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SOUTH-SOUTH COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMME

OCCASIONAL PAPER SERIES

**Impact of 'New' Global Trade Regimes
on Regional Integration Processes in
the South**

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contributing a South perspective towards the transformation of the Social Sciences on a global scale

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This paper was presented to the CODESRIA/APISA/CLACSO South-South International Seminar on Regionalism in the South and the New Global Hegemony, in Accra, Ghana.

Papers published in the CODESRIA-APISA-CLACSO Occasional Paper Series are posted on the websites of CODESRIA www.codesria.org; APISA www.apisa.ml and CLACSO www.clacso.ar as preliminary working papers to stimulate discussion and critical comment. The Occasional Paper Series is part of the CODESRIA-CLACSO-APISA South-South tricontinental collaboration supported by SIDA/SAREC.

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The realities of global economy, including the increase commitment of the North to hegemonic tendencies, have again revived interests in regional integration and cooperation, with better and improved acceptance in the South. Motives for regional cooperation include broad economic, social and political interests, and the need for greater international bargaining power in the world economy. Although most of the regional integration schemes in the South have always claimed responsibility for promoting regional cooperation and integration, the practical results, however, have been very disappointing. Nevertheless governments in the South have regularly declared their commitment to the ideals of regional cooperation as a strategy for self-reliance and development. The critical question is how integration and cooperative schemes are they fairing (or are likely to fare) under the 'new' global regimes on trade? The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is our case study for testing our key hypotheses on the challenges and opportunities for the regional integrations schemes in the South against the background of 'new' global trade regimes. We examine the paths taken by countries in West Africa to bring about regional cooperation and integration and ask the question what is the impact of globalization, especially in terms of the pressures of global market forces on integration processes in the South. What is the influence of the regime of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and other global forces? What is the impact of the global market forces on the capability of regional integration schemes in the South to work towards achieving collective self-reliance? What is the extent of resistance of the South to the inequality and inequities that characterized the global economic system? In this paper we point out that that current African regional strategies are rather seeking accommodation within (also and closer cooperation with) the global trade system and its powerful international agencies. Recent developments in the cooperation between African regional blocs and the USA through the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), and the EU through the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) are cases in point. Also, the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) negotiated in the Post-Cotonou era is no less important in this regard. These initiatives are far from promoting collective self-reliance in Africa. Rather the trends have pointedly showed the need to redefine the goals and strategies of regional integration in Africa beyond the constraining influences of global market forces.

I. Introduction 25.2 The Evolution and Dynamics of West African Integration

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was established in 1975 as an economic integration scheme. Until 1999 when Mauritania withdrew its membership, the ECOWAS was made up of sixteen West African countries, including seven countries, which belonged to the Communauté Economique de l'Afrique de l'ouest (CEAO), and three countries that are in the Mano River Union (MRU). It is the biggest regional integration scheme out of about 40 single-purpose and multi-purpose inter-governmental organisations (IGOs) that dot the West African landscape. However, except in the matter of regional security, and to some extent the promotion of democracy and good governance in West Africa, the performance of the ECOWAS generally have been less impressive. The experience of the ECOWAS, and also that of other regional and cooperative and integrative schemes in South are necessarily provoking discourse about contents, forms, logic and values of regional integration schemes on the continent. Many development analysts are asking questions about the actual and potential capacities of many of these schemes to accelerate development processes in a way that reduce their dependency on the North.

Arguably globalization is increasingly been made complex with developments in global trade regimes that seek for the liberalization of the international trading system. Also, developments within Europe, notably the efforts towards increased integration of European economies are reinforcing new global trade regimes. These developments are already presenting African regional groupings such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) with challenges. For example, the ECOWAS, representing West African countries which have relationship with EU, first under the EU-ACP Conventions (the Lome Conventions) and lately the Cotonou Agreement, is negotiating with the EU for a free trade area to the 'benefits' of the two. Under the Cotonou Agreement preferential market access commitments are to be made on the basis of reciprocity which is in contrast to what obtained under the Lome Conventions. The terms and conditions of the reciprocal references are being negotiated between the EU and the ECOWAS. These negotiations are to be concluded by 1 January 2008, until which date non-reciprocal preferences under the Cotonou Agreement will be preserved. These negotiations are expected to be in conformity with WTO rules. Indeed they are meant to produce 'WTO

compatible' outcomes, which in effect, will serve to further consolidate the hegemony of the WTO. The EU in its negotiations with the ECOWAS is already espousing multilateral trade liberalization, and at the same time seeks free trade with West Africa. The critical question is whether a mutually beneficial agreement is possible between two unequal partners. It is also critical to ask whether the transformation from non-reciprocal trade agreements to reciprocal trade agreement will not make the agreements between EU and the ACP countries totally irrelevant. This shows that the EPAs and other initiatives like the US-sponsored African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) are far from promoting collective self-reliance in the South. They are rather seeking accommodation within (also and closer cooperation with) the global trade system and its powerful international agencies. Rather these trends and developments have pointedly showed the need to redefine the goals and strategies of regional integration in Africa beyond the constraining influences of global market forces.

This paper critically discusses the challenges of development as well as opportunities for the ECOWAS. It re-examines the philosophical and theoretical foundation of the ECOWAS, and also reviews some specific cooperative and integrative programmes of the ECOWAS within the last three decades. It also unveils both its unsung accomplishments and frustrations in the pursuit of development and collective self-reliance as goals of regional integration. Arguably, the experience of the ECOWAS is representative of other integrative and cooperative initiatives in Africa, not only in terms of its evolution and dynamics but also its challenges and opportunities as a modern integration scheme. Also, in this paper we point out that that current African regional strategies are rather seeking accommodation within (also and closer cooperation with) the global trade system and its powerful international agencies. Recent developments in the cooperation between African regional blocs and the USA through the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), and the EU through the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) are cases in point. Also, the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) negotiated in the Post-Cotonou era is no less important in this regard. These initiatives are far from promoting collective self-reliance in Africa. Rather the trends have pointedly showed the need to redefine the goals and strategies of regional integration in Africa beyond the constraining influences of global market forces.

II. Conceptual and theoretical foundation

The 'success' of the European integration was able to conceal for long time the deficiencies of the received theories. However, new evidences have emerged that show these extant theories as largely inadequate for explaining the process of regional integration in the South. Among other things, these theories fail to give satisfactory account of the roots of integration among the less developed countries (LDCs). For example, the critique of the functionalist/neo-functional perspectives and the classical custom union theory has shown them to be based on restrictive assumptions. Similarly, the formulations by the dependency theorists are now known to be having limited bearing on the evaluation of gains from integration in the South. This is one of the background justifications for re-examining existing theoretical treatments of regional integration initiatives in Africa, including the ECOWAS.

