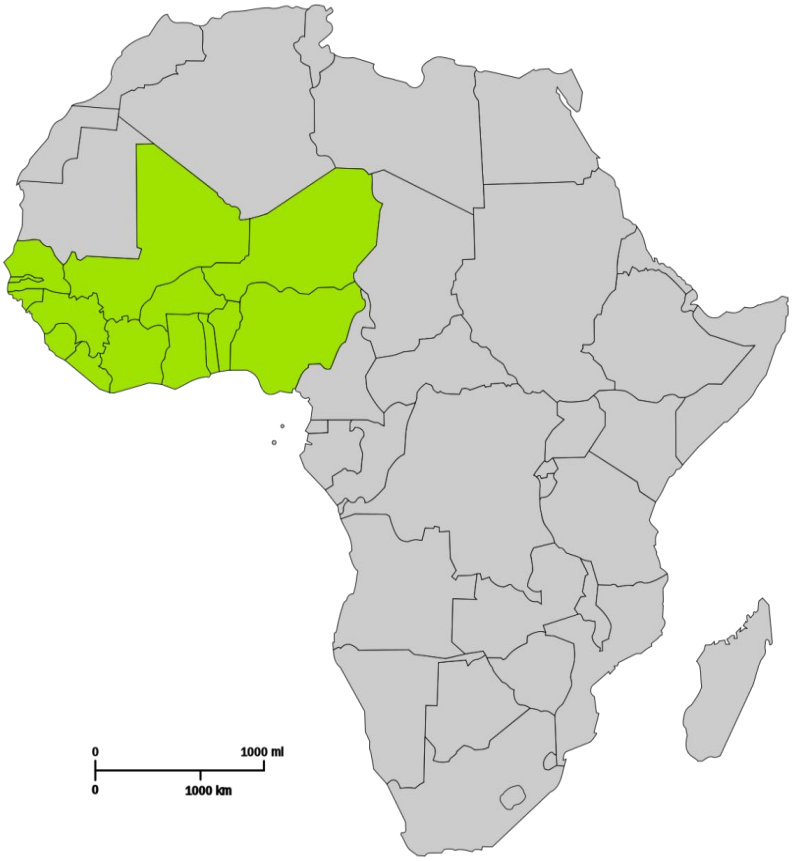
# THE WEST AFRICAN POWER POOL: A MODEL FOR REGIONAL INTEGRATION?




## A Master's Capstone Project

**By Joseph G. Bartuah**

**Candidate, Master's of Science Degree in Public Affairs & International Relations**

**John W. McCormack Graduate School of Global Studies & Public Policy**

## UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON

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ABSTRACT

The December 10, 1999 decision by West African leaders, under the aegis of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to set up the West African Power Pool (WAPP) was hailed in many economic and political circles as a farsighted move by leaders of the sub-region, because if fully implemented, this integrative approach has the potential to effectively tackle some of the socio-economic challenges of West Africa. WAPP's primary mission is to integrate the electrical power grids of 14 [one member, Cape Verde is an island state 400 miles off the West African coast] of the 15 member states, with the goal of making electricity available, affordable and accessible to all inhabitants of the sub-region; one member, Cape Verde is an island state 400 miles off the West African coast.

Even though the WAPP initiative is viewed by many as a potentially promising integrative endeavor, the project has, however, been dogged by questions about the political will as well as economic capability of ECOWAS member states to translate their aspiration into practice. In this paper, I will be assessing WAPP's economic feasibility, reviewing some of the strides made towards the realization of this new integrative paradigm and its over-all status since the Lome` protocol was signed by the heads of state. In so doing, the key question in this paper is: can the WAPP initiative be a model of regional and sub-regional integration?

Through qualitative data analyses, I will assess whether West African leaders' desire to transform the socio-economic developmental features of their sub-region through the

provision of affordable and accessible electricity is achievable within the time frame they have earmarked for themselves.

