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Abstract

African crises have dominated the economic, political and socio-cultural environment in post-colonial and self-governing independent Africa. In fact the crisis has now become the order of the day across the length and breadth of the continent. Political and economic integration if well thought about, carefully planned and judiciously implemented and managed will definitely guarantee effective, efficient, transparent, accountable and responsive governance process in West Africa. It will also, ensure separation of powers, rule of law, an independent judicial process, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms popular participation in the political process, equitable sharing of economic resources and sound macro-economic policies and good financial and management systems, political stability, food security and stable and rational regulatory and highly motivating framework supported by effective control and supervision mechanisms. The end results of all these will be the full realization of good governance and its accompanied advantages on both the public and private sectors. Thus, the main thesis of this paper is that political and economic integration is the way forward for Africa's long standing and deeply rooted leadership crisis to be resolved once and for all. At present, integration is more realistically achievable at the level of various sub-regions and there after the process can quite easily and smoothly moves to the regional level.

1.   Introduction

In the few years preceding independence and self-rule in Africa many Africans and their friends all over the continent and beyond had high hopes and expectations that with political independence and liberation there were lots of opportunities for the indigenous leaders to prove the worth and dignity of the African people. They expected the entire continent to enjoy the fruits of an effective economic and political governance system which would have ensured sustainable economic growth, lasting peace and security and that eventually the African people would fully realize all the potentials that God has bestowed on them as a great nation. However, ordinary Africans are bewildered and seriously disappointed by the outcome of several decades of self-role which is nothing but gross mismanagement of economic resources, rampant corruption, nepotism, political insecurity, decline of state power and authority, endless coups and coup attempts, abject poverty, military and autocratic rule, over staying in power and many more. These and other crises have dominated the economic, political and socio-cultural environment in post-colonial and self-governing independent Africa. In fact the crisis has now become the order of the day across the length and breadth of the continent. It is very obvious that the majority of West Africans have now lost or are losing faith and confidence in their political leaders and government systems. These disappointing results and experience have indeed raised serious questions about the quality of the character, mind and leadership attitude of the post independent West African leaders.

The crisis which also include the absence of respect for human rights and the rule of law, as well as the absence of an effective system of transparency and accountability have lead many Africans and some critics of Africa outside the continent to believe and argue that Africans are incapable of ruling themselves and further that the colonial powers may have opted out of the continent prematurely. In some respects certain Africans are calling for or contemplating about the return of the colonial powers to rescue the situation. The most frustrating of all obstacles and problems of African Governance are its persistent and chronic domestic conflicts and leadership crises which have eventually destroyed the foundations of the State in countries like Guinea Bissau and Somalia today, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Rwanda and Brunei and Sierra Leone in the recently passed.

Thus, this paper critically examines the major crisis of governance in post-colonial West Africa, the impact of that crisis on the continent's development in a fast changing world and the way for word for Sub-Saharan Africa to get out of such crisis.

2. Nature of the recent Conflicts in West Africa

The vast majority of the conflicts in our sub-region are multidimensional and multifaceted, they are either religiously or ethnically or politically motivated or justified.

It is very obvious that the Boku Haram problem and the crisis in northern Mali can be directly attributed to and associated with religion and religious reasoning and justifications. As for those conflicts that appear to be ethnically or even politically motivated they are also firmly anchored into religion and religious sentiments and justifications. If we look at the recent conflicts that took place in the mono- river region including Liberia and Sierra Leone conflicts and most recently the Ivorian conflict where people are divided along distinct geographic or ethic lines, we will find that religion is firmly anchored in the root causes of those conflicts. The geographic distinctions in some of the countries are mainly characterized either by a Muslim majority north with a small Christian minority and a Christian majority south with a small Muslim minority on one hand or by an indigenous Africans of a Muslim majority population or Muslims and traditional animists with a small Christian minority or a very organized and economically and politically empowered Afro- American or Afro European Christian minority or a sizable group with a largely disorganized, uneducated and less developed Muslim majority or an indigenous African population of a Christian and traditional animist majority with a small Muslim minority on the other. Consequently, it is fair to conclude that the root causes of the majority, if not all of the recent conflicts in our region, are constituted by a combination of religious, ethnic and political factors with the former taking the centre stage.

However, these three dimensions of the causes of the conflicts in West Africa are interrelated and interwoven in a way that makes it absolutely difficult to distinctly separate them from each other and to be able to fairly and proportionately allocate an exact degree or percentage of the cause of a given conflict to one or the other. In many parts of West Africa particularly in those countries engulfed by the recent conflicts, you would observe that religion, ethnicity and politics are so interconnected and sometimes confused in a way that when one becomes the main cause of a conflict, the conflict will either be fueled by or it comminutes into the other. Today all the ongoing conflicts whether religiously or ethnically motivated, have culminated into politically motivated conflicts and characterized as such in the sense that they are transformed into leadership (political leadership) and governance crisis.

3. The Leadership Crisis And Its Various Forms

The nature of the leadership problems in West Africa and elsewhere across the continent keeps on changing from one form to another. During the few years that immediately followed independence, Africa was engulfed in destructive and senseless civil wars, whereas throughout the period of the cold war the continent became a favourite playground for the super powers. This unfortunate situation produced a unique brand of leadership problem for Africa which aggravated the continent's governance crisis. The leaders of this period were giving priority to their own personal or individualistic interests on one hand and on the other, they put the economic, political and strategic interests of their foreign masters and allies above those of the indigenous people whose interests they were exclusively contracted to serve.

In some cases the problems were systematic in nature. While some leaders introduced unpopular and failed Marxist economic policies without the consent of their people, others haphazardly pursued western capitalist economic models and as a result they horribly failed their people. There were other leaders, who by their style of leadership, engaged their countries in senseless and destructive wars, as a result of which they sinked their national economies. Furthermore, those internal conflicts enabled the leaders concerned to loot their national treasuries and therefore exposing millions of Africans across the continent to abject poverty. .

As a result of economic exploitation, political repression and the eventual failure of the social welfare and public service delivery systems throughout West Africa, millions of Africans are exposed to severe economic hardships,

political instability and socio-economic insecurity. As a result of the crisis of the period during the 1970s and 1980s to the end of 1990's most economies in West Africa and beyond experienced dramatic decline and eventual down fall.

