



**For Better or for Worse:  
The Impact of EPAs on Africa's Regional Integration**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in Africa are often plagued with disorientation and sub-par trade relations. It is well-established that extra-continental trade partnerships between Africa and the West have resulted in the delaying of industrialisation and the subsequent growth in intra-continental and intra-regional trade. This study aims to determine whether the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), engineered by the European Union (EU) between Africa and the EU have been beneficial to Africa's quest for regional economic integration. This was done through qualitative research. The theoretical perspective of Neofunctionalism is used in order to explore how scholars perceive regional integration. This is accompanied by some conceptual lenses stemming from the umbrella of New Regionalism theory, particular these are: Open Regionalism, The WIDER Approach, Regionalism from Below (New Regionalisms), as well as the External Guarantors Model. The study showed that the trade and economic agreements the EU established with Africa have been asymmetrical and have left Africa as a producer of raw materials. Thus, while the EPAs may produce some positive outcomes for Africa, the costs far outweigh the benefits. The EPAs have the potential to negatively affect Africa's quest to establish a thriving African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). In this regard, the EPAs are detrimental to, rather than enhancing Africa's regional integration efforts. Africa's regional economic communities (RECs) are critical to the success of the AfCFTA. Future trade agreements between Africa and the EU should therefore be crafted in ways that enhance Africa's regionalism.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABBREVIATION	MEANING
AAMS	African and Malagasy States
ACDIC	Civil Association for the Defence of Collective Interests
ACP states	African, Caribbean and Pacific group of States
AfCFTA	Africa Continental Free Trade Area
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
APF	African Peace Facility
APRODEV	Associations of World Council of Churches related to Development Organisations in Europe
CARIFORUM	Caribbean Forum
CEMAC	Central African Economic and Monetary
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EAC	East African Community
EC	European Community
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
EDF	European Development Fund
EEC	European Economic Community
EED	Church Development Service
EPAs	Economic Partnership Agreements
ESA	Eastern and Southern Africa

FTAs	Free Trade Area
GNP	Gross National Product
GSP	Generalised System of Preferences
HDI	Human Development Index
ICCO	Association for Development Co-operation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPRs	Intellectual Property Rights
LDCs	Less Developed Countries
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MFN	Most Favoured Nations
NIEO	New International Economic Order
NT	National Treatment
PACP	Pacific ACP Group
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
RoO	Rules of Origin
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SYSMIN	<i>Système de Développement du Potentiel Minier</i>
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programmes
SIA	Sustainability Impact Assessment
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures
STABEX	<i>Système de Stabilisation des Recettes d'Exportation</i>
TBT	Technical Barriers of Trade

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides an explanation of the research at hand in relation to what EPAs are and how they tie into some of the background of Africa and the European Union (EU)'s past trade and economic relations, and how these have affected Africa's regional integration. These relations stem from Africa and the EU's post-colonial history. The background and logical basis of exploring EU-Africa relations within the context of EPAs will be developed in the next section, and this will be accompanied by the aims of the study. Next, the scope and significance of the research will be discussed so as to demonstrate the extent through which the EPAs have been explored in this research and why these parameters are important. Lastly, a report to display the organisation of the chapters in this study is provided.

### **1.1 Background**

Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), which are proposed trade and economic policies between the EU and Africa's Regional Economic Communities (RECs) mandate 80% trade liberalisation as a prerequisite for African countries to enjoy the full benefits of access to the European market. They also provide a stimulus of development aid in order to circumvent the negative outcomes of market liberalisation. However, African countries still need to lower their trade barriers in line with WTO standards when implementing EPAs (Krapohl and Van Huut, 2020). In this regard, it is important to note that the economic landscape of developing RECs in Africa is very different from those of the greatly developed regions such as the EU (Fink, 2017; Krapohl and Fink, 2013). Therefore, it is vital to explore the exact implications of the trade and economic partnerships, embodied in the EU proposed EPAs, on Africa's RECs. In this regard, the specific African exports to the EU play an essential role as they serve as one variable which can depict whether there could be any possible losses and/or gains for African RECs from the implementation of EPAs. Accompanying, this are the specific policies of EPAs and how they hinder regional integration in Africa and its prospects to grow beyond where it currently is. Therefore, we can finally ascertain whether the implemented EPAs and their accompanying impact are good or bad for Africa's regional relations and integration.

Economically strong developing countries within the global south largely depend on the export of a few commodities to developed regions such as Europe, while importing a lot of manufactured goods. Consequently, neighbouring economically weaker states are not industrially developed enough to absorb the commodities from the economically strong states. A lot of these commodities are oil and gas. Thus, extra-regional trade has a lot more significance than intra-regional trade for and within RECs. However, there are still significant differences between small and large African countries as those larger African states are able to absorb the exports of smaller neighbouring countries because their markets can accommodate them. Thus, the export destination of the large countries is the Western world (Fink, 2017; Muntzschick, 2017). The resultant pattern of trade among African states, especially within RECs is thus a hub-and-spoke. Kenya in East Africa, Nigeria in West Africa, and South Africa in Southern Africa are the hubs of trade networks within their regions; while their smaller neighbours are the spokes. In this regard, intra-regional trade is important for the smaller states (Krapohl and Van Huut, 2020). This disproportionality in economic clout has been exacerbated by the trade agreements between the EU and African countries through which some states within the latter continent have more privileged access to the European market while others do not. Therefore, tensions were created within African countries with regards to reaching a certain level of regional economic integration and development.

Some of the reasons as to why this tension exists are that the EU's external trade policy treats African countries differently based on their economic potentials (Woolcock, 2014). When exporting to the EU, African countries are confronted with different trade regimes: oil exports from some African countries do not face tariffs within the European market, and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) had free access to the European market as long as they complied with the Everything-but-Arms (EBA) initiative; which allowed them to export anything to the EU market provided it was not ammunition (see Vollmer, 2009). In this regard, some African countries who met the above criteria experienced extra-regional privileges (Krapohl, 2017; Krapohl et al, 2014), while other states did not. Having privilege within the EU market has resulted in a number of economically powerful African countries not having interest in building and maintaining RECs because they already have access to a bigger market than Africa. Thus, they are not in need of access to the markets of their neighbouring

countries. Hence, they do not make much of an effort to establish good intra-regional trade links. For instance, Nigeria's main export is crude oil and none of its neighbours within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) imports this commodity. Since Nigeria can export crude oil without experiencing any tariffs, it is privileged whenever it trades this commodity within the EU market. In this regard, Nigeria has been dragging its feet when it comes to building the ECOWAS REC on the basis of implementing the EPAs. This is due to the fact that these African countries want to minimize competition within the EU market since the adoption of EPAs would result in the enforcement of reciprocal trade liberalisation at 80% (Krapohl and Van Huut, 2020).

Thus, large privileged African countries seemed to move further away from RECs, especially in relation to the initial stages of the adoption of EPAs. In addition, the original RECs which are recognised by the AU were divided by the EU, and new regional groupings which encompassed some countries which did not originally belong to those RECs are grouped together (see Nyomakwa-Obimpeh, 2017; Akokpari, 2017). Evidently, the introduction of EPAs is pushing African states away from regional integration, and in particular the goal of building strong RECs within Sub-Saharan Africa.

Regionalism in Africa is important because it brings about stability, especially in relation to interregional trade negotiations. RECs represent bigger markets than individual states; therefore they are in a better position to negotiate good trade deals with a body such as the EU since they have leverage over a larger territory and all the resources which their trading partner desires from this region (Mattheis & Wunderlich, 2017; Krapohl, 2017). In this regard, good regional cooperation leads to economic and political weight of African states as this increases their negotiating power in extra-regional negotiations such as the EPA negotiations. Thus, the rewards are improved access to the EU market, and better protection over domestic markets. In addition, RECs are able to usher in more political stability in the region and within the borders of individual member states. This is an advantage as these regions become more attractive to invest in (Mattheis & Wunderlich, 2017).

Unfortunately, the individual extra-regional deals a lot of African countries have struck with other entities pose a major obstacle to region building and steady economic integration within Africa, as these states are distracted and focus is shifted from the needs of the whole to individual needs. Henceforth, research on whether EPAs have ushered in growth in terms of regional economic integration is an important one to undertake in this study.

## **1.2 Rationale of the study and Research Question**

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Africa has almost always come from Western countries; the EU and the US. Unfortunately FDI has mostly been resource-seeking (Kaulihowa & Adjasi, 2018; Draper, 2007), thus, not stimulating economic diversification within African countries. Consequently, this poses problems for regional integration in sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, the FDI from Western countries reinforces commodity dependency of African exports, which results in capital intensive investments that do not end up in any profits being reinvested into the local economy as these are shipped offshore to the countries of origin (see Kaulihowa & Adjasi, 2018). This has resulted in the vested interest of powerful Multinational Corporations (MNC) – most of whom originate from Europe – whose aim is to extract African resources, even at the cost of domestic manufacturing interests. Thus exacerbating the lack of industrial diversification in Sub-Saharan Africa (Draper, 2007). Of course this situation is a symptom of European colonial legacies through which industries were developed for primary product extraction and exports which met Western needs, instead of building industries which would develop local markets (Draper, 2007). Moreover, Sub-Saharan Africa has been featured into the international market through preferential access to the EU – first through the Lomé Conventions and, most recently, the Cotonou Agreement – as a primary exporter of commodities and an importer of much more expensive manufactured goods and services (see Zimelis, 2011). This is not only reflective of colonial legacies, but also a comparative advantage for the EU (Draper, 2007); given the fact that the loss in import revenues incurred from raw African imports is offset by the higher export revenues of the finished goods exported to Africa and other developing countries. While African markets, especially budding industries, remain insignificant (particularly in comparison with the global market), disjointed and mostly geared towards subsistence production, European market

production continues to grow. Furthermore, the EU market has the potential to grow even further through the EPAs which require market liberalisation from sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore, the EPAs allow the EU to maximise its export gains as it has not only requested access to the African market for material products, but also for government tenders and services which would allow European companies equal competition within domestic markets (see McDonald et al., 2013).

Hence, the question which comes to the fore is what impacts will the adopted EPAs have on regional economic integration - which is dependent on thriving African industries - to be able to succeed? Do EPAs improve economic capacities of African regions, thus fostering regional economic cooperation and integration? These are the reasons for pursuing this research, in addition to answering the research question: "Have EPAs promoted or hindered Africa's regional integration?" It is also essential to find out what the long-term implications of EPAs on Africa's regional economic integration could be, especially in relation to the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

### **1.3 Aims**

The aim of this study is to answer the question on whether EPAs have hindered or promoted regional integration in Africa, and to explore the extent to which this may be true and/or false. This will be achieved through a thorough literature study. There are a number of other relevant questions which are essential to explore in order to satisfy all the aspects of this research. These accompanying questions are:

1. Have EPAs helped the promotion of regional integration in Africa?
2. What are the negative impacts of EPAs on regional integration in Africa?
3. Are there any positive contributions of EPAs on Africa's regionalism?

### **1.4 Scope and Significance of the Study**

The study looks at the positive and the negative impacts of EPAs on the African ideal of regional economic integration through the theories of Neofunctionalism and New Regionalism, as well as the conceptual frameworks grounded in New Regionalism such as: Open Regionalism, The WIDER Approach, Regionalism from Below (New

Regionalisms), and the External Guarantors Model. “Africa” will be used interchangeably with “sub-Saharan Africa”, but the reader must understand that intentional focus has been given to sub-Saharan Africa, as North Africa has entered into its own separate trade agreements with the EU.

This study will better demonstrate what the prospects are for Africa’s economic future within its RECs under the adjustments made through EPAs. The impact on Africa’s intra-regional trade and cooperation; levels of unemployment; poverty eradication; industrialisation and skills development are significant in understanding the growth prospects or hindrances for regional socio-economic progress and economic integration brought on by EPAs. Since Africa has a large pool of human capital, it is important for the continent to harness this resource through skills development which can be used in industrial advancements. This can build the eagerness for intra-continental and intra-regional trade as finished products from raw materials can easily be manufactured either within commodity producing or neighbouring countries. A noteworthy benefit to this is that Africa will no longer suffer as much brain drain as it does currently as more educated professionals will also use the opportunities available for entrepreneurship and private sector development, which in turn advance regional trade links and integration. In the end, African countries would not find themselves in situations where they have to enter into compliance dependent development aid and trade agreements which have them stuck in cycles of relying on the export of a few commodities. It is for this reason that this study is an important one to undertake. By unveiling some of the negative impacts of EPAs which are already taking place on regional integration as well as some of the possible future negative impacts, this study throws caution to extra-continental agreements which repress regional economic growth and cooperation, particularly in the age of the AfCFTA.

## **1.5 Chapter Organisation**

Chapter one comprises of the introduction, the background, the rationale of the study and research question, the aims, the scope and significance of the study and chapter organisation. In chapter two, a theoretical or conceptual framework will be explored. These are theories of regionalism. Chapter three looks at EU-Africa trade relations prior to the EPAs. Specifically, these are the conventions before the proposal of EPAs, and a brief introduction of what EPAs are. In chapter four an exploration of the impact

of EPAs on Africa's regional integration is made. In this chapter, the discussion focuses on an in depth explanation of what EPAs are, and the negative and positive aspects of EPAs on Africa's regional integration including the AfCFTA. Lastly, chapter five will be where a summary of the key arguments made in the thesis will be given, and recommendations will be offered.

## **CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL/CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS**

### **Introduction**

The study of regionalism welcomes a myriad of perspectives which propose the ways in which regional integration can be achieved. In this chapter, focus will be on the ways in which scholars have attempted to understand regional integration within International Relations. This entails the display of the theory of Neofunctionalism, and some conceptual lenses which have been used, especially stemming from the umbrella of New Regionalism theory. In particular, Open Regionalism, The WIDER Approach, Regionalism from Below (New Regionalisms), as well as the External Guarantors Model will be explored. These concepts stem from the new era of regional integration, also called 'the second wave', which gained momentum after the Cold War (Lee, 2003).

### **2.1 Neofunctionalist Theory**

This theory emerged as a product of new social scientific thinking which was prevalent after the Second World War. This thinking was premised on the behavioural movement, which sought to analyse political behaviour and processes. It evolved in the 1950s and 1960s. The leading theorist of Neofunctionalism is Ernst Haas, and he was followed by Leon Lindberg. This theory emerged as a way of theorising about and building the European Community (EC), stemming from the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) (Rosamond, 2000).