**ABBREVIATIONS IN THIS PAPER AND THEIR MEANINGS**

1. AA……Articles of Agreement
2. ALRI……Acute Lower Respiratory Infections
3. AU……African Union
4. CIA……Central Intelligence Agency
5. EB……Executive Board
6. ECA……Economic Commission for Africa
7. ECOWAS……Economic Community of West African States
8. ERERA……ECOWAS Regional Electricity Regulatory Agency
9. FDI……Foreign Direct Investment

10. GA……General Assembly (of WAPP)

11. GDP……Gross Domestic Product

12. IJES…… International Journal of Engineering Sciences

13. MNC……Multinational Corporation

14. OPEC……Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries

15. UN……United Nations

16. UNGA……United Nations General Assembly

17. WAPP……West African Power Pool

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## Introduction

In West Africa, what seems to be a quiet revolution, or better still, an exemplary integrated development process is steadily evolving, fueled by a realization among leaders of the sub-region that none of their countries can actually undertake sustainable socio-economic development in isolation. It was in realization of this collaborative concept that on May 28, 1975, West African leaders collectively midwifed the birth of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), to ensure trade liberalization, free movement of people and

economic integration within the sub-region. Largely modeled after the former European Economic Community (now European Union), ECOWAS currently comprises 15 member states: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. Since ECOWAS came into being about 39 years ago, it has been making some modest progress towards its aspirations, amid multiple challenges.

However, the focus of this paper is to specifically assess how leaders of West Africa are attempting to put into practice the core concept of regionalism by integrating their energy resources, as manifested by the establishment of the West African Power Pool (WAPP) as a specialized agency of ECOWAS. WAPP involves a new paradigm in regional development because it seeks to forge a public-private partnership aimed at boosting the availability, affordability and accessibility of electricity for all the inhabitants of the sub-region. Unlike developed countries, where electricity is provided mainly by privately-owned corporations and other commercial entities, electrical energy in Africa is almost exclusively provided by the governments of the various countries. The dismal result has been the lack of, or inadequacy of electricity to most parts of the continent, especially in the rural areas. But with the formation of WAPP, West African governments have vowed to liberalize and encourage foreign direct investment (FDI) in the sub-region's burgeoning energy sector.

In chapter 1, this paper will encapsulate some of the events leading to the establishment of ECOWAS, the parent organization of WAPP. The perennial struggles for political independence in the aftermath of the Second World War, the strides towards economic development amid the economic downturns of the 1970s are some of the issues that will be briefly discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 2 will review the theoretical framework of regionalism as a building block of greater international cooperation and development. That is, some of the scholarly thoughts on regionalism and the role of inter-governmental organizations in catalyzing sustainable socio-economic development will be highlighted, with specific focus on the functional, neo-functional, constructivist and essentialist approaches to the concept.

The emergence of WAPP on ECOWAS's diplomatic radar and the ambitious goals set by its architects to achieve will be considered in chapter 3. In other words, is the WAPP experiment feasible as a model for integrated regional development? If so, is it replicable in other parts of the continent? Does the political will exist within the sub-region for the realization of this project? So far, how has the project been faring? What has been accomplished thus far and what are some of the challenges? Using a case study approach, I will be assessing available materials to determine whether the current generation of West African leaders is striving to accentuate some of the aspirations that the founding fathers of ECOWAS had envisioned in 1975. Since WAPP has already earmarked some target dates for the achievement of certain phases of the project, I will scrutinize efforts made towards the realization of such phases, along with their corresponding dates, in terms of investment and actual implementation. I will then conclude the paper with some relevant policy recommendations, following a summary of my findings.

## Chapter 1

### Historical Backdrop

Since WAPP does not exist in a vacuum, it is imperative to briefly look at ECOWAS, the sub-regional grouping that created this specialized agency in 1999. One of the positive impacts of post-World War II was the realization by colonial powers—though reluctantly--about the

equality of all human beings. Even though from the Enlightenment era in the 17th century, some European philosophers had invariably been espousing the equality of humankind, such philosophical idealism did not deter European political elites from subjugating their fellow human beings to all forms of degradation on almost every continent of the world. In the case of Africa, the continent was literally shared among existing major European powers at the time, following the Berlin Conferences of 1884 and 1885 during the height of the so-called Scramble for Africa.