Domestic conflicts and civil wars count for more than 70% of the leadership crisis during this period. In 2001 it was estimated that "there was a war in at least one out of three (African) countries and there was only a relative peace in the continent and the situation continued to be tense, either due to ethnic troubles or religious disagreements". (AL MUFRUKI, 2001)

The crisis highlighted above, though sometimes appearing in different forms, continue to exist together with other problems to the present day and they still obstruct West Africa's economic development and progress. These wide ranging problems of governance in modern day West Africa include the following: electoral mall practices, disputes over election results, persistent refusal by incumbent leaders to share power with political opponents, the spread of civilian led autocratic rule and military dictatorships which block all means of democratic and peaceful leadership succession, military coups like the recent coups in Mali and Guinea Bissau, the unprecedented rise of the cost of living and basic commodities at a time when only 4% of national budgets are currently spent on agriculture, the dramatic increase in the cost of fertilizer, the continuous rise in the cost of fuel, the instances of daily power cuts because of inadequate generating capacity or the inability of the state to provide enough fuel for power generators, the absence of potential foreign investors from many countries in our sub-region due to poor infrastructure and communication facilities, poor human rights records of governments across West Africa. The senseless was that Boko Haram is waging against the Nigerian federation represents a new method, level and timing of religious and ethnic violence in the sub-regional. These and many more other crisis continue to obstruct and sometimes derail the governing process in Africa South of The Sahara, (Richard dowden, 2008), where the removal of entrenched autocratic civilian and military dictators, has become an impossible task. Similarly efforts aimed at the eradication or even substantial reduction of corruption, nepotism, favouritism and other administrative mall practices have all turned out to be a formidable task holding back socio-economic development and progress in the whole of the West Africa Sub-region. (Richard Dowden: 2008)

4. Few Successes

The democratic successes recorded by Ghana, Mali and Senegal over the past decades recently in achieving democratic and peaceful leadership succession through free and fair electoral processes represent few but limited positive exceptions to the picture painted above. However, the democratic successes just referred to above couldn't be sustained or properly managed in some of the countries where such successes had occurred. At this juncture let's make a quick mention of recent developments in Mali, Nigeria and Senegal.

Mali

Since Mali become independent from France in 1960, the West African country has suffered from various destabilizing events which include droughts, a series of coups, 23 years of military dictatorship, internal conflicts and rebellions spearheaded mainly by tuareg rebels in the North and being completely saddled with a chronic budget deficit making it heavily dependent on foreign aid and the money sent home by millions working overseas. With all these problems the former Western Sudanese republic (now republic of Mali) had made significant successes in food production and democratization. Mali is said to be self-sufficient in food production. This is mainly due to the fertile Niger River basin in the southern and Eastern Parts of the country.

Regarding democratization, Mali was able to break with its long years of Military rule when it successfully conducted its first democratic election in 1992. Thus, the first democratically elected president of Mali took power in 1992 and since then the country's democratic credentials and development achievements have continued to grow from strength to strength until the 22nd of March 2012 when Africa's most senseless coup took place in that country. This coup has completely destroyed Mali's new democratic achievements. One of the reasons that make the coup puzzling and Un-understandable is that it came only few weeks before the country's next democratic elections. The coup leaders justified their action by citing the country's in ability to defuel the Tuareg rebels in the North. In other words, the coup came in the after marth of a series of losses suffered by the Malian Army in the face of the Tuarges, who were apparently strengthened following an influx of weaponry from Libya transported there by the Tuareg rebels who were fighting for Colonel Ghadafi until his death in 2012. (Timbuktu's Sidi Yahia mosque attached by Mali Militants", BBC news, 2 July 2012; "Mali Tuareg rebels declare independence in the north", BBC News, 6 April 2012, Security Council

Press Statement on Mali, 10 April 2012, "Senior UN official condemns 'alarming reports of sexual violence in Mali", UN News Center, 10 April 2012, UNHCR deeply concerned as Mali crisis worsens).

The biggest question here is, whether the new military rulers who were now heading to northern Mali have been able to reverse the series of loses the country's army had been suffering, before the coup, at the hands of the Tuareg rebels?

The answer is obviously a definitive "NO" in fact, the Tuaregs had registered significant successes in the days, weeks and months that followed the coup as a result of the confusion in which the Central government in Bamako has been thrown and which seriously weekend it.

Demoralized and rendered ineffective by the absence of a strong, strategically focused and capable political and military leaderships, the Malia Army continued to sufer significant losses until the time France decided to intervene.

Thus, on 6th April, 2012, the National movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) formed in 2011 mainly by armed Tuareg fighters returning from Libya, proclaimed independence. The MNLA fights together with the Islamist group. Ansaradin, virtually captured most of the territories in the North including the cities of ancient Tumbuckutu, kida, Gau and other towns. It worth's mentioning at this juncture that the tucreg rebals engaged the Malian in a series of skirmishes in the vast desert of the Nation during the 1960's, the early 1990's, and again in 2006.

To conclude, the 22 March 2012 coup has definitely owefully, failed to achieve its stated objective. Thus, as a result of the coup and the ensuing developments relating to the country's Chronic leadership crisis, this vast West African dominion has again been condemned to its usual status of being one of the World's poorest nations despite being Africa's third biggest gold producer. The people of Mali have again suffered serious setbacks in their continuous struggle to end the ever escalating Militancy by the Tuareg rebels who took up arms demanding greater rights for their people since the 1960's and 1970's.

As a result of the renewed conflict and the leadership crisis, the human rights situation in Mali remains in dire situation with latest reports revealing terrible incidents of violations and atrocities against both sides, interference with the rights of individuals and groups, the right to liberty and security of persons, the right to privacy, the right freedom of movement, assembly, association, freedom of speech and other rights violations committed during the renewed fighting in the Northern part of the country.

France and its allies have so far failed to bring back stability and return Mali to normalcy and to democratic constitutional rule while the sub-regional grouping is still undecided about what to do exactly to once and for all and the crisis in that country. (Timbuktu's Sidi Yahia mosque attached by Mali Militants", BBC news, 2 July 2012; "Mali Tuareg rebels declare independence in the north", BBC News, 6 April 2012, Security Council Press Statement on Mali, 10 April 2012, "Senior UN official condemns 'alarming reports of sexual violence in Mali", UN News Center, 10 April 2012, UNHCR deeply concerned as Mali crisis worsens).

Nigeria and the Boku Haram Challenge:

Boku Haram is a name for an armed Nigerian Islamist group that is working to implement Islamic law (Shari'a) throughout Nigeria. The meaning of the group's name in Hausa is "Western culture/education – is forbidden". Its full and official name is: Jamatul Ahlis Sunnah lid Dawda wal Jihad. Meaning: the people of sunnah for Propagation and Jihad – Most of its members were students who abandoned their studies and gathered in northeastern Nigeria, near the border with Niger. Apparently, the group was established as early as 1995 at one of Nigeria's universities; it became more established in 2002 when Muhammed Yusuf became its leader. Initially, the group did not support violence, but in late 2003 it began a comprehensive rebellion against the Nigerian federation. Boku Haram intensified and confined its attacks to police stations in Nigeria. In July 2009, however, Boku Haram waged a bloody five-day

battle against the Nigerian security forces in retaliation for the latter's ruinous campaign to prevent Boku Haram from amassing any further weapons or power.

