africa. The economic and political weight of the big power in the region, forces Zambia to both belong to SADC, where South Africa is a member, and belong to COMESA, so they do not get trapped under the influence of South Africa.

One of the first patterns I noted in my conversations about Zambia and regional integration was the paradoxical attitude towards South Africa. For Zambia, South Africa is a “big brother” (Interview #20, Former MCTI), the “biggest trading partner” (ibid.), and a “gateway to the rest of the world” (Interview #19, Think Tank/Former COMESA). However, South Africa is also a former enemy (fighting apartheid was the very reason why SADC and PTA were founded in the

⁸ It is perhaps only incidental that the 2018 COMESA Summit was relocated from Burundi to Zambia the same year that a new (Zambian) Secretary General was sworn into office. An outraged Burundian government received the news in May when it was scheduled to take place in June. Burundi has applied to join SADC (Ng & Mumford, 2017).

1980s) and a source of anxiety, especially for the private sector worrying about South African competition (Interview #7, Civil Society; Interview #11, Civil Society).

These double sentiments are captured in a 2008 study commissioned by Zambia Business Forum (ZBF). Interviewees from key institutions in the country were split on whether they preferred membership in COMESA or SADC. Presented with a hypothetical situation where Zambia picks one of the ROs to deepen the commitment, respondents in both camps paradoxically cited South Africa as a key reason for their decision. While those in favor of SADC pointed to South Africa as a crucial economic partner to side with, those in favor of COMESA named the “absence of a dominant figure like South Africa” as a key benefit (Bwalya, 2008, p.8). In basic terms, membership in an organization where South Africa is the dominant power can be perceived as both an economic benefit and a political risk, depending on who you ask.

As a political risk, some interviewees mentioned the fear of a domineering South Africa as a driver to remain in COMESA. As one political analyst put it:

Zambia’s economy is almost annexed by the South African economy. (...) That adds another dimension, that even when it comes to regional integration, I think Zambia tries to counter the South African economy by signing up to the different agreements.

(Interview #10, Foreign Embassy Analyst)

A notable number of interviewees viewed South Africa as *the* main reason why Zambia’s government will not consider leaving SADC (Interview #20, Former MCTI; Interview #23, Think Tank; Interview #19, Think Tank/Formal COMESA). From a counterbalancing perspective, South Africa is also the reason why Zambia’s government will not consider leaving COMESA. What remains clear is that it is difficult to exaggerate South Africa’s role in the matter. “For many decision-makers and policymakers, (...) their gut-feeling tells them they need South Africa” (Interview #19, Think Tank/Formal COMESA).

Ruling Elite Gain

This analytical category explains Zambia's overlapping memberships through more narrow interests of the ruling political elite. From the realist perspective, overlapping regionalism is driven by a logic of power maximization to further *national* interests. Conversely, the regime-boosting perspective, captured in this category, also views power maximization as the driving logic, but the objective is to further the interests of ruling elites rather than the interests of the nation. This is a subtle yet important difference. While difficult to avoid speculation, the next section conveys how some interviewees perceived that ruling elite gain is a driver of Zambia's dual memberships in COMESA and SADC.

Regime survival: Next to friends

On the one hand, having a seat at multiple tables in both COMESA and SADC can be a way for the political leadership to play a game of political strategy, increase Zambia's influence in the region, and further Zambia's national interests of peace and security. On the other hand, having a seat at multiple tables in both COMESA and SADC can be a way for the president and the ruling elite to meet with other leaders to cement personal friendships and gain international recognition that indirectly strengthens their hold of political power at home. Given the troubled record of Africa's post-independence political leadership, such cynical explanations for overlapping regionalism are common. More memberships offer more opportunities for ruling elites to ensure regime survival and preserve the status quo.

When asking interviewees what benefits the Zambian president might see in having dual memberships in COMESA and SADC, some emphasized a personal attachment. COMESA's former Secretary General, who had spent plenty of time mingling with political elites, said "they are doing it because they belong to a club," and "not because they are committed to how the club works" (Interview #14). A Zambian SADC official also noted the friendliness at these gatherings: "Those Heads of State cannot disagree with other Heads of State; the ministers cannot disagree with other ministers" (Interview #27). This adds to the assertion that overlapping memberships are about politics.

But whether the 'club' memberships of COMESA and SADC fulfill ruling elite interest or national interests remain difficult to ascertain. "Why would a political leader like ours, who has massive problems at home, want this additional responsibility of strong visibility and strong influence in two RECs when things are not well at home? Is it just propensity for greed or is there an endgame? Is it a legacy issue?" (Interview #19, Think Tank/Former COMESA). One speculation, based on the fate of past Zambian presidents, is that regional careers are excellent post-presidency opportunities (ibid.).

