

**Challenges and Prospects of Regional Integration in Africa: A Study of New Partnership for African Development [NEPAD] and Economic Community of West African States [ECOWAS].**

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**Abstract**

Political motives, geography and the uneven distribution of gains trumped the traditional efficiency gains across Africa's Regional Economic Communities (RECs). The small, sparsely populated, fragmented, and often isolated economies across Africa make a compelling case for these economies to integrate regionally to reap efficiency gains, exploit economies of scale, and reduce the thickness of borders. But lack of complementarities among partners and diminishing returns to the exploitation of resources has reduced supply response to market-integration oriented regional policies. Additionally, a very uneven distribution of resources has sharpened the trade-off between the benefits of common policies needed to tackle cross-border externalities and their costs, which are heightened by the sharp differences in policy preferences across members. African RECs have pursued the 'linear model' of integration with a stepwise integration of goods, labour, and capital markets, as well as eventual monetary and fiscal integration. With the exception of the franc zone, the RECs have not yet completed goods markets integration; the lack of adjustment funds to address the uneven distribution of benefits across partners contributing to the delay. Using In-depth review of literature, this paper reveals that regional integration and creation of trade brings continental solidarity, implying community spirit, which appears as the result of the delamination from the outside world and inner homogenization;

as the result of political centralization, administrative centralization; judicial uniformity; territorial organized division of labor; mass education and mass communication. It also shows the shortcomings of the linear model of integration, as behind-the-border measures aiming to reduce trade costs were largely ignored across African RECs until recently. While this is probably due to the difficulty in gaining the confidence necessary to get collection action started, many behind-the-border measures could still have been undertaken unilaterally.

**Keywords:** regional integration, Africa, trade creation, trade diversion, Franc zone, trade liberalization

## 1. Introduction

The concept of integration denotes the joining together of two or more economies, polities or abstract entities for a common purpose. According to Ernest; the term integration is the process whereby political actors in several distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities toward a new center, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over preexisting national states (Adejumobi, 2009). The end result of a process of political integration is a new political community, superimposed over the pre-existing ones (Adetula, 2004).

Economic integration is therefore the fusion together of two or more economies in order to achieve a common economic purpose. Thus, integration implies the development of some new alliance or new integrity of separate parts, which start to act as an independent unity. It should be underlined that integration is seen as a positive amount game, which makes it profitable for each player as well for the whole community (Schalk, Auriacombe, and Brynard, 2005). It should be said, that, HTO global competitive landscape is a kind of environment in which only the strongest survive along with the countries and economies that unite the efforts facing the blows and challenges of globalization. On the other hand, regional integration guarantees its participant's preferential economic, commercial, political regime which undermines certain universal regulative instruments (Wapmuk, 2009). Integration is possible through Continental solidarity, Economic growth and Legal capacity.

- Continental solidarity, implying community spirit, which appears as the result of the delamination from the outside world and inner homogenization; as the result of political centralization, administrative centralization; judicial uniformity; territorial organized division of labor; mass education and mass communication (Soderbaum, 2002);
- Economic growth, which enables the constantly growing part of population enjoy the economic prosperity on a bigger scale;

- Legal capacity of the governments that manage to guarantee common people relatively high living standards regardless of individual market success. It is important to remind of the fact that the problem of globalization and regional integration correlation is tending to come out in the foreground recently. It tackles upon a wide range not only geopolitical, geo-economic and geo-civilizational issues, but also political-economic, financial, currency and other problems (Shaw, 2009).

## 2. Regional Integration in Africa

Regional economic integration became an important subject in Africa as more African countries began to achieve independence from the early 1960s. This was due to the realization that considering colonial rule and the effects of Africa's balkanization, it would be difficult for newly-created African states to make progress in an international system dominated by powerful, rich and industrialized countries of the West (Hettne, and Soderbaum, 1998). African states would need to unite. As such, the quest for cooperation and integration was influenced by pan-African desires for collective self-reliance, solidarity, development, peace and unity. This led to the establishment of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and, subsequently, the formation of sub-regional groupings and institutions to promote regional integration. However, while some level of progress has been recorded at the sub-regional level in some of Africa's regional economic communities (RECs) such as the ECOWAS, EAC, SADC, the continent has lagged behind other regions in its integration efforts.

