



# **State, Governance And Regional Integration In Africa**

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## **Regional Integration and The Crisis of Democracy in Africa: Challenges from The Gambia**

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### **Abstract**

*The literature is replete with various attempts by African leaders at heralding regional integration, continental unity and development. This is particularly supported by their bold and practical attempts, culminating in the formation of regional and sub-regional organizations like the Organization of African Unity (O.A.U.) later African Union (A.U.) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) among others, towards the development and total integration of African states and to promote democratic values and ideals that could transform the continent and put it at a better pedestal to actualize the vision of the founding fathers. However, lack of democratized institutions and the seeming marginal democratic nature of most of the states in Africa continue to plague the black continent and thus undermine democracy and democratic institutions. This is to the extent that the continent strives for harmony, integration and democracy. This scenario has further fanned the ember of disunity and disintegration to the extent that the vicious circle of military dictatorship cum democratic authoritarianism has permeated governance creating a succession/transitional crisis that urgently calls for leadership and institutional democratization. This paper interrogates leadership vis-à-vis Africa's aspiration for integration and development. It contends that most crises in Africa are occasioned by the undemocratic posture of most leaders. Utilizing the Gambia as its basis, the paper attempts an exploratory evaluation of the recent 'power gamble' in Gambia and canvasses leadership rebirth and value reorientation towards an integrated, developmental and crisis-free Africa.*

**Keywords:** Democracy, Leadership Democratization, Institutional Democratization, Regional Integration and Development.

### **Introduction**

Africa has made several attempts at both political and economic integration at the continental, regional and sub-regional levels. The formation of the Organization of African Unity, O.A.U. in 1963; which later transformed to the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States,

ECOWAS in 1975, among others, attests to this. It must however be added that attempts at integration predates the establishment of these organizations. Before their eventual independence and the declaration of the 1960s as the Decade for Africa; being the Decade in which most African states gained political independence, African states had been politically integrated alongside colonialists' divides. Decolonization only reshaped and enhanced regional integration among African states.

Thus, the continent has experienced two great waves of regionalization. The first one is associated with colonization, decolonization and pan-Africanism. Immediately after the decolonization process started the first set of attempt at regional cooperation in Africa among independent states took place. Pan-Africanism constituted the ideological frameworks for these attempts, (Nkrumah, 1963; Nye, 1965; or Chazan, Mortimer, Ravenhill and Rothchild, (1992) but equally important was the former colonial structure. The former East African Community (EAC) illustrates how the independent African states tried to build upon and develop further regional schemes established by the colonial powers. The main instigators behind these processes were the United Nation's Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Organization of Africa Unity (O.A.U.). In this period, Africa experienced the establishment of a whole range of regional schemes for economic cooperation, but most of these became nothing but 'paper tigers' (Boas 2001).

The second wave of regionalization started in the late 1980s/early 1990s. The main instigator this time was what is seen as the globalization of regionalization: the globalization of the idea of regionalism as a potential counterforce to economic globalization. By implication, the idea of the region as a potential additional governance layer in the international political economy that could protect participating states from the worst storms in the world political economy (Boas 2001). It is widely acknowledged that Africa's integration efforts have thus far failed to bear satisfactory fruit. While other regions have successfully used their integration mechanisms to improve their economic welfare, Africa lags behind with respect to GDP growth, per capita income, capital inflows, and general living standards (Qobo 2007). This paper therefore examines the impact of democratic crises in Africa on the continental's bid to democratize with particular emphasis on the Gambia. It is within the purview of the paper that development and ultimate integration can only be realizable in a democratized milieu. Achieving this, the paper is divided into six segments as follow.

### **Africa's regional integration in historical perspective**

After independence regional integration became a pillar of Africa's developmental strategy. Pan-Africanism, an ideology which emphasizes continental unity and strong identification with anti-colonial struggles, was the leitmotif of Africa's developmental framework. This perspective sought to externalize Africa's problems, with much of the blame laid at the door of former colonial powers, with little responsibility and accountability demanded of the postcolonial African elite. Politically this was the safest position to be in as economic failures could always be ascribed to the legacy of imperialism and colonialism. As Mistry (2000) points out, 'Africa's commitment to integration appears to have been visceral rather than rational, more rhetorical than real.' From the beginning of the decolonization process in the 1960s, the establishment of sub-regional economic communities was a significant part of Africa's development strategy. Regionalism in Africa began during this period, spearheaded in large measure by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and Economic Commission on Africa (ECA), partly as a response to the last vestiges of colonialism as well as to spur political and economic progress on the continent; and partly as a political instrument to deal with the power imbalances in the international system. Initiatives such as the Economic Community of Central African States, the Arab Maghreb Union, and the Preferential Trade Agreement for East and Southern Africa (later the Common Market for East and Southern African States–COMESA) were inspired by this pan-Africanist vision. There are other initiatives that evolved outside this framework, such as the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), the Southern African Development and Coordinating Conference (and later the Southern African Development Community), and the East African Community (EAC).

