

## Sino-African Relations in West Africa: Implication for Ecowas

Ibrahim Ishola Yahaya<sup>1\*</sup> & Abdul Rauf Ambali<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Political Science and Conflict Resolution, Alhikmah University, Ilorin-Nigeria

<sup>1</sup>Department of Politics and Governance, Kwara State University, Malete-Nigeria

\*Corresponding Author

E-mail Address: [yahayaibro15@gmail.com](mailto:yahayaibro15@gmail.com)

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### Abstract

*Chinese relations with Africa began as early as the Christian era. However, modern China's involvement in the continent dates back to the Bandung Conference of April 1956 where China and representatives of 29 African countries agreed on certain terms of engagements. However, the rivalry between the defunct Soviet Union and China enhanced the presence of China in Africa. These relations suffered a setback with the death of the China's leader, Mao Zedong. Deng Xiaoping who succeeded him paid more attention to the economic development of China. Consequently, he shifted foreign policy attention of China towards forging ties with global economic powers and institutions. Thus, Sino-African relations remain docile between 1970 and 1980s. The improved economic fortune of China in the 1990s coupled with the end of cold war era, made China to renew her engagement in the continent not only as source of raw materials for her new industries, but as source of market. While this renewed engagement of China has been controversial, all African countries currently enjoy robust relations with China in various forms. This work examines these relationships with a view to assessing their implications for economic integration in the West African sub-region Vis-a- Vis the objectives of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). We use secondary source of data as research method. The paper finds that Sino-Africa relations have potentials for positive impact on each country in the sub-region if properly handled by the West African countries. It could in the long run add positively to economic integration of the sub-region.*

**Keywords:** Sino- Africa; Integration,; West African sub-region; Trade imbalance

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### INTRODUCTION

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Chinese contacts with and interest in Africa has been on for more than two hundred years. According to Basil Davidson, as reported by Pham (2016) 'Chinese goods were reaching the continent of Africa by the sea routes as early as the beginning of the Christian era' He said the most important period of Sino-African relations in history was the period of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). Since this early period, China's relation has been on mutually agreed Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. These five principles seems to be the traditional basis of China's relation with most countries in the World and still subsist till date.

In April 1955, representatives of 29 African and Asian countries met in the Indonesian city of Bandung in the first Asian–African Conference. The final communiqué of the summit adopted “Five Principles” as the foundation for relations among the emergent nations of the developing world. The conference participants also called for economic and cultural cooperation among their largely newly independent countries as well as a programme of active support for the self-determination of dependent people against colonial regimes. (Richard. W. 1994). Following the Bandung Conference, the PRC developed relationships with both independent African states and aspiring liberation movements like the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) whose provisional government received Beijing’s recognition in 1958. China’s Premier, Zhou Enlai visited Africa three times in the 1960s, and the decade constituted the high point of China’s material assistance to both governments and revolutionary groups (nearly every liberation movement received arms, funds, and training from the PRC at one point or another on the continent (Pham 2006).

Contemporary history reveals that the death of Mao and the ascendancy of Deng Xiaoping as the defacto leader of China in December, 1978 led to a change of Chinese policy priorities at both foreign and domestic fronts. Although the “Five Principles” were continually reiterated as the basis for international relations-they were subsequently incorporated in the agreements establishing diplomatic relations between the PRC and more than 160 other countries. In order to attend to her domestic economic needs, Sino–African ties were moved to the back burner in the late 1970s and remained so through the 1980s. Furthermore, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, Beijing no longer felt keen pressure to compete for the revolutionary allegiance of Africans against its old rival, and so it scaled back or terminated support for the liberation fighters in Africa (Pham, 2006). By the 1990s, however, two changes on the world stage redirected the PRC’s gaze back to Africa. First, the success of its economic modernization programme that places China as the third-largest economy in the world (after the United States and Japan, respectively). In addition, since 2003she became world’s second-largest consumer of petroleum products. Secondly, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the wholesale decline of Russia as a major power inform the renewed focus on Africa. Consequently, throughout the 1990s, the PRC reenergized its multilateral relations with African countries, especially those in a position to advance its newly found geostrategic goals.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was established in 1975 with the aim of ‘promoting economic co-operation between the initial 16 and later 15 countries minus Mauritania that withdrew her membership of the community in year 2000 with different historic trajectories (colonialism, language, and administrative culture) yet sharing similar socio-economic conditions’ (Jean 2016). Chieka (2012) identified four motivating factors that encouraged the establishment of ECOWAS in 1975. These motivators are:

- 1) Nigeria’s civil war ended in 1970. During the war Nigeria learned a lesson of good-neighbourliness. To this end, Nigeria championed the establishment of ECOWAS for the sub-region to be good neighbours and collective benefit from the good neighbourliness
- 2) Related to the above is the issue of Arab-led oil embargo of the 1970s. Nigeria saw this as an opportunity to realize her potential as an oil prospecting economy.
- 3) Another push factor for the establishment of ECOWAS was need to neutralize the effect of France in the sub-region. The continued influence of France in the political economy was seen as a threat to Nigerian hegemony in the sub-region and this needed to be addressed
- 4) The encouragement given by European nations for Africa, Caribbean and the Pacific countries to establish a European-like regional grouping was another impetus. The aim was to ensure better distribution and coordination of EEC’s aid to these developing countries.