This paper examines the challenges and prospects of regional integration in Africa: a study of new partnership for African Development [NEPAD] AND Economic Community of West African States [ECOWAS]. It argues that African leaders and policy makers easily sign regional agreements and treaties, formulate desirable objectives in establishing regional economic institutions, but, in reality, are not politically committed to the principles of regionalism and effective implementation of regional resolutions. Regionalism in Africa is problematic and influenced by political variables. The paper argues that African leaders and policy makers would need to move beyond rhetoric in furthering deeper integration in Africa (Hettne, and Soerbaum, 2000).

The ECOWAS is bedeviled with a lot of challenges just like that of the African Union. Scholars have given several reasons for the struggling nature of the various integrative structures of developing countries. For instance, according to Okolo, the absence of favourable background conditions before the commencement of the integration process coupled with weak institutional structures and competing ideologies are to be blamed for

the challenges of integration in developing countries (Chen, 2011). Ezi, on the other hand, disagrees and contends that “the problems of regional economic integration in Africa go beyond those of political instability, ideological diversity, and lack of infrastructure, low industrial development and divided loyalty of members. These tendencies that pose serious problems for economic integration of the sub-region still rear their ugly heads. Of crucial importance is the problem of foreign capital which is in alliance with the local dominant classes and the continued marginalization of these economies in the international division of labour (Adetula, 2004).

### **3. Regional Integration: New Partnership for African Development [NEPAD] and Economic Community of West African States [ECOWAS].**

It is important to remind of the fact that the problem of globalization and regional integration correlation is tending to come out in the foreground recently. It tackles upon a wide range not only geopolitical, geo-economic and geo-civilizational issues, but also political-economic, financial, currency and other problems (Gehring, 1996).

Thus, regional integration, firstly, allows the countries of the region to stand up to the challenges of globalization, endure the pressure of global leaders who dictate the rules of the game.

Secondly, it allows creating regional preferential advantages in global competitive landscape at the world goods, services, technologies and labor markets.

Thirdly, regional integration lowers cost of production and marketing expenses, encourages international labor disintegration, specialization and cooperation of goods and services production encourages dynamic development of national economies, the growth of their competitive ability in global environment. There are some examples of integration in the world history based on the contingency of economic interests and this ways seems to be the most effective in solving multiple problems of African reality (Gilpin, 2001). The decision made by the Union to provide support in development of international processes relying on the current political and administrative unities of the South and the North of the continent, western and eastern Africa show the understanding by the heads of the governments the problems they are going to face on the long and difficult way and the readiness to overcome them.

As for regional integration in Africa, it is necessary to underline that for the detailed analyses of African international processes we should turn to earlier periods, as the tendency of African countries to unite originates in the 1950-1960-ies, the period of political

independence acquisition. In this precise period the first integration alliances were formed, which were considered the key way of gaining economic independence for the countries free from the colonial dependence, an instrument of reformation and integration of the national economies into world economy. It should be stated that the problems of regional integration in Africa are mostly determined by the character of political processes organization on the African continent (Lamberte, 2004). Africa is the only region in the world where the growth of poverty is not only recorded but also predicted. The situation is worsened by the external debt problem, the growth of which exceeds the development possibilities of African economies. It also should be mentioned that the majority of economic exponents are still at low level, for example the employment exponents. African economic structure renders its position at the global economic system, and the combination of negative external and internal factors intensify the economic instability in Africa even more (Koukoudakis, 2012).

Due to the current international division of labor Africa specializes mostly on the export of primary goods with the prices established at the global level and not in Africa. Such models of unequal exchange not only lessen the opportunities for development of African countries at the expense of export but also result in competitive ability loss of African countries at the world market (Dosenrode, 2008).

Many Africanists think that Organizations of African Unity (OAU) - the biggest political unity of African continent was created in 1963 on the basis of African solidity and unity principles and from the very beginning concentrated on the fight for the complete freedom of Africa from the colonial dependency. One more priority was the fight for the destruction of apartheid regime in South Africa and all forms of racial discrimination. Particularly in this the organization demonstrated outstanding decisiveness and firmness and managed to mobilize the efforts of all countries on the continent and draw the attention of the world to these problems, which resulted in final success of its intentions (Rosamond, 2000).

