



Review

The political dynamics of regional integration in Africa: The subjective side

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This paper examined the subjective political conditions which affect the prospects and challenges of regional integration in Africa using ECOWAS, SADC and EAC as cases in point. Employing the modernization theory, ‘communicative action’ and the regime theory as frames of analysis, secondary sources were used to prove that political motivation has been key to unlocking the economic prospects in the areas of energy supply and single market formation. The evidence also displayed the absence of a clear and single voice about specific economic issues, non recognition of Civil Society Organisations, lack of political commitment to defer economic gratification and personal political discords, mounted on grounds of suspicion and mistrust, as critical challenges. The study argues that the discussion of Africa’s regional integration prospects must not just consider economic issues but should incorporate those micro level political variants which are equally fundamental to the understanding Africa’s current economic setting.

Keywords: Regional Integration, Political, ECOWAS, SADC, EAC

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of integration, whether political or economic, has been a long standing creation by entities separated by artificial means. This is largely inspired by the need to pool tangible and intangible resources and complementing the efforts of one another in their own interest. This has been visibly exhibited by the countries in Europe through the European Union and the fusion of the fifty states to form the United States in America. Today, these entities remain formidable in their economic strides evident in, among others, high Gross Domestic Products.

The notion of economic integration, as Mattli (1999:3) describes, represents “the voluntary linking in the economic domain of two or more formerly independent states to the extent that authority over key areas of domestic regulation and policy is shifted to the supra-national level”. With particular reference to regional economic integration, it stands for special economic

agreements between countries in a specified geographical area or between two or more geographical areas.

In Africa, the importance of regional integration as a means for supporting her economic development has long been recognized by African leaders (Vinaye et al, 2011). Far back as 1965, Nkrumah intimated that “It is only when the artificial boundaries that divide her are broken down so as to provide for viable economic units and ultimately single African unit that Africa will be able to develop industrially, for her own sake, and ultimately for the sake of healthy economy” (p. 25). Nkrumah further discloses that “planned economic growth is necessary so that all states can benefit from industrialization and other important improvements made possible by unified direction” (p.26). Thus, the essence of regional integration is not a reflection of a constellation of states but a phenomenon that represents “functional

cooperation with an emphasis on the economic aspects” (Soomer, 2003:2).

Justifying the need for regional integration as a strengthening force in Africa is clearly elucidated in Nkama’s (2010) analysis arguing that the thinking behind the pursuit of regional integration as a developmental path was born out of the fear that small countries could not survive on their own because of the high costs associated with providing all the functions of government. In a similar vein, Gerrit (2010) expresses that the rationale behind African integration is quite obvious: acting on their own, most African states are destined to remain vulnerable, marginalized and beggar nations. Indeed, as these arguments project, economic integration does not just act as a strengthening force towards economic unity but as a palliative tool for likely economic losses and immunity against economic exploitation.

Some strides have been made out of regional integration evident in the fact that African countries have experienced significant infrastructure development. Nevertheless, it remains an excruciating reality that today, more than six decades since decolonization, Africa remains the most backward continent on the globe as attested by the alarming levels of economic underdevelopment. Gerrit (2010), for example, observes that “between the 1960s and 2000 sub-Saharan Africa registered absolute declines on virtually all indices of socioeconomic development”. Abject poverty, political instability, as well as the perennial armed conflicts in and among various states are symptomatic of this.

Juxtaposing the challenging realities that confront Africa to Nkrumah’s argument about the ultimate objective of regional integration on the same continent it becomes apparent that Africa is yet to reap the myriad of advantages (The advantages of the regional integration are quite universal. Evidently, an integral aspect of regional integration is trade and the agreements made between the states usually lead to differential treatment in trade and sometimes in investment policies for member countries in comparison with non-member countries. Regional integration is also vital to creating the infrastructure that many poor countries are unable to build on their own trade corridors, including transport networks, energy development, water resources management, and telecommunications connectivity. According to the IDA, (2012) effective collaboration among countries, can meet the critical gaps in basic access and service delivery that promote growth and development. International trade plays an important role in the fight against poverty. It creates the potential for higher economic growth and employment (IDA, 2012). To Todaro and Smith (2009) trade helps countries to achieve development by promoting and rewarding the sectors of the economy where individual countries possess comparative advantage, whether in terms of labor efficiency or factor endowments as it also helps them to

take advantage of economies of scale) associated with regional integration in essence.