### **Conceptual Clarification:**

#### **Democracy**

The concept of democracy derived its origin from the ancient Greek city-states most notably Athens. Since democracy literally means "government by the people" the initial system of governance could be termed 'direct democracy.' Direct democracy is characterized by the direct exercise of governmental power by the people themselves, public policies and laws are decided upon directly by all eligible voters. The complexities of modern societies are such that have made direct democracy to give way to representative government/democracy. Democracy is a philosophy of government in which supreme power is vested in the people and exercised directly through participation or indirectly through a system of representation,

usually involving periodic free and fair elections (Gana 2005). Democracy is thus defined as “a system of government that consists of certain core values, the rule of law, popular sovereignty, guaranteed rights and liberties, and the economic well-being of the populace”. As an ideal “democracy aims to protect and promote the dignity and fundamental rights of the individuals, instill social justice and foster economic and social development. (Human Right Report, 2002, p.55).

Democratic governance is valuable in its own right. Indeed, advancing human development requires governance that is democratic in both form and substance. However, democracy can advance human development for three reasons:

**First**, enjoying political freedom and participating in the decisions that shapes peoples’ lives represent fundamental human rights which are essential aspects of human development. Democracy is not the only political regime, which guarantees political and civil freedoms.

**Secondly**, democracy helps to protect people from economic and political catastrophes such as famines and descents into chaos. This capacity to mobilize people and resources for the common good is one of the highly valued gains of democracy. By facilitating dialogue, debate, and consultations, democracies also contribute to political stability, providing open space for political opposition to express views on national issues.

**Third**, democratic governance can trigger a virtuous cycle of development because political freedom empowers people to press for policies that expand social and economic opportunities. Open debate also help communities shape their priorities as a free press and civil society interventions provide new ways for popular participation (Ibrahim & Cheri, 2013).

### **Integration**

Chaturvedi in his Dictionary of Politics defines integration as: “the process of bringing together of the different groups which may have same rights in law but nevertheless have unequal privileges and divided and disparate social and educational institutions. Integration would mean bringing all such institutions or organizations together on one platform or to bring together all people regardless of creed, race and origin; with the intention of forming a unified civil society. Integration may stand against the concept of ‘tolerance’ where in spite of people differing in creed, race, and beliefs they come together and respect one another’s identity” (Chartuvedi, 2008, P.148). According to Haas (1973), integration is seen as a 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. It is the attainment within a territory of a sense of community and of institutions and practices strong enough and widespread enough to ensure for a long time change among its population (Deutch, 1989). Thus integration is seen as an organic process of living old division or loyalties for a new one by separate units or entities who come together for the purpose of mutual interdependence for their common benefit.

### **Political Integration**

Political integration would therefore imply attempts by states to bring a reasonable degree of orderliness to human and societal affairs and to create orderliness vis-a-vis development in inter-state relations. When this is done within a geographical confinement, it becomes regional. Political integration is anchored by international organizations at universal, regional and sub-regional levels and it is usually done voluntarily among the consenting integrated states.

Security is an important motive in many regions and regional integration. The role of security is obvious in the original post-war founding of the Leagues of Nations and the U.N.O. Integration boosts political, economic and social advantages. Regionalization and or regional integration, as a political strategy, is thus assumed to enhance national and regional security in a broad sense. It is an attempt by nation-states to recuperate governance over a globalized international political economy through regional management. Thus the most sophisticated systems of modern communication and the development of integrated international community and financial markets have not destroyed cultural, ethnic, economic, or political diversity (Boas, 2001).

### **Regional Integration**

This is a more permanent arrangement characterized by the establishment of joint institutional mechanisms and a degree of shared sovereignty around full range of public sector activity including economic, security, human rights, education, health etc. (Ogbeidi, 2006).