In its forty-six (46) years of existence (1975-2021) ECOWAS has been able to record some positive achievements. These achievements in the view of Jean (2016) are in the areas of peace-keeping in troubled parts of the region, mediating conflicts within the sub-region, monitoring elections in member nations so as to minimize electoral malpractices, facilitating free movement of people or supporting infrastructure development within the sub-region. However, ECOWAS has not been able to address the all important objective of economic integration of the sub-region. This is not to say however, that efforts are not being made towards this direction. It is a known fact that all ingredients of sub-regional integrations are lacking in the case of ECOWAS. For instance, it is observed that Trade among the countries is low, economic and monetary cooperation is absent joint efforts to address energy and infrastructure development is not encouraging. In the face of this debilitating factors in the sub-regional organization

towards realizing its core objective, the pertinent question to ask is ‘how will the renewed interest of China in the economy of the sub-continent affect the effort of ECOWAS towards the integration of the economy of the sub-region? It is on the strength of this pertinent question that this work examines the renewed Chinese interest in Africa, with particular attention to Ecowas within the framework of Interdependence theory. Secondary means of sourcing data is applied in this study.

The work is in five parts. The first part is the introduction that contains the background to the study, statement of the problem, its objectives, the significance of the study, conceptual clarifications as well as research method. Part two discusses the theoretical basis of the study. The third part examines China’s relation with Africa in history as well as the establishment of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its objectives. The fourth part is devoted to the analysis of the implications of China’s renewed engagement in the continent on integration of the West African sub-region. The fifth and the final part discusses the summary, conclusion and the recommendations of the study.

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The problematic of this study lies in the implications of China’s renewed involvement in Africa. This is in view of the fact that China is a developed country that needs raw materials, markets and cheap labour from these African countries. It is been argued that Africa is entering into another round of or forms of colonization. This assumption is hinged on the submission of peter (2006) that the quests for resources, business opportunities, diplomatic initiatives, and building strategic partnerships are the driving forces of Chinese interest in Africa. How are these objectives different from those of the Western colonialists? The paper is also concerned about the possibility of the Chinese renewed engagement leading to disunity among countries in the sub-region.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The broad objective of this study is to examine the implications of the renewed involvement of China, an economically developed power, in ECOWAS countries and the effects of the involvement on the attempt of the sub-regional economic organization (ECOWAS) to attain its object of sub-regional integration. Specific objectives of this study include:

- 1) To examine the concept of integration among the West African countries
- 2) To examine the role of ECOWAS in the sub-regional integration efforts
- 3) To examine how China's involvement in the sub-region can affect the achievement of economic integration aim of the sub-regional organization
- 4) To examine how the sub-regional organization can harness the opportunities offered by the Chinese involvement in the economy of the countries in West Africa to realize the objective of sub- regional integration

## **RESEARCH QUESTION**

- 1) What is Integration among countries in West Africa sub-region?
- 2) What roles has ECOWAS played in regional integration in the West African sub-region?
- 3) How will China's renewed involvement in the sub-region affect the quest for the sub-regional integration?
- 4) How can the West African countries harness the opportunities offered by the Chinese involvement in the sub-region to promote sub-regional integration?

## **CONCEPTUAL CLARRIFICATION**

### **Integration**

According to Weiner, (1971) Integration is the process of bringing together culturally and socially discrete group into a single territorial unit and the establishment of a national identity. This notion of integration presupposes that there must be in existence culturally distinct groups by language or other forms of identity that involve self- consciousness.

## **Regional Integration**

Regional integration, has conceived by ECOWAS is an attempt and effort by the countries in the sub-region to align their resources, trades and manpower with one another in order to enhance their productive capacities individually and collectively, and improve the general development of their people.

## **Sino-African Relations**

Sino-African relations refer to the historical, political, economic, military, social and cultural connections between China and the African continent. The relationship dates back to the Christian era. But in the 1970s and 1980s it witnessed docility due to internal reforms going on in China and her desire to join the global powers. However, since the 1990s there has been tremendous improvement in this relationship involving both official and private businesses.

## **The Economic Community of West African States**

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a regional economic union of fifteen countries located in West Africa. Collectively, these countries comprise an area of 5,114,162 km<sup>2</sup> (1,974,589 sq. mi), and in 2019 had an estimated population of close to 400 million people, (399, 966,869) or 5.6% of the global population. (Worldometre, 2020) The union was established on 28 May 1975, with the signing of the Treaty of Lagos, with its stated mission to promote economic integration across the region.