The precursors to Africa’s inept economic display, according to Vinaye et al. (2011), include very low, intra-African trade, lack of product diversification, low trade complementarity among African countries and high trade costs perpetuate this situation. Explaining further, Vinaye et al. (2011) observe that poor transport and communications infrastructure and unreliable power are key constraints to Africa’s ability to trade with itself and with the rest of the world much as lack of trade facilitation instruments, including trade finance, and complex customs arrangements further impede intra-regional and international trade.

These findings make it obvious that studies on the economic dynamics of regional integration in terms of impediments to regional integration in Africa (Vinaye et al, 2011) which will help to understand the performance of regional integration in the sub-region (Gankou and Ntah, 2009) have been carried out. However, what seem to be either clearly missing or given little attention in the literature of regional integration in Africa are the political dynamics which usually play out in shaping regional integration prospects. It therefore leaves many knowledge gaps in regional integration discourse. Indeed, the introduction of political ingredients in the analysis of the core issues of any given regionally integrated body is very useful and it is supported by a number of arguments. For example, a stable political climate, as said, offers better security of markets (Business and Financial Times, February, 14, 2011, p.5). Additionally, no country can be completely self sufficient or afford to ignore political events outside his borders thus economic unity will be effective if accompanied by political unity (Kwame Nkrumah (1965) *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, pp. 25,36). Such rationalizations reflect the strength of the political nuances in facilitating or marring the economic prospects of economic groupings of any sort. It therefore stands to reason that some of the challenges and prospects of regional integration in Africa have empirically ascertainable political undertones. It is, however, instructive to note that studies on these political undertones focus on the role of large political structures with no regard for the interactive and the subjective elements in the political arena hence the necessity of this study, using ECOWAS, SADC and EAC as cases in points.

Research Questions

- What are the subjective political conditions accountable for the achievements and prospects of Africa’s sub -regional integration enterprise?
- At what points do political challenges which assume subjective characters work to derail the

prospects and objectives of Africa's regional integration at the sub-regional level?

Theoretical Framework

The quest to explain Africa's underdevelopment has generated a number of theories with modernization theory as one of such. This theory finds its roots in the structural functional analysis of social change spearheaded by Auguste Comte's 'consensus universalis' (1830), Emile Durkheim's 'social facts' (1893) and Talcott Parsons' 'pattern variables' (1937) ('Pattern Variables' reflect a behavioral dichotomy among individuals, depending on the social setting, characterized by five sets of opposing behaviors. Hoselitz (1963) applied this idea to explain development and underdevelopment in the First World countries and Third World countries respectively. They include affectivity - affective neutrality, ascription - achievement, collectivity - individualism, specificity - diffusionism and universalism - particularism). The notion of functionalism represents the view that describes society or any given entity in analogous terms to a biological organism. Functionalism epitomizes that perspective which acknowledges an entity as characterized by the composition of elements among which a large degree of mutual dependency exists. The roles of these elements are clearly established and the sustenance, progress and stability of the entity is a function the roles of the elements. Inherently, the function of an element, owing to the interrelationship, is explicable by making reference to the functions of other elements. More so, the dysfunction of an element and the entity in its entire feature constitute the dysfunction of other elements.

Providing insights into the political dimension of the modernization theory, Hirschman (1968) argues that underdevelopment in the Third World is largely attributable to an overdose of charismatic leadership and an underdose of skill. Similarly, Das (2003) suggests that underdevelopment occurs when development programmes are implemented with a top-bottom approach coupled with an abuse of state power, thereby excluding the people in any planning and conceptualisation process. Ramphela (2011) also argues that African leadership suffers from a lack of urgency and understanding about just how much the governance system will have to improve if they are to respond to the competitive pressures of the global economy (Cited in Business and Financial Times, August 1, 2011, p.1). Key to this theory is the emphasis on cultural values in the underdeveloped countries as inimical to change. Resting on the assumption that societies are mutually isolated this theory posits internal factors, reinforced by long standing institutional arrangements, as responsible for development and underdevelopment in any given society. The solution to underdevelopment, according to Behrendt

(1968), is the transfer of technology, financial aid, rational ideas and democratization from developed countries to underdeveloped ones (cited in Asamoah 1982).