### 1.1 Independence and Economic Reality

However, with the devastation of Europe in the Second World War and the near crumbling of most European governments, continuously holding onto those colonial enclaves became economically untenable. Besides that, the new hegemonic power on the global stage—the United States of America—was not a proponent of colonial empire. As a result, in the San Francisco Charter out of which the United Nations emerged as the new paradigm for global interaction, a special Trusteeship and Decolonization Council (UN Charter: chapter 13) was set up to specifically work with colonial administrations in preparing all those territories under subjugation for eventual independence, in consonance with the goals of the new global organization. Moreover, article 62, section 2 of the UN charter, which among other things, stipulates the functions of the organization's Economic and Social Council, also charged the council with the responsibility of making "recommendations for the purpose of promoting respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all".

### 1.2 Colonial Crumbling and Mass Independence

The ensuing domino effect of such unprecedented reforms within the international system was that many colonial holdings around the world began agitating for independence. For example, between 1847—the year in which Liberia, the first African republic declared her independence--and 1957, only six African countries gained independence. But within a 20-year period from 1957 to 1977, at least 45 African countries fulfilled their political aspirations of obtaining independence. Even though they gained political independence, each country still heavily relied on its colonial power for most of its economic interactions.

### 1.3 Post-Independence and Economic Challenges

African leaders were assuming the mantles of state power, the UN was aware that eventually, managing their national economies would be one of the challenges for the new political elites. As a result, the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) conceptualized the division of the continent into four sub-regional zones for economic development purposes (Okolo, 1995: p. 130). Moreover, the need for harnessing their resources was also not lost on African political leaders themselves, as they made some attempts in that direction. For example, Ghana and Guinea, two newly independent West African states had sought to form a "union" in 1958; Mali joined that grouping in 1961. "If we are to remain free, if we are to enjoy the full benefits of Africa's rich resources", Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana had observed, "we must unite to plan for our total defense and the full exploitation of our material and human means in the full interests of all our peoples"(Pambuzuka News, p. 1).

Moreover, William Tubman, President of Liberia—from 1944 to 1971--is, however, credited in official circles (ECOWAS Profile, p. 1) with pioneering the concept of West African integration in a 1964 proposition. Even though he led a relatively small country (as compared to

Ghana and Nigeria, for example), but Tubman as an elder statesman in Africa during his era, (born on November 29, 1895), wielded enormous influence in the region, partly because he was President of Africa's first independent republic. Tubman having made the call, he convened a conference in Monrovia in February of 1965 during which he signed a free trade agreement with the leaders of Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea and Sierra Leone in furtherance of his ambition. But this initial ad hoc attempt at economic integration apparently did not materialize.

### 1.4 A New Generation of West African Leaders

In the decade of the '70s, the West Africa political circle was infused with a new brand of highly forward-looking leadership, mainly young military leaders who turned out to be action-oriented, coupled with a leadership shift in Liberia where upon his death on July 23, 1971, Tubman was succeeded by his Vice President, William R. Tolbert, who was much more robust and influential in his advocacy for African integration. Some of those leaders began a shuttle diplomacy to resuscitate the efforts of their predecessors. Notable among such efforts was then Nigerian head of state General Yakubu Gowon's visit to Togo in April of 1972, during which he and the Togolese President, General Gnassingbe Eyadema, revitalized the concept by drafting a plan; both leaders subsequently intensified their shuttle diplomacy by visiting 12 additional West African capitals to galvanize support for an integrative architecture. Their efforts yielded initial results, with a conference of West African leaders in Lome`, the Togolese capital from December 10-15, 1973. The political elites at the Lome` conference resolved to refer the draft treaty to "the conference of experts and Jurists" (ECOWAS Profile, p. 3), which was held in Accra, Ghana in January 1974, followed by a ministerial conference in Monrovia, Liberia in January of 1975 to review the recommendations made by the conference of experts.

## 1.5 External Economic Factors

Another precipitating event which eventually accelerated the formation of ECOWAS was the adverse effects of the Arab-Israeli war of 1973. From the onset, African leaders under the auspices of the erstwhile Organization for African Unity ( now African Union), resolved that Israel was the aggressor; as a result, all members of the OAU, with the exception of Malawi, severed diplomatic ties with Israel. Moreover, member states of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) instituted punitive economic action against the United States and its Western allies for backing Israel. But as it turned out, African economies that heavily relied on Western countries for most of their trading transactions were more adversely affected than the Western countries for which the sanction had actually been intended (Miller, 1975, p. 393; Clapman, 2002: p.113).