At the moment there are some factors which in my opinion contributed to the achievement of the compromise and the creation of Organizations of African Unity. Firstly, it clear understands by the African countries that it's impossible to break free of the colonial burden by the forces of one or several countries only. Secondly, young African countries were inclined to unite and collaborate (Martin, 1992).

At the moment the real reasons for creating African Union which substituted OAU were cardinal changes in the alignment of political forces in the world at the period of its existence (1963-2001) and the fulfillment at the brink of the new millennium some high

priority tasks that were appointed to OAU. The problems of current economic development in Africa call for new approaches and mechanisms (Niemann, and Schmitter, 2009). The main difference of AU from OAU is that economic integration is proclaimed the main priority of the new organization while OAU viewed political integration as the main task for taking measures to guarantee national independence and territorial integrity of young African states (Ogbeide, 2010).

It is necessary to mention that the aim of the new organization, as it is underlined in the organizational act of AU, is the readiness of the heads of governments and countries - AU members to promote unity, solidarity, cohesion and collaboration among the nations and countries of Africa. As the main tasks of AU were announced: leading a dialogue with the world community on unanimity of view point on the part of African countries (including decisions which will be able to answer the challenges of globalization), protection of sovereignty, territorial integrity of countries, support of peace, safety and security, stability on the continent, effective resolution of regional conflicts (Gehring, 1996).

It is worth mentioning that at the conference of the heads of OAU in June 1979 a historic Monrovia declaration was carried which laid the basis for Lagos plan of actions (LPA), the main points of which are the following (Adetula, 2004):

- great resources of Africa should be used above all to satisfy the needs of people;
- it is necessary to deal with the dependency of Africa from the export of raw material;
- Africa should mobilize all its own human and material resources for the sake of development;
- these efforts should lead to economic integration of Africa;
- governments should pursue the economic, social and cultural policy in accordance with LPA aims.

On the other hand the analyses I made allows me to state that Cairo plan defined the following priorities for the continent's invigoration:

- government, peace, stability, development;
- food safety;
- human resources development and the growth of their efficiency;
- resource mobilization;
- economic collaboration and integration on the regional level;
- structural reorganization of African countries economies.

As for the foundation of the United states of Africa and the establishment of OAU Kaddafi not only broke the statute of OAU in which it is said that the revision of the statute is only

possible in a year after its project will be put over to all the countries-members of the Union. He also reopened discussion about the organizational form of pan Africanism, which originates from the early 60-ies before OAU was established (African Union, 2002). The head of International Affairs Committee of the Federation Council Mikhail Margelov says: African integration today is a fight among different groups of countries for the influence on the continent, which represents not only the interests of African states but also the USA, the European Union, China and other serious international players, the is why political and economic unity of the continent being the optimal way-out from a number of crisis situations in Africa still is a matter remote future and it is a long way to go till all the problems AU faces are solved.»

Executive economic program of the newly reestablished all-African organization became NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development) - new major program of Africa strategy development which determines its place in the world, it includes a certain complex of measures in the economy sphere of African countries and a hope is expressed for the partnership on the global level in the process of its realization and to promote mutual commercial and investment relations (African Union, 2005). This program has essentially two bases: the partnership program to revitalize the development of Africa in the new century and the Omega Plan, which aims to resolve intra - African conflicts, investment and financial assistance among African countries (Shaw, 2009). In the early '90s both in Africa with expansion abroad there was an extremely pessimistic information regarding the strategies and prospects to solve socio - economic development of Africa apocalyptic situations in different African regions, in my opinion the source of African pessimism and ma economic development of most African countries (Schmitter, 2005)..

According to the Russian Africanist Sumbatyan J.G. program that gives priority to develop the agriculture, education, health, and infrastructure. African leaders considered the African Union and NEPAD as two social factors inter - linked, integrated social, political and economic relations and replicate Africa's access to the world Economic. It is clear that the activities of the African Union determines the existence of NEPAD , requiring new qualities of solidarity of African States, waives the selfish political tendencies of African leaders (Anadi, 2005). In July 2001, a new program that known as' New African Initiative «, it had raised the fusion of the two aforementioned programs, the new program has the following goals by the year 2018 was approved:

- Reduction of the number of people living below the poverty line (less than \$ 1 per day)
- Ensure primary education for all children of school age,

- Achieving Equality of gender in relation to populations facing education, primary, secondary and higher education,
- Reduce child mortality for 3/2,