The concept of regional integration is still largely elusive to define, either in terms of geographical or economic boundaries. The ECOWAS is an example of regional groupings in Africa that has strict geographical context and whose members have historical and cultural ties. While the debate is still on among scholars on the meaning of 'integration', there seems to be agreement on one issue that integration can be regarded as a process or as a state of affairs reached by that process. According to Fritz Machlup, the question as to whether that state has to be terminal point or intermediate point in the process can be taken care of by distinguishing between 'complete' and 'incomplete' integration. The more difficult question according to him is: what is that to be integrated; people, areas, markets, production, goods, resources, policies, or what? Although 'integration' and 'cooperation' have been used interchangeably by integration scholars, there is a fundamental difference between the two. The difference is both in qualitative and quantitative contexts. While 'cooperation' may be employed to identify loose forms of interstate activity designed to meet some commonly experienced needs, 'integration' refers to a much more formal arrangement that involves some political and economic sacrifices as well as commitments, concessions, processes and political will to redefine participation in the international economy. In this regard regional cooperation may be a phase in the process of regional integration.

Economic integration is often defined in terms of trade liberalization or absence of economic discrimination among economic units.

However, such a definition can be misleading for Africa. For instance, based on of a common tariff and free movement of capital and labour, the East African Common Market in 1963 was more 'integrated' than the European Common Market. But only 20 per cent of the total trade of East African countries was with their partners within the region whereas European Economic Community (EEC) had 40 per cent of trade among its members. Based on (mis) conception, many self-styled common markets, federations, unions and communities have emerged in Africa without promoting regional integration or even showing any potential to do so. The conception of regional integration as the progressive elimination of trade and tariff discrimination between national borders is too restrictive.


The customs union theory dominates the literature on economic integration and Jacob Viner's pioneering work is noted in this regard. The customs union approach focuses on production effects as well as the realization of more efficient utilization of productive resources. According to Viner, the primary purpose of a custom union is to shift sources of supply; a shift which may either be to lower cost sources, or to higher cost sources. The basic theoretical concepts in Viner's analysis are those of 'trade creation' and 'trade diversion'. The Vinerian approach argues that the desired 'trade creation' can be achieved if: (i) member countries are initially competitive but potentially complimentary in trade (ii) intra-regional trade, in proportion to total trade, is relatively high; (iii) the ratio of foreign to domestic commerce is low. It follows thus, that, where a customs union consist of countries with widely differing comparative advantages, an economic union will assist to rationalize their production pattern with prospect for trade creation.

Also, where countries have similar comparative advantages and they consequently have to trade merely among themselves rather than with one another, economic union will lead to trade diversion. In the South scarcely do countries meet the conditions for trade creation, particularly in situation such as in West Africa where the economies are competitive rather than complimentary. Arhur Hazlewood observed quite early that the removal of barriers between African countries "would not have any redistributive effects on the patter of production within the union, replacing high cost of domestic production by lower-cost supplies from members of the union". Adebayo Adedeji, also considering the prospect of custom union type of regional integration for West Africa, concluded that "the

formation of a custom union or economic community in the region would appear irrelevant if not positively harmful”. It is now commonly acknowledged that classical custom union theory cannot accommodate the interests of countries in Africa.

Classical customs union theory has been said to be a mere disguised argument for free trade. The argument is that the same grounds for preferring a customs union to national tariffs are reasons for preferring universal free trade to custom unions. Some critics of conventional theory of customs have rejected the notion that it is largely irrelevant to LDCs. The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) took the lead in this regard. It found the classical customs union theories too ‘economistic’ and recommended customs union as a means of collective import substitution in developing areas. The ECLA School advocated for a strategy that would address the ‘trade gap’ between the underdeveloped countries and the industrialized ones through programmes of industrialization and import substitution which in effect translated to the replacement of extra-regional manufactures by local one. In this way custom unions offer protected markets for adequate size for industrial development. Thus ECLA proposed a regionalism which would unite some groups of countries by separating them from others. On the evidence of the most member-states of the ECOWAS, the strategy of import substitution has generated more than expected crisis. Although most integration schemes among LDCs have continued to emphasize ‘trade creation’ and ‘trade diversion’ as the basis for evaluating the gains and loss of regional integration, their experiences in practical terms however have been that as soon it became expensive to purchase within the union, such schemes were abandoned.

While it can be argued that the ECLA School moved forward the discourse on regional integration in the South, the “wedding of orthodox development economics and traditional integration theory” was unable to provide necessary justification for economic integration among LDCs. Admittedly it was worst for the protagonists of classical customs union approach. They got carried away with the experience of Europe, forgetting that the effect of ‘trade diversion’ and ‘trade creation’ on the two environments varies according to the difference in social conditions. They failed in their considerations to appreciate underdevelopment and disarticulation within the economies of the LDCs while they assume a full utilization of production factors.



The dependency school argued for a re-conceptualization of the purpose of regional integration in the South. The argument is that economic integration should aim at creating economic stimulus among member states - an alternative development strategy that will enhance rapid economic development and eliminate underdevelopment. The dependency school for instance advocated for a re-examination of such issues that politics of integration. This path has already been illuminated by the works of Andrew Axline, Lynn Mytelka, S.K.B Asante, and also Raph Onwuka, Steven Wright and Amadu Sessay. These scholars considered the impact of exogenous factors on the process of integration among Third World countries, posited that the cooperative and integrative efforts of Third World countries mostly centre on “the hegemonic input and dominant influence of the North” which “have conditioned and determined the outcome of integration arrangement”. Consequently, “all African countries, individually and collectively remain integrated with the international market than they are among themselves”.

The traditional validity of the dependency school’s criticism of the role industrial bourgeoisie in Africa integration processes is easily noted in their postulations that emphasize the dangers in over-capitalization of integration schemes and the result of the imposition of transplanted market conditions into the African continent to serve foreign interests. Characteristically, such forces as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and factors like the debt crisis and the activities of TNCs have been identified by dependency theorists as imperialist agents for the reproduction of conditions of dependency in Africa.


Lynn Mytelka developed a framework for integration among LDCs which seriously reviews the relationship of the social forces within integrated economies. Mytelka’s postulations question the logic of ‘laissez-faire’ (Type 1) which informs a number of integrative efforts in the Third World, especially the bias towards trade expansion. By neglecting the peculiar problems of the less-developed countries, through unreserved support for free trade without regard for the ability or inability to take advantage of available opportunities (if any), the application of the ‘laissez-faire’ model could only promote competition and conflict from the promulgation of protectionist policies by participation countries. Some of the problems associated with the pursuit of regional integration through the custom union model find some parallels in the Type I model. It is good to know



that there are aspects of the ECOWAS' mandates that emphasized the free trade model.

Mytelka's Type II model of regional scheme is constructed to transcend the limitations of the Type I in some respects. The ECOWAS easily falls within this category. It includes mechanism for the distribution of losses and gains of integration as it is in the case of the ECOWAS. While it is common for such integration schemes to feature policies and programmes of compensation and correction such as the establishment of special funds and policies on allocation of industries within the region etc., none of these measures is able to avert crisis in the distribution of obligations and benefits. For example, in the 1970s the ECOWAS experienced a bureaucratic crisis that was more as a result of the dynamics of underdeveloped West African economy rather than personality conflict between the Managing Director of the ECOWAS Fund and the Executive Secretary. Given the inherent structural contradictions of Third World economies, conflicts over the distribution of obligations and gains in regional economic schemes are endemic. In the words of Lyn Mytelka, "the principal contradiction is generated by the interplay of a nationalist orientation towards inter-regional bargaining processes and the distortions resulting from dependence. This dynamic interaction of nationalism and dependence explain the failure of corrective mechanisms in Type II system".

