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Review

The Prospects and Challenges of the Proposed African Free Trade Zone (Aftz): A Search for A New Theory

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The African Free Trade Zone (AFTZ) is a free trade zone announced at the EAC-SADC-COMESA Summit on Wednesday 22 October 2008 by the heads of Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the East African Community (EAC). The African Free Trade Zone is also referred to as the African Free Trade Area in some official documents and press releases. In May 2012 the idea was extended to also include ECOWAS, ECCAS and AMU (Africa free trade zone in operation by 2018). The announcement of the Tripartite Summit of Heads of State and Government of member states of East African Community-Southern African Development Community-Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, EAC-SADC-COMESA, to establish an African Free Trade Zone (AFTZ) has been greeted with optimism in many quarters, and as such hailed as a welcome development. This optimism concerning the prospects of the proposed AFTZ, though often exaggerated, is not totally unfounded as it could help African Economic Community (AEC) strengthen intra-Regional Economic Communities, RECs, and inter-RECs integration by reducing the incidence of multiple memberships and proliferation of regional economic groups and subgroups. This paper, however, argues that the proposed AFTZ would be confronted with some potential challenges capable of, not just hindering, but torpedoing these prospects. The study is essentially prognostic. The Thrust of this paper is to exam the prospects and challenges of the proposed African free trade zone (aftz): the search for a new theory.

Keywords : African, Free Trade Zone, Theory

INTRODUCTION

Free trade area or zone is an area or a zone where there are no tariffs or other restrictions on movement of goods and services across borders usually representing the first stage in the economic integration. Other stages include customs union, common market, and economic and monetary union. States located within the free trade area, that is, the member states enjoy duty-free trade relations between/among themselves (Goldstein & Pevehouse, 2008; Aniche, 2009). Free trade area is, thus, part and parcel of regional economic integration, and in fact a stage or a phase in the strategies and aims of African Economic Community (AEC). This is perhaps what the heads of government and state of member states of East African Community (EAC), Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Common Market for Eastern and Southern African (COMESA) had in mind when they, apparently worried by the dwindling prospects of regional economic integration in Africa, convened a tripartite summit on October 22, 2008 to float a free trade area to be known as African Free Trade Zone (AFTZ).

The EAC-SADC-COMESA Summit is considered historic because for the first time since the birth of the African Union (AU), several key building blocks of the African Economic Community (AEC) have met on how to integrate territories and move towards deepening and widening integration within the framework of the Abuja Treaty for the establishment of the African Economic Community (AEC). Furthermore, for the first time a truly transcontinental union came into being ranging from the North to the South of the continent (Joshua, 1989; Ezeanyika, 2006). Not much has been written on the proposed African Free Trade Area, but not a few believes that it has a lot of prospects, while there are many who think that there are yet a number of challenges that may confront or even preempt. It is within this context that we pose this question:

- Are the challenges that confront the proposed African Free Trade Zone (AFTZ) capable of hindering or swallowing its prospects?

To address this question, we partition this paper into parts, namely, introduction, the proposed African Free Trade Zone (AFTZ), the prospects of the proposed African Free Trade Zone (AFTZ), the challenges of the proposed African Free Trade Zone (AFTZ), the search for a new theory, and conclusion and recommendations.

The Proposed African Free Trade Zone (AFTZ)

The African Free Trade Zone (AFTZ) announced at the EAC-SADC-COMESA Summit is the realization of a dream that has been for more than hundred years in the making. A trade zone envisioned then to span the length and breadth of the African continent from Cape to Cairo; from North African Egypt all the way to the Southernmost tip of Africa, Cape Town in South Africa. The Cape to Cairo dream was envisioned by Cecil Rhodes and other British imperialists in the 1890s, and was expressed in different contexts and versions including, but not limited, to the following ideals: Cape to Cairo Road, Cape to Cairo Railway, Cape to Cairo Telegraph and Cape to Cairo Trade Union (*http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Economic_Community,* retrieved on 9/3/2009).