Riddled with such deficiencies as being subjective, ahistorical, ethnocentric, myopic and hypocritical, this theory has received wide spread condemnation by many Marxist-oriented development pundits who subsequently offer an alternative to the explanation of Africa's underdevelopment. I state, nevertheless, that it is not within the confines of this paper in using this Marxist-inspired alternative to the modernization as a frame in this paper, albeit its relevance to the analysis of regional integration actualities. Rather, as Michael Schultz, Fredrik Söderbaum and Joakim Öjendal have noted that the analysis of regional integration should avoid fixed and one-dimensional definition of regions as well as a narrow and simplified focus on instrumental state strategies, regional organisations, security alliances and trading blocks, I introduce a multidimensional model as a guide to the analysis of the political issues which play out in this paper. Elaborating on the need for a more multi-focused frame of analyzing events in the regional blocks, Michael Schultz, Fredrik Söderbaum and Joakim Öjendal (2001:185) conclude that

"... the multidimensionality of contemporary regionalism warrants a new type of analysis, which transcends the dominant theories of regional integration, such as neorealism, functionalism, neofunctionalism, institutionalism, ... and so on. The mainstream theories in the field may still provide valuable and sensible insights, but in our view they are neither designed for nor capable of capturing the multidimensionality, pluralism and comprehensiveness of contemporary regionalization processes, nor the way in which these are socially constructed"

Responding to the call for a useful frame in analyzing the multidimensionality and pluralism, all of which are products of social constructivism, as suggested by Schultz and contemporaries reflects the relevance and the subsequent deployment of constructivist theories two of which I find useful for the discussion of the evidence this paper, in addition to the modernization theory. They include Habermas's (1984) idea of *communicative action* and Young and Demko's (1996) *regime theory*.

According to Habermas, actors in society seek to reach common understanding and to coordinate actions by reasoned argument, consensus, and cooperation rather than strategic action strictly in pursuit of their own goals (1984, p. 86). Here, two or more actors establish a relationship and "seek to reach an understanding about the action situation and their plans of action in order to coordinate their actions by way of agreement. The central concept of *interpretation* refers in the first instance to

negotiating definitions of the situation which admit of consensus. ..." (ibid).

Habermas provides a theoretical basis for a view of planning that emphasizes widespread public participation, sharing of information with the public, reaching consensus through public dialogue rather than exercise of power, avoiding privileging of experts and bureaucrats, and replacing the model of the technical expert with one of the reflective planner (Innes 1995; Lauria & Soll 1996). In this view, the effectiveness of an institution does not depend on the rules and regulations, but also on "the discursive quality of the full processes of deliberation leading up to such a result," (White, 1995, p.12). Dryzek (1995) notes, that Habermas prompts the policy analyst to work on conditions of political interaction and design of institutions rather than merely the content of policy proposals. Dryzek (1995) further states that Habermasian ideal institutions rule out "authority" based on anything other than a good argument.

Young and Demko's (1996) regime theory provides a constructivist view of institutional effectiveness. Constructivists tend to focus research into subjectivity, intersubjective beliefs about the 'proper behavior', rightfulness of institutional norms, and persuasive practices in creation of institutions and literature of this school analyzes for example shared beliefs of a group about normative obligations (Vihma, 2007). Constructivists look at how institutions facilitate constitutive processes such as learning, legitimacy concerns and formation of dominant norms (Vihma, 2007).

Social constructivist paradigm emphasizes the notion of subjectivity in the problem formulation and solution. A key issue raised by constructivist paradigm is that institutions have constitutional effects through creating logic of appropriateness; actors who consider an institution as important for their role, will engage in behavior deemed *appropriate* (Wendt, 1999). Vihma (2007), similar to White (1995), does not see hard law and credible enforcement systems as key to compliance in institutions, as measuring the utilitarian value of compliance and non-compliance is not the central issue. Changes in behavior can also occur through processes of socialization and the expansion of norms, ideas and principles. From the constructivist perspective soft law approach might have advantages in promoting norm diffusion and learning that have a positive impact and allow a wide spectrum for deliberation in governing (Trubek, Cottrel et al. 2005, cited in Vihma, 2007).

Drawing from these theories, I argue that achieving the economic objects and prospects of Africa's regional integration cannot rest solely on the right economic conditions. Rather, political conditions which are subjective and interactive in nature play critical role in driving African countries towards economic development. Further, an understanding of regional integration, as this

paper will exude, is one that reflects a marked shift from the economic frames which blur the influence of the political shoals and drivers to a successful regional integration enterprise. This paper as well displays those politically flavored micro level sociological variants as crucial ingredients in developing a useful frame of analysis in regional integration discourse. It lays the evidence that it takes behavior, attitudes, perceptions, group dynamics and interpersonal relationships as crucial ingredients for a better understanding of regional integration dynamics of Africa.

This paper is organized into five sections. The first section provides the history, structure and objectives of sub regional bodies in Africa. The second section presents the prospects of these sub regional bodies. The third section discusses the prospects of the African integration. The fourth section discusses the general and specific political challenges and the fifth section provides the summary and conclusion.