The African Union and the regional economic integration groups argued that new approaches to the formation of connections " cross-country " is required and improve the forms , methods and tools for mutual cooperation in economic and social fields (Ayangafac, 2008). The creation of the AU was an absolute step forward in the development of the idea and practice of African integration. The AU has contributed to the development of the African states position face the global challenges. Key factors of disintegration in Africa:

- Reduced size and capacity of markets and economies of African countries: GDP per capita well below average, poor diversification of production and exports, leading to the need to share resources;
- The integration of many member countries into one group (to 27 countries), which prevents the development of a common policy;
- The concern of governments with regard to the unequal distribution of benefits and costs of integration between the various Member States;
- Extremely low the role of the private business sector;
- Weakness of the structures of state power.

In Africa, there are a large proportion of the world's poorest countries, with a GDP per capita below \$ 950 on average per year. The factors of disintegration are clearly manifest poor performance of almost all African regional groups. Thus , it should be noted that the economic development of most African countries are at an extremely low level .In general Africa which is formed by 54 countries , but Africa still plays a minor role in the global economy(Biswaro, 2012).

In the book titled "Feature integration processes in Africa " , (Biswaro, 2012). explained that unlike many other regions of the world, the internal contradictions of the groups of African integration (with some exceptions) do not contribute to the growth of bilateral trade. Unless a low share of exports relative to total exports of member countries, while the last two decades in many groupings exports increased investment (Caporaso, 1998). The most dynamic growth of this indicator is characteristic of the Southern African Development Community, the Union of the Arab Maghreb and UEMOA. In 2011 almost all groups of regional integration reached an early stage of economic integration, free trade areas have become totally or partially. It is important to clarify that the geographical structure of foreign trade of African countries is dominated by developed countries, especially the

European Union countries, the share of which in total African trade is 40 % (Collard-Wexler, 2006). Overall, Africa's trade with the EU is greater than the volume of trade between the five largest countries of the continent (South Africa, Algeria, Nigeria, Morocco and Egypt).

In recent years there has been a desire of some integration groups to coordinate their domestic economic activities. Thus, ECOWAS and UEMOA have developed a common program of trade liberalization and implementation of macroeconomic policy, the development of common rules of origin, customs procedures and harmonization of the compensation mechanism (for that ECOWAS decided to use the system UEMOA) African countries (Delvin and Estevadeordal, 2002).

#### **4. Challenges of Regional Economic Integration in Africa:**

According to Kimunguyi one of the notable challenges of regional economic integration in the African continent is the difficulty in promoting inter-and-intra regional trade in Africa. In his paper, Kimunguyi observed that there are a lot of factors which have contributed to the poor inter/intra African trade performance. He lamented the fact that many African countries in the region basically produce raw materials, which are less competitive in the international markets and sometimes there is virtually no demand for them elsewhere in Africa (Diiego-Castaneda, 2006).

Again citing the Angola and the Seychelles for example, where ninety per cent of Angola's export, to other African countries come from petroleum products and the fact that fresh fish constitutes nearly 98 per cent of such exports for the Seychelles, Kimunguyi contends that lack of diversity of African products is also a big challenge for the promotion of inter and intra trade in Africa (Geda, and Kibret, 2002). Moreover, pointing out the fact that though Senegal is the Gambia's close neighbour, trade between the two is negligible and that France is Senegal's biggest trading partner, while the Gambia trades largely with the United Kingdom (UK). Kimunguyi lamented another hindrance to the promotion of trade in Africa on the fact that, many African countries are still in tight trade partnerships with their former colonial master than with their fellow African countries (Economic Commission for Africa, 2011). This is the only reason which explains why exports from Tunisia and Cameroon often find their way to French warehouses before being redirected to each other's market shelves. Thus Regional Economic Integration in Africa is challenged. It is therefore clear that Kimunguyi focused his attention on the economic challenges of regional integration in Africa proffering suggestions as to the way forward in addressing the challenges of Regional integration in Africa (Gibb, 2009).

