COMPARATIVE INTEGRATION: A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (EU) AND THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES (ECOWAS)

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Abstract

This paper attempts to compare the European Union and the Economic Community of West African States. It contends that economic integration has the potential to enhance the relative strength of the integrating economies in their bargaining with other economic groupings in the world. It however frowns at the indiscriminate implementation by the Economic Community of West African States of ideas and theories borrowed from the European experience without recourse to West Africa's peculiar socio-economic and historical problems.

Key Words: European Union, economic community, West African

Introduction

The study of comparative integration efforts has been quite fashionable for scholars of international political economy. For instance, over the last few years, comparative studies of the North Atlantic Free Trade Area (NAFTA) and the European Union (EU) has been undertaken to reveal the factors that facilitated the successes of each organisation in their integration efforts at the regional level. Also, a comparative study of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and European Union has also been undertaken.[1] In addition, an attempt has also been made to compare the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) with the Economic Community of West African States.[2] However, very little effort has been made to compare the European Union with the Economic Community of West African States. Against this background, this paper focuses on a comparative study of the European Union (EU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The factors responsible for the resounding success of the European Union in its integration efforts on the one hand, and the very modest and limited success of the Economic Community of West African States on the other hand shall also be discussed before a conclusion is drawn. Herein also lays the importance of this study.

A closer look at the Economic Community of West African States suggests a potentially rich two-way vein of empirical and theoretical insight to be gained from comparison with the European Union. Indeed, there are striking parallels that might not seem evident at first but that do emerge through a vigorous comparative analysis. There is no doubt that the geographical, historical, political, and cultural contexts are sufficiently different as to ensure different paths towards regional cooperation.[3] It is also important to stress that the comparative analysis of the European Union and the Economic Community of West African States offers a chance to refine our knowledge in several broad areas of international relations and comparative political economy. At a deeper level, it allows us to refine dominant neo-liberal institutionalist approaches to the understanding of economic cooperation. Again, the approach allows for the utilisation of alternative constructivist applications to the study of regional integration.

Conceptual Clarifications

This section provides some conceptual clarifications in relation to integration and regionalism. A clarification on these two concepts is necessary for a proper understanding of the evolution of the European Union and the Economic Community of West African States. Thus, "integration can be seen as the attainment within a territory of a sense of community and of institutions and practices strong enough

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[1] For details, see Richard Higgott, "The International Political Economy of Regionalism: The Asia-Pacific and Europe," compared in W. D. Coleman and G. R. D. Underhill (eds.), *Regionalism and Global Economic Integration* (London: Rutledge, 1998).

[2] See Ogen Olukoya "Globalization and Regional Integration: ASEAN and ECOWAS Compared," (Unpublished paper, 2004).

[3] Richard Higgott, "International Political Economy…, p.42.

and widespread enough to assure for a long time change among its population."[4] On his part, Ernest Haas defined integration "as the tendency towards the voluntary creation of larger political units, each of which self-consciously eschews the use of force in the relations between the participating units and groups."[5]

Arising from the above definitions is the fact that integration can be viewed as a condition in which separate units or entities come together for the purpose of mutual interdependence for their common benefit. Also obvious in the definitions is the fact that integration normally infringes on the sovereignty of the integrating states.[6] However, what appears to be a common agreement among integration scholars is the fact that there is a merger of separate institutions and communities usually within a specific geographical region. It is at this point that integration and regionalism meet.

On the other hand, regionalism is a concept that is employed to explain the relationship that exists among members of a segment or unit of the global system. It could also be seen as a foreign policy tool that defines the international interests of a country in terms of particular geographic areas. In the area of both local and international politics, regionalism, and by extension regionalisation is a process of dividing a political entity into smaller regions and transferring power from the central government to the regions.[7] Several reasons advanced by integration theorists to explain the conditions or situations that make nations integrate include the following: first is the desire to maintain peace and peaceful co-existence; second, the need for multipurpose capabilities; and third is the need for capacity building.