Firstly, Neofunctionalists hold that there should be agency within the integration process (Rosamond, 2000). The process to integrate by actors is more important than outcomes, and this is reflected in actors who are pursuing their own interests within a political environment of a pluralistic nature. Secondly, Neofunctionalists presuppose politics to be a group activity. In this case, Neofunctionalism is a pluralistic theory, which perceives society as made up of diverse interests which drive themselves into distinct groups (Lindberg, 1963). These groups then compete for their values to be accommodated within decision-making processes for the benefit of having an influence over policy outcomes. A further assumption of Neofunctionalism is that the pluralistic nature of states can be transplanted from the domestic level onto the

supranational level. Meaning that within an international organisation, states can attain similar procedures to those attained from a domestic political system (Heathcote, 1975). The accumulation of the behaviour of the groups on the international level would create actions which would result in a system. These groups' motives are based on self-interest. However, once integration takes place their attitudes and motives will be altered, and they will become more loyal to the supranational authority, than their domestic governments (Haas, 1964). Lindberg (1963) further points out that these groups could modify their tactics and political organisation in order to gain access into the core policymaking centres. Furthermore, regional-level institutions would need direct access to societal groups through mechanisms which go beyond national governments in order for integration processes to take place. Another assumption of Neofunctionalism is that welfare and material needs are a priority with regards to their issues being met, and no longer those of traditional domestic political actors (Rosamond, 2000).

Furthermore, the Neofunctionalist logic assumes that after two or more states agree to integrate in a specific economic sector, they appoint a supranational bureaucracy for more efficiency (Rosamond, 2000). While integration in that relevant sector is being achieved, the full breadth of advantages of integration are not being achieved until equivalent economic sectors are integrated as well. In this case, the former sector being integrated, births functional linkage pressure for subsequent sectors to also integrate. Rosamond (2000) highlights other automatic processes of the Neofunctionalist logic. The first one is that transactions between states are automatically increased because of economic integration. Secondly, new interest groups tend to arise at the regional level because of the group attributes of politics. At the same time, the supranational authority evolves into a crucial sponsor of further integration by advocating for the advantages of integration, and sponsoring new regional-level interest groups which will be its strong allies (Rosamond, 2000).

Lindberg (1963) elaborates on the hypotheses of Neofunctionalism. His stance is that certain conditions need to be present prior to the commencement of the integration process. To begin with, there needs to be central policies and institutions. Secondly, the institutions should be given the authority to initiate economic and social processes, making their mandate far broader than those of an international organisation. Third, there needs to be expansive tasks assigned to institutions; in this way, they attract

more actors into their political realm. Lastly, there would need to be some congruence between the interests of the participant states as well as the new institution's project and policies.

The most important idea to Neofunctionalists was the idea of "spillover". By this they meant that once a specific economic sector integrates, this will trickle into another sector and further integration would happen in that new sector (Haas, 1968). This is mostly due to the fact that for integration in the first sector to operate optimally, it would need integration in a cognate sector. For instance, as the coal and steel industry of the Western European countries integrated, there was a general understanding that there needed to be integration in another sector. In this case, integrating the transport sector would be ideal for moving products across nation borders (Rosamond, 2000). The spillover hypothesis was used to explain Europe's transition from the ECSC to the Economic and Monetary Union. Proponents of the theory perceived the decision to build a free trade area, as something which would catalyse the creation of a customs union, a common market and a monetary union (Rosamond, 2000). However, in the 1960s the idea of spillover was refined because of the critique which was posed to it, being that it seemed to assume an automatic and linear progression to integration (Rosamond, 2000). In this case, Haas and Lindberg offered different perceptions of functional imperatives. For Haas functional imperatives were binding agents to elite actors, whereas, Lindberg understood that by their involvement in the process, actors ignited political pressures for greater integration (Rosamond, 2000). In essence, if businesses perceive an imminent creation of a monetary union within a region, then they start preparing for this even before state officials have legitimately put it into place. This puts pressure on the officials to approve of this move, especially as they see the economy reacting positively to this move through investment opportunities which are already being directed towards the common market. This is what happened in the UK during the late 1990s, and it is how the euro-zone came about (Rosamond, 2000). Consequently, interest-driven actors are the ones who create functional linkages that result in integration (Rosamond, 2000).

The most pressing question is whether Neofunctionalism is applicable to other parts of the world. Haas (1961) identified several background factors which made it possible for European integration. These are: extensive economic and industrial development, pluralistic social structures and similar ideologies between actors. He further states

that it might not be possible for other regions of the world to imitate the success of the EU if they have vastly different environmental factors (Haas, 1961). What Haas failed to account for is the fact that patterns of integration cannot be restricted under one umbrella of progression. Factors which are specific to other regions are what can facilitate the different progressions of regional integration within those contexts. Rosamond (2000) agrees that the endeavour to generalise the theorisation of integration is erroneous. Perhaps this is exactly what has been problematic in the adoption of regional integration in Africa. Often the ideal has been to mimic European integration, yet Africa's background and historical factors are different to those of Europe. The attempt to fit a square peg in a round hole has robbed Africa of its ability to exercise its region-specific patterns of integration.

Given this demonstration that Neofunctionalism cannot be universal, it is imperative to point out that some of the assumptions of the theory are also insufficient for general applicability. The idea that actors will pledge their allegiances to a supranational body once integration has taken place is negligent of the fact that most actors highly embrace nationalistic values. They identify with a unit of authority which they can see, especially one with an aspect of sovereignty (Lodge, 1978). In this regard, large regional bodies may remain invisible to citizens of sovereign states (Rosamond, 2000), therefore willing no loyalties towards themselves. Furthermore, Rosamond (2000) argues that states may view integration as an encroachment to their governments, particularly because of the expectation that they would have to yield power to a supranational body. This is the case for regional integration in Africa. African leaders have been reluctant of deeper integration which would require them to yield more power to their regional bodies, and the AU, out of fear of losing control over their states, especially state resources.

In the next section, the theory of New Regionalism as well as its accompanying concepts are reviewed.

## **2.2 New Regionalism Theory**

Firstly, the evolution of regionalism finds its roots in 1957 when the European Economic Community (EEC) was created. Along with it "old" regionalism was also created as a response to the threat of the Soviet union (Lee, 2003). Therefore, by creating a united Europe, the Soviet threat would be mitigated. In this regard, the US

gave support to regionalism in Western Europe, even though they had an antipathy towards it (Wyatt-Walter, 2000). The US offered to continue to assist Western Europe under the condition that trading blocs were created, and were accompanied by lower intra-regional trade barriers (Gilpin, 2000). Unfortunately, integration in Western Europe slowed down, and this resulted in the failure of the first wave. Thus, regionalisation was suspended from around the mid-1970s to 1989 (Lee, 2003).

However, during the post-Cold War era, regionalism re-emerged; and this was called “new regionalism”. This resurgence was owing to the multipolar system due to the end of the Cold War; the decline of the US as a hegemon; a rise in globalisation, and enhanced democratisation (Wyatt-Walter, 2000; Fawcett, 2000). In addition, the US’s neglect of multilateralism and its support of regionalism is what gave rise to the resurgence of regionalism (Gilpin, 2000). The US’s support was a reaction to the slow pace taken towards the finalisation of trade liberalisation within the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) (Lee, 2003). In this regard, regionalism was a more attractive option for trade liberalisation as opposed to multilateralism in the face of the delayed GATT. Consequently, the US also opted for the creation of free trade agreements (FTAs) with its neighbours; Canada and Mexico. These being: the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement (CUSTA) in 1989; and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) among itself, Canada and Mexico in 1993 (Lee, 2003). As regionalism was growing in the West, Lee (2003) also records that this resurgence was also due to the growing interest in regional integration of countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the former Soviet Union, and Central and Eastern Europe.

Multitudes of governments (and in most cases liberation movements) in developing countries were intrigued by the EEC. In the 1960s and early 1970s Asian, Latin American and African countries adopted Import-substitution Industrialisation (ISI) at the regional level, as a way to participate in regional integration (Lee, 2003). Moreover, the envisaged potential of the adoption of FTAs and customs unions as a means to facilitate regional development was at the core of these projects. As noted, unfortunately, the first wave of regionalism failed; the EEC (today the European Union), and the European Free Trade Area (ETFA) being the only ones which stood the test of time (until most recently).

Despite the suspension of worldwide regionalisation in the mid 1970s and 1989, African countries' cause for this project continued as they saw regional integration as a means to political liberation from colonial rule (Lee, 2003). Through regionalisation African states could achieve post-colonial political consolidation within the regional economic organisations; thus having leverage in negotiations with western powers (McCarthy, 1999). In 1958 at the All-African People's Conference, regionalism was on the agenda as a strategy to combat the problems caused by the fact that African economies were so small. Regionalism was adopted as an integral part of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) when it was formed in 1963. This was followed by the adoption of the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA), in order to reinforce the necessity of regionalism. The LPA's goal was that by the year 2000, an African common market will have been created (Lee, 2003). In addition, economic integration at the continental level was supposed to be instigated through sub-regional integration through which a stage by stage facilitation by sub-regional economic bodies would occur. Firstly, Free Trade Areas (FTAs) were supposed to be implemented, followed by common markets, and lastly economic unions (Lyakurwa et al., 1997). Since Sub-Saharan Africa was supposed to be divided into Central, Western, and Eastern and Southern, there are regional bodies which were created in this regard: the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS); the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); and the Preferential Trade Area for Eastern and Southern Africa, later transformed into the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). ECCAS and ECOWAS were meant to facilitate regionalism in their regions respectively. In 1991 the Abuja Treaty was proposed as another form of regional strategy. Through it the African Economic Community (AEC) was created and ratified by African heads of state in 1994. The expectation has been that the AEC would come into existence in 2025 (Lee, 2003). The AEC adopted the LPA model for region-building; thus requiring sub-regional bodies to be precursors to the community's success of African economic integration (Lee, 2003; Lyakurwa et al., 1997). The different types of New Regionalism have been discussed below, and the first look will be given to Open Regionalism.

### 2.3 Open Regionalism

This concept holds that regionalism is a channel for greater globalisation/multilateralism; therefore resulting in the enactment of policies which promote the movement of services and goods across both national and regional frontiers (Oman, 1994). The world is divided into three trading blocs according to Open Regionalism. These being Europe, Asia and North America. The conceptualisation is done through the neo-liberal economics context; and with it there are three distinct features. The first one is that trade agreements are not limited to only the export and import of goods, but extend to trade in services, capital and labour flows, common standards of regulatory regimes and the harmonisation of domestic policies. Secondly, the agreements between developed and less developed states are based on a relationship of reciprocity and not one-way unilateral preferences. Third, customs unions and FTAs must focus on the liberalisation of national markets, and steer states towards trade strategies which are outward-oriented (Odén, 1999). This approach is the 'neo-liberal market integration', as the ultimate goal for it is global liberalisation. In this sense, the World Bank did not deem it beneficial for states, especially developing states, to form regional bodies.

Regional integration in Africa has been greatly impacted by the neo-liberal paradigm since the early 1980s (Lee, 2003). African governments were forced to adopt neo-liberal policies which came under the guise of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs)<sup>1</sup>, which were implemented by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. For the West neo-liberalism was the doctrine to steer the world economy and this included forcing developing countries to get with the program. In this regard, African countries had to adopt unilateral trade liberalisation in compliance with the World Bank. This allowed the states the ability to open up their markets for the free movement of goods and services. However, at a detriment to intra-regional trade in Africa. Trade did increase for core countries as they swarmed the African markets with their cheaper produce. Consequently, while core countries' industries grew, those of African countries were severely stifled, resulting in closures (Lee, 2003). In addition, the IMF and the World Bank, opposed the market integration since it would have been

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<sup>1</sup> SAPs "are economic policies for developing countries that have been promoted by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) since the early 1980s by the provision of loans conditional on the adoption of such policies." (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, 2020)

contradictory to the aims of the neo-liberal perspective; being market competition and enhanced efficiency.

By the early 1990s market integration was conversely supported by these institutions as they now accepted the perspective of African leaders that market liberalisation would be better for African countries at the regional level instead of through unilateral market liberalisation on the global level. Unfortunately, the institutions supported this in concept but not in practice (Lee, 2003). Therefore, African states have continued to find themselves competing with industrialised Western countries.

For a concept of regional integration, Open Regionalism really fails to accommodate the main function of its title "Regionalism". Its proponents ignore the fact that as a concept of regionalism, it is supposed to support and promote regional integration, not only in developed countries, but also in developing states. Unfortunately, what this approach demonstrates are the asymmetries which are enshrined within the international system, especially as it relates to trade and the economy. African countries operate within the Bretton Woods system (housing the World Bank and IMF), whose inception was by 45 Western powers after the Second World War as a way to avoid the financial crisis experienced during the Great Depression (The World Bank, 2020). This system was founded in 1944, while Africa was still under colonial rule by Western European states, some of the founders of the Bretton Woods Agreement. In this regard, it is imprudent to assume that this system would put Africa's regional economic needs at the forefront of its agenda, even though it opened up membership to include developing countries. This is evident in the very reason of its inception as, "the World Bank's initial aim was to help rebuild European countries devastated by World War II" (The World Bank, 2020). In addition to the surveillance the IMF puts over the international monetary system and the monitoring of financial policies of member states (International Monetary Fund, 2020), the Bretton Woods system has used this surveillance to be able to advance neo-liberal policies which have served the founding countries.

Unfortunately, the monitoring of the financial policies of member countries went to the extent of forcing African countries to adopt Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) as a pre-requisite to the attainment of loans from the IMF (Lee, 2003). These programs required African countries to liberalise their markets, to remove import subsidies and trade barriers, as well as to halt protectionist policies. In this sense, African states had

to open their markets for highly industrialised Western countries to export their finished goods, while they could not protect and subsidise their infant industries (see Lee, 2003). It is disingenuous for scholars of 'Open Regionalism' to attempt to label it as a concept of regional integration. Based on the negative implications it has had on regional integration in Africa, Open Regionalism does not seem to qualify as a valid concept for region-building. By the 1990s more scholars within the field of new regionalism theorised about the appropriate lenses through which one should study regionalism, thus offering alternatives to Open Regionalism. The concept of the WIDER Approach by the UN University follows this trend.