Sub-regional integration blocs: History and Objectives

The processes preceding the formation of the sub-regional blocs have been broadly categorized by Gerrit (2010) into two main episodes. The first episode of African regional integration was dominated by political forces generated and unleashed by anti-colonialist fervour and epitomised by notions of 'African Unity', 'African Fraternity' or 'Pan-Africanism'. Thus, this process of region-building in Africa's first decade of independence, as suggested by Ikome (2007) and Adedeji (2002), was often no more than a declaration of intent, and an indication of continental alignment. The second episode of African regional integration is highlighted by a shift from the continental geo-political approach to the sub-regional economic domain of market-driven intra-state or extra-territorial cooperation. The deficiencies observed in the nature of the previous methods of African integration necessitated a new paradigm towards African economic integration when the UN General Assembly and the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) mooted functional co-operation for five 'economically viable' sub-regions: North Africa, West Africa, Central Africa, East Africa, and Southern Africa, building to an important extent on pre-independence institutions and practices.

This development was informed by, as Gerrit (2010) puts it, "the concern for economic revival, renegotiation of position in the world economy and for attracting more aid money as it also demonstrated a similitude of approach and will of the states to create free trade areas and form customs unions, set up consultative and decision-making bodies conferring to these community groupings the formal attributes of a union comparable in its external

attributes to the European Union". Consequently, five Regional Economic Communities (REC's) were formally established. They comprised the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), the Economic Union of West African States (ECOWAS), the Community for Central African States (CAEC), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), formerly known as the Southern African Coordinating Conference (SADCC).

The failure to put ambitious grand schemes and good intentions into action ran as a continuous thread through Africa's post-colonial history. On the one hand, African governments, by and large, fully realised their weaknesses and what solutions ought to be followed, but on the other hand, and invariably so, narrow nationalistic and power-political considerations outweighed the imperatives of reform (Gerrit, 2010). The failure of economic regionalism in the immediate post-independence phase is one example of this. As Ikome (2007) and Adedeji (2002) point out: "with limited Southern African exceptions, most regional economic co-operation schemes launched in the 1960's had become moribund by the end of the 1970's. For example the old Eastern African Community (EAC) collapsed in 1977 with mixed reactions from the citizens of the states that make up the community, after the demise of the bloc (Africa Watch, January, 2011, p.60).

Attempts at addressing the failure of regionalism saw the revival of defunct ones and the formation of new sub-regional integration blocs. Currently, 14 economic integration sub regional blocs reflecting the introduction of additional RECs including the already known ones. The new ones include, among others, Community of Sahel-Saharan States and Economic Community, Economic Community of Central African States, Inter-Governmental Authority on Development and Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, Economic Community of Great Lakes Countries, Indian Ocean Commission and Mano River Union. The ultimate redefined aim of these sub-regional blocs is to promote economic integration and subsequently ensure sustained economic and human development among the countries within the various blocs and the African countries, generally. Redefining the focus of the regional integration has been occasioned with the recognition of the failure to realize the grandiose intentions and the desire for reorganization for sustained economic benefit; thus representing a display of knowledge and willingness by political leaders. These reflect those micro level sociological variants relevant for institutional effectiveness thereby emphasizing subjectivity as key in shaping institutional arrangements. Hence, subjectively interpreting the failure as a threat to progress has been a driver to the change the leaders have required. This general goal, notwithstanding, the various blocs have outlined their specific objectives as follows.

The SADC, in article 5 of its treaty, states that it aims "to achieve development and economic growth, alleviate poverty, enhance the standard and quality of life of the people of Southern Africa and support the socially disadvantaged through regional integration; evolve common political values, systems and institutions; promote and defend peace and security; and promote self sustaining development on the basis of collective self reliance of the region" (Extracted from New African November 2010 edition, p.51) ECOWAS, on its part, seeks to "promote economic integration in all fields of economic activity, particularly industry, transport, telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural resources commerce, monetary and financial questions, social and cultural matters..." (Extracted from Business and Financial Times, February, 14, 2011, p.5). The EAC aims at widening and deepening co-operation among the partner states in, among others, political, economic and social fields for their mutual benefit (www.eac.int/index. Accessed 24th January 2013).

These sub-regional economic communities, according to Gerrit, (2010), are to play a critical role as functional building blocks of continental integration; and that national sovereignty can no longer be used as an impenetrable shield against outside intervention by dictators, abusers of human rights and warmongers. Judging from Gerrit's (2010) arguments the sub-regional integration units are not an end in themselves; but as a pragmatic catalyst to the long term vision of building a formidable continental economic unit.