Muhammad Yusuf himself, and hundreds of his followers, were killed in this battle. Since 2009, Boku Haram has increased, refined and diversified its attacks on Nigeria. Instead of one-off attacks, it has begun to systemically attack government institutions, security forces, innocent people and the Christian community using explosive devices, guerilla warfare, assassinations, and suicide attacks in public places like mosques, churches, markets, educational institutions and offices. Boku Haram's stated aim is to overthrow the so-called, secular regime in Nigeria. It is mort ant to point out all this juncture that many those who promote and call for secularism including those who believe that they are secular do not understand the real meaning of the term secularism. According to Al-Attas one only becomes secular, when religion ceases to influence his language and his mind. In order words when religious teachings and concepts do not appear anyway in his daily language or influence his thinking. (S.M.N. Attas:)

Beginning in July 2009 and up to 2013, the group had committed about 200 attackers, killing more than 1000 people. Although its attacks have up to date been centered in northern Nigeria, many fear that it will also infiltrate southern Nigeria, where the majority of the population is Christian. This conflict could eventually reach other parts of West Africa if it is not comprehensively addressed by Nigeria, and perhaps with the support of ECOWAS, the AU and similar supranational institutions. Boku Haram maintains an 18-member Shura or consultative Council, currently led by the group's Amir, Abu Bakar Shekau, who has two deputies. In addition, in every Provence in which the group has a presence, it has appointed an Amir for that province. Many of Boku Haram's rank and files are poor Nigerian youths who have received a religious education (mainly), and young people from the neighboring countries of Chad, Cameroon and Nigeria. Boku Haram is thought to be funded by wealthy businessmen, government insiders, bank robbers and other clandestine groups in Nigeria. (International Institute for Counter Terrorism: 2012)

Senegal

Senegal is one of the most stable and peaceful countries in West Africa. It is the only country in the sub-region that never experienced military rule since the country became independent from France in the early 1960's.

However, Senegal was, shortly before its last presidential elections in 2012, absolutely engulfed in a wave of political unrests which seriously threaten the country's unbroken democratic record. Coming from a sub-region where presidents seek to be crowned kings or life presidents, it was not surprising at all to see the former president Abdoulaye Wade strongly pushing to break the two limits imposed by the constitution sometime in 2011 to enable him run a third term in office as president. Interestingly, when Wade was in the opposition he happened to successfully lobby for a term limit for the term of office of the president of Senegal, but unfortunately for his country, the Senegal constitutional council cleared president Wade in 2011 and declared him eligible to stand for a third term. This manipulation of the electoral process by the president through amendment of relevant laws and support of the country's constitutional council was the reason why political violence broke out in that country in the form of street protests, skirmishes and confrontation between the opposition and the police. It was only divine intervention that saved and avoided Senegal from the fate of the neighboring countries like Liberia, Sierra Leone and most recently Ivory Coast. Former president Wade's manipulations of the electoral processes in order to stand for a third term constituted a serious violation of art. 23 of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance which deals with illegitimate change of government. This issue is further discussed below. The people of Senegal stood firm and chose to decisively reject Abdoulaye Wade's third term bid and this provided Senegal the golden opportunity to regain its long standing status of being the bright star of African democracy, with an unblemished record of peaceful presidential transitions since the country gained independence from France in 1960.

It is believed that Senegal has been so fortunate, unlike many West African countries, simply because religion has not in any serious way divided the Senegalese people both in politics and society. There are no tensions between Muslims, Christians and traditional animists in Senegal, notwithstanding that the West African nation is predominantly Muslim and that its entire Muslim population is united under or behind strong traditional Islamic leaders. To conclude, the 2012 political and leadership crisis in Senegal and the extent to which they took the country have shown the depth of the seriousness of the fragility, unpredictability, the vulnerability and un-viability of the processes of

democratization and the democratic achievements and the political stability and security of the West African international political subsystem.

Finally, there is a general tendency on the part of many African analysts of viewing Africa's problems in terms of the excesses of individual dictators and autocratic leaders and their wrong doings. They argue that it was these irresponsible leaders who turned several parts of the continent into killing fields in senseless wars and that only their removal from power, preferably through democratic and peaceful means on a sustainable basis, can make a difference. In order words, a change in government through democratic means is the main pre-requisite for making a fresh start and for attracting foreign investments and economic aids crucial to rescue their economies. (Tunde Obodina: 2000) In 1996 alone the international humanitarian mission to Africa cost more than 3 billion US dollars whereas only one third of this money could have been used to comprehensively address the entire economic and developmental problems of the warring countries. While the rest of the money could do a lot of good things toward solving not only the sub-regions but also the continent's entire economic and developmental problems

These analysts focus their minds only on how the continent's inept leaders can be removed from power without critically examining this concept of change in leadership in Africa through democratic means.

The fact of the matter is that there have been changes of leadership, democratic or otherwise, in various West African countries and beyond but the governance crisis either remain intact or become worst. In the West Africa Sub-region Nigeria alone has changed the country's leadership for about 12 to 13 times since independence but to no avail. There have been changes of leadership elsewhere in West Africa such as Mauritania, Senegal, Mali and Guinea Bissau, just to name a few. Despite such changes of leadership in these countries and elsewhere in our sub-region, governments remained corrupt and ineffective as the pace of economic development become slower than ever before. Thus the notion saying that removing the set of crooked leaders in West Africa is the way forward to solving the sub-region's chronic governance crisis is not precisely correct. In fact, as explained above, removal of inept leaders in many countries only succeeded in shifting power to another set of more corrupt, inept and ineffective leaders. Let's take Guinea Bissau, as an example:

Guinea Bissau

This small actor in the West African International Political Subsystem has so far been the most unstable and under developed territory of the countries of Africa South of the Sahara dissert. It appears that Bissau Guinea is not only a failed state but worst than that because it looks as if the foundations of statehood have never been fully established in the country.

According to article 1 of the 1933 Montevideo conversation on the Rights and duties of states, a territory can only become a state or qualified to be a state when it fulfills the following criteria:

- Definite territory
- Permanent populations
- Stable and effective government
- Legal independence or capacity to enter into legal relations and obligations with other states and non-state actors as well.