Basically, there are several forms of integration and these include economic integration such as the European Union (EU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA), the European Common Market (ECM), and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) to mention but a few. Secondly, there is political integration, and examples of this include the defunct Organisation of African Unity (OAU), the defunct League of Nations, the United Nations Organisation (UNO) among others. Thirdly, there is security integration such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the Association of Southeast Asian Nation (ASEAN) etc. At this point, this paper shall discuss briefly the historical background of the European Union and the Economic Community of West African States

The European Union (EU): A Brief Historical Background

It will not be wrong to argue that the European Union (EU) represents a success story of a regional integration effort and this success story is derived "from an ever increasing lowering of the barrier effects of boundaries between the world oldest national states with, hitherto, a history of recurrent and most devastating territorial and border wars."[8] Basically, the inauguration of the European Union has been based on the theory and practice of "Europe without Frontiers."[9] An important result of this development is that there has been an unprecedented growth of relevant institutions and a steady expansion of regional constituencies, which have interests that transcend national boundaries and identities.

In terms of evolution, it can be argued that pressure from the communist bloc caused European Powers to cooperate not only militarily but also economically. Available records have shown that the most important step towards economic cooperation and integration was taken when the Treaty of Rome was signed on March 26, 1957 by the six countries that had earlier formed the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) i.e. France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Holland and Luxemburg.[10] All the signatories to the Treaty of Rome agreed on the establishment of European Economic Community. In summary, the community had the aim of abolishing all trade barriers and to establish a common external tariff amongst

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[4] K. W. Deutsch, *The Analysis of International Relations*, 3rd Ed. (New Delhi: Prentice-Hall, 1989), pp.270 – 283.
[5] E. B. Haas, "The Study of Regional Integration: Reflections on the Joy and Anguish of Pre-theorizing," in L. N. Lindberg and S. A. Scheingold, *Regional Integration: Theory and Research* (Massachusetts: Harvard Press, 1971), p.3.
[6] See M. M. Ogbeidi, "Regional Integration: A Theoretical Analysis" in A. Olukoju, A. Lawal and K. Faluyi (eds.) *Fundamentals of Economic History* (Lagos: First Academic Publishers, 2003), p.362.
[7] A. I. Asiwaju, *Boundaries and African Integration in Comparative History and Policy Analysis* (Lagos: Panaf Publishing, 2003), p.4.
[8] A. I. Asiwaju, p.4.
[9] Higgott, "The International Political…"
[10] Felix Gibert and David C. Large, *The End of the European Era, 1860 to the Present,* 4th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1991), p.437.

others. It was a long tortuous journey before the European Economic Community metamorphosed into the European Union on the 1st November 1993 after the signing of the Treaty of Maastricht. Today, the European Union has twenty-seven member states.[11] These countries are guided by the objectives of the European Union which are enumerated and briefly explained below.

The Objectives of the European Union

The European Union's mission is to organise relations among member states and among their peoples in a coherent manner and on the basis of solidarity. The main objectives are:

(a) To promote economic and social progress. To achieve this, a single market was established in 1993 and a single currency was launched in 1999.

(b) To assert the identity of the European Union on the international scene – through European humanitarian and to non – EU countries, common foreign and security policy action in international crises and common positions within the international system.

(c) To introduce European citizenship, which does not replace national citizenship, but complement it and confers a number of civil and political rights on European citizens.

(d) To develop an area of freedom, security and justice – linked to the operation of the internal market and more particularly the freedom of movement of persons.

(e) To maintain and build on established European Union laws; all the legislation adopted by the European institutions, together with the founding treaties.[12]

It is not a disputable fact that to a very large extent, member states of the European Union have struggled and succeeded to ensure that the objectives of the organisation are realisable, although they are still experiencing some hiccups in their bid to ensure a total and smooth implementation of the afore mentioned objectives. The next section of this work is devoted to explaining the institutions of the European Union.