Another version of the treaty was agreed and signed on 24 July 1993 in Cotonou. Fifteen member countries signed the new agreement. In the new agreement, members agreed on 97 different articles to strengthen their resolve to become a single regional economic block (integration). ECOWAS is considered one of the pillars of regional blocs of the African continent. The ultimate goal of ECOWAS is to achieve "collective self-sufficiency" for its member states by creating a single large trade bloc by building a full economic and trading union among the member countries.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Theories are brick blocs with which studies are constructed scientifically. They serve as foundation as well as guide to studies. There are several of them. However, scholars and researchers apply theories they consider appropriate for specific studies. In this work, we consider interdependency theory as appropriate.

Interdependence theory is a theory that stresses the complex ways in which, as a result of growing ties, the transnational actors become mutually dependent, vulnerable to each other's actions and sensitive to each other's needs. Waheeda (2015). According to (Genest 1996) cited in Waheeda (2015), complex interdependence is 'an economic trans-nationalist concept that assumes that states are not the only important actors in the international system, social welfare issues share centre stage with security issues on the global agenda, and cooperation is as dominant a characteristic of international politics as conflict'. Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye developed interdependence theory in the late 1970s. Interdependence theory seeks to borrow from the tenets of the older theories of Realism and Liberalism. It however tries to integrate both elements of power politics and economic welfare of liberal school and come up with an ideology that recognizes the importance of both power and welfare as germane instruments with which global politics is executed in the contemporary global setting. (Robert O Keohane and Joseph S. Nye (1977) cited in Waheeda 2015).

Interdependence theory sees the contemporary international system from a different perspective from those of the realist and the liberalist perspectives. While not condemning any aspect of the earlier theories, interdependence theory is suggesting a mix of the good sides of realism with that of liberalism as means of determining interactions within the contemporary international system. Interdependence theory is useful in this work because of the complementarities that exist between China and the African countries. The tendency for China and the group of African countries to have mutually beneficial relationship is high. Through interdependence, countries of the world exchange goods and services among themselves. In the case of China and African countries, while China has technology and capital resources, the African countries are blessed with abundant natural resources. Thus while China could rely on African countries for her raw materials, African countries can benefit from Chinese technology.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### ECOWAS and Economic Integration in the West African Sub-region

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was established on 28 May 1975 to promote economic integration across the region. Chieke (2012) described the signing of the treaty establishing ECOWAS as a ‘copy cat’ of the founding of the European Economic Community (EEC) but he is doubtful of possibility of ECOWAS realizing her objective of economic integration of the sub-regional. His fears were based on the fragmented nature and character of the member countries in terms of culture, economic non-complementarities and colonial experience. This is because, according to him, there is no history of successful integration of societies has fragmented as the west Africa sub-region. Commenting on ECOWA, Karim and Elke (2017) justified the need for the establishment of ECOWAS on the basis that small states like most members of the community need to join hands and form large markets in order to be relevant in the international system. The treaty that gave birth to ECOWAS stated the stages of integration proposed by the founding fathers of the community. These are Free Trade Areas, Customs Union, Common Market and Economic and Monetary Union. Chieke observed that these goals are ambitious and may be difficult for a fragmented region to attain. But despite his pessimism, the authors equally identify some efforts of the community that shows determination and readiness to achieve its goals. He states that ECOWAS has been able to put some structures and institutions in place that could generate integration of the sub-region (ECOWAS, 2008).

The magnificent headquarters of the community in Abuja, Nigeria and the Ecobank with headquarters in Lome, Togo and operating offices across the member countries of the community are some of these institutions and structures. In addition he said the community has been able to commit hundreds of millions of dollars towards integrating the member countries and that several policies have also been put in place in this direction. Speaking in similar vein Oluyemi F & Gabriel L (2015) posit that ECOWAS’ main focus in search of integration is to promote economic activities in all its ramifications. They posit that in doing this ECOWAS is concentrating attention on such economic activities as industrial development, development of efficient inter and intral-regional transportation system, development of effective telecommunications system, sustainable energy development, improved agricultural productivity with

modern equipment, development of her natural resources, promotion of commerce, development of workable monetary and financial policies, and enhanced social and cultural relations among member nations. By this effort, ECOWAS has been able to record some successes in physical integration through intra-regional transportation and collective security. The oil and gas sector has remained the major source of foreign earnings for countries in ECOWAS that are endowed with the resources. Olufemi and Gabriel (2015) claim that the total African Natural Gas production in 1977 was 3.6 trillion cubic feet (tcf) produced by Egypt, Algeria, and Nigeria in percentages of 36 %, 13 %, 34% respectively. The urgent need for oil resources in the sub-region has led to development of cross-boarder pipeline development, not only among ECOWAS members, but among the countries in the African continent.