Another serious challenge facing regional economic integration in Africa as espoused by scholars is the issue of the fear of loss of revenue. According to Geda and Kibret, the reduction of trade barriers in economies where tariff revenue is one of the most significant sources of government revenue complicates the inter-temporal trade-off between the apparent short-term loss of revenue and the expected long-term benefits emanating from regional integration. Citing Kenya, for instance, the two scholars indicated that government revenue from its imports from EU constitutes a reasonable percentage of its total revenue (Haas, 1958). The two scholars also pointed out for instance, that Ethiopia's revenue loss due to opening its market to COMESA is less than 1 per cent of total revenue since its trade with COMESA is negligible (although shifting from EU to COMESA could mean a lot of loss in tax revenue). With these analyses from COMESA, it is clear that many African countries are hesitant to ensuring a Regional integration because of the fear of the loss of revenue in the inter/intra state trade. This study therefore reviewed the challenges of regional integration in Africa by taking a critical look at the prospects and challenges of regional economic integration in ECOWAS (Hettne and Soderbaum, 1998).

## 5. Challenges of Economic Integration in ECOWAS

Multiplicities of challenges have had a significant role in the poor record of the ECOWAS integration process. The challenges run from the decision-making at the community level to the national level. According to some scholars, regional integration in Africa started during the era of Kwame Nkrumah. He argued in his book 'Africa Must Unite' of the need for the economic unification and integration of African states. However, the kind of African Unity Kwame Nkrumah envisioned for Africa never saw the light of day (IRCD, (International Relations and Cooperation Department, Republic of South Africa) (2003). Asante views regional integration as "the only viable strategy for optimal development of all the peoples of Africa in the contemporary economic and political circumstances as well as in the world as a whole" (Hettne, and Soerbaum, 2000). He posits that "regional integration in Africa did not succeed because of factors such as lack of commitment by African ruling class", absence of "viable national institutions for managing the regional cooperation process, deficiencies of the community institutions" to institute and implement policy making functions successfully, limited role of nongovernmental organizations and interest group in the integration process among others (Kimaryo, 2013). Greer also argues that the strain between Anglophone and Francophone countries is a basic challenge facing ECOWAS integration (Manboah, 2000). The Francophone-Anglophone issue is owed to the differing colonial institutions, legal heritages and business practices as well as the influence of France, unlike Britain, on her colonies (Mitrany, 1943). Neo-colonialism, attributed to the French and British, has been more prevalent in West Africa than in most parts of the world. France opposed the creation of

ECOWAS, because it reasoned that a large regional organization would allow its former colonies more political and economic independence (Soderbaum, 2002). Greer argues that the colonial masters still exert some form of influence on their colonies to the degree that they manipulate their decisions on integrating with the other countries in the sub-region. Initiatives like the creation of the single monetary union of the francophone countries, the CFA, remains one of the major challenges to the integration process as the sub-region hopes to achieve a monetary union (Sesay and Omotosho, 2011). The activities of the colonial masters cause divisions in the Community and make member states more aligned to them than to the sub-region. The result is that, decision making by the Community on integration is difficult. Greer perhaps describes the most obvious challenge to the integration process in the West African sub-region (Olu-Adeyemi, and Ayodele, 2007). This is because colonial masters have affected decision making of the Community since the initiative towards integration in the 1970s.

## **6. History of Regional Economic Integration in Africa**

Regional economic ties in Africa have had a long history owing to the long distance trade which existed throughout Africa even before the advent of the Europeans. These trades, included, the trans-saharan trade and the caravan trade. However, with the coming of European colonialism, economic activities of many kinds including trade, finance, monetary affairs, administrative responsibilities, transport and communication network were organized on a regional basis during the colonial period, including the monetary unions between the francophone countries and France (Schalk, Auriacombe, and Brynard, 2005). During this era (colonial period), each colonial authority used to bind occupied territories together under one central administration, merely for convenience. This resulted in the creation of common services and common money issuing boards. The adoption of common practices such as free movement of people also proved useful in this context (Schmitter, 2004).

After independence, regional integration became a pillar of Africa's developmental strategy (Olivier, 2010). Pan-Africanism, an ideology which emphasizes continental unity and strong identification with the then ongoing anti-colonial struggles, was the leitmotif of Africa's developmental framework (Olivier, 2010). Qobo asserts that, from the beginning of the decolonization process in the 1960s, the establishment of sub-regional economic communities was a significant part of Africa's development strategy.<sup>5</sup> Economic regionalism in Africa began during this period, spearheaded in large measure by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and Economic Commission on Africa (ECA). These were done for two main purposes – partly as a response to colonialism as well as to spur political and economic progress on the continent; and partly as a political instrument to

deal with the power imbalances in the international system.<sup>6</sup> It is worth pointing out that at independence, Africa lacked the human and physical capital that was required for industrialization; there was therefore the need for African countries to come together and strike an agreement that would ensure they benefit from one another, hence the idea of fostering Regional Economic Integration in the continent (Okhonmina, 2009).