## 1.6 Harnessing Meager Resources

The West African leaders then realized that they needed to cultivate intra-African economic activities rather than each country solely relying on its ex-colonial master for economic vibrancy. As Julius Emeka Okolo argues in, *Integrative and Cooperative Regionalism: The Economic Community of West African States*, "the integrative and cooperative regionalism of ECOWAS is a counterdependency strategy stimulated in part by residual affects of colonial imperialism and fears of neocolonialism" (1995: P. 131). In short, multiple events, experiences and orientations motivated the creation of ECOWAS; leaders of the sub-region realized that their individual strides were grossly insufficient to effectively mitigate the mounting socio-economic problems prevailing within the sub-region. It was following this confluence of events at the technocratic, ministerial, presidential and global levels that African leaders gathered in the then

Nigerian capital, Lagos, to formally sign the Treaty which established the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on May 28, 1975.

In 1977, Cape Verde, an island state about 400 miles off the coast of West Africa, joined ECOWAS, becoming its 16th member. However, the membership was reduced to its original 15 when in 2000, one of the founding members, Mauritania, withdrew its membership in favor of the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), the North African version of ECOWAS, which also comprises Algeria, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia. The territorial confines of Mauritania, a largely Moorish state, span the northern tip of the continent, within the proximity of Morocco and its southern border is with Senegal in West Africa. The AMU was founded in 1989 to harmonize the economies of the mainly Arab countries in North Africa, but its progress has been impeded by strong diplomatic disputes involving Algeria and Morocco over the former Spanish enclave of Western Sahara.

### 1.7 Formulating Integrative Policies

Since coming into existence, ECOWAS has been formulating integrative policies through various protocols to put into practice its ultimate goals of fostering "the economic and social development"(original ECOWAS Treaty, p. 1) of the sub-region, so as to "improve the living standards of their peoples"(original ECOWAS Treaty, p. 1). In 1979, barely four years after its establishment, the organization adopted a protocol on "Free Movement of Persons, the Right of Residence and Establishment." Pursuant to this protocol, citizens of member states were able to travel within the sub-region without passports or the issuance of visa, but were required to get what was referred to as *Lesse` Passe`* (A Pass) from security or custom officers at the border of the country being visited, or upon arrival at a port of entry.

Moreover, in 1981, ECOWAS had the premonition of introducing a Defense Protocol, which stipulated "legitimate intervention" in the internal affairs of member states on humanitarian grounds; this protocol was about a decade before the United Nations began contemplating on the concept of the right to intervene. Nine years following the adoption of its defense protocol, ECOWAS would invoke it for its pioneering intervention in the anarchy that engulfed Liberia from December 24, 1989 to August 2003. Other protocols adopted by ECOWAS pertained to: Trade Union of West Africa (1984); West African Youth Association (1984); West African Universities Association (1987); the West African Women's Association (1987) and the West African Health Community (1987). In 1993, leaders of the sub-region revised the ECOWAS Treaty so as to make it more reflective of the prevailing socio-economic imperatives (Profile of ECOWAS, pp. 6-9).

## Chapter 2

### 2.0 The Concept of Regional Integration

The concept of regional integration has been one of the ideas advanced by scholars of international relations for a long time, especially in the aftermath of the Second World War. Shared history, shared goals and aspirations, geographic proximity, similarity of political systems or economic conditions, socio-cultural values and ideology are some of the eliciting factors associated with the concept of regionalism or regionalization. The essentialist perspective of regionalism holds that regions do actually exist, especially with regards to their geographic and linguistic characteristics. However, in this 21st century of technological sophistication, the constructivist approach to regionalism is that regions are basically created; in other words, nation

states are no more constrained by geographic proximity in becoming integral parts of regional groupings. Thus, for constructivists, shared goals, commonality of interests, interdependency and the likes tend to trump geographic consideration as a fundamental impetus in the contemporary context of new regionalism.