On the evidence of the ECOWAS, it is now known that mere reforms such as the provision of built-in compensatory and corrective system are incapable of resolving the structural contradictions in the Third World countries. These measures, in effect, cannot generate the necessary political will or economic capacity to restructure the internal economies, reduce the power of foreign capital, and establish a strong foundation for self-reliance. As argued by Constantine Vaitos, any analysis of integration in the less developed region should go beyond mere emphasis on the form of network of exchanges and interactions. There is need to appreciate "the conditions imposed by economic and political environment within which they (regional schemes) are supposed to operate". In this regard, the network of exchanges are to be considered along with interactions based on the networks of power, knowledge, and information which are not equally distributed for all integrating countries, or even tending towards equilibrating conditions. Vaitos further advocated for regional integration that is built around four key issues areas to answer such questions as who integrates and for




whose benefits. The four key areas include: i) the local socio-economic and political interests served by integration; ii) the influence of foreign governments and private interests; iii) the relationship between structural characteristics and choice of integration schemes; and iv) key issues relating to process and key issues relating to process and duration of integration stages, the peculiar nature and trade and the requirement of inter-country distributional considerations.

The Type III model in Mytelka's formulation is a remarkable advancement compared to the previous two types discussed above. Usually, it is constructed to resolve the contradictions of regional dependence through the introduction of some measures. In this model the efforts essentially seek solutions to the problem of unequal distribution of gains and polarization. The measures may include arrangements to attack the conditions of dependence through some complex institutional frameworks. In some cases this model may include the establishment of a 'regime' for direct investment and foreign capital which can regulate external linkages.

The major limitation of the Type III is its apolitical policy prescriptions for attacking the conditions of dependence. This means programmes are just introduced without provision for necessary political weapon for ensuring autocentric regionalism. For instance while some integrative schemes provide for progressive localization of industry, this arrangement may not necessarily include a programme for nationalization of industry or socialization of production process and exchange. In several cases regional schemes in the South merely initiate regional strategies for development that hardly go beyond the inauguration of over-ambitious programmes that are not properly conceived and therefore suffer premature death. In the case of the ECOWAS for example, the ECOWAS Monetary Cooperation Programme (EMCP) is as good as non-existing. It is possible to argue that the EMCP just like many other programmes were not conceived with adequate consideration for social and political factors.

The ECOWAS model is no more than a 'hybridisation' of 'laissez faire' and the custom union theory with only scanty attention given to the crisis of dependency and underdevelopment in the sub-region. This, in effect, resulted in the restriction of goals of integration largely to the economic domain with emphasis on purely economic performance as key indicators of integration. This approach was dominant especially in the early days of the ECOWAS, and even up to



the time of the approval of the Revised Treaty. It would appear that the Lagos Treaty (1975) in effect was essentially meant to guide trade relations among member-states.

In contrast to the above, regional integration represents a much more formal arrangement which require states to make certain political and economic sacrifices and commitments as well as concessions, and demonstrates political will towards a redefinition of their individual and collective participation in the international economy. There is the sense in which some of the provisions in the Revised ECOWAS Treaty demonstrate this ideal. It is worth noting that with regional integration conceived strictly in terms of economic relations among the states involved, the role of the ECOWAS as an economic community for long was not more than creating some infrastructures where commodities can be exchanged at a reasonable cost. Exchange and markets are to be set up to facilitate movements of good and people.

Regional integration in the South is an extremely complicated and varied phenomenon which is conditioned by socio-economic and political dynamics that are different from what obtain in the North. Therefore the theory of regional integration in the South must recognize the unity of the processes of economic integration, political integration and social integration, and also provide for political weapon as part of the strategies for implementing regional integration programmes.


The absence of the political dimension in most of the existing theoretical formulations on regional integration in the South has made some questions increasingly more relevant in any discourse on regional integration in the South. What are the necessary and sufficient conditions for successful regional integration? Should regional integration be approached through the custom union model? Are preferential trade areas more preferable? As many as there are such questions are types of regional integration schemes in the South whose philosophical guide derives mostly from the experience of the North. It is to be noted however that each of these forms of integration arrangements has its own regularities, class contents, and mechanisms of operation. An in-depth analysis of the performance of ECOWAS in some key areas of the regional integration reveals these and other variables.

III. Performance and track record

The ECOWAS was set up “to promote cooperation and development in all fields of economic activity particularly in the fields of industry, transport, telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, commerce, monetary and financial questions and in social and cultural matters for the purpose of raising the standard of living of its peoples, of increasing and maintaining economic stability, of fostering closer relations among its members and of contributing to the progress and development of the African continent”. Modeled as a custom union, the ECOWAS Treaty and protocols provide a plethora of integrative instruments in form of several monetary, fiscal, administrative, institutional and legal measures. In 1996 the ECOWAS Treaty was revised to enable the ECOWAS address new realities, notably the global craze for democratization, good governance, and human rights. The upsurge of incessant conflicts, illegal cross-border activities in West Africa and the opportunities provided by the African Economic Community expectedly provoked collective response among West African countries with the ECOWAS providing an appropriate platform. However, by and large, it is evident that ECOWAS has not succeeded in achieving its stated goals and objectives.

Trade liberalization/Intra-regional trade

The ECOWAS as a regional integration arrangement has the aim to eliminate all tariff and non-tariff restriction on intra-ECOWAS trade, establish a common external tariff and commercial policy against non-ECOWAS countries abolish all obstacles to the movement of all factors of production, and harmonize domestic policies across its member-countries. In this regard a comprehensive trade liberalization programme was designed. It was to become operational in 1979, but had to be postponed till 1990 when it was finally launched. The implementation of the programme was planned for three stages. The first stage is for an immediate and full liberalization of trade in unprocessed goods and traditional handicrafts while the second stage seeks for the liberalization of trade in industrial products, with the phasing reflecting the differences in the levels of development of three categories of the ECOWAS member-states. The third stage focuses on the gradual establishment of a common external tariff. The trade liberalization scheme of the ECOWAS is by and large a progressive reduction




culminating in the elimination of all tariff and non-tariff barriers against intra-ECOWAS trade. The annual tariff reduction rates varied among the three categories of countries: (i) the most advanced of the countries whose schedule was expected to be in 6 years; (ii) the middle group of countries whose completion period was set at 8 years middle group of countries; and the third group whose schedule was expected to last up 10 years.

According to the agreed implementation schedule, total elimination of all trade barriers was expected to occur by the end of 1999. But as at that time only one country was able to operate in compliance with the agreed obligation. The Authority of ECOWAS in December 1999 approved a new proposal - the Nigeria-Ghana fast-track approach - which suggested the elimination of all trade barriers by 15 April 2000 and the establishment of a common external tariff by 1 January 2001. In spite of the moves by ECOWAS to catch up with UEMOA, not very much has been achieved and there are issues yet unresolved such as the relationship between the ECOWAS and UEMOA and how ECOWAS plans to complete the convergence of its trade liberalization programmes with that of UEMO .