Subjective Political Conditions to Regional Integration Prospects

Any entity with prospects sends useful signals for its members and observers to develop a sense of optimism. In Africa, the prospects presented by the continent's sub-regional economic integration are enormous. The evidence presents two key observable prospects; creation of single markets and increased energy supply. As the Eastern African Community has implemented the Eastern African Common Market Protocol allowing partner states to operate as a single market with free movement of goods, services, labour, and capital as well as common taxes and similar trade laws, ECOWAS is intensifying efforts to create a common trading zone, common market and customs union. In reality, the building blocks are being put in place for, as Gbeho (2011) puts it, "an eventual borderless West Africa" (Outlined in New African, June, 2011, pp.55-57). The SADC has also developed a time table for the harmonization and economic integration put out by the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan and the formation of the SADC Free Trade Area (New African, November, 2010, p.54). Aside these, The EAC also hope

to establish a monetary union and a political federation in 2013 (Africa Watch, January, 2011, p.61). All these represent the removal of artificial boundaries created through colonialism. Such an outcome does not only constitute a typical aid to trade and physical movement of individuals but serves as a platform for removing state-like identity differences all of which will then act as symbolic precursors to economic integration.

Another critical prospect for energy generation and increased supply of electricity, gas, coal and other sources of fuel has become SADC's hallmark. Energy serves as a valuable and necessary condition for attracting Foreign Direct Investment and useful implications for employment generation. The energy generation is clearly evident in the efforts some of the member states are exhibiting. Mozambique for example is developing a new series of large hydro schemes, while Zambia and DR Congo have designed dams for the purposes of exports. Moreover, the availability of Coal-bed Methane (CBM) reserves in Botswana's Kalahari Karoo Basin makes it a potential of an electricity producer to other neighbouring states like South Africa. Additionally, two generating plants with a total capacity of 270 Mega Watts, to be supplied with the CBM, are being constructed. It is equally financially stirring to indicate that as Gas fields are being developed in Kudu gas field of Namibia, deep water oil fields have already been discovered in Mozambique's Rovuma Basin in February, 2009 making it a substantial gas producer for export (New African, November, 2010, p.54). ECOWAS is equally intensifying efforts to finalize the Common External Tariff (CET) as the implementation of the National Agricultural Investment Programme and the establishment of the ECOWAS Center for Renewable Energy Efficiency for ensuring easy and high access to renewable energy (New African, June 2011, p.55-57). Indeed, the critical nature of these prospects is their potential in providing the real foundation for industrial development. While production is aided by energy supply it is sustained through increased demand for products spawned by an expanded single market. Nevertheless, beneath all these economic prospects are the political motivations which, according to Hatzenberg (2011), are key to unlocking the fertile economic space for social progress.

General Subjective Political Challenges to Regional Integration

A key hindrance to integration in Africa, however, has been the multiplicity of regional economic communities with overlapping memberships. Out of the sub Saharan Africa's 53 countries, only 6 are members of one regional community, 26 belong to two and 20 members of at least three (African Business (July, 2011) pp.18-27). The notion of overlapping membership of Regional Integration

Agreements (RIAs) is given conflicting interpretations. Even though Hatzenberg (2011) claims the overlapping is a reflection of political motivation the symbolic nature of which represents a clear exhibition of subjectivities and rational intents by nation-states regarding the decisions they take, its negative latent functions, a few of which have been outlined, cannot be overemphasized. Muuka et al. (1998), for example, regard it as a phenomenon that weakens the integration process and lead to costly competition (even for attention and resources); conflict; inconsistencies in policy formulation and implementation; unnecessary duplication of functions and efforts; fragmentation of markets and restriction in the growth potential of the sub-regions. Similarly, the Africa Progress Panel Report (2012) regards the overlapping membership as groundwork for duplication of efforts and waste of scarce resources (African Business (July, 2011) pp.18-27).

Another critical challenge is the unenviable track record of regional dispute resolution revealed through the absence of the robust role of RIAs and regional institutions. Of sociological relevance, these are structurally created bodies with functionally specific roles of ensuring national compliance and domestic policy, legal and institutional development. Even though the tribunal is a structurally created entity its dysfunction is a product of what constructivists such as (Vihma, 2007) will proscribe as subjectivity, intersubjective beliefs about the 'proper behavior', rightfulness of institutional norms. Using the SADC tribunal as a case in point, Afadameh–Adeyemi and Kalula (2011) observe that following a decision by the tribunal that Zimbabwe was in breach of article 6 of SADC Treaty, Zimbabwe expressed its dissatisfaction with the decision, and as a result, at the August 2010 summit the SADC Tribunal was suspended. This then clearly signifies a lack of shared beliefs among the member states of SADC about normative obligations. It is therefore obvious, as Vihma (2007) and White (1995) contend, that hard law and credible enforcement systems are not key to compliance in institutions. It demands understanding and dialogue. Furtherance to this, it will also be instructive to note that even though the disagreement is rooted in subjective interpretation of the tribunal's decision, it is also accentuated by other structural arrangements grounded on the principles of sovereignty. The question then is: at what points do states trade their sovereignty for international political demands from international bodies such as the SADC and at what points would states agree on objectively defined standards for measuring behavior?