In their book, *The European Union—Politics and Policies*, John McCormick and Jonathan Olsen observe that "Integration involves the surrender, transfer, or pooling of sovereignty: the rights of jurisdiction that states have over their people and territory and that cannot legally be challenged by any other authority" (2014, p. 19). States usually pool their sovereignty in order to accelerate socio-economic development in the best interests of their peoples. It must be pointed out that such surrender or ceding of sovereignty has to be voluntary. Monica Herz, in her well-written article, "Regional Governance", published in a book titled, *Who Governs the Globe?*, edited by Thomas G. Weiss, defines regionalization as the "intensification of economic and social interactions in one region" (2014, p. 237). She adds that "Regionalism" is "state-led political projects to promote intergovernmental collaboration within the region" (2014: p. 237).

## 2.1 Mitrany's Functional Theory

David Mitrany, a British social science thinker originally born in Romania, is considered by many scholars as blazing the trail in articulating the concept of integration as we now know it at this point in time. His concept squarely puts the onerous responsibility of integration or international cooperation on the shoulders of technical experts who should coordinate their technical know-how for the common good of all. As cited by McCormick and Olsen, when post-World War II debates were mounting about formulating the best possible alternative strategies

for sustainable peace in Europe, Mitrany proposed the establishment of "international agencies that built on common interests and had authority in functionally specific fields" (2014, p. 20).

Describing his concept as *functionalism*, Mitrany insisted that the existence of such international organizations, mainly staffed by technocrats who will be working in the interests of member states, would generate a strong sense of solidarity among nations. Mitrany who experienced the horrors of the First and Second World Wars, was concerned about the prospect of cementing international peace through practical cooperation. As he eloquently observed in his 1932 classic, *The Progress of International Government*, "Functional integration of material activities on an international scale and cultural devolution on a regional basis therefore offer the most hopeful way out of international anarchy" (1975, pp. 103-104). His rationale was that once nation states' cooperation is anchored on common interests devoid of politics, such mutual dependency would generate a strong sense of solidarity among them, which will, in turn, diminish the specter of mutual suspicion and unbridled nationalism that had characterized the pre-World War I and World War II eras.

## 2.2 Neo-functional Approach to Integration

Another writer known for his advocacy of integration was Ernst Haas, the American scholar of international politics. Like Mitrany, Haas also believed that once the process of integration was set in motion, it would intrinsically follow a progressive course of growth. The difference he had with the British sage was that regional integration or international cooperation cannot be effected in isolation of domestic and international politics. Labeling his theory as *neo-functionalism*, Haas argued that the inter-connectivity of states through integrative organizations would have positive spillover effects on the various economies of member states of such

organization. Put another way, states would eventually realize the similarities of their needs and strive to set common standards for the benefit of all their citizens (Viotti & Kauppi, 2012: pp. 139-142); (McCormick & Olsen, 2014: pp. 20-21).

## 2.3 Wendt's Constructivist Perspective

Alexander Wendt was another scholar whose constructivist perspectives strongly impacted the concept of integration. Wendt insisted that humans' appetite for association is mainly driven by shared interests, ideas, expectations and values rather than material things (Votti & Kauppi, 2012: p.303). The point is that when people cultivate ideological or philosophical similarities on given issues, they are likely to carve out a blueprint through which they can begin to actualize their goals. Whether it is labeled as an association, integration, a federation or league, Wendt notes, it is the similarities of ideas and commonality of interests that tend to fuel the process of integration. To reiterate, the concept of regional integration is basically anchored on the premise that some socio-economic problems can be effectively tackled through collaborative efforts at the regional level. As Susan K. Sell has observed, "International politics is largely about who gets what, who benefits, how costs and benefits are distributed, who pays adjustment costs and contestation over all of these" (2011: Avant, Finnemore & Sell, p. 75). Indeed, regional integration has multiple underlying factors among which are similarity of history, proximity, socio-cultural identity and economic integration. Having broadly outlined the concept of regional integration, I will now focus on its specific application as it relates to the creation of the West African Power Pool (WAPP) as a specialized agency of ECOWAS.