### **Historical Survey of Africa's disputed elections**

Elections in Africa have always been characterized by crises and monumental loses in human and material. Such elections have also been catastrophic. The resultant effects of electoral/democratic crises have been ravaging and making good governance an arduous task in the continent. It is therefore unthinkable contemplating integration among warring nations or countries in crises.

Before Gambia's President Yahya Jammeh, who has disputed his rival Adama Barrow's election victory, many African heads of state have attempted, in some cases successfully, over the past few years to remain in power beyond their legal mandate. In some countries, elections have been disputed amid deadly violence, as was the case in Kenya, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Togo and Gabon. Here are examples of two African leaders, in Ivory Coast and Madagascar, who refused to step down after losing an election, but failed. – Ivory Coast – On November 28, 2010, the second round of a presidential election – delayed six times since 2005 after a low-intensity civil war in the world's top cocoa producer – pitted incumbent Laurent Gbagbo against his rival Alassane Ouattara. But on December 3, the country found itself with two presidents: the constitutional council declared Gbagbo the victor, while the electoral commission said that Ouattara won. The UN recognised Ouattara's victory and the European Union, France and the United States called on Gbagbo to stand down. On December 7, West African regional bloc ECOWAS said it recognised Ouattara as president and suspended the Ivory Coast's membership. Two days later the African Union also decided to suspend the Ivory Coast. A deadly four-month post-election crisis followed Gbagbo's refusal to hand over power, in which more than 3,000 people were killed. On April 11, Gbagbo was arrested by Ouattara's troops after 10 days of fighting in Abidjan, backed by French and UN soldiers. On May 21, 2011, Ouattara was sworn in as president. Gbagbo is currently on trial before the International Criminal Court (ICC) for crimes against humanity in relation to the clashes. – Madagascar – The island nation was paralysed by protests during a political crisis in 2001-2002. In January 2002, President Didier Ratsiraka's rival, Antananarivo mayor and successful entrepreneur Marc Ravalomanana, sent his supporters into the streets claiming victory in the first round of presidential elections held in December 2001. Ravalomanana refused to organise a second round of voting, while Ratsiraka declined to concede defeat, plunging the country into seven months of violence and chaos. The impasse split the vast nation in two-with two capitals, two governments, and a divided army-until Ravalomanana was officially proclaimed president in April 2002 and sworn in on May 6, with Ratsiraka still disputing the result. In July Ravalomanana conquered the whole of the territory and Ratsiraka started an 11-year exile in France. (The *Punch*, January 19, 2017 online version, accessed 21/1/2017) Read more at: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/01/african-leaders-refused-stand/>

Thus, Africa has been marred with various electoral unrests across the continent. Here are some of the violent elections that have taken place in the continent:

- **Ivory Coast**-After a five-month-standoff, incumbent Laurent Gbagbo was detained on April 11, 2011 by forces backing rival Alassane Ouattara, who was recognised internationally as the winner of Ivory Coast's October 2010 presidential election. Gbagbo had refused to stand down and some 3,000 people died in the post-election unrest. He is currently on trial before the International Criminal Court (ICC) for crimes against humanity in relation to the clashes.
- **Kenya**-Violence sparked by disputed results in Kenya's December 27, 2007 presidential poll won by Mwai Kibaki claimed some 1,300 lives and left about 600,000 displaced according to documents filed before the ICC. Elections in 1992 and 1997 also led to violence and related inter-ethnic clashes in 1992 in the western Rift Valley killed hundreds of people.
- **Nigeria**-Unrest that claimed more than 800 lives flared in Nigeria after a disputed April 2011 presidential election in which President Goodluck Jonathan was declared victor. Defeated opposition candidate Muhammadu Buhari alleged rigging. Elections in April 2007 elections were also criticized by the opposition and observers and led to violence that officially left 39 people dead. The European Union believes at least 200 died.
- **Togo**-In 2005, Faure Gnassingbe won a disputed presidential election after the death of his father Gnassingbe Eyadema. Between 400 and 500 people were killed in related clashes.
- **Zimbabwe**-In the March 29, 2008 general election, the ZANU-PF party of long-serving President Robert Mugabe was defeated by the Movement for Democratic Change of opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai. Tsvangirai's supporters then became targets of violence in which 180 died according to Amnesty International. Tsvangirai withdrew from the run-off presidential election against Mugabe, citing violence against his supporters. The March 2002 elections won by Mugabe were also marred by violence.
- **Democratic Republic of Congo**-In late 2011, general elections that were hastily organised and marred by allegations of fraud were accompanied by violence. A UN report that was denounced by authorities in Kinshasa spoke of around 30 deaths and accused government forces of serious human rights violations. Incumbent head of state Joseph Kabila officially won re-election, but challenger

Etienne Tshisekedi rejected the results. The country has been mired in crisis ever since.