Thus, stable and effective government is what the people of Guinea Bissau have not enjoyed since the advent of independence in the early 1970's. The West African sub-system has also woefully failed to stabilize the situation in Guinea Bissau and therefore become unable to help its people establish and maintain the foundations of statehood, the pillars and principals of sustainable democracy and development. This country is probably the only West African territory which had militarily engaged its colonial masters in a prolonged war of independence that lasted for 13 years before its people unilaterally proclaimed their independence in 1973. Since that historic moment, the former Portuguese colony has been going through successive waves of internal conflicts, violence and insecurity. Bissau Guinea has experienced a period of autocratic and dictatorial rule, four military coups, a civil war, the gruesome murder of its independence leader Amilcar Cabra early in 1973 and four military chiefs of staff and a series of interventions by the West African sub-system. This is a country where no democratically elected leader has ever completed his term in office. After the independence leader Amilcar Cubral was assassinated in 1973, he was succeeded by Luis Cabral who was also overthrown in a military takeover in 1980 lead by Joao Bernardo Vierira, the

country's longest ruling president. Vieira was also overthrown by the military in the aftermath of another bitter civil war from 1998 – 1999. Vierira bounced back in 2005 when he contested and won the presidential election as an independent candidate. However, he was assassinated in March 2009, and replaced by Malang Bekai Sanyang after winning a presidential election that year. Unfortunately, this president died of a long illness two years after his election. Besides its dark historical past and political instability, Guinea-Bissau is rendered more fragile by a weak economy. It is listed among the poorest countries in the world, with. More than 70 percent of the population living on less than $2 (two American dollars) a day. It also has some geographical challenges with over 80 islands in addition to the mainland making it an easy prey for drug cartels which have transformed the dysfunctional nation into a norcotic-state. (A. Sanyang: 2012)

The Ecowas's efforts to ensure stability and democracy in Guinea Bissau was dealt a final blow in April 12, 2012 when the military staged one of Africa's most senseless coups in modern times.

Following the death of the country's President Malang Bicia Sanyang, a democratic election was held in March 18, 2012 in which the former Prime Minister Carlos Gomez Junior took a slight lead but fell short of the needed majority. Thus, as he and the people of Guinea Bissau, West Africa and the rest of the world were waiting for the second round or the run of election slated for April 2012, the military irresponsibly, irrationally and in total disregard of the authority of the African Union, the ECOWAS and most importantly that of the United Nations, interrupted the democratization process which was expected to confirm the country's commitment to not only stability and political security but also to asserting its democratic credentials with the above mentioned coup. (A. Sanyang: 2012)

The April 12 military coup was immediately and strongly condemned by large sections of the international community including the United Nations through its Secretary- General, the Security Council, and its Peace building Commission (which has Guinea- Bissau on its agenda, alongside with Burundi, the Central African Republic, Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone). The United States, the European Union, the community of Portuguese speaking countries, Canada and the continental powerhouse, South Africa also condemned the coup, while the World Bank and the African development Bank suspended millions of development programs in the country, to increase pressure on the military leaders.(A. Sanyang: 2012) Up to this time (April, 2013) the West African grouping (ECOWAS) has not been able to put Guinea Bissau back on track. Although the concept of change in leadership particularly through democratic and peaceful means, cannot and should not be totally rejected or discredited, it is high time for researchers and analysts in governance affairs in West Africa to start looking for and focusing on other alternatives.

5. Cause of the crisis

Political and economic integration whether at the regional or sub-regional levels, could be viable alternatives to the proposed idea of change of leadership discussed above.

Similarly, constitutional, legal and systemic reforms and increasing civil society involvement are equally important techniques that could be on play to minimise the leadership problems of our sub-region. But like the question of change in leadership, integration alone may not be the key to solving the problem of bad governance in Africa. However, whether we are focusing on change of leadership or political and economic integration or constitutional, legal and systems reforms or on all and other proposed solutions, we must have a consensus first on the real courses of the crisis. Some writers on African Affairs put the blame for the continent's persistent mismanagement, bad governance and under development on ignorance and lack of capacity for effective management and good governance. (Tunde Obodina, 2008) They explained that this is the reason why there has been a proliferation of capacity building programmes initiated by donor and multilateral agencies over the past decades. The aim of those programmes, this view argues is to help African countries put in place structures and reforms that will strengthen the rule of law, enhance support for democratic systems and promoting greater accountability and transparency as well as ensuring good governance. This is because the different actors involved believe that poor governance anywhere is due largely to incompetence, ignorance and inadequate infrastructure and for this, West Africa is not an exception.

While nobody can dispute the fact that bad governance, poor administrative skills, weak judicial systems, inadequate basic infrastructure and inadequate numbers of expertise in almost all fields of development contributed immensely to the governance crisis in our sub-region and in Africa as a whole, but it is also important to acknowledge the fact that these short comings are not the main causes of the problems. They cannot explain the instances of constant abuse and misuse of state powers and authority in West Africa. As Tunde Obadina, aptly argues, Nigeria for instance, "has a large number of highly–trained professionals including accountants and constitutional lawyers" (Obadina: 2000).

The same thing applies to Ghana, Senegal, Ivory Coast and other countries of the Sub-region. There are laid down budgetary and financial procedures, adequate constitutional and legal guarantees for checks and balances to function and similar facilities on the ground but despite all this, rulers and political leaders in the sub-region have in many instances ignored the provisions of the constitution and the laid down financial and administrative procedures which were supposed to guide them in the actual working of government.

Thus, abuse and misuse of state powers and authority are not to a very large extent, due to lack of capacity and knowledge to ensure good governance. African rulers have not been ineffective, inept, corrupt and tyrannical because they are ignorant or untrained, or incompetent. Similarly the lack of sufficient administrative or intellectual expertise to formulate and properly execute growth enhancing policies has not been the cause of the governance crisis. (Obadina: 2000) African military rulers and autocratic civilian leaders have in recent years demonstrated remarkable political skills to undermine the opposition in their respective countries. They have been successful in tactfully sowing the seeds of confusion and disarray in the ranks of the opposition and eventually make them lose credibility in the eyes of the masses. In some instances the African leaders by demonstrating great political sophistication through the democratic process have peacefully eliminated their political opponents.

Furthermore, the millions of African intellectuals who studied in various foreign Universities across the globe and those of them that are working in international organisations and for foreign governments are always outstanding in their respective fields of specialisations and experience.

It is therefore, fair enough for us to conclude that many of the bad economic policies, failed political systems and actions that had entrenched many countries in West Africa in economic under development was deliberately designed and implemented to serve the interests of those in power. (Obadina: 2000) The Military rulers and civilian autocratic leaders in the sub-region have benefited and are still benefiting enormously from the economic misfortune and the under-developed status of our countries across West Africa.

Thus, it would be a great mistake to conclude that our "political leaders and their advisers are a bunch of idiots, untrained and inexperienced crooks who are ignorant of politics and governance". (Obadina: 2008) This discussion raises a very important question at this juncture that is, what then is the real cause or reason for this unfortunate situation in West African politics and governance? Why have our countries been entrenched and engulfed in deep and chronic governance crisis since the beginning of self-rule in the early 1960's to the present day?