While other powers, notably Germany and Portugal that had colonies and/or spheres of influence in the Cape to Cairo trade zone, contemplated; the primary benefactor of the Cape to Cairo Union would have been the Great Britain and the British Empire. The difference in the idea of the initial Cape to Cairo zone and its current incarnation is that the African Free Trade Zone (AFTZ) is the creation of African states for the mutual benefit and development of the AFTZ member states, their peoples and the whole of African continent rather than a trade zone for the benefit of Great Britain. Another important difference between the two is that the AFTZ encompasses an area greater than the one even Cecil Rhodes could have imagined. Cecil Rhodes' Cape to Cairo would have involved at most a dozen countries while the current Cape to Cairo zone under the AFTZ encompasses most of Africa, almost half of the African countries (i.e. 26 out of 54) representing more than half of the production, trade, population, landmass and resources of the entire African countries (*http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African Economic Community*, retrieved on 9/3/2009).

The proposed African Free Trade Zone (AFTZ) is likely to be made up of 26 member states namely; Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, Swaziland, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. All the aforementioned African countries are members of one, two or three of these following existing regional economic organizations, namely, East African Community (EAC), Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and even other regional economic organization in Africa and beyond. At this juncture we will make brief comments on the above regional economic organizations as part and parcel of the regional economic communities (RECs) of the African Economic Community (AEC). This will place our argument in a proper perspective.

The East African Community (EAC)

The East African Community (EAC) is the regional intergovernmental organization of the republics of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania with it headquarters in Arusha, Tanzania. The treaty for the establishment of the East African Community (EAC) was signed on November 30, 1999 and entered into force on July 7, 2000 following its ratification by the original three members, *viz*, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania for its reestablishment. Rwanda and Burundi later acceded to the EAC treaty on June 18, 2007 and became full members of the Community with effect from July 1, 2007. The East African Community (EAC) was originally established in 1967, however, disagreement between the founding members led to its collapse. On its reestablishment on November 30, 1999, the new EAC established a customs union in 2005 and is working towards establishment of a common market by 2010; subsequently, a monetary union by 2012 and ultimately a political federation of the East African states (*http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African Economic Community*, retrieved on 9/3/2009). The East African Community

(EAC) has a combined population of approximately 120 million people, land area of approximately 1.85million square kilometres and a combined gross domestic product of $466 billion in 2006. For details see table 1 below.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC)

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) was formed in Lusaka, Zambia on April 1, 1980 as a loose alliance of states in Southern Africa known then as Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) with the aim of coordinating development projects in order to lessen economic dependence on the then Apartheid South Africa. Subsequently, the then Southern Africa Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) was transformed to Southern African Development Community (SADC) as part of post-Apartheid South Africa fall out on August 17, 1992 in Windhoek, Namibia when the Declaration and Treaty were signed at the Summit of Heads of State and Government, and is currently headquartered in Gaborone, Botswana. The SADC is currently made up of the following member states, viz, Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. It covers a combined population of approximately 248 million people, land area of approximately 9.88 million square kilometres and a combined gross domestic product of $379 billion in 2006 (*http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Economic_Community*, retrieved on 9/3/2009). For details see table 1 below.

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) was formed in December, 1994 replacing the Preferential Trade Area (PTA) which had existed since 1981. Currently, COMESA is headquartered in Lusaka, Zambia with 19 member states which include Burundi (December 21, 1981), the Comoros (December 21, 1981), Democratic Republic of Congo (December 21, 1981), Djibouti (21st December, 1981), Egypt (6th January, 1999), Eritrea (1994), Ethiopia (December 21, 1981) Kenya (December 21, 1981), Libya (June 3, 2005), Madagascar (December 21, 1981), Malawi (December 21, 1981), Mauritius (December 21, 1981), Rwanda (December 21, 1981), Seychelles (2001), Sudan (December 21, 1981), Swaziland (December 21, 1981), Uganda (December 21, 1981), Zambia (December 21, 1981) and Zimbabwe (December 21, 1981) (*http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_Market_for_Eastern_and_Southern_Africa*, retrieved on 11/1/2004; *http://.www.comesa.int,* retrieved on 7/22/2009).

Perhaps with the exception of Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Tanzania, COMESA encompasses all other member states of EAC and SADC. It is, therefore, only seven of member states of EAC and SADC that are not COMESA members. The COMESA has a combined population of approximately 398 million people in a landmass of approximately 12.87 million square kilometres, and a combined gross domestic product of approximately $286.7 billion in 2006. For details see table 1 below.

