

Explaining the Gap between the AU and its Member States

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The paper looks into the relations between the African Union (AU) and its member states. While there are improvements on the AU level with regard to the implementation of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the building of other institutions such as the Pan-African Parliament, it must be diagnosed at the same time that on the state level governments are reluctant to engage in a deepening of the continental integration. Cases like Algeria, Ethiopia, South Africa or Zimbabwe even suggest that national governments topple the integration process or undermine their own initiatives such as the African Peer Review Mechanism. The paper addresses the gap between the AU level and the member state level and asks why many AU members are so reluctant to support integration dynamics beyond the realm of APSA.

Amongst other reasons it is assumed that although undermined by Article 4 h and j of the AU Constitutive Act, African governments still consider national sovereignty sacrosanct and are not willing to cede it. One might say that there is a culture of conservatism with regard to the sovereignty question. Secondly and closely related is the fact that several African leaders want to hold to their power and are not willing to give it up. Thirdly, the regional economic communities are regarded as more beneficial for its member states as compared to the AU. This results in a lack of interest and commitment *vis-à-vis* the AU and its institutions. Lastly, a significant number of national governments have no capacities and resources for the continental integration and hence engage little in the AU.