To answer this question properly we need to examine the nature and extent of the special interest that our rulers and political leaders had come to serve. In other words, the failure of democracy and economic development in Africa as whole is due mainly to the scramble for wealth and power by the content's political elites who have dominated African politics since the advent independence in the mid-20th century. (Obadina: 2008)

According to governance experts in West Africa the sub-region's political elites see Political power and the seat of president as a source of personal prestige and wealth accumulation. For them, power and authority are a source of enjoyment, prestige and wealth accumulation rather than a source of responsibility and accountability. There is high premium on the control of the seat which is the biggest and most easily accessible source of wealth accumulation? (Obadina 2008) (Also A.A. Senghore PhD 2010) That is why when our politicians seek power they use all means to attain their goal and when they get it they resort to all means and techniques that would guarantee their stay in power for as long as God wishes. Such means and techniques would include hand picking and employing people from the same ethnic, religious or geographic group so as to consolidate their political position on one hand and fostering ethnic sectarianism and political repression to distract the attention of the critics at home and that of the international community on the other. This analysis clearly indicates that the real reason for the governance crisis in our sub-region is deeply rooted in the attitude of the people concerned including the successive political leaders in various parts of the sub-region and beyond. This makes the problem more complicated and more difficult to solve. Despite the availability of different factors such as capacity, knowledge and infrastructure to ensure good governance, the situation has not changed. West Africa does not lack the necessary facilities to ensure good governance which simply means "the effective exercise of power and authority by government in a manner that serves to improve the quality of life of the populous" and which includes the full development of individuals and of their capacity to control their lives. (Obadina: 2000) The real cause of the tragedy is that we have a ruling class in our sub-region which "sees the state solely as a means of expropriating the nations' limited resources" and this class is simply incapable of good governance. So long as the ruling class in West Africa and other people in and outside government continue to be motivated by objectives that have very little to do with the common good of the people, governance and economic crisis of the sub-region and elsewhere across the continent will continue to exist. In fact, the ruling elites will, by their character and mission, continue to abuse and misuse the seat of president, the position of power and authority and apply all available methods and techniques including political repression, corruption, electoral mall practices,

introduction and application of draconian laws and ethnic separatism to maintain the status quo which has always been bad governance, under development and mal administration.

THE IMPACT OF THE GOVERNANCE CRISIS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SUB-REGION.

The West Africa sub-region has experienced profound leadership crisis over the past two decades. The four countries of the Mono.River Union i.e. Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea together with Ivory Coast which used to be the economic power house of the sub-region have gone through serious conflicts and severe crisis which literal destroyed their economies and eventually brought down the state as a whole.

Thanks to systematic military interventions by the Economic community of West African States (ECOWAS), The United Nations and France as a result of which the conflicts were militarily brought under control. Given the central position of Côte d'Ivoire in West Africa and that it used to be the economic power house of the sub-region, the conflicts there had left wide ranging severe economic and political consequences not only for the country but more importantly for its neighbouring states and for the whole of West Africa. Indeed Ivory Coast shares more than 3000 kilometres of land frontiers with five West African countries. The states directly affected are: Burkina Faso (584 KM borderline), Ghana (668 KM), Guinea (610KM), Liberia (716KM) and Mali (532KM). More than 4million of the 16 million inhabitants of Ivory Coast during the civil war were immigrants or descendants of immigrants from those neighbouring countries. About a half of these 4million immigrants were from Burkina Faso (2.5 Million) whereas more than one million of them originated from Mali. Similarly there were 300,000 immigrants from Guinea, 200,000 from Ghana and 100,000 from Liberia. Countries such as Senegal, Nigeria, Niger and Mauritania and other nations also had many of their nationals living in that country. (A UN report 2004). This is why the Ivorian conflicts had left serious impact on various national economies of the West Africa sub-region, it is by all standards a sub-regional conflict directly or indirectly affecting the whole of West Africa.

This is because the new environment generated by the Ivorian conflict continues to affect the dynamics of economic cooperation and regional integration among the key actors in the sub-region, particularly the Francophonic countries. This large number of immigrations from all over West Africa, who come to settle in Ivory Cost from all over West Africa, had to be on the move or become economically non productive as a result of the war. Consequently hundreds of thousands of families and millions of people who relied on those immigrations for their daily subsistence were rendered helpless and they had to experienced unprecedented economic hardship

THE ECONOMIC IMPACT

According to a 2004 UN Report on the economic, political and humanitarian impact of the Ivorian conflict across West Africa, the crises threaten the entire socio-economic fabric of the sub-region. This is because Ivory Coast was   the second largest economy after Nigeria in ECOWAS and by far the most prosperous country in the West Africa Economic and Monetary Union. It is the principal gateway to the World for landlocked countries like Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger.

In terms of revenue generation, Ivory Coast represented a substantial source of income for many West African countries whose expatriates form important communities in that country. According to the UN report before the outbreak of the civil war in September 2002 "migrant workers from Burkina Faso in Côte d'Ivoire, sent home about 70 billion CFA Francs in remittances each year". Other countries such as Mali, Senegal and Niger drew important revenue from the same country. As indicated by the then Governor of the Central Bank of the eight Franco phonic West Africa monetary union, the Ivorian leadership crisis is a major source of "Macro economic instability for the entire West African Monetary Union and that the uncertainties it raises has derailed the dynamics of integration. (The UN report: 2004) In addition to the monetary consequences of the Côte d'Ivoire crisis, its economic impact in West Africa is also strongly felt in the areas of business, trade and other commercial transportations, particularly with regard to landlocked countries of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger which were heavily dependent on Abidjan, the second biggest harbour in West Africa.

Before the crisis more than 85% of the external trade of these countries passed through Abidjan. Likewise, 57% of total imports of those countries were shipped through Abidjan. Similarly the Ivorian capital was before the war, a major air transit point for flights shuttling in and outside the sub-region particularly those bound for the Middle East, Europe, Southern Africa, Asia, and Latin America and elsewhere across the globe. As a result of the war both sea and air traffic across the sub-region had to be re oriented. Thus Abidjan had to lose its supremacy as the central sea and air hub in West Africa. Another negative impact of the crisis on national economies of the sub-region was the sharp decrease in intra-regional trade and business between Ivory Coast and its neighbours. The annual percentage

of exports from Côte d'Ivoire to the sub-region and of imports into the country from around West Africa had significantly dropped from 13.43 – 5.20 and 169.37 32.18 or 421.11 – 288.49, in some cases respectively.

Political Crisis

Finally, the civil wars and internal disturbances caused by the leadership crisis in other West African countries like Sierra Leone, Liberia Guinea Conakry and Guinea Bissau had in the same way left negative consequences on various national economies of the sub-region. I now move on to the next section which examines integration as the way forward for our sub-region to once and for all overcome its chronic governance and leadership crisis.

REGIONAL INTEGRATION AS THE WAY FORWARD

While there is a high degree of consensus among academics, researchers, governance and political experts in west Africa that political and economic integration for the sub-region could be a good and a very effective way of resolving its long standing and deeply rooted leadership crises and also that African integration is at the moment more realistically achievable at the level of various sub-regions such as the case with the ECOWAS, there could be serious challenges to the realisation of integration. Thus, this section first examines the challenges and obstacles to the realisation of the proposed political and economic integration project for West Africa and for other sub-regional grouping elsewhere in the continent.