A more common assertion is that overlapping memberships could help presidents and ruling elites gain legitimacy, especially during elections. One interviewee said, "it seems like it helps to keep the wolves at bay for the politicians" (Interview #19, Think Tank/Former COMESA). Both COMESA, SADC, and the AU have Election Observation and Monitoring (EOM) missions employed to member states at the time of political elections. Such missions are seldom too critical of a fellow member state's election:

If your neighbors are saying 'well done', it is difficult for somebody further off to come and say, 'hold on, wait a minute, there was A, B, C'. Then they say, 'who are you to talk? Our neighbors are already patting us on the back for doing something that is free and fair'. I think the regional leaders are seeing that and using that to ride off each other and strengthen each other. (Interview #19, Think Tank/Former COMESA)

The idea is that more friendly EOM missions – more 'pats on the back' from friends and colleagues – can be perceived as a benefit from the perspective of the president and the ruling elite. Two other experienced interviewees expressed similar sentiments:

If you are a member state who is becoming a dictatorship, no one of those guys in SADC will get up and call to say, 'this is wrong you cannot do that'. They will stay away and

keep quite about it. So it is not serving the interest of the people but just the politicians.
(Interview #20, Former MCTI)

SADC always have these election monitoring things, and never do they come up and say, 'well that was a crock of shit, wasn't it?' Never. And they never will because they will not question the sovereignty of a neighbor. You have personal relationships. The president here gets on very well with Mugabe. But that is not a regime supporting another regime, just 'how did you manipulate the elections so well, can I learn from you?' (Interview #3, Former COMESA/Zambia Negotiator)

The COMESA and SADC Summits are grand events, where discussions happen behind closed doors. That ruling elites have a self-interest in such events is one perceived reason driving Zambia's overlapping regionalism. While it was only mentioned by few interviewees, it is a driver not easily dismissed.

Institutional Survival

This analytical category explains Zambia's overlapping membership in COMESA and SADC by pointing to the role of the institutions themselves. From this perspective, overlapping regionalism is driven by a logic of institutional survival where ROs 'spread out', expanding in mandates and members, to add value. It emphasizes the agency of the ROs and their bureaucracies and removes at least some blame from the member states. It is a necessary category to include given the perception that many issues that stem from overlapping regionalism – duplication, ineffectiveness, confusion, administrative costs – happened beyond Zambia's control.

Mandate expansion: "A mind of their own"

"You don't make the organization stronger than what you want to contribute as a country," said a diplomat at a foreign embassy (Interview #24, Foreign Embassy Diplomat). Conversely, a government official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs suggested that, "these institutions almost

have a mind of their own. Once they are formed, they start expanding their mandates and go into different areas” (Interview #16, MFA). Without analyzing the level of truth to these two statements, they reflect two contentious ideas from the interviews. The latter statement emphasizes the role the ROs play in causing COMESA and SADC to overlap.

It is noteworthy that most of the interviews start off with a history lesson of Zambia’s dual memberships in COMESA and SADC. The moral of the story is always the same: When Zambia founded the organizations in the early 1980s, the two ROs were *not* overlapping like they are today. Overlap existed but COMESA was the trade organization and SADC was the political organization. One interviewee, who worked within the ranks of COMESA during the 1990s, pointed this out. He argued that the overlap was “historical,” adding that “it is not like it was intentional,” and cited this as the main reason for Zambia’s overlapping memberships (Interview #5, Former Deputy SG COMESA). Similarly, a government official described a situation where Zambia did not really have a say in the matter:

“When SADCC became SADC (...) that was also when the mandates expanded. And as it was expanding, we were part of it. And COMESA was also expanding to take on peace and security issues and we were also there.” (Interview #16, MFA)

This represents a common perception among interviewees that Zambia was in it from the start and then things happened outside Zambia’s control.

The expansion of mandates was a topic that interested the few interviewees that were part of the donor community. A diplomat from a big donor country noted that the general perception from the embassy community is that COMESA is chasing too many opportunities and thus spreading itself too thinly (Interview #24, Foreign Embassy Diplomat). “We want COMESA to go back to its original objectives, (...) and focus the organization” (ibid.). An official at the EU, the biggest external donor, said that because ROs need funding, “they get involved and they try to

do things they don't have capacity to do" (Interview #15, EU Official). The perception is that ROs overcommit to new programs and projects partly because that is where the funding is.

Interestingly, while interviewees from the donor community noted the ROs unsustainable expansion, representatives from the ROs themselves often argued for the strength and relevance of their organization relative to the other. The more institutions and projects their organization had and the further the organization was in the integration agenda, the better and more relevant their organization was. One SADC official reflected on how multiple memberships leads to competition:

Multiple memberships bring about competition because at the end of the day you are trying to be ahead. You are not only competing for member state resources, but you are also trying to be ahead in quite a number of aspects. (Interview #26, SADC)

The fact that COMESA launched a customs union in 2009, and markets itself as a customs union today despite not being operationalized, is perceived as a way to get ahead: "They are saying, 'look we are [a customs union]'. They want to be ahead of SADC, they want to be ahead of EAC" (Interview #27, SADC). When I asked a government official whether COMESA and SADC had a cooperative or competitive relationship, he said there are notable signs of competition stemming from the fact that both ROs are funded by the same donors: "You find that they start creating these extra programs because they want to receive money from donors, and when they get the money you see that they are proud of that" (Interview #16, Government Official MFA).

There are perceptions that one driver of overlap is the ROs' efforts to add value. This causes mandates and memberships to expand, which creates or increases the overlap. It is a formula which many interviewees perceive to be a key reason driving the overlap between COMESA and SADC.