## **2.4 The WIDER Approach**

The World Institute for Development Economics Research (WIDER) in Helsinki, at the UN University, embarked on a new regionalism project. The aim of the project was to study the phenomenon of worldwide regionalisation that reached beyond the parameters of classical integration theory (Hettne, 1999b). Cultural, social, political and economic issues were to be given precedence within the integration project as they reflect the "multidimensional process of regional integration" (Hettne, 1999a). Thus, the concept is a full package and not just a single policy. Hettne (1999a) argues that there is a structural change which has arisen on the global level, and this entails regionalism and globalisation. Therefore, he perceives new regionalism as an alternative to globalisation, and a phenomenon which could be a catalyst to 'deglobalisation'. In this sense, the turbulence and market disorder of the globalised world which permeates both the domestic and international level can be corrected by regionalism (Hettne et al., 1999). After all, a regionalised world is an attractive alternative to Hettne (1999b) than a globalised one; and this is of importance because the former will be the result of a multipolar global system. Hettne (1994) further argues that the EU is the ideal model for new regionalism as it happens to be the most advanced regional community in the world.

In addition, Hettne (1994) maintains that economic issues are secondary to political ones. The entities in the forefront of regional integration should be the constituent states and other actors, instead of superpowers. In this regard, regionalism will be created from below and not from above. Instead of only focusing on relations within a single region, this concept also concerns itself with relations between single regions,

thus making it what its proponents consider to be a world order concept (Hettne, 1999a). Consequently, the manner in which the world is configured will be shaped by the regionalisation process. Meaning, the power structure will be such that the core is divided into two, between the centre and periphery, thus resulting in a different power structure of only core and peripheral regions (Hettne, 1999a). Hettne (1999b) adds that peripheral regions need to become more regionalised so as to overcome their cycles of political instability and economic stagnation. Unlike the peripheral regions, the core states are able to exert control in international relations because of their dynamic economies and stable political systems. In this regard, peripheral states will need to abate disintegration and economic stagnation or decline by forming regional bodies (Hettne, 1999b).

Lähteenmäki and Käkönen (1999) on the other hand posit that new regionalism does not have to be subregional co-operation initiated by supra-national actors and states, but should be co-operation generated from below. An example is the 'Four Motors of Europe' which is an agreement forged by Rhône Alps in France, Baden-Württemberg in Germany, Catalonia in Spain, and Lombardy in Italy. These are four European cities who voluntarily chose to co-operate (Lähteenmäki and Käkönen, 1999).

Conversely, Amin (1999) argues that periphery states (particularly those in Africa and the Arab world) forming large integration regions is essentially what new regionalism should entail. These regions will effectively respond to the mounting polarisation resulting from globalisation. Ultimately, the global system will be restructured and the developing world will be less polarised (Amin, 1999).

The main critiques of the WIDER Approach come from its own proponents. One critique is that the approach is ambiguous and does not have a clear definition (Mistry, 1999; Odén, 1999). Since its points of departure are so far apart, it is not possible to have a meaningful debate about it (Lähteenmäki and Käkönen, 1999). There is also a gap in the methodology to enable one to capture and explain the costs and benefits of regionalism (Mistry, 1999). Moreover, the strategy used to articulate the benefits are elusive. Mistry (1999) notes that the new regionalism is criticised for not being based on reason, but rather on emotion. It also lacks analytical incisiveness as it places attention on rhetorical articulation (Mistry, 1999).

Other critics of the concept have argued that it is Eurocentric and results in a biased comprehension of regionalism (Mittelman, 1999; Marchand et al., 1999). The EU, the model which Hettne (1994) proposes as the regional body which best operationalises this concept, is ironically far from what new regionalism proposes. Neo-classical economics configured as market integration theory are at the core of unity within the EU. The state is also the key actor, resulting in regionalism being created from above and not from below. Moreover, economic integration takes precedence over politics (Lee, 2003).

Lähteenmäki and Kähkönen (1999) make a compelling argument against the involvement of supra-national actors in the region-building process. Having big states and institutions such as the EU at the helm of regional economic integration in Africa is obstructive to the initial, and often pressing reasons African states are choosing to regionalise. The agenda becomes mired within Western policies and politics which bring about a disunity between governments and the civil society. These policies and subsequent aspects will be expounded in the following chapter.

For a concept which argues that the cultural, social, political and economic issues should be at the forefront of regional integration, it is astounding that the first proposed model for regional integration is the EU. The socio-economic and socio-political issues of any and every specific region in the world are suddenly dismissed for the purpose of adopting a model which has worked well for European countries, thus neglecting the fact that the reality of these states is far different from those of African states. Indeed, the EU might be the most advanced regional institution, however, that does not qualify it as the blueprint for regional economic integration.

## **2.5 Regionalism from Below (New Regionalisms)**

A big critique of the WIDER approach by new regionalists is that the concept negates the dynamic and complex aspects of regionalism. In this regard, regionalism should be perceived as a plural process (and not a singular one) encompassing myriads of overlapping, distinct and sometimes contradictory cooperation networks happening on a regional level (Marchand et al., 1999).

Therefore, Regionalism from below holds that those within the informal sector are the primary actors within the region-building process. This approach in the study of New

regionalism further holds that even though regionalisation might be a crucial part of globalisation, it can also be counterproductive, especially through the economic development strategy for instance. The second or underground economy can result in transborder activities, which are reflective of regionalism. Thus, an integral part of this approach is to merge both the informal and formal processes of regionalism. The informal networks and politics of trade, crime and smuggling are what Marchand et al. (1999) call informal regionalisms (regionalism from below). Its proponents argue that it is within the informal sector where the most amount of innovation, entrepreneurship and imagination take place, and not within the formal sector. Even though some of these activities might be illegal, they still count as part of the informal sector and should be taken into consideration.

In order for regionalism to succeed in the South, it is argued that the EU model of market integration should be rejected (Bøås et al., 1999). Moreover, regional organisations need to be in touch with the reality of both the formal and informal economy, thus reflecting the accurate economic reality of member countries. In this sense, the informal economy can be reattached to the formal economy within states in the South, thus resulting in what Bøås et al. (1999) propose African countries need to return to: a 'Back to Basics' strategy which deals with both informal and formal trading networks. Subsequently, informal cross-border trading networks should facilitate formal regional organisations (Bøås, 2001). Bøås (2001) further argues that the study and practice of regionalism should surpass the ineffectual state-centric approach.

A most prominent critique of regionalism from below is that it assumes informal cross-border trade to be an instrumental feature of authentic regionalism (Meagher, 2001). The argument that informal trading systems will be a more effective tool for economic integration is disputed, as these are directed by indigenous traders and only driven by the needs of people. Meagher (2001) argues that the concept of using the informal economy as an apparatus to formal regionalism in Africa has been tried before, however to no progressive change. Moreover, the concept has its roots in anti-regionalist neoliberal ideologies from the late 1980s and early 1990s. These Neoliberals argued that regionalism from below was beneficial to garner domestic support for neoliberal policies, thus it was promoted for the purposes of neoliberal trade liberalisation. It was also promoted under the banner of food security in

Francophone West Africa (Meagher, 2001). Unfortunately, instead of promoting liberalisation, food security, and integration, the neoliberal quest of integration from below only resulted in criminal activities such as corruption, rent-seeking, the plunder of natural resources, drug trafficking and violent conflict. Its implications were disastrous both economically and politically; to the extent where those pursuing the neoliberal agenda have abandoned the quest.

The informal networks, which are remnants of the neoliberal integration from below, have undermined the formal regional agenda of states as they have failed to promote industrial development, regional agricultural production, and inter-Africa trade (instead of import-export trade). They have also posed dire consequences for communities as they have challenged states' legitimacy, states' territorial control and fiscal capacity (Meagher, 2001; Bach, 1999). Meagher (2001) further critiques regionalism from below by stating that informal cross-border trade erodes the prerequisites for regional integration and halts potential productive investments. Bach (1999) agrees with Meagher (2001)'s critique, and they further agree that cross-border regionalism does not promote regional integration. Moreover, trans-state regionalism is said to be too limited to be an avenue for the facilitation of formal cooperation pursuits (Bach, 1999). Meagher (2001) suggests that state involvement is crucial. This means that African states need to be strengthened in order to birth better governments which can effectively coordinate all local, domestic and regional interests; something which was not achieved by informal trade and liberalisation (Meagher, 2001).

Meagher (2001)'s critique of regionalism from below seems to be heavily focused on the failed attempts by the Neoliberal agenda of promoting regional integration for the purpose of market liberalisation. One cannot ignore the significant role which informal trading networks play in Africa, especially with regards to how they integrate different populaces. It is important to note that some of the failures of regional integration on Africa are due to the lack of involvement from civil society. African governments' exclusion of the very communities who are consumers of the goods being traded through regional economic integration is a big flaw in the regional integration agenda, because a lack of buy-in from the general public results in a lack of motivation for governments to follow through with their commitments. When communities are involved in the regional integration agenda, and there is transparency regarding the potential benefits from this quest, they are more likely to put pressure on their

governments to initiate and commit to the final goal. In addition, trust between governments and the civil society can be built, particularly within a continent where corruption has eroded this moral value. Therefore, regionalism from below, outside of the umbrella of Neoliberal market policies, is an attractive agenda to pursue. Indeed, the results from what was a duplicitous attempt of regionalism from below by Neoliberals are disheartening, but one should be careful not to be disingenuous in their critique and analysis of what Marchand et al. (1999) and Bøås et al. (1999) are proposing.

In addition, the proposal which Bøås et al. (1999) make that states should reject the EU model and have an honest analysis of both their formal and informal economies reigns true to what regional integration should be about. Regional integration should be modelled to fit the unique cultural, regional, and normative practices of an area. The point is to harness economic benefits which will extend far beyond a single territorial unit, but will expand to territories within a given geographical location; Africa being that location of interest within this research. Therefore, in order to get the most benefits out of Africa's region-building agenda, one cannot transplant a model which works for Western states with different economic realities onto Africa.

Meagher (2001) is correct in suggesting that African governments need to be strengthened in order to meet every interest at every level of governance. However, in order to meet these interests, some aspects of regionalism from below will have to be applied. Specifically, these are paying special attention to the informal economy which drives trade within the specific local and domestic markets. Coordination of all local, domestic and regional interests cannot neglect the economic interests of civil society; meaning the informal trading networks which hold together the informal economy need to be included within the quest of strengthening African governments for the benefits of regional economic integration.

## **2.6 External Guarantors Model**

Those advocating for this model argue that African states should be placed under the supervision of an external body as an instrument to achieve regional integration (Lee, 2003). They further state that in order to strengthen macroeconomic stability and to inhibit the reversal of economic reforms, relevant mechanisms need to be put in place. It has been noted that with respect to the latter, African governments have not been

forced by the World Bank, IMF and the global donor community to preserve economic reform policies; a lot of which were employed under SAPs. In this regard, macroeconomic stability has been intangible because most policy reforms were reversed. Therefore, proponents of the External Guarantors Model argue that if policies were rooted within their proposed model and accompanied by reciprocal agreements, then macroeconomic stability could be achieved (Collier & Gunning, 1999).

It is perceived that powerful foreign governments would act as a form of restraint for African governments as they would enforce reform policies and impose penalties on governments for rescindment of agreements or corruption (Helleiner, 1999). The final goal of the policy is to get African governments to follow-through on their economic reforms, thus reflecting greater accountability. It is predicted that the containment of malfeasance, enforcement of agreements and structures put in place to ensure the non-reversal of incentives will lead to greater assurance to the international community that there is macroeconomic stability within African countries. Consequently, Helleiner (1999) argues that these countries would have an enhanced investment climate.

The external guarantor proposed for Africa is the EU. An example of this model being used in Africa is within the CFA franc zone where France is the external guarantor (Fine & Yeo, 1997). There was formation of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) in 1993 by France in coalition with Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Mali, Guinea-Bissau, Niger, Togo and Senegal (Lee, 2003). France also formed the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CAEMC) in coalition with Central African Republic, Cameroon, Gabon, Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Chad. Both these economic regional blocs are housed under the African Financial Community franc, and the Central African Financial Cooperation franc respectively (Sylla, 2017). In this regard, these regional economic bodies make up the CFA franc zone. Thus, France has been an overseer in a lot of policies and economic activities of these countries. Fine & Yeo (1997), partisans to this concept, argue that because of an external guarantor, these countries within the CFA franc zone were able to garner new multilateral institutions, in addition to other deeper economic commitments France has made, such as the overseeing of macroeconomic policies. The downside to this agreement is that the *de facto* veto power on the boards of these CFA franc zones' central banks belongs to France (Sylla, 2017). Moreover, it has been argued

that the CFA franc has continuously destroyed the prospects of economic development as it has hindered structural transformation and industrialisation. Therefore, trade integration between member states, or bank lending to their economies have been stifled. WAEMU stood at 25% of credit-to-GDP ratio<sup>2</sup>, while the CAEMC stood at 13% in 2017. This is a significant difference to the 100%+ of South Africa during the same year (Sylla, 2017).

Unfortunately, Lee, (2003) argues that France covertly, continues to take the position of a colonial master over these states. Under these policies, France still has control over the economic stability of CFA franc zone states. In this regard, the economic growth and development of these states is of no priority to France (Lee, 2003). The external guarantors model also sends a message to African countries that they are incapable of handling their affairs and that the only solution is for these states to be recolonised. The idea of an external power overseeing the economic activities of African states robs them of their sovereignty over their RECs. This is a neo-colonial tool-kit masquerading as a concept of regionalism. Evidence is apparent in the WAEMU and CAEMC zones where the African states who are members have continued to serve France's monetary and fiscal needs, as there have been enormous capital outflows, most owing to the fact that the Bank of Central African States (BEAC) and the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO) are obliged to deposit half of their foreign exchange reserves into "a French treasury operating account" (Sylla, 2017). Conversely, there has not been much economic development as per the promises of the potential benefits of having an external guarantor. In fact Sylla (2017) demonstrates that, 11 of the 15 member states of the CFA franc are considered to be Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Unfortunately, being a member to the franc zone is also deleterious to the democratic rule of law as heads of state who have challenged the system and expressed the desire to withdraw have been jettisoned in exchange for compliant ones by France (Sylla, 2017), their external guarantor. What has been demonstrated by France's involvement as an external guarantor through the CFA franc zone are colonial practices which were established during colonial rule. The

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<sup>2</sup> Credit-to-GDP ratio is the amount of debt a country has in comparison to its gross domestic product (GDP) (Drehmann & Tsatsaronis, 2014)

exception to this being Togo and Equatorial Guinea who were not French colonies. France has managed to maintain political and economic control; which is exemplary of neo-colonial ties.