The Prospects of the Proposed African Free Trade Zone (AFTZ)

With a possible combined population of approximately 527 million and a land area of approximately 18.47 million square kilometres, possibly a total of 26 member states, vast natural resources, huge market, and approximately a combined gross domestic product of US$ 625 billion; the African Free Trade Zone (AFTZ) could rival any other regional economic community, the European Union (EU) included, if it actualizes its potentials and becomes a truly integrated economic bloc. This is because the African Free Trade Zone (AFTZ) will, therefore, encompass most of Africa, almost half of the countries (i.e. 26 out of 54) more than half of the production, trade, population, land mass and resources. In addition, it will enlarge the market of member states, unlock their productive potentials, increase the levels or volumes of intra-African trade, and enhance developmental prospects. See table 2 for comparison of EAC-SADC-COMESA with other regional economic blocs.

The African Free Trade Zone (AFTZ) is, thus, likely to eliminate duplicative/multiple membership, proliferation of regional economic blocs, and subgroupings. In other words, the AFTZ has the prospect of removing or resolving the problem arising from the participation of member states in two or more regional economic communities or even regional economic, political and security cooperation schemes that may compete with or undermine one another. The AFTZ will, therefore, reduce combined memberships of EAC-SADC-COMESA from 40 memberships to 26 memberships as well as eliminating 13 duplicative memberships of its members in the three regional organizations. However, it is yet to be clear whether the AFTZ will be able to remove the existing subgroups or the possibility of forming future ones. Table 3 below shows the duplicative memberships of the EAC, SADC and COMESA.

The Table 3 above demonstrates that half of the 26 member states of the EAC, SADC and COMESA are members of any of the two of the three regional economic blocs, while the other half maintains single membership in the three regional economic organizations. None of

Table 1. Comparison of EAC, SADC and COMESA

Tripartite Summit/ AFTZ	No of States	Area Km^2 (in million)	Population (in million)	GDP (US$ billion)
EAC	5	1.85	120	46.6
SADC	15[1]	9.88	248	379
COMESA	19	12.87	398	286.7
Total	26[2]	18.47[2]	527[2]	625[2]

[1]Madagascar was suspended after the coup *d'etat*.
[2]Subracted double or multiple memberships to avoid double or multiple counting
Source: *http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Economic_Community/9/3/2009*

Table 2. Comparison of EAC-SADC-COMESA with other African Regional Economic Communities

Pillars regional blocs (REC)	Area (Km^2)	Population	GDP (PPP) In million	($US) per capita	Member states
AEC	29,910,442	853,520,010	2,053,706	2,406	53
ECOWAS	5,112,903	251,646,263	342,519	1,361	15
ECCAS	6,667,421	121,245,958	175,928	1,451	11
SADC	9,882,959	233,944,179	737,335	3,152	15
EAC	1,817,945	124,858,568	104,239	1,065	5
COMESA	12,873,957	406,102,471	735,599	1,811	20
IGAD	5,233,604	187,969,775	225,049	1,197	7
Western Sahara [1]	266,000	273,008	?	?	N/A[2]
Other African blocs	Area (km2)	Population	GDP (PPP) In million	($ US) per capita	Member states
CEMAC [3]	3,020,142	34,970,529	85,136	2,435	6
SACU [3]	2,693,418	51,055,878	541,433	10,605	5
UEMOA [3]	3,505,375	80,865,222	101,640	1,257	8
UMA [4]	5,782,140	84,185,073	491,276	5,836	5
GAFTA [5]	5,876,960	166,259,603	635,450	3,822	5

[1]The Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) is a signatory to the AEC, but not participating in any bloc yet.
[2]Majority under military occupation by Morocco; some territory administered by the SADR.
[3]Economic bloc inside a pillar REC.
[4]Proposed for pillar REC, but objecting participation.
[5]Non-African members of GAFTA are excluded from figures.
Source: *http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Economic_Community/11/1/2004*.

them is a member of the three regional economic communities. The implication of the above is that the AFTZ is likely to strengthen or synergize its bargaining power when negotiating international deals with other regional bodies or part of it.

Analysts believe that the African Free Trade Zone agreement will increase intra-regional trade, boost economic growth, and raise development prospects of their members. How this will be achieved is yet to be known. The African Free Trade Zone (AFTZ) is, also, considered as a major step in the implementation of the African Economic Community (AEC), and therefore, will strengthen and harmonize intra- and inter-RECs through elimination of multiple or overlapping memberships, proliferation of regional economic groups and subgroups. It is pertinent to state here that most of the above prospects are projections and we are going to periscope them in the light of various challenges that may confront AFTZ in order to address the question we posed earlier.