The Institutions of the European Union

There are five institutions involved in running the European Union. These include:

i. The European Parliament (elected by the peoples of the member states).

ii. The Council – representing the government of the member states.

iii. The Commission – comprising the executive and the body having the right to initiate legislation.

iv. The Court of Justice – ensuring compliance with the laws.

v. The Court of Auditors – responsible for auditing the accounts.

These institutions are supported by other bodies such as the economic and social committee and the committee of the regions made-up of advisory bodies which help to ensure that the policy positions of the European Union's various economic and social categories and regions respectively are taken into consideration. The European Ombudsman deals with complaints from citizens concerning mal-

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[11] This section relies heavily on the information available on the European Union website, www.eu.org.com/httm. (Accessed 12th March 2005). Also see Juliet lodge (ed.), *The European Community and the Challenge of the Future* (London: Pinter, 1989).
[12] Ibid.

administration at European level, while the European Investment Bank and the European Central Bank are the European Union's financial institutions responsible for monetary policy matters in the Euro-area.[13]

Taking a critical look at the history of the European Union, it would be discovered that some landmark decisions in term of evolution and membership, policy competence, and policy style has characterised the European Union system since inception.[14] Some of these policies and decisions shall now form the focus of discussion. As far back as April 18, 1951, members of the European Community (EC) which eventually metamorphosed into the European Union signed the Treaty of Paris which established the Strategic European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). By January 7th 1956, the European Coal and Steel Community confirmed the principle of free circulation of steel products imported from Third World countries within the community.

Again, in May 1952, the European Defence Community (EDC) Treaty was signed which established a common defence policy for all the member countries. Also, in January 1959, the first steps were taken in the progressive abolition of customs duties and quotas within the defunct European Economic Community (EEC). In July 1962, custom duties on industrial products between member countries were reduced to 50% of their 1957 level. Again, in 1959, regulations creating a common agricultural policy (CAP) came into force among the members of the European Union.[15]

In January 1966, the European Economic Community entered the third and last phase of its transition to the common market. This implies the replacement of the unanimity vote by the majority system for most of the decision of the Council and in March 1966, the commission laid before the council its proposal for independent revenue for the community and wider powers for the European Parliament. Furthermore, in 1967, the EEC Council of Ministers decided to harmonise indirect taxes in the community. They adopted the principle of the Value Added Tax system. The Council also approved the first medium-term economic policy programme defining and fixing the aims of the economic policies of the community for the years ahead. Furthermore, on the 4th of March 1970, the commission submitted to its Council of Ministers, a memorandum on the preparation of a plan for the establishment of Economic and Monetary Union. In May 1971, the Council introduced a system of monetary compensatory amounts for trade in agricultural products between member states in order to maintain the unity of the common agricultural market.[16]

The European Confederation of Trade Union was established in February 1973 to harmonise trade union activities within the European Union. While in February 2000, the Fourth Ministerial Conference on EU-African, Caribbean, Pacific (ACP) negotiations aimed at a partnership for development was held in Brussels, Belgium. The European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries agreed on the plan of action that was to follow the Fourth Lome Convention. More importantly, a special European Council meeting was held in Lisbon, Portugal to decide on a new strategy to strengthen employment, economic reforms and social cohesion as part of efforts aimed at ensuring the existence of a knowledge-based economy.[17]

Last but not the least, for the purpose of this discourse, the Parliament and the Council adopted a decision designating 2001 as the European year of languages. Hence on the 20th of June 2000, the broad economic policy guidelines for the member-states and the community for the year 2000 were adopted. Also, the entry of Greece into the Euro zone was approved in that year. A common strategy on the Mediterranean region was adopted and an action plan for the Northern dimension in external and cross-border policies of the European Union was endorsed while support was given to the European Union's Anti-drugs Action Plan.[18] today, it cannot be disputed that the European Union is waxing stronger in its integration efforts, and more nations within and outside of the region are desirous of becoming member states. Briefly discussed above are the modest feats achieved by the European Union, our discussion shall now be shifted to examining the evolution of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) before undertaking a comparative analysis of the two bodies.

