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Unit 1: History of Africa Since 1800

Senior: six

Term: 1

Topic 11: Regional Economic Groupings and International Relations (S6/3)

Competency: The learner demonstrates an understanding of the need to address common challenges by analyzing the activities of selected regional organizations and economic groupings to appreciate regional integration in Africa.

11.1 The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)

The **Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)** is one of the most influential international groupings in modern history, especially for developing nations seeking independence from global power blocs. Here's a comprehensive overview:

What Is the Non-Aligned Movement?

- **Definition:** NAM is a coalition of countries that chose not to formally align with or against any major global power bloc—especially during the Cold War era.
- **Founded:** In **1961**, at the **Belgrade Conference** in Yugoslavia, led by visionary leaders like:
 - **Josip Broz Tito** (Yugoslavia)
 - **Jawaharlal Nehru** (India)
 - **Kwame Nkrumah** (Ghana)
 - **Gamal Abdel Nasser** (Egypt)
 - **Sukarno** (Indonesia)

Core Principles

NAM was built on the ideals of:

- **National sovereignty and independence**
- **Opposition to colonialism, imperialism, and racism**
- **Peaceful coexistence and non-intervention**
- **Support for global disarmament and economic justice**

These principles were first articulated at the **Bandung Conference** in 1955.

Membership & Global Reach

- **121 member states** and **18 observer states**
- Represents **over 55% of the world's population** and nearly **two-thirds of UN members**
- Includes countries from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East

Role in Global Affairs

- **Cold War Neutrality:** NAM provided a platform for countries to resist pressure from both the U.S.-led NATO bloc and the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact.
- **Advocacy for the Global South:** It has championed issues like economic inequality, climate justice, and fair trade.
- **UN Influence:** NAM countries often vote as a bloc in the United Nations, amplifying their collective voice.

Uganda's Leadership

Uganda assumed the **NAM Chairmanship in January 2024**, hosting the **19th Summit of Heads of State and Government** in Kampala. President Yoweri Museveni emphasized the need to resist ideological imposition and promote sovereign development paths.

Relevance Today

While the Cold War has ended, NAM remains vital in:

- **Defending sovereignty** against foreign intervention
- **Promoting multipolarity** in global governance
- **Uniting developing nations** on issues like debt relief, digital equity, and climate resilience

11.2 The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)

The **Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)** is a powerful regional economic bloc that plays a central role in promoting trade, integration, and development across Africa. Here's a full breakdown of what COMESA is, why it matters, and how it's shaping the future of the continent:

Overview of COMESA

- **Established:** In **1994**, replacing the earlier **Preferential Trade Area (PTA)** formed in 1981.
- **Headquarters:** Lusaka, Zambia.
- **Membership:** 21 African countries, including Uganda, Kenya, Egypt, Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Zambia.

- **Population Coverage:** Over **640 million people**.
- **Economic Scope:** Combined GDP of approximately **\$1 trillion (PPP)**.

Objectives of COMESA

- **Free Trade Area (FTA):** Eliminate tariffs and non-tariff barriers among member states to boost intra-regional trade.
- **Customs Union:** Apply a common external tariff to goods from non-member countries.
- **Free Movement:** Facilitate the movement of goods, services, capital, and people across borders.
- **Regional Development:** Promote industrialization, infrastructure, and investment across member states.
- **Monetary Integration:** Long-term goal of establishing a common currency and payments union.

Key Institutions

- **COMESA Authority:** Composed of Heads of State or Government; sets overall policy direction.
- **Council of Ministers:** Oversees implementation of decisions and programs.
- **COMESA Court of Justice:** Resolves disputes related to treaty interpretation and application.
- **Specialized Agencies:** Focus on trade, finance, agriculture, climate resilience, and health systems.

Recent Initiatives

- **Health Systems Strengthening:** COMESA is investing in local pharmaceutical production, disease surveillance, and emergency preparedness in response to COVID-19 and climate-related health threats.
- **Climate Transparency Project:** Supporting member states like Zambia and Seychelles in climate monitoring and reporting under the Paris Agreement.
- **Digital Policy & E-Waste Management:** Regional experts are shaping sustainable ICT strategies to support innovation and environmental protection.
- **Agricultural Trade Boost:** Zambia and Malawi signed a Mutual Recognition Agreement to enhance regional agricultural trade.

Uganda's Role in COMESA

Uganda is an active member, benefiting from:

- **Trade facilitation** through reduced tariffs and improved border infrastructure.
- **Agricultural cooperation** and market access for coffee, dairy, and other exports.
- **Participation in regional health and climate programs** to strengthen resilience and sustainability.

COMESA is more than a trade bloc—it's a blueprint for African-led development, integration, and global competitiveness.

