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ECONOMIC INTEGRATION IN WEST AFRICA, 1960- 1975: AN ENQUIRY INTO THE PAST

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria can be considered as a giant in the region, more so one the major power in West Africa. The paper, however, is a study of the West African states. This paper examines the fortunes of integrating their economies with particular reference to their interests in subjects like multilateral politics, migration, and their geo-politics relations. The research will also examine the perceptions, as well as strategies of the major and minor powers in the economic and power relations among the West African states. The study will rely heavily on documentary data. The documentary data were sourced from newspapers, journal papers, internet sources and correspondence. The data would be subjected to internal and external criticism for authentication, and then to textual and contextual analyses. The study will investigate 'if' truly the large market of West Africa is attractive for the international powers or were there other reasons for these interest.

I. INTRODUCTION:

Since independence the colonial pattern of labour migration continues, with Ghana, Ivory Coast and Nigeria continuing to provide seasonal employment in their coffee, cocoa and groundnut plantations for migrants from Benin, Togo, Burkina Faso and Niger, and Senegal's groundnut farms receiving a large number of laborers from Mali *(Adu & Ade-Ajayi, 1986)*. The mining industry in West Africa has expanded since 1960 in a number of states. In Mauritania and Liberia, considerable foreign investment in the mining of iron ore has led to near exhaustion of the original supplies, but several other states vast quantities of certain minerals which are already in profitable production: Guinea with a third of the world's high quality bauxite reserves, Senegal and Togo with phosphates, Niger with Uranium, and Nigeria with Oil and Natural Gas *(Ajayi & Crowder, 1985)*.

The first attempt to achieve collective self-reliance in West Africa was made in November 1963 when a conference on industrial harmonization in the sub-region was held in Lagos. In 1964 nine West African states from Nigeria to Guinea set up the newly created Niger River Commission, for the purpose of joint development of water supply, navigation, Hydro- Electricity, Irrigation and Fishing. In the Chad Convention of the same year, Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon agreed to a joint study of the lake region and joint use of its resources *(Duyile, 2006)*. This was followed, in Niamey, by a conference on economic cooperation in October 1966. At a similar conference at Accra, in April 1967, an agreement on the Articles of Association of a proposed Economic Community in West Africa was signed. Under this framework, an Interim Council of Ministers was established with the task of preparing a draft treaty for the proposed community *(Adefolarin, 1998)*. The interim council held its first meeting at Dakar, in November 1967, when it was agreed that the inaugural meeting of the proposed community should take place at the level of Heads of States or Government *(Duyile, 2006)*. This attempts proceeded further when in the same month the four Head of States of the Organization of Senegalese River States met at Bamako and expressed their intention of extending their co-operation through the creation of a regional group embracing the whole of West Africa and accordingly mandated the President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania to communicate this intention to the Head of State of the other West African countries *(Olatunde, 2005)*. As a consequence, the Head of states met at Monrovia in April 1968 and signed the protocol establishing the West Africa Regional Group. The meeting instructed Guinea and Nigeria to prepare priority studies on areas of co-operation. While Liberia and Senegal were asked to prepare a draft treaty and protocol for a customs Union. Nigeria, however, played a prominent role in the formation of the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) *(Olatunde, 2005) (Ofoebu, 1972)*. Nigeria actively involved itself in the series of conferences sponsored by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) between 1966 and 1968 for Economic Cooperation in West Africa *(Ofoebu, 1972)*.
Later in the year, officials of the Government of Nigeria and Guinea met to prepare the studies, which were submitted to the then fourteen West African states pending their consideration by the Interim Council of

Ministers *(Adedeji, 1985).* Unfortunately, this body never met. Consequently, neither the priority studies nor the draft treaty and protocol on the Customs Union were considered, let alone adopted. This was the standstill in which West Africa found itself until April 1972, when the Heads of State of Nigeria and Togo decided to revive the process of achieving economic integration in the sub-region and accordingly mandated their ministries and officials to work out the modalities and strategy of such integration. At subsequent meetings, the government of the two countries agreed on the following guiding principles.

a) That the new economic community should cut across linguistic and cultural barriers;

(b) That, initially, limited objectives capable of early organization should be pursued;

