Along with this chapter, the following two chapters contain case studies that seek to empirically evaluate the impact of mechanisms found in regional organizational theory. These analyses compare the mechanisms associated with regional organizations with mechanisms identified by two other causal processes, which emphasize the impact of dominant regional states and international donors. As evidenced in Chapter 1, the statistically significant reduction in the number of West African leaders removed or killed in coups or attempted coups over the ten years following 2000 correlates with the zero-tolerance policy adopted by the region in December 1999. Yet the significant reduction and correlation does little to demonstrate which mechanisms or causal process is responsible for the reduction. If regional organizations are responsible, how do the regional organizations in Africa implement their policy of promoting constitutional governance? Starting with São Tomé and Príncipe in this chapter and Togo in Chapter 4, these case studies will examine the intervention process and evaluate the impact of the various mechanisms advanced by competing theories, in view of determining the validity of each. The Mauritania case in Chapter 5 contrasts with the other two cases; since the main subregional organization was not involved in this case, it better showcases the mechanisms of competing theories.

Background

São Tomé and Príncipe is a small archipelago comprising two main islands and several smaller isles, with a population of just over 200,000. The main island of São Tomé is approximately 290 kilometers west of Gabon, while the island of Príncipe is about 160 miles west of Equatorial Guinea, and
about 144 kilometers north of São Tomé. It is the only island nation in the Gulf of Guinea. By geographic size, it is the second smallest state in Africa with just over 960 square kilometers of territory. The volcanic origins of the islands resulted in their mountainous terrain and rich soils. There are disputing claims as to whether the islands were populated before the Portuguese arrived in the fifteenth century, later settling in 1485 (Hodges and Hewitt 1988: 1–4). In the southern region of São Tomé, there is a community known as the “Angolars.” They are the closest approximation to indigenous inhabitants. By some accounts, they lived on the island before the arrival of the Portuguese. Other stories claim that they descended from survivors of a wrecked slave ship from Angola in the mid-sixteenth century, placing them on the island more than 50 years after the first Portuguese settlements. Until the late nineteenth century, they remained a separate and autonomous population with a centrally organized traditional political leadership (Shaw 1994: xii–xxiii).

Historically, the settlers of São Tomé and Príncipe relied on plantation agriculture, first cultivating sugar. The islands were also an important trading port in the transatlantic slave trade to Latin America, the Caribbean, Europe, and the Americas, linking with trading posts on the African mainland and other Portuguese-held islands such as Cape Verde. Rich soils, rivers flowing from the mountains, and available labor made sugar plantations among the most profitable ventures for settlers, who included Portuguese criminals and Jewish orphans who had left hardship on the Portuguese mainland. With no natural immunities many European settlers died from disease, leaving the mixed descendents of the settlers and the slave population to emerge as the islands’ elite class. These wealthy and powerful families played a role in the slave trade, profiting from the use of the islands as holding stations for slaves bound for Brazil and the Americas, and even established a settlement in Luanda. They also profited from the sugar plantations, becoming the world’s largest producer of sugar in the sixteenth century. As other territories, such as Brazil, began to export sugar, Santomean sugar plantations found themselves unable to compete and many plantations were abandoned. Escaped slaves fled into the forests to join forces with the “Angolars,” raiding remaining plantations. In 1595 the Angolar king, Amador, led an uprising that almost conquered the island of São Tomé. Peace was not fully restored until an accord was reached with the Angolars in 1693, almost 100 years later (EIU 1994, Shaw 1994, also see Hodges and Hewitt 1988: 21–22, 60).

In the nineteenth century, São Tomé and Príncipe began cultivating coffee and cocoa on its plantations for export to European markets. To capitalize on the boom created by coffee and cocoa, plantations began to expand to the forests, which were held largely by the elite families of