Collectivist Ideals

This last analytical category explains Zambia's overlapping memberships in COMESA and SADC through a logic of community. Aside from materialist motivations of resources and power, there is an important normative dimension that drives Zambia's overlapping regionalism. This category captures the common perception that the dual memberships are driven by shared norms of solidarity.

Norms of solidarity, belonging, and good neighborliness

Solidarity, belonging, and good neighborliness are reoccurring concepts that seem to perpetuate perceptions of Zambia's dual memberships in COMESA and SADC. For many interviewees, deciding to leave one of the organizations is difficult to imagine, not only because of what Zambians would say but also because of what fellow member states would say. Interviewees hypothesized other countries would accuse Zambia of being, "not loyal" (Interview #2, Private Sector), and "selfish" (Interview #6, Civil Society).

The attachment to the two ROs is accentuated by Zambia's strong historical links to their founding. As one government official puts it: "There is this attachment to the institutions because we were founding members. (...) We have that attachment to SADC and also to COMESA, so it is very difficult to say that we should pull out of one" (Interview #16, Government Official MFA). A former high-level government official put it best:

Even if empirical evidence indicate that it will be more beneficial for countries like Zambia to belong to one and reap the maximum benefits, they still want to retain the two. Not necessarily because of economic benefits but because of the historical: Because of how the two organizations were founded. And in terms of Zambia as a central founding member they might think it is betrayal to leave now. That is the challenge I see. (Interview #20, Former MCTI)

In addition to the historical attachment to the ROs there are strong norms and ideas of continental unity and being a good neighbor. One civil society representative viewed Zambia's push towards regional integration as something that is done because, "we want to do what other countries are doing," and "because it is the continental agenda" (Interview, #6, Civil Society). For example, several interviewees pointed out that the main reason why Zambia eventually signed the AfCFTA in February 2019 was the "continental pressure" (Interview #4, MCTI; Interview #7, Civil Society; Interview #11, Civil Society). Similarly, an analyst at a foreign embassy said that Zambia stand committed to both ROs, "because we want to show good neighborliness" (Interview #10, Foreign Embassy Analyst). He added that "you would rather be with the crowd than moving against it" (ibid.). These examples are manifestations of norms of solidarity in African international politics.

The concept of 'good neighborliness' is reiterated by Zambia's political elite. In his 2016 presidential speech, President Lungu told parliament that the government, "will continue to be guided by the principles of good neighborliness, non-interference in internal affairs of other countries and economic diplomacy" (The Government of the Republic of Zambia, 2016). The former Minister of Foreign Affairs reasserted that Zambia's foreign policy follows "values of good neighborliness, non-discrimination and co-existence" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016).

The strong principles and norms of solidarity, belonging, and good neighborliness are collectivist ideals that are perceived to be reasons driving Zambia's dual memberships in COMESA and SADC. The constructivist logic of community perpetuates the empirical data, and it makes for a convincing normative driver of overlapping regionalism.

Summary Results

This chapter showed what the main actors perceived to be the reasons driving Zambia's dual memberships in COMESA and SADC. As shown in Table 4, the analytical framework categorized and tied perceived drivers to different actors and driving logics. The relevance of all five analytical categories and the eight perceived drivers paint a picture where Zambia's dual

memberships may satisfy the interests of a variety of actors. It shows the relevance of a variety of logics and theoretical perspectives in explaining what drives Zambia’s dual memberships. The next chapter is set to delve into the dynamics of the different drivers and clarify the relative importance of the analytical categories in the case of Zambia.

Table 4: Summary Drivers of Zambia’s Overlapping Memberships

Analytical Category	Drivers of Zambia’s Overlapping Memberships	Actors: Whose Interest?	Driving Logic	Theoretical Perspective
Functional Needs	1. Market Access 2. Functional Differentiation	Pluralist State Interest Groups Private Sector	Utility	Liberal/ Functionalist
Political Considerations	3. Having a Seat 4. Hosting COMESA 5. The Role of South Africa	Unitary State/ Government	Power (National Interest)	Realist
Ruling Elite Gains	6. Regime Survival: Next to Friends	Ruling Elite (Self-interest)	Power (Regime Interest)	Regime- Boosting
Institutional Survival	7. Mandate Expansion	Regional Organization	Survival	Institutionalist
Collectivist Ideals	8. Norms of Solidarity, Belonging and Good Neighborliness	People (Aggregate)	Community	Constructivist

Analysis and Discussion

The analytical framework used in this thesis placed the main actors' perceived reasons driving Zambia's dual memberships in COMESA and SADC into one of five analytical categories that each capture different driving logics of overlapping regionalism (see Table 4). This chapter delves into the dynamics of the different analytical categories. It serves to tie the results back to theory and assess the five analytical categories' relative importance in explaining Zambia's dual memberships in COMESA and SADC.

Which Driving Logic Matters Most?

This section sets out to assess the relative importance of the five analytical categories. It analyses and discusses the different dynamics and aspects of each analytical category, while arguing for their relative importance as driving logics to Zambia's overlapping memberships.