In practical terms, the ECOWAS has not been able to increase intra-West Africa trade. For example, intra-ECOWAS export and import trade was only 9.25 per cent and 13.61 per cent of total West Africa export and import trade in 2001. In contrast, the ECOWAS export and import trade with EU was 31.44 per cent and 45.5 per cent of total West Africa export and import trade for the same period. This unimpressively low rate of intra-ECOWAS trade cannot provide the required wider market which is needed for modern industrial growth. Also, the structure of trade links with the metropolitan countries has implications for the development of local industry in West Africa to produce manufactured good as component of intra-ECOWAS trade.

Regional approach to industrialisation

The theoretical basis of the approach of the ECOWAS to industrialisation results from the arguments in favour of customs union formation among developing countries, as opposed to traditional static welfare gains operations. As part of strategies of the ECOWAS for promoting industrial development in West Africa, member states are expected to cooperate with one another in the



exchange of industrial plans, avoid unhealthy rivalry and waste of resources, and harmonise their industrial policies to avoid disruption resulting from dissimilar policies. In West Africa the need to harmonise policies is higher in the industrial sector than in any other sector. During the negotiation for the ECOWAS most of the states supported efforts geared towards a rational development of industry in West Africa as the foundation for an eventual coordinated regional approach to industrial development. Thus the provisions on harmonization of industrial policies, which are the subjects of Chapter V (Articles 28 & 32) of the ECOWAS Treaty, were seen as relief by most member states. Unlike the implementation of the provisions on trade which in the Treaty is timed, the provisions for the harmonisation of industrial policies make no reference to any time-table for implementation. The provisions, however, provide for a three-stage approach for the hamonisation of industrial policies within the framework of custom union model

Apart from the provisions in Chapter V, there are other provisions of the Treaty that address the issue of industrialisation. There are Articles 27 and 39, for instance, that provide for free movement of 'factors' within the Community in a bogus fashion. For instance, there are no definite provisions on strategy for harmonizing the politics of indigenisation of individual member states of the Community. Also, there is the Fund for Cooperation, Compensation and Development, which was established by Article 50. The Fund's main purpose is to reverse possible inequity in development resulting from the application of the provisions of the Treaty on the liberalization of trade within the Community, as well as on the harmonisation of industrial policies. The Fund shall derive its resources from sources as well as other foreign sources which include "receipts from bilateral and multilateral sources as well as other foreign sources". Chapters VII and IX of the Treaty also contain provisions that are of relevance to industrial developments. There are provisions on programmes for the common evolution of common policies and joint development of transport, communication, and energy and other relevant infrastructures within the Community.


By 1983 the ECOWAS has been able to put in place an Industrial Cooperation Policy whose objective is "to adopt a sub-regional approach to economic development which would include market integration (liberalization and promotion of intra-Community trade) and physical integration (in the areas of production, infrastructure, transport, communication, natural resources and energy)". The

Industrial Cooperation Policy is drawn around the idea that sub-regional approach to industrial development should give priority to industries that will contribute to the modernization and promotion of other sectors. The Policy is also aimed at “establishing the industrial foundations of the Community by promoting intermediate goods and input production industries”. This is expected to facilitate the specialisation of states or groups of states within the sub-region.

Since the end of the 1980s, cooperation activities in the industrial sector have been essentially on the Community’s Industrial Development Programme adopted in 1986. Activities under the Programme include rehabilitation of industrial enterprises, coordination of production activities through the involvement of the private sectors in member states, regional cooperation in industrial training, sponsorship of West African Industrial Forum, and coordination of the IDDA programmes in West Africa. While these are accomplishments in some respects, the pursuit of the goal of industrialisation within the framework of customs union in the ECOWAS region has only encouraged the extension of national import substitution by individual member state to regional level. The industrial structure of West Africa and types of dominant industrial activities further reveals the weakness of import-substitution strategy for regional approach to industrial development in West Africa.

Free movement

Based on the provisions in Article 2(2d) of the Treaty of ECOWAS, “the community shall by stages ensure the abolition as between the Member-States of the obstacles to the free movement of persons services and capital”, while Article 27(i) confers the status of community citizenship on the citizens of member-states, and enjoins member-states to abolish all obstacles to freedom of movement and residence within the Community. The ECOWAS in principle recognizes the need to maintain and encourage intra-regional migration as a way of rationalizing and optimizing resources used at the regional level, toward the liberalization of trade and improved competition. The central assumption of this orientation can be summarized, at random, with the words of one of the founding fathers of the ECOWAS, Yakubu Gowon:



Even more than the promotion of trade, the mobility of labour and the other factors of production was central to ECOWAS and exemplified what the community was about. The free movement of persons within the region was both a repudiation of colonial frontiers in so far as they impeded the economic development of the new States, and an affirmation of the spirit of cooperation and mutual assistance.


Gowon also revealed further that it was the “intention in creating ECOWAS that free movement of labour, like trade liberalisation, would proceed gradually...”. Thus the “first concern was to give security to those already living and working abroad in the interests of stabilising production and increasing economic growth”, while the relaxation of control was expected to “also channel skills and labour to countries where they were in short supply and provide at least temporary relief for those states without adequate employment opportunities”

Question arising from the limitations of the Treaty provisions on free movement led to the signing of the Protocol on Free Movement, Residence and Establishment in member states on May 29, 1979 and which came to force in 1980. ECOWAS Treaty provides for the free movement of persons, residence and establishment, yet in practice this cannot be automatic, and therefore the phrases “by stages” and “by agreements with each other”. The main idea in the ECOWAS Protocol on Free movement of Persons is that at the end of a transitional period of fifteen years every, “Community citizen” has the right to enter, reside and establish in the territory of Member State. The transitional period is trilaterally phased: Phase 1 - Right of Entry of Establishment (1980-85); Phase 2 - Right of Residence (1985-90); Phase 3 - Right of Establishment (1990-95). The transition from one phase to the next, according to Article 2 (4) of the Protocol, has to be “based upon the experience gained from the implementation of the first phase”. The Community has adopted all the three phases of the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Establishment. However, ratification proved a difficult and protracted exercise. The implementation of the Protocol was evidently a serious problem. Take for instance, all the ECOWAS citizens, excluding those defined by law as undesirable aliens, may enter without a visa and reside in any member-state for a maximum of ninety (90) days. The only requirement for the ECOWAS citizens is a valid travel document and international vaccination certificates. While the visa and entry permit

requirement may have been abolished in all the ECOWAS member-states, it was observed that “nearly all the States still maintain numerous check-points, and the ECOWAS citizens are subject to administrative harassment and extortion”.

The ECOWAS Agenda for Action was put in place to further ease the procedures at entry and exit points and facilitate free movement. It involves the use of ECOWAS Travel Certificate to facilitate and simplify formalities for cross-border movement. In 1993, it was reported that the number of countries printing the ECOWAS Travel Certificate increased substantially. The ECOWAS Travel Certificate has entered into circulation in Burkina Faso, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Niger, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone. The Executive Secretariat of the ECOWAS claims that “high printing costs are a prohibiting factor for some Member States”, and financial assistance is being sought from a number of donors for such countries. Part of the ECOWAS migration rules is that ECOWAS citizens holding a Travel Certificate or Passport should be exempted from filling out migration and emigration forms for the ECOWAS Member States. The harmonized immigration and emigration forms were introduced, and to be used in only exceptional cases. But member-states have been reluctant to introduce these forms for use. There is also the ECOWAS Brown Card Motor vehicle Insurance Scheme that was introduced as an accompanying measure to the other programmes on free movements and goods. Twelve countries currently apply the scheme, namely Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d’Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. But the problem is that two motor vehicle insurance systems are coexisting in the sub-region; the ECOWAS Brown card and the CIMA code.