## 2.4 Minting a Tool for Sub-regional Mitigation

From all indications, leaders and most people within the sub-region perceive the West African Power Pool (WAPP) as a viable mechanism with a potential for engendering integrated development in all sectors of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), but the question is: Is WAPP up to the task? The creation of WAPP occurred on December 10, 1999 when West African leaders signed an *energy protocol* in the Togolese capital of Lome` during the 22nd annual summit of ECOWAS heads of state. As originally envisaged by ECOWAS leaders, WAPP is intended to "secure regionally efficient and reliable supplies of electricity and other forms of energy" for most member states of ECOWAS (WAPP's preamble, p. 1). In declaring the establishment of WAPP, the heads of state conceded at the time that "the energy sector in West Africa is one of the least developed in the world, despite the abundant energy potential in the sub-region" (Energy Protocol: 1999, p. 1). In their apparent eagerness to improve such a dismal situation, they then set up a broad framework comprising energy ministers and directors-general from the 15-member states of the organization to regularly meet and work out modalities detailing the technical structures, financial requirements leading to the actualization of those ambitious goals.

Following a series of meetings involving energy administrators and technocrats from the member states, WAPP formally came into being as a specialized agency of ECOWAS in October, 2005, with headquarters in Cotonou, capital of Benin, one of the member states. According to WAPP's *priority projects strategy* paper, its vision is to "integrate the operations of national power systems into a unified regional electricity market, which will, over the medium to long term, assure the citizens of ECOWAS member states a stable and reliable electricity supply at competitive cost"(p. 1). From my perspective, the dismal energy situation within the sub-region, coupled with West African political elites' desire to step up socio-economic development

activities through the sustainable production of electricity are some of the accelerants for the creation of WAPP, as will be indicated later in this reading.

## 2.5 Africa's Energy Potential

According to many expert analyses, Africa has the potential to be energy self-sufficient, yet the continent is currently "plagued by severe energy scarcity"(Kabele-Camara: 2012, p. 1). In his PhD dissertation entitled, *Achieving Energy Security in ECOWAS through the West African Gas Pipeline and Power Pool Projects: Illusion or Reality?*, Abdoul Karim Kabele-Camara puts the continent's current energy production as "about 9.5% of the world's total output" (2012, p. 1). Against this backdrop of severe energy deprivation in Africa, the 193-member United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)--53 of them African states--has already declared a seemingly over-ambitious goal of "Energy for All" by the year 2030. In other words, global policy makers at the level of the UNGA anticipate that every citizen of the world would have access to energy resources in the next 16 years or so. In fact, the UNGA also designated 2012 as "The International Year of Sustainable Energy for All"(Kabele-Camara, p. 3). It is, however, easier said than done, because the World Bank estimates in its *Energy: The Facts Sheet (2011)* assessment paper that $35 to $40 billion will be needed annually in order to make energy universally accessible by the year 2030. "This is in addition to worldwide annual investments of about $450 billion just to sustain energy services at current levels" (2011, p. 1), the Bank adds.

## 2.6 Energy Deprivation and Poverty

Credible data on Africa is replete with evidence that the continent's chronic energy needs had impelled ECOWAS in envisioning WAPP. The West African sub-region, which currently has an estimated population of about 250 million inhabitants, constituting about 4 percent of

global population, according to the most recent United Nations Fund for Population Activities' (UNFPA) estimate, produces about 9.7 percent of world energy production (2012:Kabele-Camara, p. 1). Kabele-Camara also emphasizes that in 2002, "86% of sub-Saharan Africa utilized traditional biomass (wood, charcoal and animal dung) for culinary purpose and heating"(2012: p. 13). Emmanuel Glakpe and Rocco Fazzolare (1985: p. 144) also note that while electricity prices are relatively low in some West African states such as Benin, Ghana and Nigeria, among others, electricity is very expensive in the landlocked countries of the sub-region such as Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, due to their primary reliance on thermal power and its associated costs.