Functional needs: Inflated importance

The relative importance of *functional needs* (logic of utility maximization) as a driver to Zambia's overlapping memberships in COMESA and SADC is deemed important. This importance, I argue, is partly because of the fluidity of perceptions and because it is easy to inflate its explanatory value as a driver to overlapping regionalism.

Interviewees commonly referenced market access and functional differentiation as key drivers to Zambia's overlapping memberships. It is notable that most of the interviewees doing so were optimistic about Zambia's dual memberships. Or at least generally not as critical as interviewees who emphasized *political considerations*. Furthermore, most government officials referenced market access and functional differentiation as the main driver.

Whether interviewees are optimistic or more critical towards overlapping memberships is an interesting pattern in the empirical data which highlights a difference of perception. The phenomenon of overlap and its effects are interpreted and understood differently. I suggest that part of this difference in perception stem from different interpretations of overlap on

paper versus overlap in practice. This is a confusing yet potentially useful distinction, which has been covered in recent scholarship on overlapping regionalism.

Nolte (2018) attempts to distinguish overlap on paper from overlap *in action*. After having studied the effects of overlapping regionalism in Latin America, Nolte (2018) argued that “overlapping might be more of a theoretical problem than a practical challenge” (p.129). Nolte’s (2018) insights connect to the empirical findings in this study. One high-level actor referred to the academic debate of overlapping memberships as ‘intellectual confusion’:

This thing about overlapping memberships have been overhyped. (...) It is theoretical. It is not based on any premise. I mean I can have an hour. One institution can be strong in one way and another institution can be strong in another way. (Interview #5, Former Deputy SG COMESA)

This idea that COMESA and SADC are purposed for different things was popularized by several interviewees with the phrase: ‘COMESA is for trade and SADC is for politics’. The common perception among the main actors was that the two RECs serve complementary functions, and that the issues ascribed to overlapping memberships are exaggerated. This was interesting because many other interviewees had different opinions. One SADC representative was disgruntled by how many technocrats in government, “don’t fully understand or appreciate what regional integration is and its implications” (Interview #26, SADC):

SADC’s agenda is broader (...), SADC is talking about programs to develop infrastructure, which will enable trade to occur. It will facilitate for goods and people and services to move in the region. So how can somebody say it is political? It is the conception. (Interview #26, SADC)

Without assessing the level of truth to whether ‘COMESA is for trade and SADC is for politics’, the empirical findings give ample evidence that perceptions of the main actors vary, not least

regarding whether Zambia's overlapping memberships is a problem or not. And for those who argue that it is less of a problem, *functional needs* is perceived to be the main driver. I contend that the analytical category is important as a driver but I want to emphasize that perceptions differ and they also matter.

Secondly, I suggest that *functional needs* is important as a driver but that it is easy, and even preferable, to inflate its importance as an analytical category. Market access is routinely referenced as the main reason driving Zambia's overlapping memberships. This is a common perception. When ECA was commissioned to assess Malawi's dual memberships in COMESA and SADC in 2007, the main benefits of the arrangement were said to revolve around market access:

The benefits of dual membership relate largely to the possibilities of deriving substantial economies of scale with respect to various activities typically associated with the expansion of trade and overall economic growth. (p.3)

This is in line with the empirical findings of this study, which show that market access was perceived to be a key reason driving Zambia's dual memberships. But whether market access is as important as many people suggest is doubtful. Especially because of the limited role that domestic groups are said to have in a country like Zambia (Chacha, 2014, p.524). While many interviewees cite market access as the main driver to Zambia's dual memberships, it is reasonable to believe that it is cited as the main drivers because that is what it should be. After all, as Oyejide et al. (1997) say: Because regional integration essentially deals with economic relations between countries, "it must be justified in economic terms" (p.37). Zambia's dual memberships may be justified in economic terms in theory but in reality, the record of economic gains is bleak.

In sum, while *functional needs* is important as a driver to Zambia's overlapping memberships, that is because the common perceptions say so. I further suggest that the importance of

functional needs as an analytical category is easy to inflate simply because functional needs should be the driver. In comparison with other analytical categories, however, *functional needs* is more likely to play a secondary, tertiary or even quaternary role as a driver to Zambia's overlapping memberships.

Political considerations: Above all else

The relative importance of *political considerations* (logic of power maximization) as a driver to Zambia's overlapping memberships is deemed most important. After motivating that this category is the main driving logic to Zambia's dual memberships, I suggest that it does not work in isolation. Other categories, such as *functional needs*, serve a secondary reinforcing role.

The importance that is ascribed to *political considerations* is unsurprising. When ECA (2006) asked policymakers from 26 African countries why they belong to multiple RECs, the most common answer was "strategic and political reasons" (p.54). Previous research in Africa tend to point out the primacy of political factors over economic factors (Braude, 2008, p.21). Kasanga (2007), who conducted an independent study on Zambia's dual memberships, concluded that "for Zambia, historical and political reasons appear to have influenced the current situation rather than means of achieving economic objectives" (p.12).