Additionally, a common political challenge confronting almost all the sub-regional blocs is the absence of taking common decisions in the face of common economic perils associated with certain economic policies. One of such policies is the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). For a fact, the provisions and clauses of which are still under negotiations. The EPA, in essence, seeks to

foster trade relations between ACP and EU states under the following conditions binding both sides.

- The establishment of free trade areas with ACP regions
 - Liberalization of 90% of the *total value of trade between the EU and the ACP*, whereby the EU liberalizes 100% of its trade and the ACP liberalizes 80% of its trade. This would leave
 - ACP countries able to protect only 20% of the total value of their trade with the EU through the use of an exclusion list
 - The implementation of liberalization in Ghana over a period of 10-12 years
 - Binding rules on investment, government procurement and competition policy.

As established under the Cotonou Agreement, EPA negotiations began in 2002 and were to be negotiated during a five-year preparatory period, concluding on the 31 December 2007. In the negotiations, ACP countries are split into six regional groups: West Africa; Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA); Southern African Development Community (SADC); Central Africa; the Caribbean (CARIFORUM); and the Pacific. Each of these groups is negotiating a separate EPA with the EU, a mark of political disintegration for the search of a similar economic interest – regional integration.

The economic implications of the lack of urgency associated with the EPA are enormous. First, Patel's (2011) analysis of Ghana's EPA agreement suggests that the EPA will not meaningfully increase access to the EU market for Ghanaian exporters beyond what they already enjoy. Patel (2011) establishes that the 100 per cent liberalization of the market will not add more than 1 per cent of Ghana's export value. Further, eliminating tariffs will expose domestic traders with direct competition with EU firms (Business and Financial Times, February, 14, 2011, p.4). Thus, Ghana's ability to use tariffs to nurture and encourage the productive activities of local industries will be derailed. In Namibia, the Trade and Industry Minister describes the effects of the EPA on Namibia's economy as follows:

"...forfeiture of the policy of using export taxes on raw materials as an incentive for value addition and an important source of revenue. The country would have to jettison its infant industry protection policy, thereby killing attempts as industrialization and worsening unemployment. The EPA would reverse gains Namibia has made towards rural empowerment by securing markets for its producers through restrictions on various imports. No agreement is better than bad agreement" (Business and Financial Times, February, 14, 2011, p.5).

With negotiation as part of the West African Group, countries including Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal and Togo have taken active roles. One difficulty associated with the negotiations is the growing disparate economic interests of individual countries born out of different levels of development and other political commitments. The result of these disparities which doubles as a manifestation of the difficulty is the lack of one common voice about Africa's stance on the EPA. Impatient about the rather slow pace of negotiations and the possible risk the delay might pose to their export sectors, some countries have already signed up for the agreements. Cote d' Ivoire, for example, has initialed for the bilateral EPA whilst Ghana has symbolized its interest in some of the provisions evident in the interim EPA. Here, much as the economic risks are common and somewhat uniform the state sovereignty and varied political interests have engendered varied decisions about the EPA. Much as Ramphele (2011) argued about how much African leadership must improve governance system to respond to the competitive pressures of the global economy, one can say this is an urgent decision; but the evidence and the implications of the decision by Patel visibly represent an exhibition of a rather misplaced urgency because the urgency is not situated within the context of maximizing economic gains in the long term. In this case, urgency is confused with rush and impatience is the driver. The impatience is characteristic of, as Gerrit (2010) pointed out, the narrow nationalistic and power-political considerations outweighing the imperatives of reform thus marking a repetition of the political symptoms which conditioned the failure of economic regionalism in the immediate post-independence era.

It is usually argued that all the regional blocs are saddled with weak intra-regional trade because they find trade with developed countries and emerging markets as more useful due to their relatively large market size and the relatively stable political climate which offer better security of markets. But this is an over simplification. An understanding of these micro level sociological variants exhibited in forms of misplaced urgency and impatience requires the act of situating the decision within the international politico-economic contexts. The intense political pressure, manipulation and threats of African countries by the EU are dire (In the case of Ghana, it appears the threat of sanctions from the EU appears to coercing Ghana into signing the agreement. Extracted from <http://www.twnafrica.org/index.php?option=com>. Accessed 19th September, 2012). Nevertheless, much as the decision, in response to the pressure, is being taken immediately, it does not constitute a rational response to the competitive pressure of the global economy. In short, the impatience and the lack of common voice about the EPA reflect Okonjo-Ileawa's (2011) assertions that

African leaders are not proactive and lack the willingness to develop strategies on a regional basis as well allowing their national deliberations to be subsumed into regional plans which could enable large scale cross-border projects to be agreed (*Business and Financial Times*, March 9, 2011, p.2, 15).