Obstacles to African Integration

6. **Colonial Legacies**

The Advent of independence from colonial rule around the middle of the 20th century did not usher in a complete break with colonial institutions and legacies. One of the most difficult obstacles that impeded African integration in the post-colonial period is the impact of different legacies left behind by colonial powers. English and French colonial rules for instance, left behind their respective legacies in the legal and economic systems, political institutions and other aspects of Western civilisation. The existence of bitter rivalry and imperial ambitions among European nations and rulers seeking to occupy different portions of African territories resulted into the apportionment of the Continent by the colonial powers into so-many colonies, protectorates and settlements. Since the colonial powers came from different socio-cultural backgrounds, spoke different languages and followed or applied different practices and systems of government and administration, it was inevitable that they would leave behind different legacies in their respective colonial territories. These differences in their colonially inherited values and systems impeded efforts aimed at nation building, economic progress and political integration on various parts of the Continent. Issues like language and colonial partition of territories constituting the same geographical, historical and ethnic region and planting the seeds of separatists' movements in some regions are among the Western colonial legacies that continue to effectively prevent any form of serious economic and political integration across the African continent. Let's take the Senegambia Region and the State of Cameroon as examples.

SENEGAMBIAN INTEGRATION: A LOST CAUSE

Senegal and The Gambia constitute one natural geographical unit, they belong to the same geographical, historical, cultural and ethnic region given that Senegal actually sandwiches the tiny but naturally beautiful Republic of The Gambia. The two entities therefore have every opportunity to be united and as Awasom aptly argues "The Gambia is right inside the belly of Senegal and nowhere else is union more required and easy to achieve in Africa than between these two States given that almost every Gambian has a Senegalese blood relative". (Awasom 2006: 94 – 95) But due to marked differences in their colonially inherited values and legacies i.e. languages and economic and political systems, the question of union between the two states has proven to be out of the question. The Senegambia region was carved into two distinct territories by the French and British colonial authorities in 1889 and placed under separate administrations. (Awasom 2006: 95). During the few years that preceded the Gambian independence, many efforts were made on both sides to integrate the two entities and such efforts were apparently supported by the two colonial powers particularly Britain. But such efforts ended in vane because the parties were not prepared to give the sacrifices necessary for the success of such a laudable venture. Gambians were not willing to surrender certain

principal areas to the proposed union executive. They made it clear that in the event of union with Senegal the key areas of internal administration, the police, the civil service and local government matters, the legal and educational systems and the question of maintenance of close ties with Britain and the Commonwealth were to remain under Gambian control (Awasom 2006: 97). Senegal too was not prepared to part with any of the main colonial values it has inherited from France for the sake of a union with The Gambia. On the other hand, one could also ask whether Britain was really genuine in her support for The Gambia to be united with Senegal. This is because The Gambia achieved its independence from Britain in 1965 and full sovereignty with republican status in 1970 without the question of integration with Senegal being given a definite answer or addressed in any concrete form. Thus, despite signing dozens of collaborative treaties by the two countries since Gambia became independent in 1965 and despite making a concrete attempt to establish a form of lose union between them in 1982, that was when the Senegambia Confederation was formed, Senegal and Gambia are still far apart. As the two countries continue to jealously guard their respective colonially inherited values and systems, there is, as yet, no sign of readiness and sincere commitment on both sides to integrate into a single union republic.

THE CASE OF CAMEROON

The State of Cameroon was subjected to the same European experiences starting from the last quarter of the 19th Century when it became a German protectorate in 1884. Professor Awasom explains that "during the First World War in Africa, German Cameroon was conquered by the Allies and divided disproportionately into the British (Western) and French (Eastern) spheres" with Britain acquiring just one-fifth of the territory formally occupied by Germany (Awasom 2006: 90 – 92). Many of the ethnic groups of Cameroon who are separated by the Anglo-French partition of the country are situated on both sides of the territory particularly in the Anglophone North-West and South-West provinces and the Francophone West and Littoral provinces. (Awasom 2006: 91) Thus the Anglo-French partition of Cameroon and the differences in their colonially inherited values and systems have created difficult identity crises, which pose a serious threat to efforts aimed at nation building, economic progress, maintenance of peace and order and sustainable development in that part of Africa.

The Experience of Other African Countries

In North-East Africa, Somalia and Sudan were subjected to similar European colonial or imperialist experiences. Somalia was partitioned into Five territories namely, British Somaliland, French Somaliland, Italian Somaliland, The North Frontier District in Kenya and Ogadin in Ethiopia. This was followed by the Italian proclamation in 1936 of the establishment of Italian colony in East Africa, which was called "Africa Orientale Italiana" or the Italian East Africa. The move merged and reconfigured the territories of Eritrea, Somalia and Ethiopia along ethno-linguistic lines into one colony. (Zewde 2006: 54 - 55). Elsewhere in Sudan, the British government, which was said to have supported the unification of Somalis, followed a diametrically opposite policy. There, Britain planted the seeds of separatism in Southern Sudan, which after independence became one of Africa's longest and most destructive civil wars. The British government effectively sealed-off Southern Sudan from the Northern part of the country and the Northern traders were barred from the South. Their declared objective was to protect the Southerners from the habitual raids and exactions of the Northerners. In pursuance of this hegemonic policy, the British government excluded Arabic language in favour of Southern languages, and mother tongues, closed Islamic schools and banned Muslim preachers in the South. At the same time, Christian Missionaries were encouraged and given every available opportunity to flourish in Southern Sudan.

However, it was later understood that the real objective of the colonial administration in Sudan was to stop the spread and prosperity of Islam in the South and also to ultimately sow the seeds of Southern separatism. (Zewde 2006: 56). In this part of the continent religion was used by the colonial authorities to divide the Africans in Sudan and keep them apart. This policy, arguably, did not serve the interests of the two religions (Islam and Christianity) separating the two peoples in Sudan. Rather the policy only brought about confusion and misunderstanding among a people who belonged to the same ethnic, cultural and geographical identity.

With southern Soudan achieving independence in July 2011, the war of independence, which was waged by the South against the North, was over and one would have thought that the two independent dominions would now put

their bitter and painful history behind them and lead their peoples into a new era of peaceful coexistence, good neighbourliness and friendly bilateral relationship. However, it is very unfortunate, devastating and heart breaking to watch the South and North Sudanese begin a new era of wars and conflicts between their two sovereign states. This time is not a war of independence but rather a war or conflict over borderlines separating the two don-minions. It is another destructive war over who owns what territory and who should have a legitimate claim and sovereign right over few oil fields and other natural resources along the borderlines separating the two countries.