Interviewees often explained that politics take precedence. The former Secretary General of COMESA put it in no uncertain terms: "[Regionalism] is essentially a political project, first and foremost, and secondly an economic project" (Interview #14). The former Deputy Secretary General of COMESA explained it further:

The decision-makers on direction and policy are the politicians – those in government. So there is always a political overhang. It is not bureaucratic, like the EU. (...) The Heads of State summit and the Council of Ministers still determine everything, and they tend to go in the direction which they feel comfortable with. (Interview #5)

I argue that *political considerations* is the most important analytical category explaining Zambia's dual memberships. Out of the eight drivers that span the five analytical categories (see Table 4), there are two that stand out as the most important: Hosting the COMESA secretariat and the role of South Africa. But while I have categorized both drivers as *political considerations*, I contend that their importance needs to be understood in combination with other analytical categories, especially *functional needs*. Before discussing the interconnection between the two categories, I will motivate why the two drivers are most important.

The best clues of what the main actors perceive to be the most important drivers are found in Zambia's past discussions about their overlapping memberships. A handful of interviewees with experience and knowledge about the inner workings of the Zambian government noted that there have been informal behind-closed-doors conversations about leaving one of the two RECs (Interview #10, Foreign Embassy Analyst; Interview #19, Think Tank/Former COMESA; Interview #20, Former MCTI). On two occasions (that have come to my attention) discussions were serious. The first one was in 2006 when the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry commissioned an independent study to figure out which REC they should pick in the face of EPA negotiations and plans to form CUs (Interview #20, MCTI). The second one was in 2010, and this time the Ministry of Finance was concerned with tariff revenues and expensive membership contributions (Interview #19, Think Tank/Former COMESA). The fact that different ministries discussed it at different times for different reasons is an interesting insight that will be reflected upon in the concluding remarks.

When the commissioned studies were presented for the Zambian government the conclusions were the same. Zambia cannot leave either REC because it is hosting COMESA and South Africa is in SADC. Interviewees portrayed the situation as a dilemma for Zambia:

South Africa is a big brother in the region, and you want to be aligned with the big brother in terms of trade. So from that point of view it has been a big dilemma for the

government. And for COMESA, they are hosting that. So how do you abandon that? They find there is a big problem. (Interview #20, Former MCTI)

The one that made most sense to stay in, purely based on revenues, was COMESA. And they hesitated because COMESA, we have the secretariat here which was wanted, and South Africa is in SADC and not in COMESA, which is a major trading partner. (...) But many decision-makers, they hesitate whenever you say that it is necessary to review the relationship with SADC because of South Africa. Their gut-feeling tells them they need South Africa. (Interview #19, Think Tank/Former COMESA)

The first quote referenced the discussion that took place in 2006-2007, and the second quote referenced the discussion in 2010. Both interviewees attended government meetings at the time. Many interviews mentioned these two factors as the key drivers for Zambia's dual memberships.

However, as I alluded to earlier, I further suggest that the importance of these two drivers need to be understood as a combination of several analytical categories. For example, *collectivist ideals* (norms of solidarity, culture, identity) together with *functional needs* (trade prospects, economic growth) play a reinforcing, secondary role for the importance of South Africa as a driver, while *political considerations* (counterbalancing, diplomatic relations, political strategy) remains the primary rationale.

It is possible to argue that *functional needs* and the economic logic of utility maximization trumps the logic of power maximization in explaining these two drivers but given how *political considerations* tendentially "[override] rational economic arguments," that is unlikely (Interview #20, Former MCTI). Moreover, the 2010 study even recommended the Minister of Finance to leave SADC based on an economic logic, but it was not a very tempting suggestion. Based on what this study has shown, there were likely more than one driving logic at play.

Ruling elite gain: Underreported

The relative importance of *ruling elite gain* (logic of power maximization for the regime) as a driver to Zambia's overlapping memberships is deemed more important than it appears. While the results show that *ruling elite gain* is relevant as a perceived driver, it was explicitly mentioned by few interviewees. There are three reasons to believe that its explanatory value is higher than the empirical data suggests: a) there are methodological difficulties attached to reporting bias, b) it has theoretical strength, and c) it is often confused with political considerations. The remainder of this section makes the case that *ruling elite gain* is an important driver to overlapping regionalism in the African context.

First, as an analytical category, *ruling elite gain* faces methodological difficulties of reporting bias. Reporting bias refers to the tendency to underreport. During the data collection process, it is reasonable to believe that main actors are wary to admit that decisions have been made based on narrower self-interests instead of national interests. Informants with insider knowledge of such narrow motivations would also be careful to speak of it in an interview setting. While the qualitative method of semi-structured interviews was suitable to find this driver, underreporting may have affected the lack of information.

Second, scholarship on ruling elite gain aptly explains Africa's overlapping memberships in theory (e.g., Söderbaum, 2010; Gray, 2015; Börzel, 2016, p.55; Hartmann, 2016, p.278). It is important to note that academic literature on regime-boosting as a strategy and driver of African regionalism is essentially a critique of Eurocentric assumptions that African states are *unitary* states that make decisions based on *national* interests (Jackson, 1990; Söderbaum, 2007). One of the interviewees highlighted this potentially skewed understanding of African statehood:

If we look at European politics (...), at the end of the day [the president] is a servant. When he gets in that office, he is not the boss but a servant of the people. But [in Africa] it is the other way around: Our leaders are bosses. (Interview #2, Private Sector)

This quote speaks to the idea that government decisions are made not with the interests of the nation at heart, but with the narrower interests of the ruling elites. In a report that summarizes two years of research on what drives and constrains the progress of Africa's ROs, Vanheukelom et al. (2016) emphasize that it is crucial to understand 'national' interests as being "defined by domestic ruling elites" (p.37). They further suggest that the fact that ruling elite interests have such influence in national decision-making partly explains the popularity of overlapping memberships in Africa (Vanheukelom et al., 2016, p.18). Thus, the strength in *ruling elite gain* as a driver lies in its theoretical reconceptualization of the *unitary* state and *national* interests in the African context.