- **Madagascar**-The island nation was paralyzed by protests during a political crisis in 2001-2002. Incumbent Didier Ratsiraka challenged the proclaimed victory of Marc Ravalomanana in the first round of a presidential poll and subsequent fighting killed several dozen people.
- **Gabon**-In August 2009, the last declared victory by Ali Bongo also sparked clashes that officially left three people dead. Opposition parties say at least 15 people were killed. (*The Punch*, September 2, 2016 online version, accessed 24/1/2017)

### **The Gambia's Debacle and the ECOWAS**

The Gambia is one of Africa's smallest countries. It gained its independence from the United Kingdom in 1965 as a constitutional monarchy within the British Commonwealth. In 1970, the country became a republic following a majority-approved referendum. President Yahya Jammeh seized power in a bloodless coup in 1994 and has ruled with an iron fist ever since. His tenure was ratified when he won election in 1996, and has since been re-elected to power overwhelmingly in 2001, in 2006, and most recently in 2011. The fairness of those elections is certainly a matter of debate. Often pilloried for a regime marked by human rights abuses, as well as the repression of critics, activists, and journalists, Jammeh nevertheless enjoys political domination.

That political power is largely due to his ability to tamp down the opposition, but it is also reliant on a canny combination of economic stewardship and strategic policies. The Gambia is a country that lacks natural resources and is largely reliant on tourism and agriculture. Heavy dependence on peanut exports makes the economy vulnerable to unfavorable weather conditions, fluctuations in production and world commodity prices. Despite these obstacles, Jammeh presided over an economy that posted strong economic growth in recent times. He used state funds for needed public works programs such as the construction of school, hospitals, and roads, effectively winning him popular support. However, he dispersed public works strategically; even going too far as threatening to withhold government funds from regions that do not vote for him. Clearly, these threats often translate into votes. They also translate into distorted development in a country where more than half the country remains illiterate, poverty remains rampant, quality of life is low, human rights abuse is rampant, and where the infant mortality rate, is one of the higher rates in western Africa. Note that in 2016, Jammeh was

voted out of office although he refused to relinquish his power (<http://www.countrywatch.com> Retrieved 18/3/2018).

On December 1<sup>st</sup> 2016, after having ruled the Gambia for 22 years, Yahya Jammeh shockingly lost the presidential election to the somewhat unknown Adama Barrow. What was more shocking was Jammeh conceding on December 2<sup>nd</sup>. As the BBC reports, “hopes weren’t high for a peaceful transfer of power, with a crackdown on opposition leaders months before the polls, the banning of international observers, and post-election demonstrations and then the switching off the internet” (BBC, 2016). During the campaign period and days before the election, a significant number of Gambians left Gambia fearing electoral violence. Some even voted for Jammeh fearing his anger in case of defeat (Withnall, 2016). To many analysts, his admittance averted post-election violence that ravaged some African countries such as Kenya in 2007 and Ivory Coast in 2010.

Seven political parties Gambia Moral Congress Party (GMC), National Reconciliation Party (NRP), Peoples’ Democratic Organization for Independence and Socialism (PDOIS), United Democratic Party (UDP) People Progressive Party (PPP) Gambia People Democratic Party (GPDP), National Convention Party (NCP) and an independent candidate Dr. Isatou Touray formed the coalition in October 2016. The initial results the IEC chairman announced showed that in the triparty simple majority race, Jammeh defeated with a 9% margin. However, the 5<sup>th</sup> December revision which the IEC blame on tallying error shows about a 19,000 difference, thus reducing Barrow’s lead from 9% margin to 4%. The IEC stressed that the corrections “had not changed the status quo” of the results.