### **7. Historical Evolution of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)**

ECOWAS was officially established in 1975. A number of events preceded the signing of the ECOWAS treaty. It is believed within African circles that the Former Liberian President, William Tubman, was first to conceive the idea of a West African economic community, which stimulated the signing of an agreement between Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone on February 1965, though this did not go far (Radelet, 1997).

However, two prominent Africans – General Gowon of Nigeria and General Eyadema of Togo reignited the idea in April 1972 (Okhonmina, 2009). They travelled to 12 countries in West Africa to elicit support. The generals drafted proposals for the treaty which were examined at a meeting of potential member states in Lomé, Togo, on December 1973; at a meeting of experts and jurists in Accra, Ghana, on January 1974; and at another meeting of ministers in Monrovia, Liberia, on January 1975 (Laffan, 1992).

Finally, on May 28, 1975, fifteen West African countries met in Lagos, Nigeria, to sign the ECOWAS Treaty, also known as the Treaty of Lagos. Since its formation, there has been a lot of critical questions with regards to the mandate of the regional body. Various scholars have taken turns to explore the mandate of ECOWAS (Haas, 1971).

According to Aderanti, due to the importance of inter-community collaboration in the world economic prosperity and development, the ECOWAS agreement was signed in Lagos, Nigeria on May 28, 1975 by leaders of West Africa to embrace various aspects of economic activity. One of the key objectives was to eliminate impediments blocking the free movement of the citizenry, commodities and income within the community. This called for the ECOWAS agreement on the freedom for people to move, the liberty to residence and free migration of workers (Akokpari, 2003).

The first part of that agreement guaranteed free entry to ECOWAS population without the requirement of a legal travelling documentation for three months. This became law in the various municipalities in 1980 and took effect forthwith to usher in a period of unrestricted migration of the Community citizens across its coverage area. However, community

citizens were guaranteed rights to entry, residence and settlement under the revised 1992 Treaty of ECOWAS; it further required her members to observe the said freedoms in the respective jurisdictions of each country. The agreement mandated members of the Community to ratify the undertaking such that it takes full effect and executed to its fullest in all member states (Adejumobi, 2009).

Regional Groupings in the West African Sub-Region Geo-politically, the West African sub-region consists of sixteen countries, including ten former French colonies, four British colonies, one Portuguese and one Spanish. Ahmad states that the former French colonies have been the most active group in the sub-region and in the continent as a whole, in terms of economic cooperation (Adogamhe, 2008).

### 8. Levels of Economic Integration

This refers to the different strategies adopted in pursuance of economic integration. For an economic bloc to attain a full-fledged integration it would have to go through five stages of economic cooperation from the least integrated to most integrated, they are a free trade area, a customs union, a common market, an economic union and finally a full political union. Even though some practitioners see it as a progression from one level to another, a level is understood to mean a completely different stage of integration which could be identified and adopted without necessarily moving from the first to the end (Ayinde, 2011). The levels of integration throw more light on the structure of the study and serve as a bridge for launching into the process of integration in West Africa.

- **Free Movement of Persons:** For reasons of national security, public order and protection of the labour market, most West African countries had been operating expatriate quota schemes and imposing entry visa requirements. One of the first achievements of ECOWAS was to adopt a protocol that made possible the free movement of community citizens throughout the region (Delvin and Estevadeordal, 2002).
- **Regional Infrastructural Networks:** The free and smooth movement of persons, goods and services depends on effective physical cohesion. ECOWAS therefore made the development of regional infrastructural networks an early priority. On the pan-African highway plan, ECOWAS adopted a regional road programme – the Trans-West African: consisting of the Trans-coastal highway from Lagos to Nouakchou, and the Trans-Sahelian Highway from Dakar to N'Djamena (Economic Commission for Africa, 2011).
- **Promoting Regional Interactions:** The colonial past, linguistic and cultural differences and past independence nationalism had all combined to make most

West African countries live without the necessary regional interaction. If a viable and integrated West African community is to exist, such barriers must be broken. Conscious effort has been made to build the necessary social and economic bridges, particularly among the business community. The organised private sector of member states has been encouraged to interact across borders through the West African Enterprise Network (WAEN) (Geda, and Kibret, 2002).