Finally, the present configuration of the African continent into so-many nation states is another legacy of Western colonialism, which like those highlighted above will definitely block any serious effort or attempt to actualise any meaningful form of Arab-African integration aimed at making a united stand against Western hegemony. Thus, unless Arabs and Africans who happened to be victims of Western Colonial Rule are willing and morally prepared to break with the values and systems they have colonially inherited from the West, they will never be able to unite themselves and their efforts to effectively challenge Western hegemonic and imperialist policies against Islam and the Islamic world in particular and the African people in general.

Let's now move on to consider another difficult issue, which like colonial legacies will definitely be a major obstacle to Arab-African integration as it has been proven to be in the past when efforts were made to achieve regional or sub-regional integration in many parts of the Continent. That is the issue of identity and politics of belonging. This is what the next section explores.

7.   Identity and Politics of belonging

Ethnic and regional politics is an increasing ongoing phenomenon in Africa's political processes. References to race, ethnicity, religion, political ideology, people of different backgrounds, district or province of origin have in many cases, prominently featured in the daily languages of politicians and political elites, community leaders and the main actors of other interest groups in African societies. Trade unions, political parties, service delivery organisations, socio-cultural groups, economic interest groups and political and think-tanks on various parts of the Continent have always been dominated by a particular ethnic, tribal or religious group or proponents of a given political ideology. In Africa today, the politics of identity and belonging has even entered the realm of the African academia. Some Cameroonian academics argued that democracy in Cameroon should be more of an ethnic right than simply an issue of one man one vote. That is because there are small and big tribes and small and big ethnic groups in all over the Continent. Thus as a real entity, each of these groups should be taken into consideration in a well-conceived democracy. A Cameroonian academic argued that when a demographically superior ethnic group is part of the picture, there is a big temptation that in applying the principle of democratic free choice the ethnic multitude would express itself in favour of the strong ethnic group, which in this way would stifle those ethnic groups who are demographically weak (Mono Ndjona 1997: 102 – 103). The argument is that although it may be fair enough to recognise the one-man-one-vote democracy principle, but this democratic principle would defeat itself when, through that vote, only one ethnic group expresses its hegemony. This amounts to self contradiction since democracy in this sense would be serving the totalitarian interests of those it has enabled to raise. (Nyamju 2006: 236) Academics are among the cream of society not only in Africa but elsewhere too and if some of them are beginning to envisage a democracy of ethnic groups as long as those groups remains a reality, that shows how seriously the continent is affected by the politics of identity and ethnic belonging.

Many parts of Africa particularly, the North-eastern, Central and Western regions, have been ridden with inter-state and intra-state conflicts since the beginning of the second half of the last Century due mainly to the clash of identities and excesses of the politics of belonging. The Rwanda-Burundi conflicts, the wars that ravaged Liberia and Sierra Leone during the 1990s, the Eritrea-Ethiopia conflicts and the ongoing Darfur conflicts are good examples of inter-state and intra-state conflicts caused mainly by the clash of identities and the excesses of the politics of belonging. Somalia represents the most unfortunate case of all these conflicts. This is perhaps the only African country where the population is constituted by the same people (black Africans) speaking the same language (Somali) and they profess the same religion (Islam), follow the same school of thought in Islamic jurisprudence and located within one geographical unit.

Somalis are bound together by the necessary elements or values that constitute the major expressions of identity (i.e. Religion, Language and Ethnic origin). Thus, as it was observed regarding the Senegambia case, in Somalia too, I would say, 'nowhere is unity more required, urgent and easy to achieve in Africa than in that country'.

Elsewhere-in North-East Africa, the conflict in the Western Sudanese province of Darfur is another unfortunate mark in African political history. Like Northern Sudan, the Western part of the country has a Muslim majority population, the so-called Arab-African divide is invisible and where it exists it does not justify the war of unprecedented ferocity characterised by massive destruction of life and property and mass displacement of people and animal that the conflict has led to. Thus, the question as to "What unique identity or set of values are the warring sides in Darfur defending or protecting against each other" has not been and probably will never be satisfactorily answered. Similarly, identity politics lied at the root cause of the prolonged civil war that ravaged the Southern part of Sudan. Finally, with the politics of identity and ethnic belonging still raising its ugly head all over the Continent, any meaningful form of Arab-African integration aimed at making a united front to effectively challenge Western hegemony is very unlikely to happen.

8. Arab disunity

With Arabs deeply divided over several key questions in international relations and world politics such as the Palestinian and Iraqi conflicts, the Arab-Israeli relations and America's attitude toward the Islamic World, the current Syrian conflict and the overall question of the legitimacy of the Arab Spring Revolution, the deeper involvement of the Arabs and the level of their commitment to efforts aimed at creating a continental or sub regional union executive, the level and the depth of their involvement in regional and sub-regional peace keeping missions/ operations as well as the crises in the level and the depth of the Arab's recognition of and commitment to their African identity and the question of how much priority they will give to the programmes of the proposed integration visa vies their local programmes particularly those that touch on culture and tradition, there is little hope that the Arabs will ever be in a position to form a continental or sub-regional union executive working hand in hand with their fellow Africans to effectively face the challenge of governance and development across the continent. The inability of Arabs to agree among themselves and make a united stand in the international political arena is one of the saddest stories of their contemporary history. Arabs are held by non-Arab Muslims in high esteem, they see them as role models and look up to them for an Islamic global leadership that will one day free Muslims, their political leaders and service delivery institutions from the conspiracies and hostile policies of European and Western hegemony. One would often ask why is it that the North Africans are still unable to unite themselves into one Great Maghrib Union despite that they have every opportunity to do so. With the exception of Libya, the North African Arabs do not have different colonial legacies rather they were all colonised by France and therefore their colonially inherited values and systems are one and the same, they share the same language (Arabic / French), religion (Islam), ethnic origin (either Arab or Berber) and constituted by the same geographical unit. Despite possessing all the necessary unifying elements or values, which are the major expressions of a nation's identity, there is no sign of the North Africans' readiness or even willingness to form one Great Maghrib Union. The withdrawal by the Islamic Republic of Mauritania from ECOWAS and that of Morocco from the African Union some years ago are a typical example of the crises in the African identity of the Arab countries in Africa and the level of their commitment and reorganisation of that identity.

Thus, unless Arabs particularly African Arabs are able to put their house in order, there is no hope of realising any form of an Arab-African union, which can realistically stand up to face the enormous challenges posed by Western hegemonic and imperialist policies and conspiracies against the third world.

9. The Ineffectiveness of International Organisations

There are many international inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations comprising of various regions, groups and cultures from across Africa in their membership. The existing Organisations of this type, such as the Organisation of Islamic Conference, the Arab league, the African Union and the Group of 77, the Eastern and Southern African economic groupings, the Sahel group etc are all weak and ineffective actors in the international political arena that their voices are not heard-off at all in the World's major political events. They cannot make any

impact on or influence decisions and major events in the international system, neither can they shape major policies and processes of today's international politics and global governance.