Despite the ban on post-election demonstration, Gambians particularly supporters of the coalition went out on the streets to celebrate what they termed as the “end of dictatorship.” Jammeh’s pictures, displayed in public, were pulled down and Jammeh t-shirts burnt. However, a week later following the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) revisions of the result, Jammeh changed his mind. He did what many international media houses including BBC call a “U-turn” rejecting the electoral result. The Guardian reported that Jammeh’s televised announcement on December 9 “throws the future of the West African country into doubt” (The *Guardian*, 2016). In the televised address played on the national TV, Jammeh cited “severe abnormalities that transpired during the elections” including unprecedented foreign interference. He rejected the results of the elections in its “totality” and called for fresh elections to be officiated by a “God fearing IEC.” Jammeh’s rejection of the results created a two-month political impasse that forced more than fifty thousand Gambians including President-elect Barrow to seek refuge in

Senegal and a greater number internally displaced. His refusal to leave office also triggered a diplomatic mission by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and later a military intervention, which eventually sent him into exile in Equatorial Guinea.

A closer look at Jammeh's 22 years of rule since leading a military coup in 1994 begged the question of how a self-proclaimed autocrat lost a democratic election in a country where he dictates the rules. In assessing the Gambian case, one may look at what scholars such as Abdoulaye Saine and Carlene J Edie refers to as "Gambian exceptionalism." For more than three decades after independence, while the rest of Africa characterized by one party rule and authoritarian rule, the Gambia maintained the longest surviving multiparty democracy alongside Botswana and Mauritius (Saine, 2009, Edie, 2000). In 1994, a bloodless coup toppled the People Progressive Party (PPP) and government of Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara. Abdoulaye Saine observed that this event is remarkable in two ways. First, it marked the end of one the longest continuous surviving multiparty democracy, and secondly Jawara as the longest president in Africa (Saine, 2009). Similarly, Carlene J. Edie refers to Gambia as an African "exception." She observed that in 1994 while the continent was moving from authoritarianism to multi-party politics Gambia was moving from multiparty politics to authoritarianism (Edie, 2000). The 2016 electoral defeat therefore on this background suggests the beginning of democratization in the tiny African country.

Looking at the personal backgrounds of those of Jammeh's West African peers who tried to convince him to step down, it is clear that few of them had any solidarity with the Gambian leader. Most of them were elected as opposition candidates against incumbents, and owed their position as heads of state to a functioning electoral process and strong regional democratic norms. Pevehouse and others have argued that democratic density-the relative number of democratic regimes within a regional organization-would affect how strongly the organisation can push for democracy (Hartmann 2008; Pevehouse 2005). There is certainly a strong variation among African sub-regions when it comes to the number of democratic regimes. This would explain why ECOWAS finds it easier than other regional arrangements in Africa to push for democratization, and why it is less likely that we will see a repetition of ECOWAS's restoration of democracy policy in other parts of the African continent (Hartmann, 2016).

The longest-serving leader within ECOWAS is currently Togo's Faure Gnassingbé, with about 14 years in office. While democracy might still face many obstacles in West Africa, alternation in office has indeed become the rule. In the other sub-regions (and regional arrangements) of the continent,

with the exception of Southern Africa, we still find a majority of leaders who reached power by means other than the ballot box. The determined intervention on the part of ECOWAS should thus be praised. A failure to enforce the departure of Jammeh would have delegitimized the whole democratization agenda. While restoring Barrow as elected president might not have made The Gambia a functioning democracy, it nevertheless still created the preconditions for a restoration of democracy.

For ECOWAS, as for all other regional organizations, actively promoting the strengthening of democratic institutions and the rule of law in member states is a much more difficult task than sanctioning blatant anti-democratic behavior, as it requires much more capacity and a stronger interaction between the ECOWAS Commission and member states' governments. At a time when the liberal-democratic model has come under attack on the continent and some scholars have noted the unstoppable rise of counter-hegemonic models of governance, inspired by the massive presence of China in Africa, the ECOWAS intervention in The Gambia sends a powerful message. Nothing would be more wrong than to suggest that ECOWAS leaders defended the principles of liberal democracy in the Gambia to please the Western donor community. West African leaders and bureaucrats had clear ownership over the process, and actually found an African solution to an African problem, for better or for worse.