Similarly, there is lack of urgency found in the decision concerning the introduction of a common currency which, according to Nkrumah (1965), is needed to “allow the free flow of goods and services”. Ever since this idea was mooted it has not even been achieved at the sub-regional level let alone at the continental level. Indeed it is only EAC and ECOWAS which are making strides of achieving this feat. Much as EAC wishes to achieve this in 2013, ECOWAS does not have any time line and for three years after its adoption the common currency is yet to emerge (The adoption of the common currency was in 2009 by the Convergence Council as part of the “Roadmap for Single Currency Programme”). The question then is how catalytic have the sub-regional economic blocs been in ensuring an organized and formidable economic integration process for the continent?

Specific Subjective Political Challenges to Regional Integration

Some regional bodies are saddled with political inequality. Access to power and its exhibition thereof in the region is varied and directly correlated with a state's economic might. Countries in SADC, for example, are experiencing economic and political domination by South Africa. South Africa takes advantage of its economic superiority found in comparatively high GDP to impose decisions on the other member countries (New African, November, 2010, pp.51). Political sovereignty of smaller states the basis for which the respect and recognition of their decisions would have been apparent also becomes a formality. Here, once the decisions of states with small economies are crowded out by those of large economies, the economic interests of the former will gain little or no attention by the latter. This represents an intra-regional economic and political domination replica of the economic and political relationship between some western countries and African states which has created dependency syndrome among African states. That same syndrome is likely to emerge and the vicious cycle of political domination might not end. Here, economic fission emerging out of the avoidance of political domination is apparent and might create grounds for external domination the results of which might then contradict the logic and spirit behind regional integration.

In EAC, the continued mistrust and suspicion among the leaders and the citizens of the region's member states is impeding the process of integration. Fears of ideologically-based cold war existed between Uganda's

president, Yoweri Museveni who is described as a Marxist-turned-free market advocate and Kenya's prime Minister, Raila Odinga, a social democrat. Moreover, the Tanzanian president Jakaya Kikwete did not wholly trust Museveni based on the former's past experience with a forty year old incident. These realities are symptomatic of how Young and Demko's (1996) subjectivity and intersubjective beliefs affect institutions. Nevertheless, these realities are not affecting the creation of the EAC as a sub-regional economic unit; rather it is EAC's sustenance. Thus, by extension of the theoretical arguments, not only do these subjective beliefs act to affect the creation of institutions, as Young and Demeko (1996) suggest; these realities affect the sustenance of already created institutions. The fear and mistrust is not limited to the heads of states alone; citizens do same. A survey conducted in October 2006 shows that over 70 percent of Tanzanians are afraid of Kenyans taking their lands as Ugandans were as well afraid of Kenyans for taking their jobs (See details in Africa Watch, January, 2012, pp.61).

The exhibitions of such psychological dispositions are politically related because they are associated with the attitude of political leaders whose decisions are crucial for the political and economic efficiency. These exhibitions are also organically connected with the attitudes of the political fore bearers of these political leaders in present day EAC. Tanzania's mistrust towards Kenya is rooted in Kenyatta (first president of Kenya) deceiving Nyerere (first president of Tanzania) to switch some lands on their common border which is currently owned by Kenya. The fear of the Ugandans towards the Kenyans is because Kenyatta was fully knowledgeable about Iddi Amin's overthrow of Obote (former Ugandan President) in 1971 when the old EAC was still in place (See details in New African, April 2011, pp.68-70). The fear and mistrust among groups and individuals born out of previous encounters clearly confirms Trubek, Cottrel et al. (2005) argument that changes in behavior can also occur through processes of socialization and the expansion of norms, ideas and principles. In all, the implications of such micro level sociological variants as found in minorities' fears from small size population's states for trade, according to Gankou and Ntah (2009) is evident in how it will result in obstacles to free movement of people and goods. The political dilemma here is how to inspire confidence in the citizenry to ensure receptivity.