The Challenges of the Proposed African Free Trade Zone (AFTZ)

The African Free Trade Zone will be confronted with numerous challenges capable of dwindling, countering and torpedoing its prospects. To begin with, establishing a free trade either by the name African Free Trade Zone or Area in the Eastern and Southern African regions will be a set-back on some of the constituent regional economic communities like the East African Community (EAC) which has already surpassed a free trade arrangement by achieving customs union. Ditto with the case of Southern African Customs Union (SACU), a subgroup or sub-bloc of Southern African Development Community (SADC) that has transcended free trade area to achieve customs union. In other words, the proposed AFTZ may hinder, instead of jumpstarting regional economic integration in these regions The implication of the above is that the prospects of setting up African Free

Table 3. Duplicative Memberships of EAC, SADC and COMESA

EAC	SADC	COMESA
	Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe
	Zambia	Zambia
	Malawi	Malawi
	Swaziland	Swaziland
Tanzania	Tanzania	
	Madagascar[1]	Madagascar
	Mauritius	Mauritius
	Demo. Rep. of Congo	Demo. Rep. of Congo
	Seychelles	Seychelles
Burundi		Burundi
Kenya		Kenya
Rwanda		Rwanda
Uganda		Uganda

[1]Madagascar was suspended after coup *d'etat*

Table 4: Duplicative Memberships of the Proposed AFTZ Member States in other RECs

AFTZ	ECCAS	CEN-SAD	AMU	IGAD
Kenya		Kenya		Kenya
Eritrea		Eritrea		Eritrea
Djibouti		Djibouti		Djibouti
Rwanda	Rwanda			
Burundi	Burundi			
Angola	Angola			
Demo. Rep. of Congo	Demo. Rep. of Congo			
Uganda				Uganda
Ethiopia				Ethiopia
Libya			Libya	
Comoros		Comoros		
Egypt		Egypt		

Trade Area may eventually lose its appeal to EAC and SACU and their member states despite its prospects of huge market and burgeoning intra-regional trade.

In addition, the proposed AFTZ may not be able to eliminate multiple or duplicative memberships and the proliferation of regional economic communities in Africa aferall. For instance, available data indicate that aside from memberships of these three regional economic groups, some members belong to other regional economic groups like Kenya, Eritrea and Djibouti belong to the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD); Rwanda, Burundi, Angola and Democratic Republic of Congo belong to the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). Also, Uganda and Ethiopia belong to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Libya belongs to the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), and Egypt and the Comoros belong to the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD). See table 4 below for details.

From Table 4 above, it is only the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) that EAC-SADC-COMESA or the proposed AFTZ member states do not belong to, but they belong to the other four regional economic communities (RECs). The implication is that Kenya's memberships of four RECs will be reduced to three memberships while Eritrea and Djibouti will retain their three memberships, Rwanda's, Burundi's, Democratic Republic of Congo's, and Uganda's memberships of three RECs will be reduced to two memberships. Other countries like Angola, Ethiopia, Libya, Comoros and Egypt will retain their two memberships. Thus, the reduction in the multiple memberships is not so significant given that many of the member states of the proposed AFTZ will still maintain double or triple memberships.

Another implication of the above is that the number of regional economic communities (RECs) in Africa will be reduced from eight to six which is still quite on the high side. Moreso, there is no guarantee that other ones will

Table 5: SADC Member States and their Past Colonial Rulers

SADC	SACU	Past Colonial Rulers
Angola		Portugal
Botswana	Botswana	Britain
Demo. Rep. of Congo		France
Lesotho	Lesotho	Britain
Madagascar[1]		France
Malawi		Britain
Mauritius[2]		Britain
Mozambique		Portugal
Namibia	Namibia	South Africa
Seychelles[2]		Britain
South Africa	South Africa[3]	Britain
Swaziland	Swaziland[4]	Britain and South Africa
Tanzania		Britain
Zambia		Britain
Zimbabwe		Britain

[1]Madagascar was suspended after the coup d'*etat.*
[2]Initially colonized by France and later by Britain.
[3]Initially colonized by Netherlands and later Britain.
[4]Jointly colonized by Britain and South Africa.