The position of Nigeria in facilitating this cross-boarder oil trade cannot be underestimated. Joint efforts at exploring the natural resources of this region has eventually birth interconnection of energy infrastructure in the west Africa sub-region. A typical example is joint efforts by Cote d' Ivoire and Ghana to carry out a come to feasible study on the possibility of a Natural Gas Pipeline from Ivorian to Ghana for power generation. Another example is Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by Cote d' Ivoire and Ghana on supply of gas between the two countries. (Olufemi & Gabriel, 2015) Another intra-regional integration effort is the Senegal and Guinea-Bissau aimed at collective development and management of Cooperation Agency (MCA) to manage the Maritime resources located in their border areas. The two countries agreed to income realized from sale of petroleum products from the area in percentages. 85% of the profits generated goes to Senegal while the remaining 15%. Belongs to Guinea-Bissau.

Karim, K & Elke, V (2017) hinged the formation of ECOWAS on the need for small countries to create large markets in order to attract foreign and local investment. According to them, integration is a necessary prerequisite for small states to get together, build and integrate their economies with a view to establishing a big market which attracts both domestic and foreign investment. A large economy, they opine, leads to greater political and economic strengths for states' ability to negotiate better terms of trade and economic prosperity in the global setting.

The main aim of establishing ECOWAS by its founding fathers according to Karim & Elke (2017) is to promote economic cooperation among member states with

the goal of raising living standards of the people and development. Other specific objectives of the community as he encapsulated them are;

- 1) Promotion of Cooperation and development; this is an important objective for the countries who are in the ECOWAS system. The development is not limited by the economic abilities of the region. It also includes social contacts between the representatives of various nations, religious groups, etc. They cooperate to foster development in these states. The cooperation also includes special offers for the members of the community. The fifteen African countries share business strategies and technologies to boost their economies. They also compete with each other to get the best results. This can foster the diplomatic and economic relations between the countries.
- 2) Harmonization of Agricultural, Economic, Monetary and Industrial Policies; One of the objectives of ECOWAS is to create a united policy which can satisfy the unique needs of every country member. It eliminates misunderstanding between country-members. At the same time, it provides the general requirements and standards for policies in Industrial, Monetary, Economic and Agricultural areas.
- 3) Abolition of trade restrictions and Customs Duties; One of the greatest objectives for ECOWAS is to destroy boundaries to assist in the development of the countries within the zone. It creates additional protection for goods that are created within this zone. That way, manufacturers are more protected and have better opportunities to sell these products. Customers can also benefit from this option as the price of goods becomes cheaper.
- 4) Establishment of Common Fund; this is another great opportunity offered by ECOWAS! A common fund provides better security options for countries within the union. It also helps facilitate the cooperation between the countries. In addition, it serves as a security measure or compensation to help any of the countries that needs assistance. The Common Fund is another great option for the development of all countries within the union.
- 5) Implementation of Infrastructural Schemes; the joint development means joint infrastructure schemes, like communication, transport, energy, etc. Therefore, the development of standards of all country-members in the community can be realized.

Economic integration in Africa is one of the legacies of colonial administration in African continent. According to Amadu & Moshood (2011) the first economic integration scheme in the sub-region was the creation of the West African Currency Board in 1912 which was responsible for issuing the legal tender for its four colonies of The Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone to ease trade transactions among these countries. The West African Airways Corporation (WAAC) was also established to facilitate air transport among the four countries. The West African Examinations Council (WAEC) was also established to standardize examination for university admission in the four colonial territories. They also established a common fund for the colonies. This was another great opportunity offered by ECOWAS! A common fund provided better security options for countries within the union. It also helped to facilitate cooperation among the countries. In addition, it serves as a security measure or compensation to help any of the countries that needs assistance. The Common Fund is another great option for the development of all countries within the union. France went further to create a monetary union among its colonial territories as legal tender and a Central Bank in Dakar, Senegal, which acts as a clearinghouse. However, unlike their Anglophone counterparts, the French colonies retained the CFA as legal tender after independence making it relatively easy in theory at least, to promote trade among them.

The existence of the common monetary system among the francophone ECOWAS countries is often identified as one of the major factors that explain their reluctance to subscribe to the Community's common monetary zone. (Amadu, S & Moshood, O 2011). Some of these colonial legacies subsist in the sub-region even after their colonial independence. It is perhaps their colonial experience and the need to strengthen themselves that serve as impetus to the establishment of the community. They may also have believed in the truth that 'unity is strength'.

### **Attempts at Economic Integration in ECOWAS**

The ECOWAS's mission is to promote economic integration in all fields of economic activities particularly in inter-regional commerce and cooperation in industrial development, transport, telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, commerce, monetary and financial, social and cultural matters. (Mohammed, I.C 2007). In the area of trade Liberalization, the ECOWAS region became a free trade area in January 2000 and its common external tariff was supposed to be operational in January 2008 (Guillaume, 2010). The ECOWAS also has a plan to create a common

currency. In her May 2015 report, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa catalogued a number of programmes and activities of the ECOWAS towards integration of the sub-region. The catalogue covers virtually all fields of human endeavour. For example the community attempted the Creation of special posts by Member States at each official entry point for entry formalities by their nationals and ECOWAS citizens. There is also protocol agreement on Freedom of movement and of residence. It also created an ECOWAS Passport and adopted biometric identity card as a travel document instead of ECOWAS travels certificate, etc. It is also reported that the community envisages free access to employment in the Member States. It also set a platform for the harmonization of immigration procedures and planned introduction of ECOVISA. In addition, there are efforts being made to reduce non-tariff barriers through control posts on some corridors. There is agreement among member states to encourage free movement of local goods and handicrafts between Member States, exclusive of all duties and taxes.