Another emergent derailing political nuance is the non recognition of Civil Society Organizations by states as part of the process to strengthen economic ties in the sub-regions. The number of Civil Society Organizations in Africa is becoming increasingly high and their resurgence, according Ninsin (2007), is a product of “the consolidation of democracy, characterized by successful change over of reigns of power from one party to another”. An increased “scope and self confidence in its determination to preserve freedom and ensure good

governance" (Ninsin, 2007:88) are symptomatic of this. Their involvement in governance also demonstrates the notion of active political participation which is key to effective economic decision in any political arena because, as Gumede (2011) hinted "...if this grand plan [of breaking down trade barriers] is to have any survival, Africans from all walks of life must be active participants" (p.45). Moreover, the interpretations of Habermas' 'communicative action' by Innes (1995); Lauria and Soll (1996) as representing that type of planning that emphasizes widespread public participation, sharing of information with the public, reaching consensus through public dialogue makes a case for civil society engagement by states.

However, in the case of Ghana and the issues surrounding the decision to sign on to the EPA suggest that the relationship between the state and Civil Society Organization has not been cordial. Arguments about the implementation of the EPA rage on. The positions of the two entities are contradictory. While a civil society organisation - Third World Network claims that it has reliable information to suggest that cabinet is about to sign the final agreement which they insist that will cripple the economy, the Ministry of Trade has accused Third World Network of not backing their position with the facts and denied that cabinet was contemplating signing the document. The Minister, however, said her outfit will begin a sensitization programme to educate the public about the EPA's and when it becomes necessary to finalize the agreement, the public would be duly informed (<http://www.twnafrica.org/index.php?option=com>).

Accessed 19th September, 2012. Gyekye Tanoh of Third World Network in an interview with Joy FM said Minister of Trade's recent pronouncements on the matter show an inclination towards signing the deal. He added that although the policy has been widely criticized by personalities including President Mills, no review of the agreement has been carried out). Such a phenomenon downplays the relevance of Civil Society Organizations in any given democratic setting especially in third world economies. The incorporation and the invitation of ideas from Civil Society Organizations remains a cliché thereby smacking off a contradiction to the ideals of Habermas' 'communicative action' which emphasizes, among others, reaching consensus through public dialogue. The implications are not just a rejection and a loss in confidence of Civil Society Organizations but the possibility of taking wrong and inappropriate economic decisions associated with the EPA. This can ultimately cripple regional integration prospects due to high influx of EU finished products after the EPA has been completely signed. It is thus clear in Das's (2003) argument that development programmes are implemented with a top-bottom approach coupled with an abuse of state power; representing an exclusion of the people in any planning and conceptualisation process. At this point, it is clear that democracy with its emphasis on increasing citizen's

participation becomes a questionable reality and, at best, a formality. Thus the adoption of democracy, on formal grounds without any substantive translation has the potential of crippling the prospects of regional integration. This is also a reflection of what Ramphela (2011) has suggested that the governance system has not been improved to respond to the competitive pressures of the global economy. The improvement of the governance system here involves the recognition of the presence of Civil Society Organizations and their involvement in the process of sub-regionalization. In this regard, weak democratic structures evident in non incorporation of the public in decision making process can as well derail the prospects of sub-regional integration.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The study has sought to examine the political conditions which work to affect the prospects or otherwise of regional integration in Africa at the sub regional levels using ECOWAS, SADC and EAC as cases in point. The evidence drawn shows enormous prospects found in energy supply and the creation of single market flavored politically by a micro level sociological variant like motivation. However, the evidence drawn from the sub-regions also represents observable micro level political nuances which have played out in sub-regional integration matrix which include the absence of a clear and single voice about specific economic issues flavored by political sovereignty across the continent, lack of urgency in taking decisions, lack of strong collaboration between Civil Society Organisations and state institutions as well as personal political discords mounted on grounds of suspicion and mistrust. These have been the political corridors upon which the fragmented economic unity of the sub-regions of Africa is situated. It is therefore clear that the political environments suitable for effective and sustainable regionalization which Gerrit (2010) trumpets do not exist, albeit a few ones. As such, the hopeful quest to improve the living conditions of the people of Africa, as has been the desire of Nkrumah and his fellow freedom fighters at the nascent stage of independence, will remain illusion in perpetuity, if these micro level sociological variants which find their way in Africa's political space are unattended to. In these regards, achieving the economic objects and prospects of Africa's regional integration cannot rest solely on the right economic conditions. Rather, political conditions play critical role in driving African countries. For that, a marked shift from the economic frames which blur the influence of the political shoals and drivers to a successful regional integration enterprise is necessary. Ultimately then, discussion of Africa's regional integration prospects must not just consider economic issues at the structural levels but should incorporate those micro level sociological variants which are equally fundamental to the

understanding Africa's current economic setting.

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