The non-implementation of most of the ECOWAS migration rules is often the rule than exception. In spite of the lofty provisions of the ECOWAS Treaty and protocols, the continuous initiation and application of discriminating economic policies against non-citizens (including Community citizens) by the various ECOWAS countries, at best, has ridiculed the claims on the liberalization of movement of persons in the ECOWAS sub-region. Today there are three levels of restriction against free movement in the ECOWAS region. The first level consists of the restrictive measures by individual member-states of the ECOWAS to protect national interests defined in most cases as the security, income and safety of their nationals and their property. Such include immigration laws, investment coded,



indigenization policies and programmes. The duplication and multiplication of regional integration schemes in the West Africa sub-region have always created the problem of multiple loyalties. The laws and rules of the smaller groupings (such as UEMOA for example) on the movement of persons within a larger one like the ECOWAS have tendency to create problems except the policies and programmes of the two bodies are harmonized. The second level of restrictions represents the policies and programmes of the smaller groupings especially as they relate to population movement. The ECOWAS Treaty and Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons with its contradictions remains the third level of restrictions.

Conflict management and good governance

The Treaty of Lagos was silent on conflict management and prevention as well as good governance. It was however appreciated quiet early in the life of the Community that no meaningful cooperation could take place within the sub-region without peace and security. The Protocol on Non-Aggression (1978) and the Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance on Defence (1981) were incorporated into the ECOWAS Treaty, to address this concern.


In August 1990 the ECOWAS sent a peace enforcement force - the ECOWAS Cease-Fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) - to Liberia following the outbreak of war in the country. At the time the ECOMOG force moved into Liberia it was almost certain that neither UN nor the United States were going to intervene to bring about peace. Amadu Sesay observed that the ECOWAS “rose creditably to the challenges of conflict management and peace keeping in West Africa at a time when the great powers had literally abandoned West Africa, and indeed the continent as a whole, and focused their attention on Bosnia in Europe.”. As most sections of the international community delayed and appeared confused, Liberia’s neighbours and other countries in West Africa were grappling with the inflow of refugees. This development no doubt affected the perceptions of the ECOWAS members-state that identified the Liberian crisis as threat to peace and economic well-being of the sub-region. Subsequently, in August 1990 a Peace Plan was announced for Liberia. In the official circles of some West African countries, especially Nigeria, the intervention was seen in terms of the defence of peace and security in the sub-region as well as in the spirit of good-neighbourliness. But support for the initial operations

of ECOMOG in Liberia was not total as some member states of ECOWAS only approved of ECOMOG operations quite reluctantly.

The intervention by ECOMOG in Liberia was an ad hoc sub-regional response to the challenges of peace-keeping and conflict management. It was, therefore expected to be confronted with challenges. President Olusegun Obasanjo was later to point out that “ECOMOG badly fell short of its ideals in many ways.” Subsequent engagement of ECOWAS with conflict prevention and management enterprises in other parts of West Africa brought lessons all of which eventually led to the adoption in December 1999 of an ECOWAS’ Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace Keeping and Security. Together with the 1978 Protocol on Non-Aggression and the 1981 Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance on Defence, the Mechanism provides the foundation for ECOWAS’ collective security system. ECOWAS has continued to work towards improving its collective security system. For example, the ECOWAS Defence and Security Commission met in Abidjan from 14-18 August 2002 and approved a harmonised training programme for ECOMOG stand-by units in three training schools in the region - the Peacekeeping School in Zambakro, Côte d'Ivoire, the Kofi Annan International Training Centre in Accra, Ghana, and the National War College in Abuja, Nigeria.


In 17 October 2002 West African troops were deployed to Cote d'Ivoire as the ECOWAS Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (ECOMICI). On 28 February 2004, the UN Security Council voted in favour of integrating these West African peacekeepers into a UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI). When crisis resurfaced in Liberia in 2003 ECOWAS deployed a second peacekeeping operation in the region. A Comprehensive Peace Agreement was reached on 18 August 2003 after which the ECOWAS Mission in Liberia (ECOMIL) began deploying outside Monrovia. The UNSC later approved the conversion of ECOMIL into a UN International Stabilisation Force.

The development of sub-regional mechanism for conflict management and peace-keeping has progressed far more in West Africa than any other parts of Africa. The accomplishment of ECOWAS in Liberia and Sierra Leone has earned the regional organization a measure of international recognition. Arguably, this can be linked to paying due regard to the issues of good governance and democratization. Some of the principles espoused the *Revised Treaty of the Economic Community of West African States*, and other major declarations on the various conflicts in West Africa



underline the notion that democratization coupled with responsive and responsible governance are the most effective conflict management tools. Because there exist consensus among member-States of the ECOWAS on the need to operate an effective sub-regional conflict management mechanism that also takes seriously the issues of good governance and democracy, the returns on investment on collective security have been quite high in West Africa. Recently the sub-region was reported as experiencing an improvement in its security situation. This can be ascribed to commitment to the principles of democracy and good governance as expressed in the democratic elections in Burkina Faso, Liberia, and the in successful political transition that occurred in Guinea Bissau and Togo. In Sierra Leone the ECOWAS supported the appointment of a Representative of the United Nations Secretary General to facilitate peace process and national reconstruction actions in the country. Also in Cote d Ivoire the ECOWAS remains committed to the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1633 and the mechanism put in lace by the International Task Force.

Despite some success stories, conflict management mechanism of ECOWAS is still largely underdeveloped, generally lacking established institutions and structures. Because of the absence of institutionalized structures for conflict management, conflict resolution initiatives have mostly taken ad hoc forms. In the Liberian conflict, for example, the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government established a Community Standing Mediation Committee, which in turn created the ECOMOG at its inaugural session. In Sierra Leone, the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government did not formally approve of the ECOMOG force until some three months after its intervention. And in Guinea Bissau, the ministerial-level ECOWAS Defence Council voted to extend ECOMOG's mandate to Guinea Bissau even before the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government had time to address the issue. The establishment of the ECOWAS' Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security in December 1999 is commendable as a commitment by the ECOWAS to create permanent machinery for ensuring lasting peace and stability. However, the Mechanism does not address the critical issue of who will determine when and how the military force under the Mechanism will be deployed. The ECOWAS like many sub-regional organizations in Africa lacks effective early warning systems, reconnaissance and logistical capacities and risk assessment capacities and therefore are considerably weak in conflict prevention. Although ECOWAS can now




boast of the Observation and Monitoring Centre which is the hub of the ECOWAS Early Warning System. The Centre has four Observation and Monitoring Zones within the sub-region. These are located in Banjul (Gambia), Monrovia (Liberia), Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) and Cotonou (Benin).

IV. Global trade regimes and their implications

The international economic system is less friendly to the economies of countries in the South. Indeed the international economic system has become increasingly characterized by depressed world commodity market, discriminatory protection, and debt crisis. Also of importance is the fact of globalization and its impact on development processes. Arguably globalization is increasingly been made complex with developments in global trade regimes that seek for the liberalization of the international trading system.