All these measures and more are aimed at economic integration. By removing barriers as indicated above, there should be free movement of labour, capital and entrepreneurs within the community. This will boost the economy of member states. On road and transportation, the community is embarking on some major road infrastructure projects. For example, the Lagos-Abidjan Highway Project, Senegal-Gambia Bridge, Rosso bridge between Senegal and Mauritania, Trans-West African Highway-Coastal with the construction of bridges in Sierra Leone and the road section between Moa Bridge and the Liberian border, construction of the Zinder- Nigeria border road and the Koupela PiegaFada Gourma-Niger border on the Trans-Sahel. Effective transportation is essential for industrialization. This is because it will ease movement of man and equipment. ECOWAS is also adopting a Railway Master Plan and an Air Transport liberalized market within ECOWAS. Pursuant to this, the community created a Sub-Regional Organization for Supervision of Aviation Safety (BAGASOO) involving seven Member States.

Other areas covered by ECOWAS initiative towards economic integration include the creation of a sub-regional shipping company, called Ecomarine International, Launching of INTELCOMM II programme, establishment of the Fund for the development and financing of transport and energy sectors (FODETEECOWAS), Interstate terrestrial fibre optic connections among others. The community's activities also extended to Agricultural policy, Energy, Sustainable

development among member countries, Environmental security of the region, Harmonization of industrial policies, Education and training, Science and Technology, Health, Arts and Culture, etc. By 1983, the organization had floated industrial cooperation policy with the object to adopt a sub-regional approach to economic development which would include market integration (liberalization and promotion of intra-community trade) and physical integration (in the areas of production, Infrastructure, transport, communication, natural resources and energy (Oluyemi, F and Gabriel, L. A (2015) ECOWAS member countries signed a number of protocols on free entry and exit of citizens of the community to and from member countries.

In furtherance of their commitment to integration, ECOWAS member countries participate jointly in the oil and gas sector of the economy. Member countries exchange this commodity among themselves. The increases in regional trade coupled with growing energy demands and the necessity for regional oil producers to utilize natural gas resources have resulted in the development of cross-border pipelines in Africa. The discoveries of offshore hydrocarbon reserves, many of which cross maritime borders has led to possible joint efforts in the exploration of these resources which eventually had resulted in the energy infrastructure becoming increasingly interconnected over the coming decades. Examples include Coted' Ivoire and Ghana that decided to come to an agreement for a feasibility study on the construction of a Natural Gas Pipeline to supply Ivorian Gas to Ghana for power generation. Negotiations and steps were taken between Cote d' Ivoire and Ghana to adopt a memorandum of understanding (MOU). Furthermore, they have a number of bilateral agreements among themselves in cross-border resources to share proceeds there from on agreed percentages. For example, Senegal and Guinea-Bissau established the Management and Cooperation Agency (MCA) for the joint development of Maritime resources located in their border areas. The countries share any proceed earned from oil in the area, with Senegal receiving 85% of the profits and Guinea-Bissau 15% (Oluyemi, F. and Gabriel, L. A (2015).

The above illustrate the determination of ECOWAS member nations to integrate on all fields of human endeavour, particularly on economy of member nations. However, not much has been achieved in that direction. Several reasons can be adduced for the failure of ECOWAS to integrate economically. One of the reasons for the inability of ECOWAS to realize the objective of regional economic integration, According to Chieka (2012) the high level of divided loyalty to the community by her member countries. In his view, Chieka accuse the Francophone member countries of

being more committed and loyal to France and francophone zone in Africa than ECOWAS. He further posits that French's financial assistance and political patronage are major obstacles to ECOWAS achieving meaningful economic integration. Obi (2015) also subscribed to this position. In his views, for ECOWAS to achieve the objective of integration, member nations need to assert their loyalty to the organization over rival bodies.

Another major obstacle to integration in ECOWAS is the absence of commitment from Nigeria leadership and the prevailing attitude within the country. Chieka (2012) argues that some Nigerians consider ECOWAS as an unnecessary burden and not a blessing to Nigeria. These people believe that, Nigeria bearing about a third of the financial needs of ECOWAS is not necessary and unbearable burden in view of Nigeria's dwindling financial resources. The fact that Nigeria's efforts in solidifying ECOWAS not being recognized or reciprocated is viewed as insult upon injury.