The external guarantors model is invariably a detriment to Africa's quest for regional economic integration, on multiple fronts; regional trade, innovation and industrialisation, and political autonomy. Instead of being a catalyst to regional integration and development, this concept stifles the economic endeavour.

## **Conclusion**

Regional integration welcomes unique perspectives, proposed by scholars, on how it can be achieved. These theories make distinct proposals on what states should do to achieve regional integration, some of which have proven, through critical analysis, not to be of much gain to regional institutions. Some of the proposals are indeed valuable. Such as the proposal made by Bøås et al. (1999) that Africa should reject the EU model and take an honest evaluation of both the informal and formal sector. Region-building should be geared towards operationalising it to fit African realities in order to get the most out of it. That is what this chapter highlighted; the importance of iterating Africa's potential exploits within regional integration where several theories govern the manner in which regionalism should take place. In this case, Neofunctionalism impedes on any region's ability to adapt integration based on its prevalent factors and unique processes. Open Regionalism also does not have any tangible benefits for Africa in the long run as it exposes the continent to harsh neoliberal policies which have already stifled the continent's economic growth potential. The WIDER Approach is very confusing in its analysis and does not do much to propose a good solution for regional integration in Africa. Instead it makes a proposal of using the EU as the yardstick for region building and as demonstrated above, that would be detrimental to African economies. Regionalisms from Below demonstrated an interplay between some aspects which can work within the African economy such as the analysis of both the formal and informal sector, and the rejection of the EU model. It goes without saying that the strengthening of African governments accompanied by the intentional accommodation of local, domestic and regional interests is a good suggestion by Meagher (2001), a critique of Regionalism from Below. Finally, the External Guarantors Model undermines the political will and political sovereignty of African

states by making bold proposals that an external guarantor would be the best solution for African countries. As demonstrated, this is reminiscent of neo-colonial practices. In order to understand what regional integration looks like for Africa within the international system, it truly has been important to explore the above theories and concepts of regional integration.

## **CHAPTER 3: EU-Africa Trade Relations**

### **Introduction**

The trade relations between the EU and Africa emerged from the call for decolonisation of African countries. After decolonisation, Europe wanted to continue to have access to the African market, so this was done through the establishment of trade and partnership agreements which would keep African countries in a system of economic dependency. Therefore, this chapter shall demonstrate the evolution of EU-Africa trade relations and how these created a breeding ground for EPAs. Firstly, a brief historical background of EU-Africa relations prior to decolonisation will be given. Then the chapter will take a look at the Yaoundé Conventions as they depict the onset of Europe's relationship with African countries exclusive of the previous colonial administration. Next, an exploration of the Lomé Conventions will be made. Finally, the Cotonou Agreement will be discussed, and this will be concluded with the introduction of EPAs. As it has been mentioned previously, the main focus of this study will be on sub-Saharan African states, however, specific organisations which encompass African, Caribbean and Pacific states which are former colonies of Europe will be highlighted as part of the broader discussion within this chapter and the one which follows.

European colonialism of Africa resulted in the underdevelopment of a continent which was already ahead of the tide at the time. Africa was home to empires which already had trade links with the Middle East and China (as Sino-Africa trade started in tenth century BC) (Mhango, 2018). Moreover, as early as the seventeenth century, Sahelian Kingdoms were trading gold; in addition to the gold trade of Ethiopia. In fact, upon arrival, some of the first Europeans on the continent discovered that gold business was already in operation in East and West Africa (Guerra, 2008). In addition, centuries prior to any European invasion, Africa had good infrastructure which supported its well established trade links and economic relations. The infrastructure spanned from the road networks constructed by the Bugandan state; the expansive Western Trans Saharan trade networks; to the route connecting the Swahili City States with the DRC and Zimbabwe (Mhango, 2018; Lydon, 2009; Wilson, 2012).

Unfortunately, some of the empires and kingdoms which were severely affected by colonialism and slave trade were already stable confederacies which were well advanced in comparison to the earliest European civilisations such as the Greek and Roman empires. These advanced African empires were the Meroë, Axum, Sudanese Nubian, Egypt and Kush empires (Blaut, 2012; Mhango, 2018). There also existed governments of the early African empires, namely: Mali, Luba-Lunda, Ashanti, Songhai, Ghana, Buganda, Mwenemutapa, the East African Coastal Swahili City States, Maravi and many more (Mhango, 2018). Demonstrating that African communities were independent and well organised even before European invasion. In addition, colonialism sought to break peaceful communities apart for the benefit of fitting people with no cultural connection into tribal cocoons. Thus, conflict ensued due to the misunderstandings between two different groups who did not relate with one another (Mhango, 2015). In fact, a number of wars in Africa have been aided by arms from Europe, whose intention has been to keep these states at war and without proper political institutions so that it would be easy for them to extract the raw resources under the guise of peacekeeping missions (Hahn, 2007; LeBaron and Ayers, 2013). By prolonging the cycle of conflict within Africa, Europe has been able to keep the supply of raw resources at relatively cheap fixed prices so as to develop their industrial arm which has helped to advance their economic clout (Mhango, 2018). Thus, Europe was able to gain a lead economically because of the capital gains it made from these practices. This especially left African states behind (Easterly and Levine, 2016). Bach (2011) argues that invariably, Europe also indebted Africa, and is using its position to portray a sense of 'partnership of equals' in its pseudo Afro-European trade agreements which are only further advancing the quest for African resources. As to whether the adoption of EPAs also proves this argument or not is an interest which this thesis seeks to uncover, and chapter 4 tracks a deeper journey of this economic partnership agreement.

Furthermore, colonialism also resulted in some tribal tensions within African states due to the fact that colonial masters divided communities along tribal lines and awarded each group of tribes different privileges; some more than others. The Rwandan genocide is an example of escalating tribal tensions which stemmed from colonialism (Samuelson and Freedman, 2010; Mamdani, 2014). Unfortunately, this pattern of tensions extends far beyond tribal divisions and into how individual African

states relate with each other. There are tensions and a lack of cooperation between Francophone and Anglophone states. This is usually demonstrated at African Union (AU) meetings at which Francophone countries always vote in coalition against a proposed Anglophone head of the AU (Mhango, 2018). In this regard, it is evident that tensions arise based on the origins of the former colonial powers who ruled over each individual African country. Therefore, colonialism dismantled even the very fabric of interstate cooperation, which is ideal in order to facilitate continental peace and economic growth. Everything was executed in a manner which resulted in Africa becoming a danger to itself, thus giving Europe the opportunity to perpetually exploit the former while its people are distracted by the wars they are fighting amongst themselves.

Clearly, Africa had established intra-continental trade through its road networks and gold trade. The continent was also thriving in its governance, confederacies and communities as a whole. Putting it at a higher footing in its legitimacy as a self-sufficient continent. However, with the arrival of slavery and colonialism, communities within this continent were dismantled, governments were destroyed and development was brought to a halt. The result of this is still felt today with tribal tensions, as well as allegiances of states to their former colonial masters at the expense of intra-regional and inter-continental growth. With growth of the continent, trade and regional economic integration can also grow. Unfortunately, the prolonged presence of European colonisers in the past and their continued influence on conflicts and tensions within the continent, have resulted in an Africa which is struggling to fully get its footing within the global economy as a thriving power. There are trade relations which the EU and Africa got into after colonialism, and these will shed a lot more light on EU-Africa relations prior to the introduction and adoption of EPAs.

### **3.1 The Yaoundé Conventions**

The Yaoundé Conventions were birthed at the heels of decolonisation. Through these conventions, FTAs between each “associate” country and the EEC were established (Montana, 2003). There were eighteen associate African and Malagasy states which formed the AAMS as the new negotiating body between the EEC and African and Caribbean states (European Commission, 2021; Montana, 2003). These states were former European (mainly French) colonies, namely: Mauritania, Côte d’Ivoire, Mali,

French-administered Senegal, Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, Congo-Brazzaville, the Central African Republic, Gabon, Togo, Cameroon, Rwanda, Belgian-administered DRC and Burundi, Madagascar and Italian-administered Somalia (SAIIA, 2017; Peterson & Virk, 2014). They had preferential access to the European Community Market (Drieghe, 2020).

Unfortunately, the Convention of Yaoundé was a continuation of the provisions under the Treaty of Rome, even though the association agreement was explicit in detailing that negotiations were taking place between eighteen sovereign states and the EEC, and not between former colonies and the EEC (Montana, 2003; Sakr, 2021). These provisions showcased what AAMS trade should look like as though the former colonies were still under colonial rule; limited AAMS states' sovereignty with regards to its trade and economic affairs; and enticed AAMS states to open their borders to European firms which would continue to have direct access to natural resources (see Part IV of Treaty Establishing the European Economic Community, 1957). However, some of the newly independent states did not perceive any drawbacks to Yaoundé I as they were hopeful about the potential growth resulting from independence, and their association with the EEC in building nation states and integrating their states into the global economy. Also reflective was the goal of economic integration on the global level which Yaoundé introduced through joint institutions (Montana, 2003).

The Yaoundé Convention's objectives took the form of general aspirations which were meant to address three areas of concern: to attract the newly independent AAMS countries, to circumvent criticism raised about the relationship, and to show that the convention adhered to the relevant international political norms (Montana, 2003). This made the objectives of the convention a lot more ostentatious than those of the Treaty of Rome Associates. Thus, the promotion of economic progress for all signatories became essential and the convention was no longer only focused on the promotion of social and economic development of the associates (Montana, 2003). Therefore, resulting in the perception that Yaoundé I could be a prelude to future interdependence (Montana, 2003). In contrast, some scholars, Farrell (2005) in particular, argue that in as much as the relationship seemed to have a democratic design, this was only an attempt to obfuscate the asymmetrical nature of the partnership.

Furthermore, Sakr (2021) contends that Part IV of the Treaty of Rome was based on the strategy to keep the former colonies dependent on the metropolises. This has been demonstrated in Article 113 (2) which requires for AAMS states to progressively remove customs duties, based on an agreement which was reached in the absence of these states (Treaty Establishing the European Economic Community, 1957). What was most concerning (from Article 134) was the lack of sovereignty given to AAMS states to oversee their trade relations as well as any other potential disputes which might have arisen (Treaty Establishing the European Economic Community, 1957). AAMS states were still stuck in a stronghold from their former colonial masters. Article 135 reads:

“...the free movement...of workers from Member States in the countries and territories, shall be governed by subsequent conventions which shall require unanimity among Member States.”(Treaty Establishing the European Economic Community, 1957).

In this case Member States (the European countries who are members of the EEC) unanimously decide in the absence of AAMS countries who has the right to access the latter's territories; meaning a foreign entity has control over the domestic affairs of independent, albeit weaker states.

Unfortunately, when Yaoundé II, came into effect in 1969 (Sakr, 2021), the AAMS was no longer a priority as the EEC pursued agreements with other developing countries (Montana, 2003). The Convention also came under fire for lacking enthusiasm. In this regard, Yaoundé I and II were quite similar, however differing in the implementation of the New International Economic Order (NIEO). The NIEO was characterised by a move towards North-South economic cooperation premised on greater material and formal equality during Yaoundé II (Sakr, 2021). Thus, it happened to reflect a new international political situation of the AAMS's move towards a sort of integration with the North by way of economic cooperation (Montana, 2003). Moreover, this is how the newly independent African states were asserting themselves in their quest for an equal relationship, in addition to their declaration of sovereignty (Sakr, 2021).

However, the Yaoundé Convention, especially during Yaoundé II, continued to face criticism as well as suspicion, especially from a lot of African leaders who argued that it was built on neo-colonial terms (Montana, 2003; Holland, 2002). The Convention was viewed as an extension of the colonial policy through indirect rule: the European states could have power over the newly independent African countries without needing to take responsibility, and the latter would be exploited without redress. These are the sentiments of the Pan Africanist and late president of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah in *“Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism”* (Nkrumah, 1964). In this regard, the Treaty of Rome was the foundation of neo-colonialism, just as the Berlin Conference was the overture to colonialism in Africa. Most African leaders, perceived neo-colonialism as more powerful than any other agreement; perhaps, as Peterson & Virk (2014) argue that, this is because starting from the Yaoundé conventions, Europe made Africa more economically dependent on it.

The Yaoundé conventions clearly demonstrate how European countries have managed to maintain a stronghold over their former colonies in a manner which would later on be beneficial for their trade and economic progress and stability. It also demonstrates that from the onset, African countries’ focus was shifted towards maintaining economic relations with the West instead of focusing on building regional economic integration. Indeed the Yaoundé conventions were the onset of the EU’s asymmetrical relationship with Africa, as well as the dependency of the former on the latter.

### **3.2 The Lomé Conventions**

In 1973, Britain joined the EEC, and this was a pivotal transformation to the Africa-Europe relationship as it opened the door to the inclusion of African, Caribbean and Pacific Commonwealth members, who were Europe’s former colonies (SAIIA, 2017). The association was expanded, and this cemented the route towards the Lomé Conventions (Peterson & Virk, 2014). Montana (2003) states that it was presented as a viable alternative to the Yaoundé conventions which brought about divisiveness, accusations of neo-colonialism and the accompanying disillusionment of African states with the international system. The irony of proposing Lomé to remedy the relations between Europe and Africa is that this convention was actually troubled from the start (Montana, 2003).

The first Lomé Convention, Lomé I, was signed in 1975 and covered the period 1975-1979 (Montana, 2003; Flint, 2009). This Convention ushered in former British colonies in the Pacific and the Caribbean, thus resulting in the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) (South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), 2017). During Lomé I, the EEC and the ACP established that they would be equal partners in their close cooperation for the purposes of international solidarity, and this was a unique contract, whereby there was no mention of Article 283 of the Treaty of Rome – the previous association agreement (Montana, 2003). This was signed by 46 ACP states who were mostly European colonies, including Liberia and Ethiopia, and 9 EEC member states (Peterson & Virk, 2014). Through the partnership, they declared that they would align themselves with the aspirations of a just and balanced economic order for cooperation between developing and developed countries within the international community (Montana, 2003). The negotiations of this agreement were exemplified by solidarity amongst the ACP states who refused the proposal of a free trade area with EEC member states. This united “spirit of Lomé” has been marked by close observers as ACP’s key strength (Peterson & Virk, 2014). For Lomé I to be able to garner more ACP signatories, a hard won concession by the EEC of trade non-reciprocity was included in the agreement. During Lomé I the *Système de Stabilisation des Recettes d’Exportation* (STABEX system) was adopted (Montana, 2003). This system was put in place in order to compensate ACP states for the shortfalls incurred from fluctuating agricultural commodity prices. Which meant that there could be stable export earnings for ACP states from these commodities, namely: groundnuts, coffee, tea, and cocoa (Adebajo, 2012). However, it is important to note that this is reflective of other measures which created a system of dependency of African countries on the EU; a position which later on led to African countries not properly developing industries of finished agricultural goods in addition to being comfortable with financial aid from the EU. Unfortunately, this “financial assistance” seems to have been leverage which the EU has used to push African countries between a rock and a hard place, where they have had to concede to the signing of EPAs. The specific details of this have been discussed in the next chapter.