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[13] Juliet Lodge (ed.), *The European Community and the Challenge of the Future*, 2nd ed. (London: Pinter Publishers, 1995), pp.1 – 34.
[14] John McCormick, *Understanding the European Union: A Concise Introduction*, 4th ed. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008). There is a detailed discussion on the institutions of the European Union.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ministry of External Affairs, Federal Republic of Nigeria, *Nigeria and the ECOWAS since 1985: Towards a Dynamic Regional Integration* (Enugu and Lagos: Fourth Dimension Publishers Co. Ltd. 1991).
[17] Olatunde J. C. *et al*, *African International Relations* (New York: Longman, 1985), pp.171 – 172.
[18] Ibid.

The Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS): A Brief Historical Background

A former military president of Nigeria, General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida, once argued that "the existence of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) essentially underscores the reality that regional economic integration has become a necessary complementary strategy to national economic development policies."[19] This statement emphasises the relevance of the establishment of the Economic Community of West African States by some of the countries in the sub-region. Indeed, without the Economic Community of West African States, West Africa would have been a region largely divided into two sections, with each part aligning with either Great Britain or France, depending on the individual country's colonial experience. Although the battle has not been fully won, the Economic Community of West African States has been trying to erode the line of demarcation created by colonialism in West Africa.

Without mincing words, it can be argued that the efforts that led to the eventual formation of Economic Community of West African States could be located in the early 1960s with the decision of the majority of the African leaders to adopt a functional cooperation strategy beginning from the sub-regions.[20] Thus, it was not surprising when on May 28, 1975, Benin, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Ivory Coast (now Cote d'Ivoire), Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Togo and Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso) signed the treaty establishing the Economic Community of West African States. Two years latter, Cape Verde joined, bringing the number of member-states to a total of sixteen. At its inception, the coming together of the fifteen states laid the foundation for a market of over 124 million peoples – the largest that Africa has ever known in modern times. It represented the beginning of the realisation of a line of action that the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) had been promoting since 1964 when it made public its report on West African Industrial Coordination.[21] At this juncture, it is only necessary for us to briefly examine the objectives and institutions of the Economic Community of West African States.

The Objectives of the Economic Community Of West African States

The aims and objectives of the Economic Community of West African States are embedded in the Treaty. The Treaty stated amongst other things that:

a. The primary mission of the organisation was to promote economic integration within the West African sub-region.

b. The organisation shall ensure that the free movement of persons, goods and capital across the frontiers of member states is guaranteed.

c. The organisation shall engage in the promotion of cooperation and development in all fields of economic activities.

d. The signatories should emphasise "in particular, the need for cooperation in the field of industry, transport, telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, commerce, monetary and financial matters, and in social and cultural matters."[22]

The Institutions of the Economic Community of West African States

The institutions of the Economic Community of West African States includes: the Authority, consisting of Heads of States and Governments; the Council of Ministers; the Executive Secretariat; the Tribunal; and specialised commissions dealing with

(a) Trade, Customs, Immigration, Monetary and Payment Matters;

[19] See Ministry of External Affairs, *Nigeria and the ECOWAS Since 1985*, p.1.
[20] Okeke S. G. Maduabuchi, "ECOMOG and Conflict Resolution in West Africa: A Study of the Linkage between Economic Integration and Regional Security," (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Dept. of Political Science, University of Lagos, October 2008).
[21] Ministry of External Affairs, *Nigeria and the ECOWAS Since 1985*, p.2.
[22] Ministry of External Affairs, *Nigeria and the ECOWAS Since 1985*, pp. 3 – 4.