Developments within Europe and efforts towards increased integration of European economies are no doubt helping to reinforce new global trade regimes. These developments are already presenting African regional groupings with challenges. For example, individual West African countries and their regional grouping - ECOWAS - have relationship with EU, first under the EU-ACP Conventions (the Lome Conventions) and lately the Cotonou Agreement. The *West Africa-European Community Regional Cooperation Strategy Paper and Regional Indicative Programme for the period 2002 - 2007* shows the plans of the EU to support West Africa for the period 2002 - 2007 with an amount of €235 million..

Under its current regional cooperation strategy for West Africa, EU will work closely with the two regional organizations with a mandate for the 9th EDF programming period: the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) and ECOWAS. ECOWAS has a mandate to negotiate the EPAs in collaboration with the WAEMU. The strategy is expected to encourage in the long-term the convergence of the two integration processes. To boost the capacity of regional integration schemes for trade negotiations, 50 per cent of the RIP allocation will be assigned to the economic integration and trade support sector. Also, support will be given for the definition and implementation of regional sectoral policies aimed at complementing national programmes. The strategy will also support a facilitating, harmonizing approach at regional level to allow the free movement



of goods and people. Thus 35 per cent of RIP resources will be allocated to a second focal sector, transport. The political role of the region and in particular of the ECOWAS in conflict prevention is acknowledged in the strategy, and allocations are provided for this as part of the “non-focal” sectors which is planned to take 15 per cent of the RIP. The expected outcomes from this strategy are quite lofty, however attaining them is a distant reality especially in view of new developments in the global system that emphasize liberalization and other aspects of the WTO rules to which the EU is now more committed.

The World Trade Organization (WTO) was established as successor to the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT), and its operations do not encourage the existence of special relationships such as the one between ACP and the European Union under the Lomé. The Cotonou Agreement which replaces the Lomé Convention introduces new fundamental principles with respect to trade between the EU and ACP countries. Under the Cotonou Agreement preferential market access commitments are to be made on the basis of reciprocity which is in contrast to what obtained under the Lomé Conventions. The terms and conditions of the reciprocal preferences are to be negotiated in the context of so-called Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) between the EU and different country groupings within the ACP. These negotiations are to be concluded by 1 January 2008, until which date non-reciprocal preferences under the Cotonou Agreement will be preserved. Least-Developed Countries (LDCs) from the ACP region are part of the negotiation process, while continuing to enjoy duty- and quota-free market access under the EU's unilateral Everything But Arms (EBA) initiative given to all LDCs. The progressive removal of trade barriers after 2008 is to lead to Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) between the EU and ACP regional groupings in conformity with WTO rules. The economic and trade negotiations within the framework of the Cotonou Agreement are meant to produce ‘WTO compatible’ outcomes, which in effect, serve to further consolidate the hegemony of the WTO.


The EU is already in the process of negotiation with four African regional groupings within the larger ACP group of countries which include the West African group (ECOWAS and Mauritania), the Central African group (Communauté Economique et Monétaire de l'Afrique Centrale (CEMAC) and São Tomé and Príncipe), the Eastern and Southern African group (Eligible members of the Common

Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), with the exception of certain Southern African Development Community (SADC) members), and the SADC group (Angola, Mozambique, Tanzania, Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Swaziland (BLNS). In its negotiations with these groups EU is set to promote multilateral trade liberalization, and at the same time seeks free trade with Africa. The critical question is to ask is whether the transformation from non-reciprocal trade agreements to reciprocal trade agreement will not make the agreements between EU and the ACP countries totally irrelevant.

It was EU that started the idea of seeking free trade with Africa but others have joined especially US. *The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA)* was enacted on May 18, 2000. The original act has been amended twice. The aim is to establish a form of free trade area between the United States and Africa. Under AGOA, eligible countries in principle receive duty-free access to the U.S. market for most of their products. More than anything else this measure is expected to provide incentives to African countries to support efforts to further open their economies and build free markets. AGOA enjoys the support of the Bush administration. On July 13, 2004, the *AGOA Acceleration Act of 2004* was signed by President Bush. Under this Act, AGOA beneficiary countries will have their non-reciprocal access to the US market extended until 2015.

It is worth examining the effects of AGOA on the trade between Africa and the US. Official statistics from the United States Department of Commerce record an increase of 54 per cent (just over USD 14 billion) in African exports to the US over 2002. The breakdown is as follows: 80 per cent (over USD 11 billion) - petroleum exports; 20 per cent (less than \$3 billion) - textiles and apparel (US \$1.2 billion) and agriculture (US \$241 million). In its 2003 report on AGOA utilization in 2002, the United States Department of Commerce identifies Nigeria, South Africa, Gabon, Lesotho, and Kenya as major beneficiary countries. The five countries accounted for 93 percent of AGOA utilization. An estimated 85 percent of non-petroleum AGOA exports originated from countries of Southern Africa. Total AGOA imports were US\$ 26.6 billion in 2004, representing an 88 percent increase from the year before. Excluding petroleum and related products, AGOA imports were valued at US\$ 3.5 billion in 2004, representing a 22 percent increase from 2003

Both the US and EU are working hard in the Southern and Eastern




Africa, targeting regional economic organizations especially for a free trade agreements. Regional economic organizations in Southern and Eastern Africa, notably the SADC, COMESA, are already considering economic partnership agreement with EU that is modelled after the EU-South Africa free trade agreement. The US is exploring possibilities with SACU while EU, on its own, had in 1999 signed a free trade agreement with South Africa.. Both the EU and U.S. are committed to the creation of free trade agreement with African countries. The question, however, is whether free trade access through AGOA, or economic partnership agreements that is tailored after the EU-South African mode, are not hindrances to regional economic integration in Africa. It is worth noting that neither ECOWAS nor any of the regional economic organizations in the West Africa has shown appreciable enthusiasm for economic partnership agreement. However, there is no guarantee against the spread of the idea across the entire continent of Africa. Given Nigeria's strategic importance in West Africa, it is plausible to argue that Nigeria is be targeted for both the EU's economic partnership and US's AGOA that are seeking to penetrate the ECOWAS region. The provision for a flexible agreement which will run for twenty years, with a revision clause every five years has made some of these options possible in the Cotonou Agreement which also gives options to individual member states or regions to negotiate bilaterally with Europe.


V. Challenges and opportunities

The process of West African integration through the ECOWAS has suffered from many deficiencies. First, the production structures of member countries of ECOWAS are not complimentary. In other words, the production structures in member states of the ECOWAS are rather competitive rather than complement each other. This in turn reduces regional exchange. The strategy of reducing customs duties to increase intra-regional trade in West Africa has also shown reducing customs duties as necessary, but not sufficient for promoting intra-regional trade in West Africa. No doubt that the ECOWAS is confronted with so many challenges such as those enumerated in the previous section, however, there are new opportunities for the ECOWAS.