(c) That a pragmatic and flexible approach should be adopted;

(d) That the necessary institutions should be set up to deal with specific issues calling for immediate attention; and

(e) That an open door policy should be adopted to enable all the countries in the sub-region to become members of the community if and when they are ready *(Adefolarin, 1998).*

The two governments of Togo and Nigeria later submitted proposals embodying the above principles and others. The leader of that delegation was Professor Adebayo Adedeji *(Adedeji, 1985)*

The proposals were considered and embodied in a draft Treaty that was considered at another ministerial meeting held in January 1975. A third meeting took place in Lagos just before the summit meeting to finalize the Treaty which was subsequently signed by the Heads of State and Plenipotentiaries representing fifteen West African countries in Lagos on 28 May, 1975 *(Adefolarin, 1998).*

Why Economic Integration failed until 1975 : The 60's were a decade of ups and downs in West Africa's political and economic history. What the nationalist had in most cases achieved political independence from their colonial overlords. Subsequent happenings however suggest that nations in West Africa have an uphill task before them as their nations sojourn to nationhood. Political powers were changing hands from the nationalist to the military in most West African states and this no doubt affected economic integration hereby having an effect on economic integration among West Africa nations *(Ajayi & Crowder, 1985).*

Although it was clear that immediately after achieving political independence, the next focus shall be directed to the economy and in further developing the West African economies that West Africa would be required to have a culmination of nations both Anglophone and Francophone countries coming together as one big economic and political bloc. It was necessary to have an economic bloc in West Africa comprising of every West African nation so as to have peace and harmony; invariably developing West African economies. But, even with this in mind, West Africa was delayed by factors that have plagued their economic development *(Adu & Ade-Ajayi, 1986).* We should not forget the fact that West African economies were linked to the sophistications of the European economies, more so the two superpowers of the Cold War. The delay can be grouped as internal and external. Internal factors like the use of different forms of currencies accounts for the economy. The British maintained a single currency board for Anglo West Africa but when these states got their independence it was not easy to have a harmonization of economies. Another factor was the fact that West Africa lacked manufacturing skills and where there was manufacturing of some sort, it was not competitive enough and this made West African economies to become a dumping ground for imported goods and as such it was not inviting to trade among each other since West Africans all import from the developed world *(Adefolarin, 1998).* The American and European interest was to dump their goods on the largest populated region in Africa. The strategy of these nations was to entice the West African peoples' states as having a taste to produce just primary goods and at the same time have an appetite for manufactured goods. The interest therefore is to factorize those states as consumer's nations. There was a sharp disparity among West Africans on ideologies. That is, difference in ideological views on what to do in getting the economies kicking. While some prefer the socialist system as a means of jump-starting the economy, others believed in capitalism as means whereby national economies can develop very quickly. Although, it is clear that these ideologies were foreign to us but our leaders adhered to these philosophies. The interest of the former were different from the mere adoption of murky ideologies

Inconsistent economic policies because of frequent changes in leadership however delayed economic integration among West Africans. Every leader with his style and dreams of shaping up their economy slowed economy integration in West Africa. The political structure of the sub-region of West Africa with all the linguistic adjuncts was hardly encouraged, after independence, an earlier movement towards a comprehensive integrative system. Aside from Guinea Bissau and the newly independent state of Cape Verde Islands, that gained independence through a protracted liberation struggle. The legacies of colonialism clearly show in the groupings in West Africa the Anglophone and Franco-phone barriers, the latter covering the areas formerly called Afrique Occidentale Francaise, and former, ex-British West African countries *(Adefolarin, 1998).*West African nations were not strange to the fact that economies should come together in order to be strong and prosperous.

But as events showed, the African brotherhood wasn't strong enough instead the people had their attachments to their colonial overlords and fellow vassals of the same colonialist. An early example of an indication of an integrative system traceable in the Franco-phone countries was the Union donaniere des Etats de l'AfriqueOccidentale (UDEAO), which, unlike its predecessor the UDAO, never really got off the ground. From the beginning, West Africa was not spared of Supremacy rivalries *(Duyile, 2006)*. For instance, Senegal, anxious to preserve her economic place in French speaking West Africa, and Ivory Coast, eager to develop her trade and industry, led to the collapse of the Union immediately following the evolution of Francophone statesinto autonomous states. Because of the weakness and ineffectiveness of the loose Economic Union which had no secretariat and a proper infrastructure to carry on with a proper administration of the Union, it was not surprising that Union's donaniereAfriqueOccidentale was replaced by the AfriqueOccidentaleFrancaise. The new union had its secretariat in Ouagadougou.