In contrast to Lomé I, the results of Lomé II were not fully satisfactory to all the signatories. Unfortunately, Lomé II was perceived as the end of the road to the NIEO, unlike Lomé I which was part of the road towards it (Montana, 2003). Lomé II followed

in 1980 and lasted until 1984. The only major change to the previous Lomé I Convention was the introduction of the *Système de Développement du Potentiel Minier* (SYSMIN system) (Peterson & Virk, 2014). This system was set up so that export revenues could be underwritten from mineral resources (Adebajo, 2012). This meant that a country which was heavily dependent on mineral resources and was dealing with export losses could counter this by taking out Sysmin loans (ACP, 2011). Thus, decreasing the state's dependency on the mining and export of mineral resources (ACP, 2011). The counter effect of this is that it increased Africa's dependency on EEC loans, which resulted in the growth of sovereign debt. During this period, there was a decline in the average annual GDP growth in sub-Saharan Africa; from 4% to 2.1% between 1970-1979 and 1980-1989 (Peterson & Virk, 2014). The irony is that between 1980-1985 4.725 billion ECU was given as development aid geared towards infrastructural developments such as the building of roads, bridges, hospitals and schools, as well as support of sustainable agriculture (ACP, 2011). One can argue that the NIEO seemed to most critics of Lomé to be coming to an end during Lomé II because of the budding system of dependency through which financial aid as well as loans from the EEC to African countries was taking root. Instead of a partnership of equals between independent parties, what was birthed was an asymmetrical relationship between a dependent party and its funder.

Lomé III was negotiated in 1984 and came into effect from 1985-1989 (Montana, 2003). Its central emphases were rural development, food security and self-sufficiency (Peterson & Virk, 2014). By the time Lomé III was introduced, the equal partnership between the North and the South was being eroded by the international financial institutions who turned the attention of the international community towards the financing of development projects, while they also were managing some of these programs (Montana, 2003). The projects were highly intensified in sub-Saharan Africa in comparison to other ACP countries, which resulted in the apparent decline of Africa (Montana, 2003). In addition, the ACP countries became highly dependent on the European Development Fund (EDF) around this time, and this resulted in a weakened negotiating position for these states (Paterson & Kudrat, 2014). The ACP states were also not guaranteed a significant increase in the share of the EEC market through the privileged relationship and this caused further disillusionment. Evident of this failure was the drop from 6.7% to 2.8% between 1976 to 1994 of ACP's share of the EEC

market (Paterson & Kudrat, 2014). Moreover, there were bureaucratic delays in relation to the disbursement of aid (Paterson & Kudrat, 2014). Unfortunately, the situation did not improve, as the EEC shifted its attention from Lomé, particularly starting in 1989. In the 1990s, the EEC commenced its plans of building an economic and monetary union which would contribute towards a stronger European house (Montana, 2003). Accompanied by this was the decline of communism at the end of the Cold War, and this resulted in more Eastern European countries who were part of the communist bloc seeking partnerships with Western Europe (Montana, 2003). Therefore, the EEC's attention strategically shifted towards strengthening its internal affairs (Montana, 2003) and building its economic bloc (Flint, 2009). Up to ten Eastern European countries exceeded the EU and the organisation's membership grew up to twenty-five in 2004, and then to twenty-seven in 2007 when Bulgaria and Romania joined (Flint, 2009). This was proof that the EU had spent the previous decade investing into its eastern European neighbours. The result of which was the EU neglecting its ACP partners, and it was especially demonstrated in the sharp decline of EU funding to the ACP, as funds were now diverted towards the rebuilding of European countries of the former Soviet bloc (see Flint, 2009).

In addition, according to ACP (2011), the main focus of Lomé III was a shift from industrial development to development based on self-reliance. One can easily deduce that unfortunately, the accompanying implication of this was the neglect of sub-Saharan Africa's industrialisation. Yet for any state to be able to reach a level of self-sufficiency, it actually needs a developed industrial arm, that way it can manufacture goods and equally compete on the international trading system. Consequently, the development funds which were given to African countries only set them back industrially instead of cultivating economic growth.

Moreover, Hurt (2003) points out that the EEC aimed to give aid based on respect for human rights as early as Lomé II. However, ACP countries declined this provision within the agreements. In this case, the EEC made a nominal inclusion of this provision within Lomé III (Hurt, 2003). This is yet another scenario which demonstrates the negative effects which development aid had on the espoused ideal which the ACP had of an equal partnership with the EEC. In this regard, it is obvious that the decline in Africa's sovereignty began as early as Lomé III as has been depicted in writing through the above mentioned nominal provision. This is apparent because, by aiming to restrict

aid provision to a state's compliance with human rights, the EEC has control over domestic politics. Based on this factor and the fact that the EEC was supplying development aid to sub-Saharan African countries, the relationship of equals was becoming an even more distant reality.

Lomé IV was signed in 1989 and spanned the period 1990 to 1999 (Montana, 2003). It was the first convention whose trade provisions covered a ten-year period, as well as having a mid-term review which resulted in Lomé IV-bis (Montana, 2003). This convention advocated for democracy, human rights and good governance (Paterson & Kudrat, 2014). The Yaoundé association was enlarged into a broader partnership between the EEC and AAMS through the Lomé convention. In this regard, the AAMS expanded its scope and thus became known as The African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP states) (Montana, 2003). Another significant event during this period was the EEC's support of the controversial Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) advanced by the IMF and the World Bank (Paterson & Kudrat, 2014). Part of the EDF was to be used to support the SAPs (Hurt, 2003). Therefore, these institutions were forcing developing countries to adopt policies such as the liberalisation of labour markets, the easing of tariffs and taxes, and the decrease of government spending on health and education (Daniel & Nagar, 2014), all under the guise of development. Moreover, a clause on human rights which was strongly opposed by ACP states was included in the agreement, and later on confirmed as a vital element to the agreements during the five year review (Hurt, 2003; ACP, 2011). These were conditions which African states had to meet in order to receive development loans (Montana, 2003). Indeed it was during Lomé IV when the EU-ACP relationship started to evolve into a political one. At the five year review of the agreement, further politically leaning clauses were adopted, such as the respect of the rule of law and good governance by ACP countries, as well as an increased supervision and financial management by the EU of the disbursed development aid (Hurt, 2003). Failure to adhere to these new clauses, especially the human rights clause, would result in the reversal of financial aid (ACP, 2011). Arguably, these new clauses eroded sub-Saharan Africa's sovereignty, and further changed the dynamics of the EU-Africa relationship into that of asymmetrical partners.

Unfortunately, the SAPs devastated sub-Saharan African economies instead of building them. Momoh (2016) states that unemployment increased, and economic

growth, investments and per capita incomes declined. The negative impact of SAPs was so severe that it resulted in 14 out of 15 countries with the lowest Human Development Index (HDI) to emerge from sub-Saharan Africa in 1996 (Momoh, 2016). In addition, 19 out of 26 poorest countries in the world in 1997 based on per capita Gross National Product (GNP) were likewise in sub-Saharan Africa (Momoh, 2016). For sub-Saharan Africa to cope with SAPs, there has been an over-exploitation of natural resources. Advancements in welfare have been obliterated while human development was drastically reversed (Momoh, 2016). Momoh (2016) asserts that the most vulnerable groups of society, women and children, were left in dire situations. Overall, the ACP's share of the EU market decreased from 6.7% to 3% from 1976 to 1998 (ACP, 2011). Unfortunately, total exports were heavily focused in ten products only (ACP, 2011). In sub-Saharan Africa, per capita GDP only grew by 0.4% per year in comparison to the 2.3% for all developing countries from 1960-1992 (ACP, 2011). Finally, intra-continental trade in Africa stood at only 6% (ACP, 2011).

A reflection on the Lomé Conventions proves that apart from their failure to ignite economic growth and instead exacerbating poverty, they also did not do much for regional integration. Having intra-continental growth of only 6% shows that sub-Saharan African countries were not becoming more economically integrated.

### **3.3 The Cotonou Agreement**

In 2000, the Cotonou Agreement came into effect, and this set the stage for future EU-ACP trade relations which were very divergent to those negotiated in 1975 (see Flint, 2009). Unfortunately, this agreement signified the final decline of collective ACP negotiating power with the EU (Flint, 2009), particularly because ACP countries were now divided into two separate units, Less Developed Countries (LDCs) and Developing countries, each of which had different trade agreements with the EU (Hurt, 2003). LDCs would continue to enjoy non-reciprocal trade access to the EU market, while non-LDCs would adhere to the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) which imposes strict Rules of Origin (RoO)<sup>3</sup> and gives non-reciprocal trade preferences to very few products (Hurt, 2003).

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<sup>3</sup> Rules of Origin (RoO) are criteria used in order to determine the source of an exported product, so that trade barriers could be imposed by the importing state based on their trade agreements with the nation of origin (WTO, 2021).

In addition, the EU and ACP countries were asymmetrical by the late 1990s, with the former being more powerful. Therefore, there is a question on the wording of the term 'partnership' as it appears up to fifty-two times within the Cotonou Agreement, as well as nine times within the annexes (Flint, 2009). The EU evolved, and because of this, its policies have changed. Flint (2009) notes that EU-ACP relations were pushed to adhere to the international development consensus instead of being based on the needs of the parties in agreement. One of the policies which the EU adopted was the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were the amalgamation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration of 2000 and the International Development Goals (Flint, 2009). The eight MDGs were agreed upon by the United Nations General Assembly (Flint, 2009). The United Nations Millennium Declaration sought to reach the targets of decreased gender inequality, poverty, and environmental degradation (Flint, 2009). In this regard, EDF is based on the set targets of the MDGs. Consequently, the MDGs have been used as the yardstick for the success of EU policies (Cotonou Partnership Agreement 2000, Preamble). Articles 177, 178 and 180 of the Treaty of Nice (2003) exhibit how the principal elements – poverty eradication and sustainable development – have been encompassed within the EU agenda; particularly the Treaties for the legal basis of the organisation (Flint, 2009).

Moreover, EU development policies have changed, and the language and framing have placed specific emphasis on policies which are 'people-oriented' and 'pro-poor' instead of economic targets (Flint, 2009). The development policy is outlined under four key objectives: promoting democracy, good governance and human rights; poverty reduction; the improvement of environmental and institutional sustainability; support of economic growth through rural sector economic competitiveness (European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDM), 2003). Poverty reduction being at the core of the objectives is perceived as a performance indicator. In this case, within Article 1 of the agreement, poverty is defined in terms of social, political, cultural and environmental improvements of the citizens of developing countries, instead of narrow economic terms such as people's incomes (European Commission, 2014).

What is central to the Cotonou Agreement is that it departs from the Lomé regime, particularly in the area of non-reciprocal trade links between the EU and Africa (Flint, 2009). The introduction of the WTO resulted in rules that non-reciprocal trade

partnerships needed to be abolished, and that trading agreements had to be either bilateral or between economic blocs (see Flint, 2009; Hurt, 2003). In alignment with the WTO's rule of trade agreements between economic blocs, the EU established the EPAs which are a trading strategy on regionalism (Flint, 2009). The EU also shifted from trade preferences of Lomé to economic cooperation. While during Lomé ACP countries could enjoy preferential access to the EU market through the export of almost all their products outside of having to pay customs duties, and without needing to reciprocate, indeed the Cotonou Agreement proved to be different (ECDM, 2003). The new agreement also required the removal of trade barriers between the ACP and the EU, which would be compatible with WTO policies. What was essential during Lomé was the negotiation of EPAs which were meant to come into full effect in 2008, however there were delays as African countries were reluctant to agree to the asymmetrical relationship (South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), 2009).

Moreover, Article 2 of the agreement is centred on the assurance of ownership, and this means that ACP states will have sovereignty with regards to the development strategies they employ in their respective states (The Cotonou Agreement, 2007). In this regard, the EC acts as a support for existing or developing strategies through funding, and collaboratively working with the respective ACP institutions (ECDM,2003). In addition, the Cotonou agreement stipulated in Article 9 the importance of democratisation and reforms for good governance within the ACP states (The Cotonou Agreement, 2007). Political cooperation became a priority. Members can also impose sanctions on those who are non-compliant to the fundamental elements which ground the Agreement (ECDM, 2003). The problem with the imposition of these sanctions is that they place ACP states in an inferior position whereby the EU can coerce them to comply with the agreements for the benefit of the latter's economic growth. The EU has the upper hand because of its power and influence within the international system. Therefore, this partnership is no longer that of equals as the dynamics shift to that of a dictator and a compliant party.

In terms of aid, the Cotonou Agreement stipulates that ACP countries will receive aid based on their performance in the areas of governance, economic policies, effective implementation of developmental strategies, as well as support given to non-state actors (The Cotonou Agreement, 2007). This is different to how things were done

during the Lomé Convention, whereby the EU gave aid to ACP states irrespective of their performance with regards to development. This means that Sub-Saharan African governmental budgets would be severely impacted, as some states' aid would be reduced (ECDM, 2003). In addition, these governments no longer have sovereignty in terms of their use and distribution of the funds. The EU's assumption is based on the stipulated strict categories of investment yet ACP economic environments are not monolithic. This in turn limits governments from venturing into other economic pursuits which might benefit their societies.

Negotiations for a successor agreement to the Cotonou began in 2003 between the EU and ACP group of states (ECDM, 2003). This is because the Cotonou Agreement was coming to an end and a new agreement which had to be WTO compliant, as per the EU's argument, needed to come into effect (see Nyomakwa-Obimpeh, 2017). In addition, EPAs are trade agreements between the EU and ACP states, and they are in place to facilitate FTAs which would replace ACP countries' preferential access to the EU market (Nyomakwa-Obimpeh, 2017). These negotiations between the EU and the ACP are at a bi-regional level (Nyomakwa-Obimpeh, 2017). The following chapter is dedicated to a discussion on the inception of EPAs, what they are, and the impact they have had on regional integration initiatives in sub-Saharan Africa.