(b) Industry, Agriculture and Natural Resources;

(c) Transport, Telecommunications and Energy; and

(d) Social and Cultural Affairs.[23]

The Authority – consisting of the Presidents and Heads of Government – is required to meet at least once annually. The meeting is to be chaired in rotation by each leader of the integrating countries. The Council of Ministers is expected to meet twice in a year and it is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the community functions in accordance with the Treaty of the organisation. Again, it has the task of issuing directives to subordinate institutions and making recommendations to the Presidents and Head of Governments. The Executive Secretary serves for a four year term which is renewable, however he may be removed from office by the Assembly of Presidents and Heads of Government on the recommendation of the Council of Ministers.

The Tribunal is responsible for the settlement of disputes referred to it by the Assembly of Presidents and Heads of Government which also decides on its competence, composition and statutes; moreover, it is to "ensure the observance of law and justice in the interpretation of the Treaty."[24] A revised Treaty which reflects on West Africa's regional cooperation experience since inception was signed by the sixteen West African Heads of State on July 24, 1993. A principal objective of the new Treaty, which was designated to be achieved in stages is the creation of an economic and monetary union. To this end, a regional trade liberalisation scheme was adopted which led to the creation of a Free Trade Area (FTA) by the end of 1999; with a common external tariff regime being implemented in phrases. The three phase programme for the free movement of the community's citizens has been completed. The community has also been pursuing the physical integration of its member-states through the development and modernisation of national highway and telecommunication networks.[25]

The monetary policy of the community has the medium term objective of achieving regional convertibility of the nine national currencies and, in a long term, the objective of creating a single monetary zone. The West African Monetary Institute (WAMI), a fore-runner of the West African Central Bank became operational in January, 2001. Furthermore, the community has been involved in implementing sectoral programmes such as the inter-connection of national electric grids and regional pipelines for the distribution of natural gas. Other programmes include rural water supply scheme, community seed production, cattle breeding centres, agricultural research programmes, a master plan for regional industrial development, coordination of desertification control programmes, cooperation in health matters, establishment of equivalence for degrees and diplomas to mention but a few.[26]

The Treaty has placed particular emphasis on promoting the involvement and participation of the private sector and the general public in the development and integration of the economies of the region. Already, the Economic Community of West African States has encouraged the establishment and functioning of a private regional commercial bank (ECOBANK), the Federation of West African Manufacturers Associations (FWAMA), West African Women's Association (WAWA), and the West African Road Transporters Union.[27]

More recently, it could be observed that the most visible activity of the Economic Community of West African States has been its intervention in the war in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Starting in December 1989, a group of Liberian dissidents swept across the country to the gates of Monrovia. The United States, the defunct Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations declined to intervene to restore peace and order, and in August 1990, the Economic Community of West African States standing Mediation Committee endorsed the establishment of a Cease-Fire Monitoring Group code

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[23] Ayo Akinbobola, *Regionalism and Regional Influentials: The Post Cold-War Role of Nigeria in African Affairs* (Lagos: Concept Publications, 2001).

[24] For more details see, *"Economic Community of West African States Fact Sheet"* 1998, www.state.gov/regions/africa,retrieved (accessed 22nd March 2005).

[25] Ibid. pp.1 – 3.

[26] Okolo J. Emeka, "Integrative and Comparative Regionalism: The Economic Community of West African States," *International Organisations,* volume 39, no. 1, Winter 1985, p.149.

[27] Akinbobola, *Regionalism and Regional Influentials,* pp.92, 95.

named Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to oversee the implementation of the Abuja Agreement for Liberia.[28]

The Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group gathered a force of approximately 8,000 with contingents drawn from Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Senegal, as well as Uganda and Tanzania from outside the Economic Community of West African States. After many failed peace agreements, the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group was able to implement the Abuja II Peace Plan because of an apparent accommodation of the largest factional leader, Charles Taylor. The Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group has also succeeded in ousting a junta that seized power by force in Sierra Leone and has re-established the authority of the legitimate government in that country.[29]

From Theory to Reality: Comparing the EU and ECOWAS

Available records have shown that certain theoretical foundation informed the establishment of the Economic Community of West African States. First, integration in the West African sub-region has largely been informed by the integration processes in Western Europe, Latin America, Asia, and elsewhere in Africa. Generally, in all these areas the main objectives of integration had been both economic and political. It is economic if the immediate preoccupation was the promotion of better economic welfare or economic development. On the other hand, it was political if the ultimate concern of members was the political unity of the component states. At this juncture, it is important to note that the European Union and the Economic Community of West African States have not actually attained full political unity, though a high level of economic integration has been achieved by the European Union which appears to be blazing the trail in this direction.