Even the new union could not be regarded as a full Customs Union, but an organization with its central interest in the creation of a system in which special tax credits to members were the sole incentive to intra-regional trade. Basically, the UDEAO provided for a common external tariff with a triple set of rates among which was as minimum tariff applied to goods from the most favored nations and a general tariff, three times as high, applied to other countries. The factors however weakened the objectives of the system. For example, the Ivorian trading relationship with certain of its Entente partners, Burkina Faso and Niger, discriminated against UDEAO members, e.g. Mali in so far as net imports were concerned. The UDEAO again came under criticism, spearheaded by Mali, through whose efforts another organization, the CEAO, which came into being in 1973, was created as a replacement. The ratification of the Treaty of Bamako that took place in Abidjan in 1973 brought into force the CEAO but, nonetheless, it took almost three years from 1970, when nine members states of AfriqueOccidentaleFrancaiseHeads of state, with the exception of the Republic of Guinea, met to propose a successor organization to UDEAO. The landlocked states, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger from experience of the past in the similar organization insisted on assurances, which called for colossal sacrifices from Senegal and Cote d'Ivoire, and it led to the creation of a solidarity fund. Niger however felt that the customs Union could not be complete without the involvement of Nigeria. Togo did not ratify the Treaty and also Benin republic (at the material time), even though they retained their connections with the Entente – a smaller economic union consisting of Cote Ivoire, Burkina Faso and Niger- whose main importance lies in its Mutual Aid Fund guarantying loans to members' states and, to degree, harmonizing of agricultural and industrial planning. Outside the CEAO there are other groupings in the Franco-phone sub-region among which, as already mentioned, are Mali, Burkina Faso and Guinea *(Duyile, 2006)*. One significant factor that makes it possible for a proliferations or economic union experiments is the geographical contiguity compared with the English speaking counterparts and, more importantly, the adherence by nearly all to the Franco zone, which makes intra-sub-regional trade easy *(Ajayi & Crowder, 1985)*.

It would surely be misleading if we conclude that it was only the Franco-phones who were having some sort of economic relations with each other. The Anglophones have indeed their own sort of economic relations *(Ofoebu, 1972)*. Notable examples were the West African Currency Board and the West African Airways, but these began to lose their importance when Ghana gained independence in 1957 *(Adu & Ade-Ajayi, 1986)*. Logically, Ghana withdrew from the West African Currency Board and the Airways, and was followed when Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Gambia finally became independent successfully. Efforts were made to resuscitate the Airways but it never saw limelight *(Adu & Ade-Ajayi, 1986)*. The Ghana-Nigeria rivalry allowed for this misfortunes integrating the Anglophones.

Among the Anglophones, there were examples of economic relations – the Mano – River Authority composed of Sierra Leone and Liberia. There was also inter relationships between Franco-phones and Anglo phones. In this regard, we may recall the famous Sonakole meeting in Liberia, which was attended by the presidents of Guinea, Ghana, Liberia, and Mali, to set up the foundations of a United West Africa. The meeting, even if it achieved nothing much, set the pace for subsequent attempts to bring Anglophones and Francophone West African countries together. According to the participant states, the belief was that foundations of a United West Africa had been laid. There is no way we can ignore the active role of the Republic of Nigeria and Togo, especially the time, money and effort spent on consultations and meetings to ensure that the Head of States finally met in 1975. Even though there were models outside the shores of West Africa such as the European Union ………. etc.; West Africa was delayed a little to achieve what was to happen in May 28, 1975. There are insinuations that if the civil war had not occurred in Nigeria ECOWAS would have cropped up earlier. Let us not forget that the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa played a great role on the road towards a comprehensive sub-region Economic Co-operation in West Africa. The UN Economic Commission for African initiated the Monrovia summit of 1968 principally to discuss possibilities of a West African Economic

Community, on the patterns of the Latin American Common Market or any viable sub-regional economic institutions, to ensure, among other matters, harmonization of industrial and other relevant programmes and a sharing of benefits of enlarged economics of scale in an envisaged market of over 120 million people. The concept was in the main killed by anti-federalists and protagonists of the progressive Economic community of West Africa.