not spring up in the future either from the proposed AFTZ or other regional economic communities (RECs). There is, also, the possibility of one of the constituting regional economic blocs, of the proposed AFTZ, that is, EAC-SADC-COMESA, resurrecting or incarnating if there is discontent, afterall there is a precedent. For example, in spite of being members of the either of the SADC and COMESA; Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda went ahead and resurrected or re-established the East African Community (EAC) in 1999. Also, the undue influence of the past colonial masters and other neo-colonial factors which usually lead to subgroupings within the regional economic communities (RECs) may not after all be overcome or subdued by the proposed African Free Trade Zone (AFTZ). Already within one of the constituting regional economic blocs, that is, SADC, there is a subgroup known as Southern African Customs Union (SACU) which members share the same colonial master and linguistic appellation. For illustration see table 5 below.

From Table 5 above, Southern African Customs Union (SACU) draws all its memberships from either the former colonies of Britain or South Africa or both and they are all Anglophones and South Africa was colonized by Britain, although, there are other British colonized SADC member states are not in SACU, but there is no SADC member state that was colonized by either France or Portugal that is a member of SACU. So, if colonial legacy engendered from many years of historical ties both in economic and political spheres is responsible for forming SACU, there is possibility that SACU will co-exist with AFTZ or reincarnate in the future just like other subgroups may emerge from other constituting regional economic groups like EAC and COMESA or from within it among countries that share the same colonial experience and linguistics appellation. Thus, the proposed (AFTZ) may not entirely be able to prevent the emergence of subgroupings from within it. The proposed African Free Trade Zone (AFTZ) will be unlikely to transform the vertical linkage and external dependence of economies of its members to a horizontal integration and interdependencies due to rentierism of most of its member states. Ditto, with the intra-regional dependencies in which some of the economies of the prospective members will be dependent on South Africa. Two major implications flow from this; one, member states will be trading more with industrialized countries of the West, and two, the trade relations between many of the member states and South Africa will be skewed in favour of the latter. As a result, member states would be unwittingly aiding developed countries in undermining African free trade area. The point being made is that the proposed AFTZ may not boost intra-regional trades as such, except in the case of trade between other member states and South Africa, because most of them are export-oriented primary producers whose primary products are in very little demand within the regional group or proposed AFTZ, and to remedy this will be very difficult (Ake, 1981:169).

As corollary to the above, the weak economic structure of the member states and the attendant economic crises, stagnation and instability of some of the member states will pose a great challenge to African Free Trade Zone (AFTZ), and will continue to be a drawback to the prospects. For example, SADC has been ineffective in dealing with Zimbabwe owing to its high inflation. If SADC is not able to resolve the miserable situation in Zimbabwe

Table 6. Conflicts in the Proposed African Free Trade Zone (AFTZ)

Proposed AFTZ Member States	Civil Wars	Wars Between AFTZ State	Other Forms of Violence
Angola	Angolan Civil Wars (a) Battle of Cuito Cuanavale and (b) Battle of Cassinger.		
Burundi	Burundi Civil War (a)Titanic Express Massacre (b)Itaba Massacre (c)Gatumba Massacre		
Comoros	Comorian Secession Crisis 2008 (Invasion of Anjouan)		
Democratic Republic of Congo	First Congo War Second Congo War (a) Ituri Conflict (b) Kivu Conflict.		Congo Crisis (a)Katangan Secession (b) South Kasai Secession, Simba Rebellion, Shaba Invasions
Djibouti	Djiboutian Civil War	2008 Djiboutian Eritrean Border Conflict	
Egypt	Mahdist War, Yom Kippur War, Present Islamic Terroism	Libyan-Egyptian War	1997 till date Islamic Insurgency in the Maghreb.
Eritrea		Eritrean War of Independence, Eritrean-Ethiopian War	Series of Massacres
Ethiopia	Ethiopian Civil War	Eritrean-Ethiopian War, Ethiopian-Adel War, Ogaden War	
Kenya	Shifta War (1963-1967)		Turbi Village Massacre (2005), 2007-2008 Kenyan Crisis.
Lesotho	Gun War	South African Intervention in Lesotho	
Libya		Chadian-Libyan Conflict[1], Libyan-Egyptian War.	
Madagascar			Madascar Revolt
Mauritius	Battle of Grand Port		
Mozambique	Mozambican Civil War		
Namibia	Maritz Rebellion, Rwandan Civil War		Rwandan Genocide
Sudan	First Sudanese Civil War, Darfur Conflict 2003 till date	Mahdist War (a) Battle of Abu Klea (b) Battle of Omdurman © Battle of Umm Diwaykarat, Chad-Sudan Conflict 2009[1], Isreali Bombing of Sudan[1]	
Tanzania	Zanzibar Revolution (1964)	Ugadan-Tanzania War (1978-1979)	Maji Maji Rebellion
Uganda	Uganda Civil War (1982-1986)	Operation Entebbe (1976), Ugandan-Tanzania War (1978-1979) (a) Fall of Kampala	Uganda National Rescue Front I (1980-1985), Ugandan's People's Democratic Army (1986-1988), Holy Spirit Movement (1986-1987), Lord's Resistance Army (1987-present), Allied Democratic Force (1996 till date), Uganda National Rescue Front II (1996-2002).
Zimbabwe	First Matabele War Zimbabwe Civil War Second Matabele War		