The integration objectives of the Economic Community of West African States are not entirely different from those of other sub-regional organisations. However, in the sphere of attaining political unity, the Economic Community of West African States tends not to have recorded any significant achievement compared to the European Union. Rather, West African leaders are more occupied with the promotion of economic development as the first step to ensuring political independence. Again, little progress has been recorded on the economic front due to factors that bother essentially on the wide economic disparity existing in the sub-region. Besides, most of the leaders tend to value their economic sovereignty more than any programme or policy aimed at developing integration.

As regard the theoretical approach to integration, the Economic Community of West African States seems to share functionalism, neo-functionalism and the traditionalist theory of economic integration with the European Union. The functionalist theory assumes that integration could be effected through the creation of a transnational complex of economic and social organisation. To this end, proponents of the functionalist theory such as David Mitrany, believed that international activities could be organised around basic functional needs such as transportation, health and welfare necessities, cultural activities, trade and production.[30] Also, the theory further assumes that the internationalisation of politics and economics would ultimately shift loyalty and sovereignty from states to international organisations. This philosophical underpinning, which was expected to guide the integration process in West Africa, is fraught with some difficulties and has not really impacted on the Economic Community of West African States. Thus, the integration process in West Africa is still very slow, and in this direction, the European Union tends to be ahead of the Economic Community of West African States.

Similarly, the neo-functionalist approach to West African integration has not really transformed the Economic Community of West African States into greater height because the neo-functionalist doctrine of ‘spill-over’ seems not to be relevant to developing countries especially in the spheres of politics. It has been established that leaders from a less-developed sub-region like West Africa will never relegate their powers and political sovereignty to the background, while leaders of the European Union are more liberal in this regard but their problem arises from their citizens who are not really in a hurry to integrate.

[28] Ibid, pp.64, 92.
[29] Ibid.
[30] See David Mitrany, *A Working Peace System: An Argument for the Functional Development of International Organisations* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1966).

The neo-functionalist school or philosophy is especially a modified version of functionalism and Ernest Haas was the proponent.[31] The central thesis of the model was that there exists a continuum between economic integration and political union, this is contrary to the argument put forward by functionalist. In neo-functionalism, both economic and political factors are believed to be linked together by the 'spill-over' effect through which the various task and powers of the central institutions are increased while integration gradually encroaches on the political sensitive area. As applied to the Economic Community of West African States, the neo-functionalist school of though has not achieved anything. Again, the European Union has gone far above the Economic Community of West African States in this direction. The reason is essentially because, unlike what obtains in Europe, issues which are relatively non-controversial and are solvable by technocrats will really pose a lot of problems in Africa. This makes the intervention of political leaders for solution inevitable. This has been the situation in Africa in general and the Economic Community of West African States in particular.

Last but not the least, the traditionalist theory of integration, which was essentially propounded by J. Viner maintained that the primary ingredients of economic integration are trade creation and trade diversion. He argued that trade creation is related to the existence of a customs union while trade diversion occurs when one of the member states which previously produced a commodity inefficiently owing to the existence of a protective tariff wall, now captures the entire markets after the creation of a customs union.[32] However, it is sad to note that till date, the Economic Community of West African States does not have a custom union and this renders the traditionalist theory irrelevant to the situation of the Economic Community of West African States. It is therefore advisable that the Economic Community of West African States should quickly move towards the removal of political, economic, and structural impediments to integration in order to be able to compete and compare favourably well with the European Union.