- **Promoting Cross Border Investment (CBI):** In order to promote CBI, ECOWAS has been encouraging the establishment of regional projects through the provisions of necessary political support and developing appropriate regional mechanisms to contribute to the share capital. In this regard, ECOWAS supported the efforts of the Federation of West African Chambers of Commerce to set up the first private sector regional bank, the ECOBANK Transnational Incorporated with its Headquarters in Lome, Togo and with branches in eleven countries (Kimaryo, 2013).
- **Regional Peace and Security:** There cannot be economic and social integration and development without political stability and peace. ECOWAS member countries have undertaken a number of initiatives to safeguard and consolidate relations conducive to the maintenance of peace, stability and security within the sub-region (Koukoudakis, 2012).

## 9. The future of regional integration in Africa

We have seen how a new momentum is building up behind regionalism in Africa, but that there are competing visions for the objectives and design of regional integration arrangements. On the one hand, there are those who argue that, because of the poor record of regional economic integration, African countries should “forget theoretical schemes of the pan-African type (a ‘United States of Africa’) or the neo-colonial type (a customs union), replacing them with simpler, cheaper, more productive, and more cost-effective models of integration through projects - choosing priority sectors for development (agriculture, industry, power, transportation, and training) and identifying specific, concrete projects in each sector to be implemented on a community basis, with possible financial support from outside (Diouf, quoted in McCarthy, 1995). On the other hand, there are the erstwhile sceptics among the donors who have been converted to supporting regionalism of a certain type, one which is outward-looking, which is focused on trade facilitation, which has strong private sector involvement and which has light institutional structures. Finally, there is the traditional model of top-down African regionalism, espoused by the OAU and endorsed by African Heads of State, which has a strong rhetorical basis and a largely political significance.

The EU's desire to encourage regional economic groupings as potential trade partners in negotiating EPAs under the Cotonou Agreement implies that trade integration as well as functional co-operation will necessarily be an important policy instrument of African regionalism during the next decade. "The Agreements shall include provisions aimed at fostering food security in accordance with WTO rules" (Manboah, 2000).

If the new regional groupings in Africa are to have a role in tackling food security, they need to be placed on a firmer footing (Sesay. and Omotosho, 2011). The new regionalism must address the following issues which have been partly responsible for the poor record of the past:

- Overlapping memberships of competing groups should be resolved to allow a clear political commitment to particular country groupings.
- For a common market to function its members at least need to be at peace. The wars and conflicts in a number of African regions which have devastated transport networks, communications and other basic infrastructure need to be peacefully resolved.
- Ways must be found to involve the private sector in the integration process. It should not be expected that all private sector groups will favor regional integration. In some countries, farmers may fear low-cost competition from elsewhere in the region and may take quite a protectionist stance. The participation of consumer groups and other NGOs should be encouraged as these groups can also gain from exploiting the opportunities for greater intra-regional trade (African Union, 2005).
- Given the disparities in economic weight that exist between members of some groupings, new policy instruments to deal with the fears of economic polarization must be found, for example, multispeed arrangements (allowing weaker members more time to liberalize), compensation schemes, regional investment banks, or structural solidarity funds such as the Food Security Financial Instrument proposed in Chapter 5.
- Dispute settlement mechanisms need to be strengthened and ways to ensure policy credibility must be put in place. Investors need to have confidence that integration measures will not be reversed and that barriers to regional markets will not be re-instituted overnight. Binding liberalization commitments in the WTO should be encouraged where possible, while the opportunity of the REPA negotiations with the EU should also be used to bind and enforce policy commitments (African Union, 2002).

## 10. Conclusion

Integration in West Africa has a chequered history. Regional groupings within the sub-region floundered, mainly because they lacked the institutional props and political commitment needed to nurture them. The first most serious attempt made by countries of the sub-region towards integrating their economies was in 1975 when ECOWAS was born. The various methods adopted by ECOWAS since its inception, bear eloquent testimony to the will of member countries to succeed in their integration drive. With the success of some of these methods, the prospects of integration in West Africa are good.

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