Another political variable worthy of note in building of the West African Economic Community was the creation of flexible intra-regional environment, for example, the close relationship between Ghana and its neighboring French speaking state. Following the overthrow of President Kwame Nkrumah, and especially during the brief tenure of Prime Minister KofiaABusia, relations between Ghana and Cote Ivoire improved. A number of studies were undertaken in an attempt to uncover exploitable complementary between Ghana and its Franco-phone neighbors in the entente and with encouragement of the Canadian International Development Agency, Ghana became an official observer in the Land Transportation Committee. Similarly, with her neighbors to the east – Togo and Dahomey- Ghana had developed links growing out of the joint construction of a transmission line and the sale of power from the Akosombo Dam, hereby damping the flames of Ewe irredentism. Ghana's also had ties with Burkina Faso were also developed during the period of 1970-73. The Mano River forms the Border between Liberia and Sierra Leone. In October, 1973, Presidents Tolbert and Stevens established the Mano River Union to work for the joint economic development of their two countries. The unions activities have covered the development of infrastructure, the setting up of a free trade area and the drawing up of plans for a joint industrial enterprise *(Adu & Ade-Ajayi, 1986).*

Another factor of equal political importance is the restoration of confidence in Nigeria after she finally emerged from the ravaging civil war. The experience of the civil war and the subsequent post war prosperity made her realize the desideratum of greater emphasis of their foreign policy on the sub-region of West Africa, thus opening a new era of conciliation and reconciliatory moves. After the civil war Nigeria's dynamism was evident in the OAU (Organisation of African Unity) and the foreign policy of Nigeria saw the initiative in developing a very cordial relationship with its neigbours. The delay of a full-fledged economic integration among West Africans can be adduced to several factors that have plagued West Africa's early economic integration. In all, it must be said that ECOWAS (May 28, 1975) birth should have come earlier if only the following demerits such as political instability, inconsistent economic policies, war, unnecessary external influences from Europe and America especially the colonial governments, unfriendliness among west African leaders were some of the issues that has distorted an early economic integration among west Africans.

Concluding Remarks : The growth of the towns has accelerated at an uncontrollable rate in independent West Africa as people migrate from the countryside in search of employment, improved amenities and a more attractive life. Urban population in West Africa. as a whole rose from 11.3 per cent in 1960 to nearly 20 percent in 1978. Lagos population for instance grew from 450000 people in 1962 to a million in 1970 and about two million in 1980. Nigeria's large population and roughly over 50% of the total population of the region makes it the important nation in West Africa *(Adu & Ade-Ajayi, 1986).*

The signing of the ECOWAS charter, set up under the Treaty of Lome in May 1976, was an effort to find a system to galvanize the two linguistic features in the sub-region. ECOWAS has sixteen member states covering all of West Africa's two million square miles and 150 million people. It broad aims are: to set up a customs union over fifteen years by progressive reduction of import duties. ECOWAS is a Treaty, which far surpasses past accords and arrangement and it closely envisage better economic arrangement as before 1975. It envisages not only a free movement of persons, goods and capital, but also a harmonization of industrial programs with provision for a solidarity fund that would serve the dual purpose of being both a compensatory fund or loss of revenue that might be incurred by certain member states as a result of the removal of trade barriers and, inter-alia, a fund for development purposes. The ECOWAS Treaty is very flexible and accommodating, for example, the tolerance of micro-integrative system within the community, as evidenced in Article 59 of the Charter, which deals with other regional associations and third countries. To judge from the last decade, ECOWAS is growing stronger and it is not just only in the economic sphere. Military interventions have been organized by fellow West Africans nations to provide stability to war ravaged nations within the geographical region. ECOWAS is administered by an executive secretary with the headquarters in Lagos. There are commissions dealing with transportation, monetary problems, and customs

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