### **Sino-African Relations in West Africa; Implications for ECOWAS**

By the early 1990s, the economic reforms in China began to produce results and the China's economy records significant growth. This no doubt, is a major reason for her renewed interest in Africa. Thus, her economic prosperity propels her to seek its sustenance through opening up to the rest of the world. African continent offers a veritable opportunity for China in this direction. The need to seek raw materials and energy sources to propel her economy and market is another push factor. And all these are in abundance in Africa. According to Onuoha, (2008) and Alli, (2010) after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the subsequent security challenges pervading the Middle East, China had to shift her trade and investment attentions away from the troubled Middle East to a safe haven which African continent represented as at the time. In furthering her relations with Africa, especially trade and investment relations, China employed several options. Among such options, According to Onuoha (2008) and Ali (2010) are aid-for oil strategy that has resulted in increasing supplies of oil from African countries. An example was the oil-for-infrastructure deal between China and Nigeria under the administration of former Nigerian President, Olusegun Obasanjo (1999-2007) African countries individually and collectively also attracted China to invest in their economy. They do this by presenting to China and any foreign investors attractive monetary and fiscal incentives that would assist these investors to

establish provitable businesses in Africa. These different economic packages and incentives put in place by African countries equally served as attraction for Chinese government and private investors to invest in African economy, especially in oil and gas as well as infrastructural development.

China developed some policies to encourage her relationship with, especially developing countries. Under the umbrella of the South-South Cooperation, the community champions economic and political interactions. The introduction of the Forum for China Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2000 and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) are further efforts at strengthening relationship between China and the rest of the World. The Forum for China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) was established in 2000 following the release of China's African Policy Paper in January 2006. This policy paper indicates China's level of commitment in engaging the African continent especially at commercial or economic level. This engagement has been lauded as a vehicle for boosting African growth and the development trajectory of the continent. During the "Forum on China-Africa Cooperation" in 2000, Chinese Minister ShiGuangsheng identified four major area of cooperation China intended to have with Africa, they include:

- 1) Promotion of trade, investment, economic and technical cooperation, with a view enhancing the development of the continent
- 2) To strengthen communication and collaboration in information technology and electronic commerce;
- 3) To intensify dialogue and consultation mechanism between Chinese and African governments, so as to address problems during cooperation,
- 4) Enhance communication, draw upon each other's experiences and make common progress;
- 5) To consolidate, coordinate and endeavor to achieve economic prosperity and development of China and Africa; etc. (Naidu, 2008; Onuoha, 2008).

FOCAC is a geo-strategic platform championed by China and embraced by African countries with objective of collective consultations on a wide range of issues, such as agricultural cooperation, investment promotion, market access, debt relief as well as peace and security affairs (Zeng and Shu, 2018). Through this geo-strategic platforms, China has grown to become the single largest trade partner of Africa (Busse, Erdogan and Mühlen, 2016; Shinn, 2019), and has thus become one of the largest

sources of FDI sources in Africa (UNCTAD, 2018). China's trade and FDI in Africa have been found to be complementary. In particularly FDI appears to boost trade between China and recipient countries of the FDI. (Abeliansky and Martínez-Zarzoso 2019). This definitely has a negative impact on intra-regional trade in the sub-region.

Several research efforts have been carried out by scholars to analyze the impact of China's re-entry into the political economy of African States. Scholars like (Azu, Okezie and Hirwa, 2019; Khosla, 2015; Montinari and Prodi, 2011) all examined the influence of China on intra-African trade. However, their effort shown focus or attention on explicit effect in a context with a relatively high degree of regional economic integration. Economic and Political relation between China and African, including ECOWAS member countries have grown tremendously in the 1990s and the 2000s. According UNCTAD,(2008) volume of trade between China and ECOWAS grew from about two billion USD in the early 2000s to nearly 40 billion USD in 2015 and 2018. China's economic presence in Africa and ECOWAS in this period is enormous and ubiquitous covering trade, economic engagement such as aid, foreign Direct Investment (FDI), concessional loans, commercial loans and technical assistance (Busse, Erdogan and Mühlen, 2016; Hruby, 2019; KummerNoormamode, 2014; Shaw, 2011; Shinn, 2019; Taylor, 2019). In the 2000s, perhaps owing to the formation of Forum for China Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2000 and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), in 2013, China-Africa trade and investment relations increased astronomically with trade relationship exceeding those of the Western World.

The diplomatic relationship also became stronger and more formal. particularly after the 2006 summit of FOCAC in Beijing (Brautigam, 2009, pp. 158, 240–241; Shaw, 2011; Zeng and Shu, 2018). Between 2003 and 2018, the flow of FDI from China to ECOWAS member countries increased from \$100 million to \$1000 million (CARI,2020b) There is no doubt that China's economic expansion is enormous in scale, yet the orderliness in the trade relationship has been blown out of proportion. The China-Africa economic relationships covers a wide range activities and involve relatively uncoordinated state. The increasing presence and involvement of China in Africa economy in particular has generated debates among academics and politicians. In the opinion of Hadland, (2012) and Zeleza, (2014) while some people argue that China's presence in the continent of Africa is a positive, development that promotes counterforce to the long-standing Western domination, others consider China as another imperialist hegemon whose main objective is to exploits the resources of the African

continent by exploring the abundant natural resources in the continent and also find markets for industrial surplus coming from her newly developed industrial out lets.