## **Conclusion**

EU-Africa relations have been plagued with a lot of uncertainty, suspicion and resistance because of the colonial history that the EU shares with Africa. It is unsurprising that even with the initial Yaoundé Conventions, some African leaders viewed the initiative as a neo-colonial tool which would further entrench the EU as an imperial power over Africa. Clearly the reluctance progressed all the way to the Lomé Conventions as well as the Cotonou Agreement. Collective resistance of the proposal made by the EEC of a free trade area by ACP states during the Lomé I negotiations represents the power of solidarity against powerful organisations such as the former. Had the ACP continued in this line, their negotiating power would have yielded better trade agreements during the Cotonou Agreement and later the EPAs. However, through both the Cotonou Agreement and the EPAs, ACP states were divided into separate groupings. With the former, it was into two groups (LDCs and Developing countries), while with the latter it was into EU proposed regional groupings. These

EPA groupings required individual negotiations which resulted into different trade agreements between the ACP and the EU. EPAs are discussed at length in the following chapter.

From the above discussion it seems that aid was used by the EU as a tool which shifted sub-Saharan African countries from addressing societal needs. This was especially apparent during the introduction of the SAPs which required ACP states to halt funding for education and healthcare as a condition for receiving World Bank loans, a lot of which came through the EDF. Development aid has clearly done more harm to Africa than good.

Finally, sub-Saharan African countries not focusing on building their economies before getting into stringent trade agreements with the EU has caused them decades of potential economic growth. During the Lomé Conventions, the EU was able to focus on its internal affairs during the fall of the Soviet Union, and this resulted in a stronger European economic bloc. Had sub-Saharan Africa focused on building itself through the AU after the end of colonialism, it would have had the upper hand in its negotiations with the EU, as well as possibly been able to thrive within the global economy today. In addition, the EU's wording of "self-sufficiency" within the Lomé III agreements came during a time when the EU's focus and financial priority was building up former communist states of Eastern Europe. The implications of which were the EU commencing with giving conditional aid to the ACP. This clearly demonstrated the shift in priorities, as well as the EU's posture towards ACP states. Indeed from this point on, there was a pivot in the relationship from that of equals to that of asymmetrical partners. Unfortunately, the Cotonou Agreement and the EPAs further drew the line in the sand for a potentially equal EU-Africa partnership.

## **CHAPTER 4: Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs)**

### **Introduction**

The EU started negotiating EPAs with the ACP in 2002 under the scope of the Cotonou Agreement (Nyomakwa-Obimpeh, 2017). Prompted by the need to comply with the WTO's rule of non-discrimination in addition to the EU's argument that the EPA's would bring forth the ACP's deeper integration into the global economy, sustainable development and eradicate poverty, the EU embarked on negotiating trade agreements with regional groupings it established (Nyomakwa-Obimpeh). In this chapter a look at the regional EPA groupings, as well as some of the conditions contained within the EPA agreements will be made. Next, arguments about the negative impacts of EPAs as well as their positive impacts will be given. Finally, a conclusion will be drawn.

The EU EPA groupings are: Southern African Development Community (SADC); Pacific ACP Group (PACP) (Nyomakwa-Obimpeh, 2017); Caribbean Forum (CARIFORUM); Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC); East African Community (EAC); Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA); Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Within the SADC grouping the member states are Angola, Lesotho, Namibia, Botswana, Mozambique, Eswatini and South Africa (European Commission, 2020). The PACP is made up of Fiji, the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Federated States of Micronesia, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Palau, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Tonga, Timor Leste, Tuvalu and Vanuatu (European Commission, 2020). The CARIFORUM group consists of Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Bahamas, Belize, Dominican Republic, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Haiti, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, St. Kitts and Nevis, Trinidad and Tobago (European Commission, 2021). The member states to the CEMAC grouping are Cameroon, Chad, the Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea, DR Congo, Sao Tome & Principe and Gabon (Nyomakwa-Obimpeh, 2017). The EAC grouping is made of Burundi, Rwanda, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and South Sudan (European Commission, 2020). ESA grouping consists of Comoros, Eritrea, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Malawi, Madagascar, Mauritius, Sudan, Seychelles, Zambia and Zimbabwe (Nyomakwa-Obimpeh, 2017). Lastly, members of the ECOWAS grouping

are Benin, the Gambia, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Liberia, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Mauritania, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, Togo, Ghana, Cape Verde and Nigeria (Nyomakwa-Obimpeh, 2017).

EPAs are trade agreements between the EU and ACP RECs which are meant to create bi-regional FTAs (Nyomakwa-Obimpeh, 2017). They have been created to repeal the non-reciprocal preferential access of ACP countries to the EU market; and replace them with an equal liberalisation of tariffs on the latter's exports into the former's markets (European Commission, 2002b). The EU wanted to ensure that its trade with ACP countries is compatible with WTO rules, thus manifesting into fully liberalised bilateral trade of 90% for goods and services (Fontagné et al, 2010). In addition, the liberalisation of trade in goods and services; the inclusion of provisions on trade facilitation and Technical Barriers of Trade (TBT)<sup>4</sup>; and the improvement on RoO are at the forefront of the EPAs (Nyomakwa-Obimpeh, 2017). The agreements make binding rules on competition policy, rules on investments, Intellectual Property Rights, public procurement and Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS). ACP states must also adhere to the Most Favoured Nations (MFN)<sup>5</sup> and National Treatment (NT)<sup>6</sup> principles of the WTO (ACP Group of States, 2002).

#### **4.1 Negative Impacts of EPAs on Regional Integration**

There are a number of implications which EPAs have had on Africa's regional integration, and these include: the hindrance to intra-regional trade, the loss of tariff revenues, the decline in agricultural produce and exports to regional members, deindustrialisation of regional economies and receding pro-poor policy sphere for the enhancement of sub-Saharan African economies (Langan & Price, 2015). A number of studies have demonstrated over the last decade the stifling effect EPAs will have in all the areas mentioned above (Nwoke, 2009). Since the overall emphasis of EPAs is 80% liberalisation of African markets for EU exports, the central apparatus to this is tariff dismantling. This has taken the form of FTAs through the obliteration of policies

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<sup>4</sup> Technical Barriers of Trade (TBT) is an agreement whose aim is to safeguard non-discrimination and foster minimal obstacles to trade as it relates to standards, technical regulations and conformity assessment processes (WTO, 2021).

<sup>5</sup> Most Favoured Nation (MFN) means that when a country imposes/removes trade barriers for certain products from one of its trade partners, it needs to apply the same restrictions or lack thereof to every single trade partner it has (WTO, 2021).

<sup>6</sup> National Treatment (NT) is a WTO clause which requires nondiscrimination of imported goods and similar domestic goods of member countries with respect to domestic laws and internal taxes (Saggi & Sara, 2008).

for pro-poor trade measures (Langan & Price, 2015). Consequently, there has been removal of protectionist measures in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors. The ramifications being tariff revenue losses. The severe consequences to tariff revenues have been predicted by Nwoke (2009) that they will ultimately amount to losses of USD341 million for a period of twelve years after an EPA has been fully implemented and adopted in Nigeria for instance. On the regional level, the total tariff revenue losses which ECOWAS would incur amount to €1.8 billion during the subsequent year of an EPA conclusion (Langan & Price, 2015). Perhaps these predictions are some of the reasons why Nigeria is the only country within the ECOWAS EPA grouping which has not signed the agreement.

Cameroon being the only country within the CEMAC EPA to fully ratify the EPAs in 2014 and commence reciprocating its preferential access to the EU in 2016 (European Commission, 2021) gives an example of potential revenue losses to countries who only started reciprocating market access to the EU recently. It has been published in the 2020 “Annual Information Sheet on the Implementation of the EPA between the EU and Cameroon” that customs revenue losses due to the liberalisation of Cameroon’s market under EPA rules amounted to €21.53 million between August 2016 and December 2019 (European Commission, 2020). This is alarming since within the timeframe of 28 months, Cameroon has missed out significantly on public revenues yet it had not even liberalised its market to half of EU imports. Most worrisome is that in the long run, the average loss of tariff revenues within ACP countries will become 25% as projected by Fontagné et al. (2011). The ripple effect of the loss of tariff revenues is that for a continent which relies heavily on the revenues collected from the export of raw materials, the former revenue acts as a means to diversify the sources of state funds. The implication of tariff revenue losses on regional integration is that the financing of infrastructural development such as road networks, border-control technologies and security will be dwindled. Thus, affecting sub-Saharan African RECs’ ability to reach a thriving level of regional economic integration.

Moreover, the loss of tariff revenues is not only due to the removal of customs duties, but it is also due to the effects of trade diversion. This means that taxed imports from other parts of the world will be replaced by untaxed EU exports to African countries (Bouët et al, 2018). In addition, there are estimates of rife trade diversions as African countries welcome EU imports under tariff reductions imposed by the EPAs. Tariff

reductions will also result in more affordable European products to middle income African citizens (Langan & Price, 2015), and this means that intra-regional and intra-continental trade in sub-Saharan Africa will be impacted as Africans opt for products from the former, therefore affecting regional economic integration in Africa. For instance, a total of 16.22% decline in Togolese exports to its regional partners is expected (Langan & Price, 2015). Unfortunately, this will exacerbate the already limited inter-continental trade, as well as hinder intra-regional trade flows. Tariff revenue losses will dwindle government budgets across Africa; and thus decrease government spending in areas such as social services (education, health care, food assistance/security, community management etc) for African citizens, infrastructural development and industrialisation. When social services are affected, opportunities for education and skills development of sub-Saharan African communities are diminished. This decline in opportunities results in a decline in the skilled labour which can contribute to the enhancement of African economies and subsequently flourishing regional economic integration. Moreover, as more and more citizens are being deprived of education, the continent will ultimately run into a lack of skilled officials who will facilitate all the mechanisms relating to regional economic integration, thus perpetuating the already mismanaged RECs. The lack of community management and reduced access to education (and information as a whole) has an even bigger potential of affecting domestic governments' ability to educate their citizens about the importance of regional economic integration and how it will benefit their businesses and their domestic economies. With a lack of information to African traders and businesses, the quest for highly functioning regional economic integration will disappear further into the distance.

Unfortunately, tariff revenue losses will compel African governments to find alternative sources to finance their diminished public revenues. Bouët et al (2018) suggest a scenario where either income or consumption tax are raised in order to sustain public expenses per capita. As a consequence, household income and welfare will negatively be impacted (Bouët et al, 2018). One can firmly predict that the loss of tariff revenues will bring about new levels of poverty within Africa. The irony is that the EU has put as one of its overall objectives of EPA implementation, poverty reduction within ACP states (see European Commission, 2021), yet EPAs are having the opposite effect. High levels of poverty will result in a lack of innovation and entrepreneurship as

citizens will not have excess income to start up their businesses. This will curb industrial development within various sub-Saharan African regions. Ultimately, borne out of a lack of innovation and industrialisation will be thwarted regional economic integration, as deficient intra-regional trade networks will be symptomatic of undiversified African markets.

Furthermore, in Africa, unused arable agricultural land makes up 60% of such land in the world (Bouët et al, 2018). However, instead of the potential increase in the farming of vacant land, African farmers might find themselves having to neglect the farms they already have because of EPAs. Due to the tariff cuts, highly equipped and government subsidised European farmers will benefit significantly (Akokpari, 2017), while local companies, subsistence and commercial farmers, as well as informal traders of agricultural produce suffer the consequences (Sanders, 2015). Apart from disrupting agricultural production in sub-Saharan Africa, EPAs also have the potential of repressing nascent agricultural technologies. Additionally, the long lasting impact will be a halt to intra-regional trade of farm produce, as well as knowledge sharing in the agricultural sector. Moreover, Sanders (2015) states that there is an expectation of import surges, as well as the accompanying displacement of domestic production (especially agricultural production) within sub-Saharan Africa. This is particularly detrimental now that EPAs have been fully adopted. A case in point is ECOWAS, as it is expected to have an import surge of 15% for potatoes, 16% for onions, 18% for poultry and 16% for beef (Patel, 2007). Moreover, as agricultural produce from the EU floods African markets, there is a high possibility that they would disorient local farmers who will not be able to compete (Sanders, 2015). Evident in history, 200,000 Ghanaian farm workers went without jobs after tariff reforms were adopted in Ghana's poultry sector in 2003 (Sanders, 2015). As cheap European produce overtook the market, local farmers were stifled, and their farms collapsed (Bagooro, 2011). In addition, trade liberalisation initiated by SAPs during the 1990s resulted in surges of up to 113% of European poultry exports to ACP states between 1995 to 2004 (Goodison, 2007). These SAPs did not take into account the fact that African farming industries were underdeveloped. Similarly, EPAs neglect the reality of small-scale African farmers, who benefit from intra-regional trade, as the EU pursues its own economic interests at the expense of African livelihoods, as well as regional trade flows and economic integration. Unfortunately, Europe's economic interests pursued through EPAs will

evidently severely affect regional economic integration within all aspects of agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa.

There are fears that EPAs are here to entrench deindustrialisation. The small-scale manufacturing sector and their products will not be included in the sensitive goods basket through which some ACP countries are permitted to put 20% of tariffs into in order to protect some of the commodities of their economies (Langan & Price, 2015). Thus, the manufacturing sector will be left exposed to import surges, which they will struggle to compete with; resulting in the shutting down of factories and industrial plants. In this regard, poor populations who rely on manufacturing jobs within urban centres will be negatively affected (Langan & Price, 2015). In addition, within EU's Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA) of EU-ACP EPAs, it has been highlighted that the RoO in the fisheries and garments sectors of the SADC EPA would result in challenges for local producers (European Commission, 2006). RoO has suppressed trade and even hindered its occurrence within the region. In contrast, it was found that when RoO is relaxed within the fisheries sector, there was a subsequent increase in exports from SADC countries, as well as increased manufacture processing of fish (European Commission, 2006). In this regard, trade liberalisation will have a negative impact on these industries. One of the most concerning implications of EPAs is that the EU will not be making any tariff concessions to some processed goods coming from Africa, and instead, the focus will only be to preserve the already established levels of ACP access to the EU market (Langan & Price, 2015). For instance, processed cocoa goods from West Africa will continue to face debilitating tariffs upon entry into the EU market, yet exports of raw cocoa will continue to be granted duty-free access so as to support the manufacturing needs of the EU (Langan & Price, 2015). In this regard, deindustrialisation is not only happening with regards to manufacturing sectors facing competition from EU imports, but also with regards to a lack of support of the African manufacturing industries as a whole from the EU due to intense protectionist measures of this European economic bloc. The EU does not support industrial diversification of Africa. These trading practices are not only unfair to those whom the EU refers to as "partners" but are also contradictory to what the EU says the EPAs aim to do: diversify ACP trade by shifting their dependence on commodity exports to higher value goods (see European Commission, 2020). Evidently, not only do EPAs not support the manufacturing sector in sub-Saharan

Africa, but they also hinder Africa's ability to compete as an evolving producer within the global market. In an environment where diversified and unique industrial products are not being manufactured by any sub-Saharan African country, the potential for intra and inter-regional trade is severely dwindled. Besides, states within similar regions have a similar climate and ultimately produce the same agricultural products; thus they would not be in a position to trade with one another. Ultimately, regional economic integration fuelled by inter-African trade will be severely affected.