[1]Opponents not proposed AFTZ member states.

what makes optimists think that the proposed AFTZ will be able to do so effectively (*http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Economic_Community*, retrieved on 9/3/2009). The proposed African Free Trade Zone (AFTZ) would have to contend with several political differences which include the differences in the development ideologies of member states, and their fear of compromising their sovereignty or control over their territories (Ake, 1981:169). For instance, within few days of the announcement of the AFTZ, Djibouti warned that it may be heading for war with Eritrea if Eritrea does not respect its territorial integrity. The import of this is that the proposed African Free Trade Zone (AFTZ) may be encumbered by conflicts or disputes between members like wars, etc. Wars will in turn lead to the upsurge of refugees in the zone and worsen the economic crises in these countries. See table 6 below for details.

More importantly, the proposed African Free Trade Zone (AFTZ) would have to deal with the subnational centrifugal tendencies like conflicts, crises, violence, ethnic nationalism, religious intolerance and ultimately civil wars. For example, the case of Somalia, that is, the only natural member of the proposed AFTZ left in the cold due to civil strife that has left most of Somalia without a functioning government since 1991. Consequently, the proposed AFTZ cannot integrate all its countries, many of whom are Somalia's neighbours, some of whom meddle in Somalia's crisis or are directly affected by Somalia's problems in terms of piracy and refugee, and leave Somalia behind. Somalia will therefore remain a great test to the proposed AFTZ (*http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Economic_Community*, retrieved on 9/3/2009). The case of Zimbabwe and Darfur are also another big test to the proposed AFTZ. Zimbabwe with her perennial instability and mass exodus of people to neighbouring countries particularly South Africa threatens to destabilize SADC's very peaceful existence, and if it is not resolved will be carried over to the proposed AFTZ. In the same vein, with Sudan's possible memberships of the proposed AFTZ, full exploitation of Sudan's potential cannot be realized so long as Sudan has the cloud of Darfur over it. However, with the peaceful separation of South Sudan on July 9, 2011, it is expected that the problem may be overcome, at least for now. Similarly, with its vast resources and possibly the largest unrealized potential in the world, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is a power keg waiting to explode if not properly handled. Many possible members of the proposed AFTZ including Uganda, Rwanda, South Africa and Burundi have a history of involvement in the internal affairs of the DRC. For example, Nkunda is believed to be funded in part by Rwanda, and thus, DRC's stability will pose a great challenge to the proposed AFTZ, especially with the involvement of some of its members (*http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Economic_Community*, retrieved on 9/3/2009). For details of internal political crises and wars between African states see table 6 below.

It is noteworthy to state here that the above lists is by no means exhaustive, however, with over fifty wars and conflicts as recorded in the table above, it suffices to say that the proposed African Free Trade Area is a crisis region where internal centrifugal forces of subnationalism and other forms of conflicts are ravaging the region. It is obvious therefore that the internal centrifugal tendencies and wars between the proposed AFTZ member states are the greatest challenge, the proposed AFTZ would have to deal with, and it dwindles whatever prospects it has, and could indeed, preempt it.

This is exactly what Echezona (1998:48) is referring to when he avers that the intractable civil strife within the member states of ECOWAS and OAU (now AU) and the refugee crisis which they cause are the constant reminders that the African states are too fragile to engage in the pursuit of regional integration or as he puts it: "of system wide community formation". The point being made is that numerous challenges awaiting the proposed African Free Trade Zone (AFTZ) are capable of hindering or swallowing its prospects or probably preempt its emergence.