### **Challenges to regional integration in West Africa Leadership**

Leadership may be defined as an instrumentality provided by a leader or a group of leaders by which all other elements of national power-geography, economy, population, technology, ideology, and morale can be mobilized and used most purposefully and effectively for the achievement of the goals of a nation in a given context. Leadership is so much essential for the strength or progress of a nation that often the strength or progress of nation itself is sought to be judged in terms of its leadership (Chaturvedi, 2006). Leadership can be military, political, diplomatic, social, economic etc. Regional integration requires committed, selfless, dedicated, accountable, nationalistic and pan Africanist leaders who share the vision for the integration. Thus, attempts at integration in Africa have been defeated by primordial and personal interests of most African leaders. Basil Davidson (1992, p.9) portrays the governance dimension of the Africa crises quite graphically:

But the actual and present condition of Africa is one of deep trouble, sometimes of a deeper trouble than the worst imposed during the

colonial years... harsh governments or dictatorships rule over peoples who distrust them to a point of hatred and usually for good and sufficient reasons; and all too often one dismal tyranny gives way to worse one. Despair rots civil society, the state becomes an enemy, bandits flourish.

**Political instability:** Countries of West Africa have been among the most politically unstable in Africa. From 1960 until the early 1990s those governments had not been interested in keeping systems which allowed multiple political parties to coexist and compete for their share of electorate in elections. The competition that parties bring into politics as they try to persuade the electorate to elect them into power opens up otherwise closed political systems to scrutiny as it forces the parties to lay out clearer manifestoes.

The abuses like imprisonments, disappearances, house detentions, forced exiles and even deaths which became rampant under single-party systems might have been ameliorated as opposition parties equally driven by a strong zeal for power would have exposed those abuses. In every newly-independent African country, civilians had the first opportunity to rule but corruption, mismanagement, and leaders and their parties aggrandizing power caught the attention of the military to step in, ostensibly to stop the wayward direction the new nations were heading.

From the mid-1960s, instability came to symbolize African politics as civilians and military personnel jostled to get an edge on ruling. Governance despair that replaced the pre-independence hope and the near helplessness of most African leaders informed their desire to hold on to power. Wanting to keep power but also apprehensive that people's deflated expectations would cost them elections, leaders found ways to eliminate political competition by nullifying the section of constitutions that allowed multiparty governance. Ghana and Guinea, two of sub-Saharan Africa countries to get independence early, also became the first to outlaw multiparty governance by adopting single-party systems.

Ghana's ruling Convention People's Party (CPP) passed the Preventive Detention Act in 1958 and the Republican Constitution of 1960 restricted political parties other than the CPP from operating. Guinea passed its own Preventive Detention Act in 1959, followed by a ban on the activities of political parties other than the Parti démocratique de Guinée (PGI). Other countries in the sub-region such as Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Senegal and Liberia followed suit by passing single-party laws or making the ruling party so strong it emasculated minor parties from competing (Bamfo, 2013).

### **Security challenges**

The major security problem that continues to threaten West African countries has been internal squabbles breaking out among ethnic groups or between regions or ethnic groups with the central government over policy. A region or a group's disagreement with government often has been about feeling cheated by the manner in which government divides budget revenues, whereby a resource-rich region suspects the government diverting revenues away to poorly endowed regions. The shortage of money for governments to allot to regions as well as governments' prebendalism which Joseph (1987) describes as the sense of entitlement that many public officials and private citizens felt they had to the revenues of the Nigerian government has been a cause. Militias specializing in kidnapping oil workers and vandalizing oil infrastructure has been a common form of protest against marginalization by the state and transnational oil corporations in Nigeria's Niger Delta region. The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) has become an umbrella group spearheading these kidnappings. The current killings of farmers by the herdsmen in northern Nigeria, has constituted a security challenge to governance in Nigeria. Conflict also has occurred among groups about their disenchantment with residents from other regions and itinerant traders who move into their community. Itinerant farmers also have run into resistance from local farmers who may complain about the nonnative farmers encroaching on their land.

### **Civil war**

Civil wars such as those which occurred in Cote d'Ivoire in 2010, Liberia in 1989, and Sierra Leone in 1991, and Nigeria in 1967, by far, have exacted much violence. These wars had several causes ranging from the cultural and economic to the political, and wrought incalculable harm on the people who were directly or indirectly affected by the wars. Countries at war are usually preoccupied with prosecuting the war. Such countries usually commit their resources including time to prosecuting the war. Thus a country at war can hardly think of integration talk less of committing resources into it. Doubtlessly, war and conflicts are deleterious to integration in its entirety, nations must be at peace and enjoy a semblance of good governance for them to integrate successfully and enjoy the benefits therefrom.