At a more analytical level, the study of comparative regional integration reveals that as salient as some of the findings of the theories of integration might be when applied to the study of the European Union and the Economic Community of West African States, the fact that they are prejudiced ostensibly by the traits of a particular region imposes certain limitations on universal applications. As long as the global regions do not share uniform characteristics, these theories are susceptible to a tendency to focus on certain aspects of the phenomenon of integration while neglecting others, which may be equally important for the refinement of theory.[33]

Furthermore, theoretical approaches to the study of regional integration based on readings of the European Union model may offer an insight into the processes of integration in the West African sub-region. For example, in theory, member states of the Economic Community of West African States agreed to remove tariffs on unprocessed goods in 1990, while tariffs on industrial goods were to be phased out between 1996 and 2000. However, in practice, tariffs still persist because member states of the Economic Community of West African States have been reluctant to risk balance of payments difficulties and loss of tariff revenue.

Intra-ECOWAS trade accounted for a modest share of 11% valued at $3.6 billion of members total trade in 1995.[34] Most exports of member states consist of raw-materials shipped to developed countries. Moreover, Nigeria accounts for more than half of the Economic Community of West African States population and nearly half of the $60 billion annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the Economic Community of West African States. The next two largest members are Ghana with 8% of the population and 18% of the Economic Community of West African States GDP. The average economic growth in the Economic Community of West African States countries was estimated at 3.9% in 1996 led by Cote d'Ivoire with 6.8% growth.[35]

The European Union on the other-hand appears to be an Island of relative prosperity, security and peace. This is because shared cultures, political traditions and basic commitment to liberal democratic practices are assumed to exit among the European Union countries. Indeed, the European Union

[31] Haas, *The Study of Regional Integration,* 6.
[32] Douglas. A. Irwin (ed.), *Essays on the Intellectual History of Economics by Jacob Viner* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).
[33] See Rosenau James, "The Restless Quest" in James Rosenau: *In Search of Global Patterns* (New York: The Free Press, 1976).
[34] See Chime Chimelu, *Integration and Politics among African States* (Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1977).
[35] For more details see, *"Economic Community of West African States Fact Sheet"* 1998, www.state.gov/regions/africa,retrieved (accessed 22nd March 2005).

represents bold attempts to create a new polity, an endeavour inspired by considerations of power politics as well as altruism. It represents not the end of the state but an example of how geographically contiguous states have adapted over time and sought to accommodate a shared goal to promote European unity.

Thus, it could be observed that the performances of the European Union and the Economic Community of West African States are a mere reflection of the level of development of the member states that constitutes the membership of the sub-regional unions. For instance, the countries in Europe that make up the European Union have attained a high level of technological and industrial advancement, while the countries that make up the Economic Community of West African States are technologically backward and industrially underdeveloped. This condition has affected the commitment and financial contributions of member states to the growth and development of the union. This explains the differences in the success rates between the European Union and the Economic Community of West African States.

Conclusion

From all indications, it is generally agreed that economic integration is necessary for the growth and development of any sub-region in the world, but this is predicated on the fact that all economies in the world have experienced sustainable growth and development based on the primacy of production centred on their natural resources. In essence, market integration theories and strategies just like free market principles, liberalisation, and globalisation seem to favour the developed world. Thus, it can be unequivocally argued that the unrestricted application of the various theories of regional integration to explain the integrative efforts of less developed countries (LCDs) such as we have in the Economic Community of West African States may be inappropriate, and any attempt to do otherwise can be regarded as part of the politics of knowledge by western scholars and this clearly amounts to academic imperialism.

Hence, it may not be wrong to assert here that the Economic Community of West African States is merely promoting market integration to improve the sales of products produced by the developed world. Instead the emphasis should be placed on encouraging indigenous manufacturers engaged in the industrial and agricultural sectors of the economy as this will promote the level of real growth and development of the various West African States. Conclusively, it must be seen that the weakness of the Economic Community of West African States *vis-à-vis* the strength of the European Union is symptomatic of the general economic malaise plaguing countries that make up the Economic Community of West African States.