After operating the ECOWAS Treaty for almost a period of two decades, the Treaty was critique as not paying adequate attention




to such issues as political cooperation, regional peace and security, the binding effect of the decisions of the Authority and the Council, and the supranationality of the ECOWAS. The Committee of Eminent Persons to Review the ECOWAS Treaty was set up to consider the legislative powers of the Authority of Heads of State and Government, the financing of the budgets of the Community institutions; and the decision making procedures of the Authority and the Council of Ministers. The Committee in its deliberations identified four issues: institutional matters; political cooperation, regional peace and security, financing of regional integration efforts, and available options for cooperation and regional economic integration. The ECOWAS Revised Treaty was adopted by the Heads of State in July 1993. The Revised Treaty is based largely on the recommendations of the Committee of Eminent Persons for the Review of the ECOWAS Treaty. The Revised ECOWAS Treaty was adopted in the hope that it would mark “the institutional process of having a stronger and more dynamic ECOWAS...”. In a broader sense, the Revised ECOWAS Treaty comes across as a response to “the rapidly changing economic landscape in different parts of the world”, which has made the slowness of pace experienced over the past years of regional integration in West Africa most undesirable. According to the chairman of the Committee of Eminent Persons, “We believe therefore that the time is ripe to review the existing arrangements for cooperation and integration in West Africa and to update them in the light of the changes and reforms taking place both within and outside the region”. The Revised Treaty contains 22 chapters divided into 93 Articles. In Article 2 of the Revised Treaty, ECOWAS “shall ultimately be the sole economic community in the region for the purpose of economic integration and the realization of the objectives of the African Economic Community”. The Revised Treaty seeks to extend economic and political co-operation among member states. It designates the achievement of a common market and a single currency as economic objectives. Also in the political sphere it provides for a West African Parliament, an Economic and Social Council and the ECOWAS Court of Justice to replace the Tribunal. The Court of Justice shall carry out the functions assigned to it and it is independent of members state and other institutions of the Community. The judgments of the Court “shall be binding on the members state, the institutions of the Community and on individuals, and corporate bodies”. The treaty also formally assigned the Community with the responsibility of preventing and settling regional conflicts.



Whereas it can be said that the overall logic and philosophy of the ECOWAS has not changed fundamentally, it should be acknowledged that new institutional framework put in place under the Revised Treaty to enhance the delivery capacity of ECOWAS. The idea was to assert the supranationality of ECOWAS institutions and facilitate their functions and roles in integration processes. Also, the seemingly refreshed commitment to the ideals of democratisation and good governance informed the provision for the establishment of an ECOWAS Parliament, tailored after the European Parliament, to exercise advisory and supervisory powers over the organs of the ECOWAS.

Looking at the Revised ECOWAS Treaty, it is possible that the ECOWAS drew some inspirations from the provisions of the African Economic Community (AEC) Treaty that regarded regional economic communities as building blocks in the construction of the African Common Market. ECOWAS was subsequently designated one of the five regional pillars of the AEC. Together with The Arab Mangreb Union (AMU), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Southern African Development Community (SADC), ECOWAS signed the Protocol on Relations between the AEC and RECs in February 1998. The Revised ECOWAS Treaty broadly reflects to some extent new trends in Africa and the world at large, taking into consideration some relevant developments on the international scene. For example, both the Revised ECOWAS Treaty and the Treaty Establishing the AEC indicate growing commitment to principles of good governance, and popular participation in development.


The renewed commitment of African governments to regional cooperation provides ECOWAS with new opportunities and challenges. The aim of the AEC specified in the Treaty is to promote economic, social and cultural development as well as African economic integration in order to increase self-sufficiency and endogenous development and to create a framework for development, mobilization of human resources and material. The AEC further aims to promote cooperation and development in all aspects of human activity with a view to raising that standard of life of Africa's people, maintaining economic stability and establishing a close and peaceful relationship between member states. The AEC Treaty provides for the African Economic Community to be set up through a gradual process, which would be achieved by



coordination, harmonization and progressive integration of the activities of existing and future sub-regional economic communities (RECs) in Africa. The RECs are regarded as the building blocks of the AEC. The existing RECs are: The Arab Magreb Union (AMU), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Southern African Development Community (SADC), and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

The implementation of the AEC Treaty and the establishment of the AEC are through six-stage process lasting 34 years. It starts with strengthening of existing RECs and creating new ones where needed (5 years); through stabilization of tariff and other barriers to regional trade and the strengthening of sectoral integration (8 years); establishment of free trade area and a custom union at the level of each REC (10 years); coordination and harmonization of tariffs systems among RECs, with the view to establishing an African Common market and the adoption of common policies (4 years); and integration of all sectors, establishment of an African Central Bank and a single African currency, setting up of an African Economic and Monetary Union and creating and electing the first Pan-African Parliament (5 years). The operational provisions of the AEC Treaty accord much importance to the building up of sub-regional integration though as a necessary precondition for continental integration. It was in this regard that Protocol on Relations between the AEC and the RECs was concluded and signed in February 1998.

The African Union (AU) is the latest of Africa's broad regional cooperation scheme. Considering some provisions of the AEC, there was urgent need to integrate the political activities of the OAU with the provisions of the AEC Treaty on economic and development issues to avoid duplications. The objectives of the AU, which include strengthening the founding principles of the OAU Charter, are more comprehensive than those of the OAU in acknowledging the multi-faceted challenges confronting the continent, especially in the area of peace and security. The Constitutive Act of the AU (CAAU), in its objective, place premium on the promotion of peace, security, and stability in Africa (Article 3 (f)). Also, enshrined in its principles are peaceful resolution of conflicts, the prohibition of the use of force or threats to use force, rights of intervention in the affairs of member states in case of "grave circumstances" related to war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity (Articles 4 (c) , (f), and (h) respectively).



The ideals of AU are easily accommodated in the new thinking in ECOWAS. Thus a good relationship which is mutually beneficial to both AU and ECOWAS is envisaged. However, the future of the relationships between the AU and sub-regional organizations in Africa such as ECOWAS will depend, in no small measure, upon the development of both AU and the various sub-regional organizations themselves. This, of course, has several political ramifications demanding complex institutions and structures, and extensive political will, as well as unity of objectives and commitments at national, sub-regional, and continental levels. It suffices to say here that the successful development of both the AU and the various sub-regional organizations in Africa depend first on the commitment of Africa states to redefine regional and sub-regional integration in a way that moves the process beyond state-centered approaches to include, among other things, the increased participation of civil society. Although there is some new thinking in this direction, which is already expressed in NEPAD and the AU, these new initiatives need to be translated into concrete agendas and programmes for civil society engagement with the state and other structures and processes of regional integration.


The most recent African plan for economic development is the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) that is based on the New African Initiative (NAI), a merger of the Millennium Partnership for the African Recovery Programme (MAP) and the Omega Plan. Again regional and sub-regional approaches to development are the key element through which many of the expected results are to be accomplished.

These new initiatives in some senses are redefining regional integration more broadly to transcend strictly economic sphere. It is interesting to note that ECOWAS and other sub-regional schemes are fast buying into the ideals that these new broad based African continental development initiatives represents. These developments have shown many of African countries including those of West Africa to be on the side of increased commitment to regional cooperation and integration. Considering these trends and development especially those associated with the establishment of the AEC, the adoption of the Revised ECOWAS Treaty, and lately the AU, one can conclude that efforts in this direction will continue into the future.