Thirdly, and this connects to the first two, *ruling elite gain* is often confused as *political considerations*. Ruling elite interests tendentially link with national interests. For example, peace and security are fundamental national interests, but they are also fundamental ruling elite interests. The results chapter in this thesis distinguished between national and ruling elite interests, yet in light of academic and policy literature the difference between the two may not be as clear-cut as one thinks (e.g., Söderbaum, 2010; Vanheukelom et al., 2016). Consequently, drivers that have been interpreted as *political considerations* in this study may be better placed under *ruling elite gain*, and vice versa.

Institutional survival: No overlap to overlap

The relative importance of *institutional survival* as a driving logic to Zambia's overlapping memberships is deemed less than the remaining four analytical categories. While it does provide nuance to how the overlap was *created*, its explanatory value in general is relatively weak. It focuses on one aspect of the overlapping memberships and it provides few clues as to why Zambia remain committed to the two RECs, despite having discussed the option of leaving one organization in the past (see Kasanga, 2007).

Critics could point out that this category is qualitatively different from the others in that it explains only what drives the *creation* of overlap, focusing on the aspect of mandates but not membership choice or Zambia's own decision-making. In a way, it is analyzed and conceptualized differently from the other four categories. This is a fair point, but it is nevertheless relevant as a driving logic. Several scholars discuss the autonomous role that secretariats and ROs play in overlapping regionalism (e.g., Brosig, 2011; Hartmann, 2016; Gray, 2018). Byiers et al. (2019) notes the occurrence of "agenda inflation" in Africa (p.8). Yeo (2018) included 'institutional survival' in his framework because it helped explain the "mandate expansion" in East Asia (p.168).

Insofar that the research question asked for the main actors' *perceived* reasons driving Zambia's overlapping memberships, its inclusion in the analytical framework is enlightening. Some interviewees shifted the responsibility to the RECs based on the perception that the RECs have a 'life of their own' and that it was not Zambia's intention, nor fault, that COMESA and SADC started to overlap. After all, when Zambia founded the two organizations in the 1980s, they had different mandates and different agendas and then the overlap happened outside Zambia's control. As mentioned in chapter 5, the overlap did happen fast but whether REC bureaucracies are responsible is a different question. Structural drivers, like globalization (see chapter 1.3), and a top-down AU-driven agenda played its part.

The notion that the overlap was unintentional is interesting for comparative purposes. Weiffen et al.'s (2013) assessment of the drivers of overlap in Latin America concludes that the overlap "was an intentional political act" (p.384). This is often the case when states join or create new ROs within the policy space of existing ones. Conversely, COMESA and SADC's mandates converged along the way. This discussion sheds light on the interviewees' perception that Zambia's overlapping regionalism was not intentional. At least not when it started.

Collectivist ideals: Normative reinforcement

The relative importance of *collectivist ideals* (logic of community) as a driver to Zambia's overlapping memberships is deemed more important than it appears. Like *ruling elite gain*, this analytical category was not very visible in the empirical data but there is reason to believe that its explanatory value is higher than the empirical data suggests. First, there is an intuitive strength that is difficult to identify empirically, but which finds theoretical support. Second, as a normative driver it tendentially blend and boost with other material drivers. It cannot be underestimated as an important driver to Zambia's overlapping memberships.

The first point is that throughout the data collection process *collectivist ideals* perpetuated the empirical data in subtle but important ways. For many, Zambia felt 'stuck' in its overlapping memberships. This was expressed by one interviewee who confided that when he was following Brexit on the news it provoked the idea that maybe Zambia could leave as well. But then he concluded that "if we say we want to pull out of this, then everyone would say, 'you're being selfish, why are you pulling out?'" (Interview #6, Civil Society). The common perception is that Zambia is in the two RECs and no matter whether the effects are positive or negative, leaving is not really an option. This can be attributed to material factors, but one reoccurring answer is that the other member states would view it as a form of betrayal: Leaving an RO shows disloyalty.

When *collectivist ideals* was observed, it evoked a feeling that it clearly matters as a driver to Zambia's overlapping memberships. This find backing in theory dealing with the importance of collectivism in Africa. *Collectivist ideals* capture the norm of solidarity, which, some have argued has been largely unaccounted for in international relations theory (Tieku, 2012, 2013; Odoom & Andrews, 2016). Tieku (2013) argues that commonly used rationalist approaches, which primes individualism and competition, fails to properly account for crucial collectivist ingredients in African international politics:

The solidarity norm is a widespread belief among African ruling elites that the proper and ethically acceptable behavior of Africa's political elites is to demonstrate a feeling of oneness and support towards other Africans, at least in public. (Tieku, 2013, p.7)

This was reiterated in ECDPM's recent report, saying that "solidarity among members seems to feature strongly in regional cooperation" (Byiers et al., 2019, p.15). ICTSD (2016) noted that, "in Africa, because *solidarity prevailed* over economic interest, non-compliance went largely unpunished [emphasis added]" (p.5). Understanding the importance of *collectivist ideals* and solidarity in the African context is necessary to better understand what drives overlapping memberships.