Alden and Jiang, (2019) argue that China's involvement in the economy of African country is essentially motivated by the need to source for resources and markets for her industries. However, the relationship has grown more comprehensive and complex in recent time. Unfortunately much scholarly attention have not be drawn to the influence of Chinese involvement in ECOWAS. However, Kummer-Noormamode (2014) and Brautigam (2009, p. 279, 307-308), have argued that the economic relationship between ECOWAS and China has been significantly impactful on the economic development of most countries in the Africa continent. On the other hand some scholars, such as Busse, Erdogan and Mühlen (2016), observe that the outcomes of the relationship is mixed. Other scholars, such as Shinn (2019) and Zeleza (2014), find that China's export of natural resources from Africa countries boost the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the African countries. It also enhances technological development. They also add that the relationship brought into the continent cheap and relatively high-quality consumers goods, trade, aid and infrastructural development.

All these contribute to economic growth and development of the continent. In addition these positive outcomes complements those of the Western European countries. However, both authors also identify major problems Chinese involvement in Africa cause for the economy of the African countries. The preponderance of concessional and other forms of loans has made some of the African counties great debtors to China. Similarly it is being argued among politicians and commentators that desire of African countries to keep supplying raw materials to China might prevent these African countries from diversifying their economy. Another observation is that like what obtains with Western countries, the FDI from China also generate environmental and labour concerns. Hodzi (2018) and Cheru and Oqubay (2019, p. 303) are of the opinion that there is the need to understand the standpoint of African politicians to be able to properly analyse China African relations. Hodzi (2018) argues that though investment and aid from China or from any other country contribute to the economic development of African countries, the outcome of such relationship lie substantially on the mindset of African political elites. Under the leadership of Xi Jinping, China is promoting her governance style through her diplomatic romance with African leaders. This is already influencing governance system in Africa. Thus it is not unlikely that the growing influence of China would not determine the actions of the political elites in Africa.

Philips (2019), provides a clue to these dynamics in an ECOWAS country. He pointed out that China's increasing involvement as a trading partner to ECOWAS member countries did not significantly affect the macroeconomic governance in Ghana because the influence of the state remains limited due to the loan conditions sanctioned by IMF and the World Bank.

The above discussion shows tremendous improvement in relationship between China and African countries at bilateral and multilateral levels. The pertinent question to ask at this juncture is, with China's deep involvement in the political economy of African states, relative to the objectives of the ECOWAS how visible is economic integration of the sub-region? This question is germane in view of the rivalry among ECOWAS members to welcome foreign investment into their respective economies. The low productivity that pervades the sub-region makes China and other developed economies attractive to the individual countries. The approach of FOCAC towards multilateral relations with ECOWAS has also not helped matters. Guillaume (2010) confirms this fear. According to him, during the FOCAC meeting held in Beijing in 2008 ECOWAS members worked as a body, but at the end of the day, the agenda of the forum was set by the Chinese government and all the 48 African states were to participate as individual countries and not as ECOWAS members.. The implication of this is that, the ECOWAS countries will deal with China as individual countries to attract investment from China. This will put intra-Africa economic relations in jeopardy. The resources available to them are same raw materials. It is therefore more profitable for each of them to relate directly with China for their needed finished goods. This has a negative implication for intra-African trade. It is obvious that the above scenerio portend negative implication for intra- Africa trade and economic relations.

### **Assessment of China-ECOWAS Relation and its Implications on Economic Integration in West Africa**

The Revised Treaty of ECOWAS (1993) tried to give a vivid picture of the specific desires and focus of the community. The treaty points out that integration policies and programmes of ECOWAS have been geared towards a political and economic convergence, sustained mostly on the free movement of people and goods, establishment of a Common Market, infrastructure development, adoption of common essential policies and advancements on peace, democracy and good governance. Based on these basic focus, several arguments have been generated in the assessment of the

China's involvement in the sub-region's economy and its implication on integration. Scholars have argued that China's increased engagement with the African continent presented an opportunity for a valuable contribution to Africa's growth and development. But some others believe there is no significant difference between China and the Western world in their interest in the continent. In fact, some even argue that China's case is worse due to the poor quality of her products made cheaply available to Africans. It is argued that going by China's investment patterns, aid conditions and trade strategies in her economic relations with Africa, China is not doing Africa any favour. This is because China is driven by her economic interest in her economic relations with Africa, which reinforces the decimation of African economies long fragmented in Berlin Conference (1884-1885) by European colonialism. Therefore, the wide imbalance in the trade between China and Africa shows that Sino-African economic relations is not relations of equals or interdependence, rather it is relations of unequal partners or dependency. It also presents a challenge in that it could also erode these countries' growth benefits; undermine the role of the ECOWAS in her pursuit of the sub-regional integration. (Spies, 2008). With or without China, it is recognized that ECOWAS has put in place measures to integrate the sub-region economically; however, this has not been achieved. The community has not been able to implement its policies in core areas of its objective such as intra regional trade, economic and monetary cooperation, energy and social development.