Langan & Price (2015) state that opening up African markets through EPAs will also leave space for EU corporate penetration, which is a constraint on the pro-poor policy trade measures as African states will not be able to reap development dividends from EU investments. There are also concerns about the obligatory nature and effects of Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) clauses within the services sector (Langan & Price, 2015). For instance, fears loom that IPRs will have a limiting effect on the telecommunications sector of West Africa (Langan & Price, 2015). Similarly, African companies in the fintech, and banking industries, could possibly find themselves facing unprecedented competition from veteran European companies. Since these African companies have transcended regional borders and provided services to communities in different parts of Africa, this has deepened regional economic integration. Moreover, financial services through fintech innovations, such as *MPESA* and *Mukuru*, have helped to build the informal financial sector within rural African communities. This has helped cross-border traders to effectively run their businesses and support their families. Unfortunately, new competition means that regional economic integration in the fintech industry, as well as within cross-border trade will be hindered. In addition, there are accompanying concerns over the ban on the importation or manufacturing of generic medication which has been effective in the treatment of HIV/AIDs, while also supplying poorer communities with cheaper healthcare products (Langan & Price, 2015). EPAs will hinder cross-border distribution of affordable pharmaceutical products manufactured within already fragmented markets. Thus, regional integration in the area of healthcare will be negatively impacted. Undoubtedly, the EPAs do not only exacerbate poverty as has been demonstrated above, but they also impede on the basic human right to healthcare within sub-Saharan African countries. Therefore, contradicting the EU's stance that

EPAs are anchored on human rights as a firm objective (see European Commission, 2020).

Another debilitating trade policy adjustment from the EPAs is the MFN clause, since the tariff liberalisation offered by an African regional body to a Southern partner must be reciprocated to the EU as per the terms of the EPAs (Langan & Price, 2015). Consequently, South-South trade and cooperation will be dampened, in addition to stifled intra-regional and inter-continental trade flows. Dampened intra-regional trade flows will ultimately result in the hinderance to Africa's regional economic integration.

It is evident at this juncture that EPAs pose a lot of negative implications for the African market. However, the EU has pointed out some benefits which it affirms will be birthed from EPAs. They follow in the next section of the chapter.

#### **4.2 Positive Impacts of EPAs on Regional Integration**

According to the European Commission (2013), there are many benefits which can be gained from EPAs in addition to the development aid which ACP countries already receive from the EU. They hold the stance that EPAs will generate good environments for trade and investment within ACP states. In the end, according to Fontagné et al. (2011), the lock-in effect might be created as the market liberalisation measures applied in ACP countries become irreversible and ultimately more credible. Therefore, the adoption of EPAs may bring about long-term benefits such as an upsurge in domestic and foreign investments within ACP states. However, Fontangé et al. (2011) do contend that this too might not necessarily be the case and could result in a dampened impact when one observes the history of foreign direct investment in these states. Conversely, Langan (2012) argues that unfortunately African countries will be "locked-in" on disparate economic relationships with the EU, while their industries and nascent agro-processing sectors crumble under the pressure of tariff removals. Indeed these market liberalisation measures will make it extremely difficult for African countries to rid themselves of their accompanying negative implications, especially given the aid-for-trade nature of their relationship with the EU. Furthermore, the argument of the lock-in effect proposed by Fontagné et al. (2011) does not seem credible enough to enhance regional integration because this only relates to foreign direct investment within specific markets and it is not necessarily directed towards the mechanisms which would build regional economic integration. Afterall, as Fontagné et

al. (2011) stated that the history of FDI in Africa has unfortunately proven to not take the expected direction in which it usually takes in other regions of the world; admittedly the flaws of the lock-in effect in terms of their ability to influence FDI are a lot more apparent. In addition, FDI's encourage large capital outflows towards the markets of investor countries and this results in a decline in real GDP, exchange rate crises (Gochoero & Boopen, 2020) and a general political instability. Local industries are also impacted as FDIs take the best labourers and create income disparities, and eventually exacerbate inequality in sub-Saharan Africa (Kaur et al., 2018). Additionally, if growth from FDI is not directed towards poverty alleviation, an unwelcomed decline in welfare levels and an incline in inequality are accompanying factors (Fauzel, et al., 2015). FDI in sub-Saharan Africa has also often been directed towards the natural resources sector at the detriment of the development of other sectors (see Eregha, 2015), and this only maintains Africa's limited production factors instead of diversifying them. With FDI, there will also be a lack of ownership of citizens within the domestic markets, and this results in the inability of governments to drive company products towards trading within regional markets. In this regard, regional economic integration is not necessarily enhanced, but it is further dampened.

Another perceived benefit touted by the European (2003) Commission is improved infrastructure, public services and administration. Therefore, improving a country's capability to generate traded goods and services, as well as knowledge-sharing within the respective sectors. The European Commission is not clear on how infrastructural development will be achieved, especially given the fact that import revenues which African countries used for such development will be severely dwindled. The European Commission (2013) proposes more transparency, economic and political stability as other benefits which can be gained from EPAs, through; political dialogue facilitated by EPAs, thus upholding human rights, good governance and democratic standards. This potential benefit would be worthwhile as the EU has contributed to political dialogue and peacebuilding within Africa for the past several decades. This includes the long-term peacekeeping missions which the EU has funded within Africa, such as the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) (Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre (NOREF), 2013). The EU has also been the main funder to the African Peace Facility (APF), where it contributed €2 billion between 2004 and 2017 (College of Europe, 2017). In addition, the EU was one of the biggest aid donors to Somalia

between 2008-2013 where it contributed €2 billion during the transitional period in order to enhance local capacity-building (NOREF, 2013). However, involvement of the EU poses issues for African sovereignty with regards to Africa solving its own problems. This is particularly concerning as there really is no apparent governing body which is made up of African dignitaries, scholars and civil society representatives within the EPA groupings. This means that the EU will be the one leading the cause for peacekeeping missions; thus depriving African countries (and the AU in general) their agency in self-governance through regional integration.

Other benefits which the EU claims the ACP countries will have through EPAs are for service providers, manufacturers, farmers and their surrounding communities (European Commission, 2013). These benefits are the removal of export duties and quotas to the EU, thus granting African countries access to half a billion people within the former's market. While the above may be true, unfortunately these benefits do not enhance regional economic integration as service providers, manufacturers and farmers will be driving their products and services outside of the continent instead of intra and inter-regionally. The EU further proposes that through EPAs, regional markets within African states will also become more integrated, through simpler and more flexible RoO (European Commission, 2013). The problem with this is that there will be no companies to accumulate this manufacturing success. As has been highlighted above, once EU products flood and take over the African market they will stifle the latter's industries and cause company closures. In this regard, regional integration enhanced by RoOs seems to be a myth.

The EU further claims that African countries will have no undue competition for 20% of their most sensitive goods which will enjoy permanent safeguard measures put in place by their respective governments (European Commission, 2013). Arguably, this perceived benefit by the EU does not add much value to ACP countries as the products which are protected within the sensitive 20% goods basket are raw materials, especially agricultural products (Langan & Price, 2015), and this does not make up the manufacturing sector where producers can actually get higher value for their products. In addition, this protection will be insufficient with regards to guarding these vulnerable sectors (Dialogue of Civilizations (DOC) Research Institute, 2019). This is concerning because it is the small manufacturing industry which is facing possible closures because of EU product import surges. Thus, having negative impacts which

are two-fold: threatening food security and production, as well as job security of populations in urban centres who survive off of manufacturing jobs (Langan & Price, 2015). Evidently, even the EU's claim that ACP states' economies will be protected from disruptions (see European Commission, 2013) is an unthorough analysis. In this regard, regional economic integration is not enhanced, but it is curtailed by industry closures which impact African states' ability to trade their products with each other.

The European Commission (2013) takes a stance that EPAs will put into practice the gradual removal of duties imposed on EU exports over periods of 15 and 25 years; while also supporting ACP countries who encounter problems. In this regard, the EU perceives this as a way of not shocking the ACP markets (European Commission, 2013). Many argue that even if the removal of these tariffs is gradual, African countries lose a lot of import revenues per single financial year of a few repealed customs duties (Langan & Price, 2015). Since the tariff revenues contribute towards GDP in sub-Saharan Africa, in this regard, these losses amount up to a 6 percent reduction of GDP (Vollmer, 2009). In effect ACP markets as well as societies still go through a shock as they have to make considerable adjustments to their way of life so as to meet the loss in public revenues which were used to uphold and deliver basic public services. In a scenario where public services such as education and skills training cannot be funded, there will be a shortage of highly qualified and skilled workers, which will result in under resourced and underdeveloped industries. As a result, the underdeveloped industries of sub-Saharan Africa will debilitate regional economic integration. In addition, the EU made a pledge that it would assist governments who encounter problems due to the liberalisation of their markets. Nevertheless, this was ineffectual given the fact that the EU failed to deliver on assistance funds to the ECOWAS EPA grouping as a condition for the latter to prepare its markets for EPAs before they could take effect (Langan & Price, 2015). Instead, the EU offered this money from the development assistance accounts, which is money that is given to developing countries anyway, instead of conceding to give these states additional funding specifically geared towards the EPA project (DOC Research Institute, 2019). Clearly, the implementation of EPAs is further hindering regional economic integration instead of enhancing it.

The European Commission (2013) also highlights that EPAs act as a component of the development agenda for ACP states. Conversely, African civil society groups and business leaders have been challenging the EPAs since their inception under the

notion that these agreements are damaging for sustainable development (DOC Research Institute, 2019). For instance, the Cameroonian civil society group, Civil Association for the Defence of Collective Interests (ACDIC) galvanised domestic consumer opinion with their campaign, *chickens of death*, against frozen imported European chicken. This organisation was successful in gaining allegiance from European church NGOs such as the Interchurch Association for Development Cooperation (ICCO), the Church Development Service (EED) and the Associations of World Council of Churches related to Development Organisations in Europe (APRODEV). Together, they released a publication, entitled *No More Chicken Please*, which demonstrated the effect of the campaign against poultry imports and how it was a catalyst to government action (DOC Research Institute, 2019). Evidently, a deeper involvement of civil society brought about a change which was much needed. If many civil society groups within every sub-Saharan African country had fought against the EPAs, perhaps the final outcome would have been different today.

However, these groups could not have had much of an argument to make given the discovery made by Carbone (2008) that they were left on the fringes through logistical barriers which made it impossible for them to engage in meaningful dialogue regarding the EPAs. Carbone (2008) notes that for instance, civil society groups were not given sufficient information about the consultation process; short periods were allocated towards consultations; there were only a limited number of non-state actors involved; there was laxness to create institutional mechanisms which would enable consultation processes; there was also limited reporting to non-state actors on the outcomes of the consultations. All these hinderances demonstrate the EU's lack of interest in enhancing local communities through EPAs, but their tunnel focus to economic gains for their markets through the partnership agreements. In this regard, the EU's interest is really not geared towards regional economic integration in sub-Saharan Africa through EPAs because they have continued to exclude civil society (who are the voices of the voiceless African communities) from discussions surrounding EPA implementation. All the same, EPAs are causing a further hindrance to regional economic integration as they are disregarding the economic needs to African communities who are represented by civil society groups. This is so because when communities' needs are not addressed, economic development which drives cross-border trade and industry development within small African communities are curtailed.

The European Commission (2013) touts EPAs as a vehicle which will lend support to regional markets by assisting with the promotion of regional solutions for the benefit of trade and development through the harnessing of initiatives on regional integration which have already been undertaken. Given the fact that the EU dismantled already existing regional groupings within Africa to form those which suited their agenda, it is incredulous that they are aligning themselves with regional integration initiatives which were already underway before the introduction of EPAs. Individual states have been moved around into different EPA groupings with countries who are not within their traditional regional blocs which are recognised by the AU. An example of this is the SADC EPA which excludes Zimbabwe, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Seychelles, Mauritius, Madagascar and Tanzania who are all SADC countries (Akokpari, 2017). In addition, the EPA groupings were designed by the EU, and African countries were forced to just join regional economic blocs they were never a part of for the purposes of continued trade with the EU. As a result haphazard trade relations have ensued as there is already overlapping membership of states within different regional blocs (Akokpari, 2017). This has further fragmented the continent instead of integrating it. McDonald et al. (2013) assert that the EU is exercising another divide and conquer tactic which is similar to Europe's colonial history over Africa. Söderbaum & Hettne (2011) bemoan similar sentiments that the EPAs are a form of soft imperialism informed by the EU's pursuit of economic self-interests. This is a clear infringement of Africa's sovereignty. Furthermore, upon resistance of various African countries to sign the EPAs, the EU pursued negotiations with individual states (see European Commission, 2021). This tactic receded from the pursuit of regional integration and the perceived benefits of negotiating with an REC. By negotiating individually, the collective negotiating power of African countries was affected as they were at a lesser advantage than the EU. Therefore, regional ties were weakened and regional economic integration has severely been weakened and threatened.

In addition, the EU adopted the MFN clause which is putting a strain on Africa's trade relations with other developing countries, particularly its South-South trading partners (Sanders, 2015). This is mainly because the cheaper products which experience lax import subsidies from Southern trading partners such as China would face competition amid the same products from the EU. Remarkably, the EU will have a more profitable relationship with Africa and the Caribbean respectively than Africa will have between

itself (within its regional communities) and the Caribbean (Sanders, 2015). As a result regional integration in sub-Saharan Africa will be hindered.