### **Corruption**

Since their interception, West Africa states have been facing corruption as a major problem. In some cases, it has attained levels of egregious theft, for which no possible or moral historical justification can be advanced, and which

have played a major role in the alienation of its people from their rulers. The existence of widespread corruption, especially in the societies beset by mass poverty and very high level of unemployment has a deeply corrosive effect on trust in government and contributes to crime and political disorder. In the political realm, corruption undermines democracy and good governance by flouting or even subverting formal processes. Corruption in legislative bodies reduces accountability and distorts representation in policy making; corruption in the judiciary compromises the rule of law; and corruption in public administration results in the unequal distribution of services. More generally, corruption erodes the institutional capacity of government as procedures are disregarded, resources are siphoned off, and public offices are bought and sold. At the extreme, unbridled corruption can lead to state fragility and destructive conflict, and plunge a state into “remitting cycle of institutional anarchy and violence”. E.g. Senegal, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Bakassi peninsula etc (Theobald 1990; Atuobi, 2007)

#### **Conflicts (Intra and Inter State)**

Intra and inter-state conflicts have been Africa’s most common source of insecurity and loss of lives for several decades. The pattern of intra-state boundaries, ethno linguistic difference, religious intolerance and a winner-take-all political culture are responsible for various conflicts in the sub region. Notable conflicts in the sub region are the Liberian civil war (1989-1997) and the Sierra Leonean crises (1990-2001). At present, there are varying degrees of disturbances in parts of Senegal, Nigeria and Niger. These conflicts have led to death, wanton destruction of property, displacement of entire population and dislocation of social groups thereby hampering sustainable peace in the sub region (Ebon, 1999)

#### **Poverty**

One of the serious hindrances of effective development in West Africa is poverty. The assessment of poverty is based on human indicators of longevity and good health, learning, economic means and participation in social life. According to the 2001 world human development report, poverty range from 3.9 percent level of Uruguayan population to the 64.7 percent of the population of Niger. The state of Mali, Guinea Bissau, Burkina Faso, Niger and Sierra Leone are the world’s poorest countries. More than half of the West African population lives in abject poverty. In the 1980’s many Ghanaians migrated to Nigeria in search of jobs but were forced to return home by the Nigerian government. That act affected bilateral relations between the two nations and hindered cooperation in the community.

Countries that are poor will find it difficult to fulfill their financial obligations to their citizens and organizations to which they belong. This poverty situation needs to be redressed for integration and development to be effective.

### **Terrorism**

This is the use of violence or indulgence in violent activity for any political end or in order to put the public in fear with the intention of terrifying the citizens and the public. It is a violence of a random and arbitrary kind. Terrorism frustrates government attempts at integration as it diverts governmental attention from the ideal. Terrorism takes political, criminal and religious dimensions in the West African sub-region. The Niger Delta region of Nigeria is an unstable area where inter-ethnic clashes are common-often access to oil revenue is the trigger of the violence. Pipelines are regularly vandalized by impoverished residents who risk their life to siphon fuel. The ongoing insurgency in the northern part of Nigeria is also a cause of serious concern. The clashes claim hundreds of lives and destroyed property that worth billions of naira.

### **Conclusion**

Regional integration in Africa has repeatedly met with failure in the past. Wrong priorities have hindered success. Much has been written about the lack of 'political will' without an accompanying explanation as to what it really means. In this paper an attempt was made to highlight the electoral/democratic challenges hindering the implementation of commitments and to trace its reasons to internal strives, unhealthy competition for political power and the dictatorial tendency of most African leaders with penchant for 'sit-tightism' once they gained political power coupled with overriding national and regional interests with personal interest. In other words, defending sovereignty has been more important than the real commitment to growth and development which is the means to a well-managed integration process. What is abundantly clear is that African leaders will not achieve success at the regional level if they fail to do so at the domestic level, and therefore it is imperative for African leaders to embrace democracy and democratize the political space for meaningful development and proper transformation of their countries. It is within the democratic milieu that sound policies that focus on economic development can be formulated and implemented. This will translate to bold economic reforms at the domestic level that is the hallmark of regional integration. While political and economic reforms should begin with strengthening the infrastructure of governance, according importance to the rule of law and human rights, stabilizing the

macro-environment and creating the right climate for investment, should transcend these minimalist objectives.

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