Second, *collectivist ideals* is more important than it appears because it tendentially blend, boost, and reinforce with other drivers. In his assessment of overlapping regionalism in East Asia, Yeo (2018) suggests that the normative dimension (see Table 1) intersect with the material dimension to create even stronger drivers (p.170). The normative logics "blended" and added depth to otherwise less convincing material logics (Yeo, 2018, p.171). This is a common view of how the normative and material dimensions intersect.

This observation goes both ways. What may seem to be normative can also be material, and vice versa. 'Good neighborliness' is a good example of something that purely seems like a collectivist norm, but which is also a principle based on material concerns. As mentioned in chapter 5, the post-independence political leadership in Zambia prioritized nation-building above all else. Because Zambia was surrounded by eight neighboring countries, with every single border dividing ethnic communities and no national identity to speak of, strong norms of good neighborliness became imperative for material reasons: If relations with the neighboring countries were bad it risked causing havoc. Shaw (1976) writes that "[Zambia's] policy of 'good neighbourliness' has encouraged harmonious, if not integrated development" (p.89). While 'good neighbourliness' was a norm, it was also one of nine objectives in Zambia's foreign policy

plan (Shaw, 1976, p.95). This example suggests that *collectivist ideals* work together with material concerns in a cooperative way.

Like in Yeo's (2018) assessment of East Asia, normative concerns, such as norms of solidarity and good neighborliness, perpetuate and enhance the importance of material concerns. Understanding that *collectivist ideals* have an enhancing effect on other drivers is necessary to understand Zambia's strong attachment to COMESA and SADC. As an analytical category and driving logic, it should not be underestimated.

Concluding Remarks

There are all these factions, constituents, and they all have different perspectives of what they perceive and realize as benefits. And it could be social or economic or political – which is power and influence. And the thing is that they are not mutually exclusive. So someone might want political power and economic power and social influence, all at the same time. (Interview #19, Think Tank/Former COMESA)

The purpose of this study was to better understand what drives overlapping regionalism in Africa through an in-depth case study on Zambia's overlapping memberships in COMESA and SADC. By the means of conducting more than two dozen interviews with main actors and experienced informants, this study sets out to answer *what the main actors perceive to be the reasons driving Zambia's dual memberships in COMESA and SADC?*

By drawing on five theoretical perspectives and previous research, I developed an analytical framework that captures the drivers of overlapping regionalism in the African context. The analytical framework was inspired by scholarly work that assessed overlapping regionalism in Latin America (see Weiffen et al., 2013) and East Asia (see Yeo, 2018). I used a similar foundation that covered realist, functionalist, and constructivist explanations, which were complemented with regime-boosting theory and institutional theory. I explored the perceptions of the main actors by using a qualitative methodology of semi-structured interviews. This resulted in a rich body of primary data, which was probed for relevant themes that helped answer the research question.

When asked why Zambia stands committed to two overlapping regional organizations, sharing both members and mandates, the main actors voiced a *pluralism of perceptions*. From the empirical data, eight perceived key drivers emerged: 1) Market access; 2) functional differentiation; 3) a seat at the table; 4) hosting the COMESA secretariat; 5) the role of South Africa; 6) regime survival; 7) mandate expansion; and 8) norms of solidarity, belonging, and

‘good neighborliness’. The eight drivers were linked to the five analytical categories that each represent a theoretically defined ‘driving logic’ to overlapping regionalism. This first empirical part of the study showed the relevance of all five analytical categories in explaining what drives Zambia’s overlapping memberships in COMESA and SADC.

While the first part illuminated a pluralism of perceptions, the second part assessed the dynamics and relative importance of those perceptions. The analysis argued that in the case of Zambia, *political considerations* (logic of power maximization) reign supreme. This is partly seen in the dominant role of state actors coupled with the subservient role of non-state actors, especially in regional affairs. Yet to say that the political driving logic works in isolation is a misconception. The other analytical categories covary with *political considerations*, as well as with each other, in various ways. Out of the remaining four drivers, *institutional survival* was argued to be the weakest, but it was nevertheless useful to explain the *creation* of overlap and it captured perceptions that Zambia’s overlap was unintentional. *Ruling elite gain* (logic of power maximization for the regime) was argued to have higher explanatory value than the empirical data suggests. The reasons are that it has theoretical strengths, methodological difficulties attached to reporting bias, and it is often confused as *political considerations*. There was also a strong reason to believe in the explanatory value of *collectivist ideals* (logic of community). Norms of solidarity are strong in African international politics, and as a normative driver it tendentially enforce and blend with other material drivers. Lastly, *functional needs* (logic of utility maximization) play a puzzling role as a driver to overlapping memberships. It is argued that perceptions of its importance are strong, and it is easy to inflate its explanatory value because that is what the explanation *should* be. In the African context, *functional needs* do however play an important secondary, tertiary or sometimes quaternary role as a driver to overlapping regionalism.