Modern international organisations are playing a major role in the current international political system. The more usual image of the role of international organisations today is that of an instrument being used by members for the articulation of specific objectives. This is particularly the case with international intergovernmental organisations where members are sovereign states with powers to do many things to serve the interest of their respective people. Another important image of the role of international organisations is that they can be used as an arena or forum within which members can take action in pursuance of their own interests. In this case, the organisations provide meeting places for their members to come together to exchange views and pursue their respective interests. (Archer 2006: 68 – 96) Thus, in this modern age of global governance, international organisations do not only assist the functioning process of the international political system but also they are capable of bringing huge returns and benefits to their members. In conclusion with the type of weak and ineffective international organisations of Africa today, it is clear from the above exposition that there is little chance for them to be able to use those organisations as an instrument or arena for the articulation and eventual realisation of their common objectives in the international political system. In view of this political reality of the African international organisations one maybe justified to suggest that one important step in their drive to collectively tackle the difficult question of Western hegemony and imperialist policies and conspiracies against them is to strengthen those international organisations by way of giving the sacrifices and concessions necessary for the effective functioning of such institutions in the modern world. However, with the new directions that ECOWAS is taking today to address the critical questions of sub-regional peace and security, human rights, good governance and democracy as well as the question legitimacy of the government of the day across the sub-region is giving the West Africans a high hope that if things continue to work the way they are expected to go, West Africa may be on course to realising a form of economic and political union for the people of the sub-region.

10. Different Faiths and Beliefs

Another major issue which can be considered a critical and fundamental obstacle to the realisation of African integration is the presence of different faiths and beliefs throughout the Continent. Undoubtedly, the enemies of Africa and the opponents of African Unity would definitely attempt to exploit the Muslim-Christian or other religious divide among Africans to perpetuate the hegemonic and imperialist presence of the former colonies and their allies in the Continent. Notwithstanding that in some part of the continent, like the Senegambia region African Muslims and Christians have been leaving together in peace and harmony for several centuries.

11. Absence of Political Will and Effective Leadership in Africa

There is almost a total absence of sincere commitment, political will and effective political leadership in Africa including the Arab and the Islamic Worlds which are closely interwoven with Africa and African affairs to organise the continent of even West Africa into a viable force capable of challenging Western hegemony and European economic imperialism in the present international political system. The former Libyan leader Muamar Ghadafi was known for his pan-Africanist tendencies and attitudes in the continent's modern day Politics and development drive. He loved Africa and the African people and his county spent billions and billions of Dollars in the cause of the continent's development and eventual unification. Ghadafi lacked the necessary support from his fellow African leaders and the necessary moral legitimacy and credentials to actualise the long awaited dream of African integration and eventual unification. Most importantly, he missed the opportunity to actualise his dream of a United States of Africa. Now that Gahadafi is gone the continent is waiting to see the birth of new pan-Africanists who will succeed the likes of Nkroma, Partic Lumumba and Muamar Ghadafi of Ghana, the democratic Republic Congo and Libya respectively.

Political and economic integration can be pursued either through the intergovernmental or supranational approach. Under the intergovernmental approach there is no sharing of sovereignty and each member state of the union effectively retains its sovereign authority, which means that each state can veto the application of regional agreements. This method requires close coordination of national policies of the integrating states. There is however, one obvious weakness of the intergovernmental approach that is, the lack of enforcement mechanisms to ensure that all states abide by the common rules. As for the supranational method, it implies arrangement under which member

states agree to surrender some part of that sovereignty to the central authority. Under suppranationalism sovereignty is substantially exercised jointly and that laws passed at the regional level over those matters on which the region has competent jurisdiction shall prevail over national legislation and they will be binding directly on member states and citizens of the union irrespective of their regions of origin.   This is known as the principle of "direct effect". Suppranationalism is a stepping stone to a federal structure or even a confederation. However, the E.U experience envisages a more diversified political outcome in which power is shared at various levels and states interact in complex ways, it is neither a typical federal structure where state power and authority are concentrated at the central level, nor is it a confederal system which is a loser form of union. There is an obvious advantage for the EU model of supranationalism that is, it ensures the democratic participation of stakeholders, the transparency of supranation decision processes and the accountability of regional institutions.   In the absence of those balancing elements/factors, the supranational method will have the obvious weakness of shifting sovereignty to supranational bodies. This will definitely weaken democratic control of individual member states and strengthen the political influence of groups that are able to organise effectively at the regional level. This may have negative consequences on poverty and food security.

Whether West Africa will adopt the EU model of supranationalism or the intergovernmental method, political and economic integration could do a lot of good for the entire sub-region and thus, it is high time for Africa South of the Sahara Desert to take concrete steps towards integration. This is because during the long years of the African leadership crisis particularly in the 1980s, the continent has significantly been losing around.

The economic and political situations are still fragile and too bad for Africa to regain the ground it has lost. Growth rates are still very low in many countries, poverty is still rampant and wide spread, national economies of the majority of countries are fragile and therefore vulnerable to domestic and external shocks, domestic savings are very low, many countries continue to depend to a large extent, on foreign products for their basic communities. There is gross inadequacy of support for and poor management of the agricultural sector and the continent is still unable "to reap the full benefits of globalisation – a process that could increase the resources available for productive investment that west Africa needs so badly (Alhassan Outtara, 1999) with the sub-region integrating its political and economic systems and institutions all those and many other problems could be a thing of the past. With political and economic integration becoming a reality in West Africa, government institutions and the entire governing process will be too big and sophisticated to be manipulated or dominated by the military, for a particular ethnic group or tribe or ideology or by a group of few corrupt politicians. Thus, military coups, civil wars, manipulation of the electoral process by ruling elites, political repression, economic exploitation or the masses ethnic separation overstaying in power and rampant and unchecked corruption and corrupt practices will soon be a history in West Africa. Political and economic integration if well thought about, carefully planned and judiciously implemented and managed will definitely guarantee effective, efficient, transparent, accountable and responsive governance process in West Africa. It will also, ensure separation of powers, rule of law, an independent judicial process, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms popular participation in the political process, equitable sharing of economic resources and sound macro-economic policies and good financial and management systems, political stability, food security and stable and rational regulatory and highly motivating framework supported by effective control and supervision mechanisms. The end results of all these will be the full realization of good governance and its accompanied advantages on both the public and private sectors. Thus, the main thesis of this paper is that political and economic integration is the way forward for Africa's long standing and deeply rooted leadership crisis to be resolved once and for all. At present, integration is more realistically achievable at the level of various sub-regions and there after the process can quite easily and smoothly moves to the regional level.

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