Successes of COMESA

COMESA—the **Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa**—has made significant strides in regional integration, trade facilitation, and economic development. Here's a roundup of its most notable successes:

- 1. Establishment of a Free Trade Area (FTA):** Launched in **2000**, the COMESA FTA eliminated tariffs among participating member states. As a result, Intra-COMESA trade grew at an average of **7% annually**, with even higher growth among FTA members.
- 2. Trade Facilitation Achievements:** It removed **Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs)**, enabled commercial vehicles to operate across member states with a single license, reducing transport costs and Simplified movement of goods under customs seals, lowering costs and improving efficiency.
- 3. Insurance & Transport Innovations: Yellow Card Insurance Scheme** provides third-party motor vehicle insurance across borders, covering medical expenses and legal liability for road accidents.
- 4. Digital Integration COMESA Virtual Trade Facilitation System (CVTFS):** An online platform that integrates trade instruments like the Yellow Card, RCTG, and Carrier License, while monitoring cargo across transport corridors.
- 5. Monetary Harmonization:** COMESA's **Monetary Harmonisation Programme** aims to create a **common monetary area**, laying the groundwork for a future **monetary union**.
- 6. Export Growth & Industrial Development:** COMESA's total exports to the world rose by **56%** from **\$100 billion in 2020 to \$156 billion in 2021**. Countries like Egypt, Uganda, Kenya, and Zambia saw a **41% increase** in manufactured exports.
- 7. Infrastructure & Investment:** COMESA has supported **cross-border infrastructure projects**, including roads, energy grids, and ICT networks. Institutions like the **PTA Bank**, **Africa Trade Insurance Agency (ATI)**, and **ZEP-RE** have helped mobilize regional investment.

COMESA's achievements reflect its commitment to building a borderless, economically vibrant region.

Challenges of COMESA

COMESA—the **Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa**—has made impressive strides in regional integration, but it faces several persistent challenges that hinder its full potential. Here's a breakdown of the most pressing issues:

1. **Slow Implementation of Agreements:** Many member states delay or fail to domesticate COMESA protocols and commitments into national law. This weakens the enforcement of trade rules and slows down integration efforts.
2. **Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs):** Despite progress, NTBs such as customs delays, licensing restrictions, and bureaucratic red tape still obstruct free trade. These barriers increase costs and reduce competitiveness across the region.
3. **Overlapping Memberships:** Several countries belong to multiple regional blocs (e.g., COMESA, EAC, SADC), creating conflicting obligations and policy fragmentation. This overlap complicates harmonization and slows down progress toward a unified economic community.
4. **Economic Disparities & Limited Value Addition:** Member states have diverse economic structures and levels of development, making it hard to align policies. Many countries still export raw materials with minimal processing, limiting industrial growth and regional value chains.
5. **Weak Political Commitment:** Shifting political priorities and regime changes can disrupt continuity in regional cooperation. Some governments prioritize national interests over regional integration, undermining COMESA's long-term goals.
6. **Poor Infrastructure & Connectivity:** Inadequate transport, energy, and ICT infrastructure hampers cross-border trade and investment. This is especially problematic for landlocked countries relying on regional corridors.
7. **Limited Private Sector Engagement:** COMESA's programs often lack strong involvement from businesses and entrepreneurs. Without private sector buy-in, trade facilitation and industrialization efforts lose momentum.
8. **Loss of Sovereignty Concerns:** Some member states resist deeper integration due to fears of losing control over national policies and economic decisions.

Despite these challenges, COMESA continues to evolve, with renewed efforts in digital trade, climate resilience, and health systems.

11.3 Southern African Development Community (SADC)

The **Southern African Development Community (SADC)** is a regional inter-governmental organization aimed at promoting economic integration, peace, and development among its member states in Southern Africa.

- **Established:** Originally as the **Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC)** in **1980**, transformed into SADC in **1992**.
- **Headquarters:** Gaborone, Botswana.
- **Motto:** *"Towards a Common Future"*

Objectives of SADC

- Promote sustainable and equitable economic growth
- Enhance regional integration and cooperation
- Strengthen peace, security, and political stability
- Improve the living standards of the people
- Combat poverty and underdevelopment
- Coordinate policies in trade, infrastructure, agriculture, and environment

Member States (16 Total)

| Country | Region |
|------------------------------|-----------------|
| Angola | Central Africa |
| Botswana | Southern Africa |
| Comoros | Indian Ocean |
| Democratic Republic of Congo | Central Africa |
| Eswatini | Southern Africa |
| Lesotho | Southern Africa |
| Madagascar | Indian Ocean |
| Malawi | Southern Africa |
| Mauritius | Indian Ocean |
| Mozambique | Southern Africa |
| Namibia | Southern Africa |
| Seychelles | Indian Ocean |
| South Africa | Southern Africa |
| Tanzania | East Africa |
| Zambia | Southern Africa |
| Zimbabwe | Southern Africa |

You can find the full list on SADC's official member page.