The Search for a New Theory

Empirical studies on regional economic integration are usually anchored on liberal institutionalism - embodying various theories of integration like functionalism, neo-functionalism and others - which basically hold that in the midst of anarchy or in spite of absence of overarching/supranational institutions, there is cooperation in the international system, and that order is facilitated through international institutions, norms and regimes. As a fall-out of this, the liberal institutionalists believe that there would be upward shifting of sovereignty from state to regional or global level facilitated by merger of several states into single state or ultimately a single world government or a process by which supranational institutions replace national ones in the long-run (Burchill & Linklater, 2005; Goldstein & Pevehouse, 2008).

But the neo-functionalism of Ernst B. Hass unlike, the functionalism of David Mitrany is non-normative, and thus, describes or explains the process of regional integration based on empirical data. Aside being empirical, neo-functionalism, unlike functionalism, does not focus primarily on global integration or global supranationalism rather its primary concern is on regional integration or regional supranationalism (Echezona, 1998; Burchill & Linklater, 2005). Classical functionalism is, thus, based on the hope that more and more common task will be delegated to such specific functional organizations or agencies of the United Nations (UN), like World Bank (WB), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organization (WTO), etc, and that each of these organizations will become supranational, that is, superior to its member governments in power and authority. In this way the world's nations will gradually become integrated into a single community within which war will be impossible (Mitrany, 1948; 1966). Orthodox or classical functionalism, thus, envisaged the treatment of these international or supranational functions and services as technical matters, non-political in nature and well removed from the clamour and pressures of interest groups, nations and the masses of the population. Classical or orthodox functionalists like David Mitrany, thus, hoped that highly specific functional agencies would enter into direct contact with the people they serve in each country. Their services would somehow remain non-political, but they, would win through their performance, both increasing elite acceptance and popular support (Deutch, 1968; Echezona, 1998). Regarding highly sensitive matters such as trade terms, financial, economic and developmental issues which the above mentioned United Nations' functional agencies handle; and which constitute serious national economic interests of producing means of sustenance as non-political form of cooperation is the greatest flaw, defect and intellectual pitfall of the classical functionalism (Groom & Taylor, 1975; Nweke, 2000). Neo-functionalism on the other hand, is a theory of regional integration or regional supranationalism in which integration is considered to be a desirable state of affairs that could be introduced by the political or technocratic elites of the involved states. However, Akpuru-Aja (2001:120-121) notes that while functionalism of David Mitrany is evolutionary, neo-functionalism of Ernst B. Haas is behavioural favouring the establishment of an institutional mechanism to promote more collaborative tendencies rather than take for granted a transition from nonpolitical forms of cooperation to political union.

There are, thus, three major principles of neo-functionalism; (i) the principle of positive spillover effects which states that integration between states in one sector, that is, economic sector will eventually ramify into integration or cooperation in other sectors, such as political, socio-cultural, security, etc; (ii) the mechanism of a transfer in domestic allegiance which assumes that as the process of integration gathers momentum in an increasingly pluralistic domestic society of each state; interest groups and other associations will transfer their allegiance or loyalty away from national institutions towards the supranational institution(s) when they begin to realize that their material interests or wellbeing can be better pursued through supranational institution(s) than the pre-existing national institutions; and (iii) principle of technocratic automaticity which states that as integration hastens the supranational institution(s) will take the lead in fostering further integration as they become more and more autonomous of the member states (Echezona, 1998; Haas, 1970).

These three main principles of neo-functionalism embody John Galtung's Staircase Hypothesis, which involves the process of beginning with limited domain (or memberships) and limited scope (or sectors or area of cooperation) and gradually deepening the scope before extending the domain. Deepening the scope means moving from the initial areas of cooperation to other areas of cooperation by bringing in new sectors, whereas, extending the domain means admitting new members or increasing memberships. But neo-functionalism has many defects and while assuming that regional integration is a gradual process its conception of integration as a linear process makes explanation of setbacks or shortcomings impossible. Another of its defects is that neo-functionalism assumes that integration of states is an integration of interdependence, and therefore, not adequate for explaining the incidence of dependence of African economies to Western economies and integration of dependence of the African state to another.