The empirical findings in this study demystifies Africa’s ‘spaghetti bowl’. The picture that emerges contradicts the idea that overlapping memberships are irrational or unsophisticated as the perceived drivers follow certain theoretically defined logics. This study gives credit to

Warner's (2018) assertion that, "African states make foreign policy along broadly similar logics as do other non-African states" (p.12). This study further suggests that there are many actors whose interests are satisfied by benefits derived from overlapping memberships. It moves past the generic explanations of overlap by concretizing what reasons of politics, economics, history, and culture entail. And it shows why overlapping regionalism remains salient, despite external pressure from powerful international institutions.

As much as this study has concretized the many actors, interests, and logics that are perceived to drive Zambia's overlapping memberships, it is difficult to downplay the complexities of regionalism. It is important to understand that many theoretical formulas explain Africa's persistent commitment to overlapping memberships, and that they do so to different degrees, at different times, in different countries. In the case of Zambia, political factors, in the form of hosting the secretariat, having multiple 'seats', and being close to and/or counterbalancing South Africa, play a crucial role relative to other factors. But in a country that does not host the secretariat or is less dependent on South Africa, the relative importance of the different logics may change. In the case of Zambia, the founding role and the four decades of dual memberships in COMESA and SADC have created a strong attachment, which is manifested in the importance of a constructivist logic of community. But in a country that was not a founder and has no RO membership that stretch four decades, the dynamics may change once again. That is not to say that an in-depth case study on one African country is futile. It is, to the contrary, a necessary beginning in a field wanting of empirical data and theory-driven research.

Overlapping regionalism is a global phenomenon and an under-studied field. The analytical framework created in this study is a continuation of previous work that plots the drivers of overlapping regionalism in East Asia and Latin America. Regional similarities, such as the primacy of political motivations, can be juxtaposed with differences that are seen in the importance of collectivist norms and the role of ruling elites. This study opens for further comparative analysis that incorporates the now better understood dynamics behind Africa's 'spaghetti bowl'.

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Appendix A

List of Interviewees (Including Date of Interview, Experience of Interviewee, and Method)

#	Month/Year/City	Experience	Method
1	February, 2019, Gothenburg	Former UNECA Chief of Regional Integration	Skype
2	February, 2019, Lusaka	Private Sector	In-person
3	February, 2019, Lusaka	Former COMESA / Zambia Negotiator	In-person
4	February, 2019, Lusaka	MCTI*	In-person
5	February, 2019, Lusaka	Former Deputy Secretary General COMESA	Skype
6	February, 2019, Lusaka	Civil Society	In-person
7	February, 2019, Lusaka	Civil Society	In-person
8	February, 2019, Lusaka	Former UNECA Official	Skype
9	February, 2019, Lusaka	Foreign Embassy Diplomat	In-person
10	February, 2019, Lusaka	Foreign Embassy Analyst	In-person
11	March, 2019, Lusaka	Civil Society	In-person
12	March, 2019, Lusaka	MCTI	In-person
13	March, 2019, Lusaka	MCTI	Email
14	March, 2019, Lusaka	Former Secretary General COMESA	Skype
15	March, 2019, Lusaka	EU Official	In-person
16	March, 2019, Lusaka	MFA**	In-person
17	March, 2019, Lusaka	MFA	In-person
18	March, 2019, Lusaka	MFA	In-person
19	March, 2019, Lusaka	Think Tank / Former COMESA Official	In-person
20	April, 2019, Lusaka	Donor Partner / Former MCTI	In-person
21	April, 2019, Lusaka	Former World Bank Official	In-person
22	April, 2019, Lusaka	Think Tank	In-person
23	April, 2019, Lusaka	Think Tank	In-person
24	April, 2019, Lusaka	Foreign Embassy Diplomat	In-person
25	May, 2019, Gothenburg	Academic	Email
26	May, 2019, Gothenburg	SADC	Skype
27	May, 2019, Gothenburg	COMESA	Email

* Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry

** Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Appendix B

Basic Elements of the Stages of Regional Integration

Preferential Trade Area (PTA)	Reduced tariffs between member countries and preconditions for deeper integration (e.g. establishment of rules, disciplines and institutions).
Free Trade Area (FTA)	Zero tariffs between member countries and reduced non-tariff barriers; PTA is not a necessary precondition for FTA.
Customs Union (CU)	FTA + common external position (common external tariff, trade nomenclature, customs management, and rules and disciplines).
Common Market (CM)	CU + free movement of capital and labour, some policy harmonization.
Economic Union (EU)	CM + common economic (fiscal, monetary, etc) policies and institutions.
Political Union (PU)	EU + common political systems and institutions.

Note: Reprinted from “What do the forthcoming COMESA customs union and COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite Free Trade Area mean for Zambia’s import trade and trade tax revenue”, by Cheelo, C., Malata, N., & Tembo, J., 2012, *Zambia Institute for Policy Analysis and Research (ZIPAR)*, p.13.