Achievements of SADC

- **Free Trade Area (FTA):** Launched in 2008 to reduce tariffs and boost intra-regional trade.
- **Peacekeeping & Security:** Active in conflict resolution, especially in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Mozambique.

- **Infrastructure Development:** Improved transport corridors, energy grids, and ICT connectivity.
- **Gender & Youth Empowerment:** Promotes inclusive policies and programs for marginalized groups.

Challenges

- **Overlapping memberships** with other regional blocs like COMESA and EAC.
- **Political instability** in some member states.
- **Slow implementation** of regional policies.
- **Economic disparities** among member countries.

The North–South Corridor (NSC)

The **North–South Corridor (NSC)** is one of the most ambitious and transformative development initiatives launched by the **Southern African Development Community (SADC)**. It's not just a trade route—it's evolving into a **smart economic corridor** designed to drive industrialization, job creation, and sustainable development across the region.

What Is the North–South Corridor?

- **Geographic Scope:** Stretches from **Durban, South Africa** to **Kolwezi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**.
- **Member States Involved:** Botswana, DRC, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.
- **Infrastructure Backbone:** Overlays key **Trans-African Highways (TAH3, TAH4, TAH9)**, and is supported by the **Southern African Power Pool (SAPP)** and regional ICT networks.
- **Trade Significance:** Facilitates **over 60% of SADC's trade** and serves **more than half of the region's population**.

Impact on Member States

1. **Economic Growth & Industrialization:** The NSC is projected to unlock **\$16.1 billion in GDP** across the region. It supports **local manufacturing, value chains, and agro-processing**, especially in mineral-rich zones like Zambia, Zimbabwe, and the DRC.
2. **Job Creation & Inclusion:** Estimated to generate **1.6 million jobs**, with strong emphasis on **youth, women, and SMEs**. Encourages clustering of economic zones along the corridor, improving access to energy, digital services, and markets.
3. **Regional Integration:** Enhances cross-border trade and cooperation among member states. Reduces transport costs and customs delays through **One-Stop Border Posts** and harmonized trade policies.
4. **Infrastructure Development:** Upgrades roads, railways, energy grids, and ICT infrastructure. Improves connectivity between landlocked countries and coastal ports, boosting export potential.

□ Challenges & Considerations

- **Implementation Delays:** Full transformation into a smart corridor is still in progress, with the pilot phase expected to begin in **2026**.
- **Funding & Coordination:** Requires sustained investment and collaboration among governments, donors, and private sector partners.
- **Environmental Impact:** Development must balance growth with sustainability, especially in ecologically sensitive areas like the Zambezi and Okavango basins.

The North–South Corridor is more than a road—it’s a lifeline for regional transformation.

11.4 The Arab Maghreb Union (AMU)

The **Arab Maghreb Union (AMU)** is a regional organization formed to promote economic and political unity among North African countries. Though its vision was bold and ambitious, its progress has been limited due to deep-rooted political tensions.

Overview of the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU)

- **Established:** February 1989, in Marrakech, Morocco
- **Founding Members:** Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia
- **Headquarters:** Rabat, Morocco
- **Languages:** Arabic and French
- **Purpose:** To coordinate and harmonize policies across member states for sustainable development, regional integration, and peace

Objectives of AMU

- Promote **free movement of people, goods, services, and capital**
- Strengthen **economic cooperation** and create a **common market**
- Pursue **joint policies** in areas like agriculture, industry, foreign affairs, and security
- Defend the **rights and interests** of member states and their citizens
- Foster **peace and stability** in the Maghreb region

Institutional Structure

- **Presidency Council**
- **Council of Foreign Ministers**
- **Consultative Council**
- **Maghreb Bank for Investment and Foreign Trade**
- **University of Maghreb**
- **Judicial Organ** and various ministerial commissions

Challenges and Dormancy

Despite its promising start, AMU has been largely **inactive** since the early 2000s. Key challenges include:

- **Political tensions**, especially between Algeria and Morocco over Western Sahara
- **Lack of regular summits**—the last major meeting was held in 2008
- **Diverging national interests** and weak institutional enforcement
- **Limited intra-regional trade**, despite geographic and cultural proximity

Current Status

AMU remains **formally intact** but is widely considered **dormant**. Efforts to revive it have been sporadic, and most regional cooperation now occurs through other frameworks like the African Union or bilateral agreements.

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