The renewed involvement of China in the sub-region, though has been remarkable, it has nonetheless affected the effort to increase intra-regional trade relations, economic cooperation and integration. Rather than being horizontally integrated with one another, African economies are bilaterally, fragmentary and vertically linked to China. The outcome is that Africa trades more with China than within themselves. One of the major obstacles to profitable ECOWAS-China relation is the level of inequality among the member countries. Majority of the member countries are classified in the low Human Development category and substantial percentage of the population is estimated to live on less than one dollar a day. This level of poverty results in major shortcoming in policy and institutional capacity of these countries. It is also observed that pre-colonial and post-colonial cleavages between the francophone and Anglophone countries affect the prospect of integration. The two blocs appear to be more comfortable with their ex-colonial masters. It is therefore not easy for them to agree easily on policies to be implemented. Fortunately for China and unfortunately for ECOWAS this pays the former.

However, while many regional leaders profess open support for economic integration under the auspices of ECOWAS, very often it is so mainly at the level of rhetoric as their actions sometimes betray their true commitment to the regional integration ideal. Since its inception, the ECOWAS countries have made significant progress in the process of regional integration through its different constituents, even though major challenges persist and there is wide scope for its development and consolidation. Another area where China's involvement in Africa has affected economic integration in ECOWAS is in the area of economic complementarities between China and the African Countries. Africa is blessed with diverse natural resources. However, their distribution is not even. This creates a situation where there are economic complementarities between China and each African country in different resources and economic parity among the African countries. It is therefore profitable for each of these African countries to relate with China than joining forces.

## CONCLUSION

The ECOWAS has developed workable policies and programmes over the years with which to integrate the member countries. Unfortunately, the core objective of the community which is the economic integration of the member countries has not been achieved owing to a number of internal factors. One of the reasons for the inability of the ECOWAS to achieve its integration aim is the similarity of the nature of the member nations' economy. They have similar items of exchange which is The relationship with China, has to some extent, remarkably affected the economy of member nations, but it has also been identified as a clog in the wheel of economic integration of the sub-region. The Chinese interest which is paramount to the fastest growing global economy is among the major obstacles to ECOWAS integration efforts. The fragmented nature of the member countries is another obstacle to their integration. This has affected their commitment to the goal of the community.

In addition the obvious weaknesses of ECOWAS at applying the policies and protocols approved by the community are other hindrances. The problem has always been integrating ECOWAS' approved policies into state policies for implementation by member states. The community developed an action plan towards the vision 2020 with the purpose of developing common agriculture and industrial policies, the inter-connection of transport, communications and energy infrastructures and the

implementation of common natural resources and environmental policies. This Plan, if implemented, is the keystone upon which an essential part of the regional integration process and its implementation can be anchored. Unfortunately, they have remained unimplemented due to several reasons, but essentially absence of the political will on the part of their leaders and divided loyalty and commitment to the goal of the community.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

There is no doubt that ECOWAS-China relations has witnessed significant upsurge in the last two decades. The two sides have benefited from the interactions in terms of trade, investment and infrastructure development. While individual countries have gained from the relation with China, member countries have also derived certain collective benefits from the interaction. However, the relationship has not helped ECOWAS to achieve its main or core objective which is the economic integration of the sub-region. One of the best ways for ECOWAS to achieve this core objective is for member countries to strengthen their economic, social and political structures and institutions individually. This will enable the member countries to sustain and support the implementation of collectively agreed programmes and policies of ECOWAS in their respective countries.

Secondly, the leaders of the member countries should develop the political will to develop sustainable economic development programmes that can be pursued at the sub-regional level and at home. It is one thing to agree at ECOWAS level on a policy, it is another thing to get this policies implemented at home. It takes the political will on the part of political leaders to do this. Thirdly, there is the need for ECOWAS members to harmonize their trade within the sub-region such that they can complement one another. They can identify their strengths and weakness so that within the sub-region they identify their comparative advantages and use it to bargain with China or any other developed countries to their collective advantage. The member countries should shelve their colonial toga by looking less on the support of their former colonial masters. This is particularly the case with France and her former colonies in the sub-region.

Finally, member countries of ECOWAS should consider looking inwards to develop own-grown technology that would enable them add values to their products at

the international forums, This we make them producers of finished goods which will attract heavy financial returns instead of trading in raw material as a means of exchange that fetches them low returns from international trade. For interdependence to be profitable to ECOWAS members in the international system, there is need for them to move from producers of raw materials to producers of finished goods.

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