Even though there might be some benefits for Africa in relation to EPAs, this section has uncovered that those benefits do not contribute towards regional integration, and instead they impede on it. Indeed in section 4.1 a lot of the drawbacks of EPAs were mentioned, however for the purposes of a robust discussion it was also important in this section to demonstrate the overall picture of the benefits which the EU has highlighted. In this regard, EPAs have proven to not be “partnership agreements” as described by the EU (see European Commission, 2020); but they represent an asymmetrical relationship with Africa. In addition, even though it is often claimed that EPAs provided many positive impacts, in practice this is very difficult to ascertain on the ground. Consequently, the overwhelming literature has always been one of criticism.

### **4.3 The Impact of EPAs on the AfCFTA**

EPAs have a bigger impact on economic development of Africa beyond individual RECs. With the biggest economic cooperation and integration agenda of African countries, the AfCFTA, having began in January 2021, the question which comes to the fore is what impact the operations of the EPAs will have on this initiative. The AfCFTA has been likened to the formation of the WTO because of the large number of countries who are involved (see Tralac Trade Law Centre NPC, 2021). With it comes multiple layers of trade agreements, and the bi-regional agreements which the EU has negotiated with various RECs can potentially cause a hindrance to the free flow of goods, services and the endeavour of Africa’s economic integration. Henceforth, in this section, an exploration of the impact of the operations and some legacies already left behind by the EPAs on the AfCFTA will be done. Prior to that an explanation of what the AfCFTA is will be given. Lastly, a conclusion and recommendations to this study will round up the discussion.

The AfCFTA has been touted as the flagship initiative on trade liberalisation within the African continent (Byiers & Miyandazi, 2021). This initiative was adopted in 2012 during the AU’s 18<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, who agreed on the year 2017 as the deadline for the establishment of

the Continental Free Trade Area (Tralac Trade Law Centre NPC, 2021). However, the deadline was not met; but in 2018 the Agreement which established the AfCFTA was signed (Tralac Trade Law Centre NPC, 2021). The AfCFTA's main objectives are based on Agenda 2063 of the AU: the creation of a single market for goods and services, inclusive and sustainable socio-economic growth, the promotion of industrial development, the facilitation of the movement of persons, and the resolution of multiple membership of African countries within RECs (Tralac Trade Law Centre NPC, 2021). The ultimate goal for the AU is a Continental Common Market which comprises all members of the AU (Asiedu, 2018). Moreover, the AfCFTA will bring together a market of more than 1.2 billion people, combined business and consumer spending of more than US\$4 trillion (Asiedu, 2018), a GDP of US\$3.4 trillion in total and a growing middle class (Tralac Trade Law Centre NPC, 2021). It is estimated by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) that through the elimination of import duties, the AfCFTA could potentially boost intra-Africa trade by 52.3%, as it currently stands at a mere 17% (Tralac Trade Law Centre NPC, 2021; United Nations Africa Renewal, 2021).

It was in May 2019 when the AfCFTA officially came into force (UNECA, 2019), however implementation only began in January 2021 due to COVID19 related delays (Byiers & Miyandazi, 2021). On 4<sup>th</sup> January, pioneer exporters under the AfCFTA framework were two Ghanaian companies; one, a cosmetics manufacturer who shipped to Guinea, and another, an alcoholic product manufacturer who shipped to South Africa (United Nations Africa Renewal, 2021). In addition, some African countries have already launched crucial customs infrastructure for the free trade (United Nations Africa Renewal, 2021).

The overall argument from studies is that EPAs may have a potentially negative impact on intra-African trade, and thus result in revenue losses for African states (UNECA, 2016). In this regard the integration initiative of the AfCFTA will indeed be affected. Moreover, liberalisation commitments and products placed within the sensitive goods basket of the EPAs are unique from country to country as they have been negotiated separately from the rest of AU member states (UNECA, 2016). Therefore, there might be some significant obstacles along the way for negotiations and implementation of some tariffs and RoOs of the AfCFTA which have not yet been completed (see Tralac Trade Law Centre NPC, 2021) as signatories to this agreement have made different

commitments vis a vis the EU, thus requiring some form of alignment (UNECA, 2016). In addition, under the MFN clause of EPAs, African countries find themselves bound in FTAs which jeopardise the AfCFTA and stall the potential benefits which can be gained from it. Perhaps the biggest drawback of EPAs to the AfCFTA is that just like the Yaoundé Convention during decolonisation, the Lomé Conventions during the NIEO and the Cotonou Agreements during the reform of the OAU to the AU (see African Union (AU), 2021), the EPAs have distracted African leaders from paying attention to the development of the African continent to some extent. Instead, attention is given to bilateral trade agreements with external partners, and this results in further exports from undiversified economies being shipped out of the continent, whereas more effort should be given to building diversified African economies which will enhance intra-regional trade and exports.

There is light at the end of the tunnel as UNECA released a report which demonstrates that the negative impacts of EPAs (and their emerging legacies) could be counterbalanced if the AfCFTA is fully implemented before the full implementation of the EPAs (UNECA, 2015). Now that EPAs came to completion in 2020 and the EU is eager to begin new Post-Cotonou Agreements with ACP countries (see European Union, 2021) it seems unlikely that the AfCFTA will be able to counterbalance the negative legacies of the EPAs, especially given all the prevailing COVID19 challenges due to economic instabilities and some restrictions. Furthermore, by being fully implemented first, the AfCFTA would have been able to boost regional trade especially within industrial sectors (Tralac Trade Law Centre NPC, 2017). For instance, it has been estimated that Togolese exports to the rest of Africa could have increased by US\$54.9 million (0.7%) if the EPAs came into full operation while the AfCFTA was already in full force, whereas under the ECOWAS-EU EPA alone, there would have been a decline of US\$6 million (0.1%) (UNECA, 2018). Moreover, in regions where tariffs on trade in goods have been removed for intra-regional partners, the EPAs will not have an impact on intra-regional trade; but they will have a negative impact on extra-regional trade to other African countries (UNECA, 2018). Consequently, these states will now have increased trade with the EU, while sacrificing their trade with other African countries (UNECA, 2018). By properly, effectively and speedily implementing and finalising every aspect of the AfCFTA, African countries will to some extent be in a better position to take advantage of extra-continental trade agreements, especially

the one being offered through their partnership with the EU. This includes developing African industries, as well as equipping Africa's human capital with relevant skills to be able to enhance these economies' ability to compete (to some degree) against the impact of EPAs. Therefore, the onus is on African leaders.

As was noted in 4.1 the drawbacks of EPAs towards regional economic integration, it was also important to highlight some of those drawbacks towards the AfCFTA. Indeed, those drawbacks are not exclusive to regional economic integration, but they also impact continental economic integration.

## **Conclusion**

It is evident that EPAs have more negative outcomes than positive ones; from individual state level to regional level and continental level. Instead of bringing deeper integration into the global and regional economies, the EPAs are creating a rift in South-South trade and cooperation while also diminishing the export of manufactured goods from African countries to the EU. In this case, EPAs are in fact disintegrating the African economy from the rest of the world. Unfortunately, the goal of sustainable development through EPAs is an unlikely achievement because the EPA policies do not support an industrialised Africa whereby the highest volumes of exports are manufactured goods instead of raw materials. Making concessions for customs duties for raw materials and agricultural exports while stifling the manufacturing industry is a dissemble, as the goal of regional integration is really not fostered. Unfortunately, EPAs are proving that they will cause job losses, the shutting down of industries and ultimately increase poverty instead of eradicating it. With the coming into force of the AfCFTA, the hope is that this will reignite the quest for regional integration and deeply enhance inter-regional trade within Africa. By expanding their energies to make this continental FTA work, African leaders can surmount some of the most distractive legacies of the EPAs before they can start bearing bitter fruits. One can conclude that the impact of liberalising 80% of sub-Saharan African markets for the purpose of absorbing EU exports has far reaching negative outcomes on economic goals of African RECs.

## **CHAPTER 5: Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

This study explored the question of whether EPAs are hindering or promoting regional integration in Africa. Given the argument made in this study, a conclusion can be drawn that a comparison between the potential number of benefits which can be gained and the potential losses, EPAs are hindering regional integration in Africa. They will continue to cause more setbacks in terms of economic growth, development and cooperation of African countries. Unfortunately, they carry forth the legacy of EU-Africa relations which were more beneficial to the EU than to the African continent. Other relevant questions to this study were answered. What was discovered is that thus far the EPAs have not helped in the promotion of regional economic integration. Instead, through various studies, it is clear that they are likely to set it backwards. This is because of the negative impacts which EPAs are already having on regional integration in Africa. These agreements will diminish exports of manufactured goods from African countries to the EU. This is due to customs duties which favour the export of raw materials over finished goods, as well as the effects of deindustrialisation which the EPAs will cause. EPAs have also caused a recession in pro-poor policies which favour developing countries and assist them to compete economically in the international system. Unfortunately, by being unable to compete economically, sub-Saharan African countries will be unable to integrate effectively. The biggest implication which has been discovered through this research is the fact that EPAs severely affect intra-regional trade. Indeed this is the final impact after deindustrialisation and the shutting down of farms which supported Africans with household incomes, both of which enhanced intra and inter-regional trade, and as a whole regional economic integration. EPAs will exacerbate poverty within Africa and set sub-Saharan Africa's economy several decades backwards. In relation to the question of whether EPAs have positive contributions for Africa's regionalism, the study uncovered that they do not. Factors such as FDI, adjusted RoO, improved public services and reduced import quotas to the EU do nothing to improve regional economic integration. Instead, economic growth is diverted towards making EPAs find a solid footing within the African economy, while vast amounts of capital and commodity exports are directed to the EU.

One interesting finding has been that development aid, from its introduction during the Lomé Conventions, in spite of several African leaders' hesitation, created a donor-client environment within African countries. Thus, eroding the negotiation space for equal partners between the EU and Africa. This has been demonstrated in how African countries have been coerced with threats that their access to the EU market will be revoked as a way to get them to adopt unfavourable and unequal terms of the EPAs. Development aid created a cycle of dependency which has shifted African leaders' priorities from harnessing their resources to build thriving industries and to pursue regional integration to be able to support these industries. African countries have failed to fully be self-reliant producers who can effectively compete within the international economy. Unfortunately, what has accompanied the years of development aid is the EU's interference in Africa's political freedoms and sovereignty with regards to internal policies. The disbursement of development aid became dependent on many domestic reforms such as the cutting down of finances towards education and healthcare during the SAPs, and the shift from industrial development to rural development. In this regard, the political and economic implications for Africa are a continent which is unable to conduct its own affairs. Since the EPAs have been fully implemented, the EU is essentially on a course to control the African market with all its exports to the continent. Domestic financial reforms which have been taken (and those in the process of being taken) by African governments in order to mitigate the loss of import revenues signify the power which the EU and the EPAs have on Africa, even through something as little as the latter's exports.

There has been a successful discussion on the theories of integration, Neofunctionalism and New Regionalism. As well as New Regionalism's accompanying concepts, namely: Open Regionalism, the WIDER Approach, Regionalism from Below (New Regionalisms), and the External Guarantors Model. Neofunctionalism has a drawback in that it cannot be applied to every case, as different economic realities of other countries are what inform them, hence they will not follow the same progression of integration as the EU. Furthermore, it was discovered that the assumption that as integration evolves states and citizens will pledge their allegiance to a supranational body is inaccurate. This has particularly not been the case with Africa, especially because of the fear leaders have of surrendering their authority and sovereignty to a foreign body. A plausible argument is from

Regionalism from Below that Africa should evaluate and focus on its formal and informal sectors in order to build thriving RECs. While Open Regionalism does not seem to have any tangible benefits for Africa in the long run and exposes its economy to stifling neo-liberal policies, and the External Guarantors Model would only push Africa further into an unequal relationship with the EU, the argument from Regionalism from Below would create an environment where all stakeholders in the pursuit of regionalism are included. The inclusion of civil society within the region-building process would help to hold governments accountable, and to ignite transparency and a level of trust between the governments and ordinary citizens. It has been proven that the suggestion made by the WIDER Approach of the adoption of the Western model of the EU which comprises of 26 member states cannot simply be transplanted to Africa either on a regional or continental level (comprising of 55 member states) while neglecting African realities and histories.

In relation to previous EU-Africa trade relations, it has been uncovered that these served as the inception of the unequal partnership which defines the current EPAs. From the Yaoundé, to the Lomé Conventions, and then the Cotonou Agreement, relations between Africa and the EU always left African leaders sceptical and suspicious that the agreements were being used to further entrench EU power and interests over Africa post decolonialisation. Indeed EU interests have been deeply entrenched into the fabric of Africa's economies, and this is only going to get worse with the EPAs. Unfortunately, the agreements prior to the EPAs have proven to leave Africa far behind in its economic endeavours, especially those it pursued through RECs, instead of placing it on an equal footing with the EU.

The future of sub-Saharan Africa is such that EPAs will continue to stifle the economy and not provide any kind of enhancement to the AfCFTA, which is Africa's biggest regional economic cooperation initiative. Instead, they will bring about trade revenue losses and stand in the way of a CFTA in Africa which has the potential to thrive. In this regard, it is apparent that EPAs bring with them no benefit for regional integration in Africa, but they will further disintegrate African states and dismantle the very little progress made with regional economic integration.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

African countries should focus on building their RECs. For future continental economic initiatives to succeed, it is imperative to have well-functioning RECs which will be able to facilitate such initiatives, the AfCFTA being an example. By putting energy into continental initiatives, focus will be given to continental growth and development, and the overall improvement of Africans' livelihoods. Another way to succeed in this is by reforming the AU and ensuring that as a continental body, it facilitates regional cooperation initiatives by especially following through on proposed initiatives. A system of checks and balances which works together with RECs will assist with reminding the latter to follow-through on its commitments. Perhaps the most important factor in any country's leadership is the involvement of its citizens in any state initiatives. Likewise, any regional economic initiative being undertaken by every African state needs to be presented to domestic communities, and a clear indication of the potential benefits from this need to be detailed. There should be clear broadcasting on state media, and conversations created within civil society groups. By involving ordinary citizens, African countries will be able to harness their human capital as more citizens will be aware of the benefits of cross-border trading, therefore creating jobs for many. In addition, with the initiative of the AfCFTA, African citizens can finally know that their local produce and services can be exported far and wide within the African continent. By creating ownership within every African community, the desire to grow RECs will be magnified and eventually RECs can reach the desired functional state.

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