VI. Conclusions, policy recommendations, and research priorities

There today is no any controversy about the desirability of greater regional cooperation and integration among West African countries. However, the limited success of attempts at regional cooperation and integration in Africa generally raises questions on what is being pursued as the goals of regional integration. ECOWAS and many other regional schemes in the South to a larger extent hold theoretical allegiance to the European process of integration and the customs union theory. It has been observed that there are defects in the application of most Western theoretical constructs on economic integration to the setting in the South. For instance, there are political factors which are critical to the evolution and operation of regional integration in the South, and which the customs union theory conceals, in the bid to neutralize the political and ideological aspects of regional integration process. Such political considerations include the question of power relations (national and regional), the dominant ideology in the region, and the domestic politics in member states.


On the one hand, one can argue with some conviction that the prospects for closer cooperation and regional integration among countries in West Africa are bright. Recent trends and developments show many of the countries to be on the side of increased commitment to regional cooperation and integration. Given the untiring efforts of these countries as well as the renewed interest of the political elites in Pan-Africanism which culminated first in the establishment of the AEC and the inauguration of AU, one can conclude that efforts in this direction will continue into the future. Of course, this resurgence of interest in closer cooperation and regional among African countries and regional integration in Africa has been largely influenced by developments at national, regional and global levels. At the global level, the external environment has become less friendly to African economies. International economic environment has become increasingly characterized by depressed world commodity market, discriminatory protection, debt crisis, and the continuing distortions by TNCs. On the positive side, there is a new global consensus on the validity of the basic principles of regionalism. The dominant idea, which is rooted in contemporary political economy thoughts, is that regional cooperation is still a very effective means of promoting the goals of self-reliance and economic development.



At the level of national politics, some progress has been recorded with respect to political reforms in many West African countries. This in turn is enhancing the capacity of these countries for regional integration in West Africa. Noticeably, many West African countries are democratizing; and the democratic space in many countries has been expanded and politics has become increasingly inclusive. In Nigeria and Ghana especially multi-party elections for 'second transition' were held successfully. On the other hand, dominant social forces within and outside the ECOWAS sub-region also demonstrate lack of interest in closer cooperation and greater regional integration in West Africa. The continued adherence to discarded models of development and administration, lack of initiatives and readiness to undertake the necessary internal socio-economic restructuring and the dominant pattern of accumulation which enriches a few at the expense of the majority have combined with other contradictions arising from the misuse of state power, wastefulness and misplacement of priorities to make national governments incapable of making their economies become more interlinked in an integration framework. The lack of regime continuity which traumatized West Africa countries for considerably long period, and the manipulative and technological power of foreign capital also constitute impediment towards the pursuit of serious integrative processes in West Africa. Moreover, the class configuration within West Africa, particularly the domination and control of state power and societal resources by a largely unproductive dominant class has often led to isolationist and pseudo-nationalist policies that do not promote regional integration.

In view of the above, three phases of regional integration are conceivable for the ECOWAS to be able to promote development. I refer to these as the 'national', 'regional' and 'global'. First and most important, individual member-state of the ECOWAS need a new 'national' development programme for reversing underdevelopment. This implies embarking on internal changes in areas of political mobilization and participation, popular access to opportunities for majority, the overhaul of inherited socio-economic and political institutions, and the redefinition of relations with transnational corporations and other external forces.

The second phase is the extension of structural changes made at the national level initially to sub-regional and later regional level. The will entails the ECOWAS to design and implement strategies that should encourage and seek means of facilitating increase in intra-



regional trade, the improvement of transportation and communication system, the erection of political institutions that would assist in the improvement of political relations and understanding and also, the effort to re-define the role of the ECOWAS sub-region in the international division of labour. Within this context the ECOWAS should be able to formulate policies towards the promotion and coordination of efforts to regulate the activities of TNCs within the sub-region, promote industrialization as a means of checking constant vulnerability to changes in global economy and the stimulation of the regional market and specialization, and also the development and growth of transnational civil society at the regional level through networks of civil society groups across national borders.

The third phase requires a restructuring of the global system .This implies a collective regional effort that seek for the re-definition of the existing unequal power relations between the West African sub-region and the North. These are prescriptions with several political ramifications demanding complex institutions and structures, and extensive political will, as well as unity of objectives and commitment. It is good to note that some of the propositions presented above depend largely on sufficient participation of civil society; the people and their representatives in associations, professional societies, farmers' group, women's groups and so on, as well as political parties. Without sufficient participation of these groups either in the political process where decisions relating to regional cooperation and integration programmes are taken or through adequate consultation, efforts and initiatives stand the risk of becoming easy prey for sabotage. Although there is some thinking in this direction which is already expressed in the Revised Treaty and other documents, but these new initiatives need to be translated into concrete agenda and programmes for civil society engagement with the state and other structures and processes of regional integration.


Based on the analysis in this paper, it is the third level that presents the greatest challenge to regional integration in West Africa. Strategies for addressing the constraining influence of the international environment require a restructuring of the global system This implies a collective regional effort that seek for the re-definition of the existing unequal power relations between the South t and the North. Certainly these efforts must necessarily transcend the existing arrangements such as the USA's AGOA, the Free Trade



Agreement (FTA) or the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA).

The rejection of these preferred arrangements of the North by the countries in the South has political implications that come with more responsibilities. Such rejection represents a desire for an alternative development framework which demands extensive political will, as well as unity of objectives and commitment. The success of the alternative framework also depend largely on sufficient participation of civil society; the people and their representatives in associations, professional societies, farmers' group, women's groups and so on, as well as political parties. Without sufficient participation of these groups either in the political process where decisions relating to regional cooperation and integration programmes are taken or through adequate consultation, efforts and initiatives stand the risk of becoming easy prey for sabotage. Although there is some thinking in this direction which is already expressed in ACP, NEPAD and the AU, but these new initiatives need to be translated into concrete agenda and programmes for civil society engagement with the state and other structures and processes of regional integration.

Finally, some of the propositions above would definitely require further research, to identify and define issues more precisely. Therefore efforts at promoting regional integration in the South should necessarily consider the importance of scientific research which entails data and information gathering, analysis and re-analysis. For example, Africa is the most balkanized regions of the world. Countries in the region are at varying levels of development. Also, there are wide differences in the historical and political backgrounds, the administrative and legal systems and monetary regimes. There is need to generate a lot of information to determine the characteristics of the countries and their economies. Research programmes would be needed to generate reliable and regular flow of data on the countries in the region. Also, lack of democratization is a major constraint towards effective regional integration. In this regard, the relationship between regional integration and democratic governance in Africa requires scholarly attention. How do regional schemes such as ECOWAS and SADC promote good governance in national affairs? What are the models that are needed to be designed for regional schemes to monitor the compliance of African governments with the democratic principles and values in some of the new regional initiatives such as NEPAD? What is expected to happen to the 'sovereignty' of states in view of some of



the radical elements and initiatives in NEPAD and AU such as the peer review? What type of early warning system is required to identify sources of instability in the region? Other issues for in-depth include the role of the external environment on the direction of regional integration, the potential and actual capacity of the domestic forces such as the civil society to promote regional integration, the prospect of transnational civil society and cross-border social and economic networking, and the idea of mainstreaming of gender into regional integration programmes.

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