Neo-functionalism, thus, blames the failure of regional integration in Africa on the failure to follow its principles or more specifically the John Galtung's strategy like Europe did, even as Europe began to suffer some setbacks towards the end of 20th century resulting from the upsurge of nationalism. Neo-functionalism is Eurocentric, and thus, parochial (Aniche, Okeke & Ukaegbu, 2009). Consequently, there is need for a paradigm shift in Africa, that is, a theory that will be appropriate or adequate in explaining the African predicament. To do this, we need to look for a theory, which transcends neo-functionalism, a post-neofunctional theory which will enable us to tell our own stories by ourselves. Neo-functionalism is an alien theory, which was propounded by the West to facilitate regional integration in Europe, and was as such tailored to suit Europe. While classical functionalism of David Mitrany advocates for global supranationalism, neo-functionalism of Ernst B. Haas advocates for regional supranationalism. The point of departure of post-neofunctionalism, therefore, is national integration and nationalism as a necessary step or starting point or take off point towards achieving stable and sustainable regional integration, and ultimately global integration Aniche, 2009). Most of the European states who kickstarted European integration have already achieved sufficient or satisfactory level of national integration, nation-building and national development. But this is not the case with African states which are still confronted by national question, battling with underdevelopment and devastated by centrifugal forces of subnationalism. There is, therefore, in Africa tension between sub-national centrifugal forces (like ethnic nationalism, religious intolerance, etc) and supranational centripetal forces (like regional integration or cooperation, free trade area, customs union, common market, single market, monetary union, etc). As the balance tilts towards the former, the regional economic communities (RECs) in Africa are continuously threatened by the subnationalism or disintegrative nationalism, and are thus, confronted with the challenge of intervening to resolve disputes, conflicts and crises arising from or within it, and are thus, distracted from the primary task of achieving sub-regionalism let alone continent-wide community formation. It is under this disintegrative nationalism or subnational centrifugal tendencies that African Free Trade Zone (AFTZ) is proposed as a solution, an option or an alternative towards overcoming various problems of regional economic integration such as multiple memberships, proliferation of RECs, dependencies, etc, in the Eastern and Southern regions of Africa. It is our contention in this paper that these challenges will override, and indeed, swallow up whatever prospects that are attributed to the proposed AFTZ. This is because so much effort is wasted and energy dissipated by African leaders and regional bodies in managing centrifugal forces of sub-nationalism to the extent that they are not able to harness the human resources of their people towards synergizing them in transforming the numerous mineral resources that abound within their territories into manufactured products, and thus, constituting a clog in the wheel of industrialization. It is this very fact that has confined African states to export-oriented primary producers whose primary products are in very little demand within the regional group and which must be exported to industrialized countries of the West in unequal exchange with manufactured goods imported from them. This has ensured that Africa with its enclave economy remains in the periphery of world politics and as well at the mercy of neo-colonialism thwarting all efforts towards regional integration in Africa, and the proposed African Free Trade Zone (AFTZ) will not be an exception.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We have, in the course of this paper, been able to address the question, and thus, concur that the numerous challenges that would confront the proposed African Free Trade Zone (AFTZ) are capable of hindering its prospects, or in the extreme, confounding it. In seeking for solution to the predicament of African integration, we insist that the solution should not be sought in the existing Euro-centric strategies or theories, but in a new theory, a post-neofunctionalism suitable for African situation and capable of solving its problems. We, also, noted that while classical functionalism and neo-functionalism reify global supranationalism and regional supranationalism, respectively, as a starting point of integration, post-neofunctionalism problernatizes it and rather advocates that regional and global integration should proceed from national integration, thus, reifying nationalism as a step towards achieving regionalism and ultimately global integration or globalism. A number of recommendations flows from this (i) that African leaders should seriously commence with the task of national integration, nation-building and national development beyond rhetoric, and as such, as a strategy of eventually achieving regional integration in Africa (ii) as a corollary to the above, African leaders should desist from divisive politics of divide and rule or balkanization and disintegrative nationalism; and work towards unleashing and synergizing the collective energies of their people towards transforming the abundant and strategic mineral resources in their territories into manufactured goods necessary for diversifying their economies from the present rentierism needed for transforming their current dependency on the industrialized countries of the West and their neo-colonial influences into relations of interdependency, and (iii) if they must relate with themselves since they enjoy all the fanfare, pomp and pageantries that are associated with it, it will be better to float a regional security organization that will assist in the addressing the national questions that result to civil wars or strife and resolving inter-AFTZ state wars.

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