Put another away, nearly all these landlocked countries rely on giant diesel generators to produce electricity. The result is that the cost of electricity production is high in the landlocked countries, because they rely on petroleum products, which translates into frequent price fluctuations; the costs, in the form of high electricity bills, are often passed onto the consumers, most of whom lack reliable sources of income. The World Bank, one of the institutions set up in the aftermath of the Second World War to alleviate poverty, vividly captures the dismal energy deprivation in Africa in the foregoing assessment: "More than a century after the light bulb was invented most of the African continent is still in the dark after nightfall"(2011: World Bank Fact Sheet, p. 1). It further notes that at least 25 Sub-Saharan African countries are currently being plagued by frequent disruptions of electricity.

Such severe deprivations have a "direct correlation between electricity consumption and the output of the economy"(Glakpe/Fazollare:1985, p. 144). The correlation between energy production and low economic output is not farfetched. It is estimated that about "115 million people in ECOWAS live on less than one U.S. dollar a day and 12 of its 15 Member States are

classified among the globe's smallest advanced nations"(Kabele-Camara: 2012, p. 10). With electricity per capita consumption put at 130khw per annum, such consumption rate is the lowest in the world. Glakpe & Fazzolare might have foreseen the negative impact of such chronic energy scarcity, because more than 14 years before the creation of WAPP, they had proposed that "A consistent and systematic regional plan for the countries [in the sub-region] is desirable in order to meet the demands for electricity efficiently, at least cost" (Glakpa/Fazzolare: 1985, p. 138). In other words, just as a series of successive socio-economic problems eventually led to the minting of ECOWAS in 1975, so, too, an array of formidable challenges resulted in the creation of WAPP as its specialized agency to boost the production and distribution of electricity within the sub-region on an integrated basis, with the hope of making electricity available and accessible.

So far, I have reviewed some scholarly thoughts on the concept of regional integration as well as recent literature relevant to what might have accelerated the creation of WAPP as a potential catalyst for development within the sub-region. This paper will now focus on the energy situation that might have impelled West African leaders in creating the WAPP framework and steps they are now taking to realize those grandiose objectives they set for themselves in 1999.

## Chapter 3

### 3.0 Pre-WAPP Energy Situation

Achievement, an adage says, is not necessarily measured based on the height attained by the achiever, but also by the depth from which the achiever comes. Perhaps such an adage is applicable to the West African Power Pool (WAPP), considering the dismal energy situation

which necessitated its creation, coupled with the enormity of the problems it intends to tackle. In fact, what might be considered a sort of rare self-critiquing by politicians, in their December 10, 1999 communiqué or protocol, the West African leaders themselves conceded that the African region in which they and their other African counterparts, as well as their predecessors have been at the helm of political power for decades, is the least or lowest in the world when it comes to energy accessibility.

## 3.1 Africa as a Dark Continent

In this post-modernist era of the 21st century, Africa virtually remains a dark continent. As *The Economist* magazine observes, "Seen from space, Africa at night is unlit--as dark as all--but empty Siberia (1997, p.1) While some analysts might dismiss such assertion as a sort of journalistic hyperbole, the relevant authoritative statistics from the continent with regards to energy deficiency is grim. For a continent in which almost 70 percent of inhabitants reside in the rural areas, according to World Bank assessment (*Africa Electrification Initiative*, p. 1), the near lack of electricity in most parts of the continent means that most of the people have no or little access to the basic necessities of life. The Bank adds that an average of 28.5 percent of the inhabitants of Sub-Saharan Africa have access to electricity; compared to other low income countries of the world, the average is 40 percent, according to the Bank, which further notes that in the rural areas, it is more chronic, with less than 10 percent of the population having access to electricity. Moreover, even those with access have less than 25 percent of continuous accessibility, due to frequent disruption of supply. "Shortcomings in the power sector threaten Africa's long term economic growth and competitiveness" (World Bank Fact Sheet, 2011), the Bank has already warned.

David Idiata et al, in an article titled, *Wood Fuel Usage and the Challenges on the Environment*, note that "Nine out of ten Africans have no access to electricity and rely on traditional sources of biomass for their energy"(2013: IJES, p. 111). Research has verified that "Almost all African countries still rely on wood to meet basic energy need, wood fuel accounts for 90-98% of residential energy consumption in most sub-Saharan Africa (2013:IJES, p. 110). Moreover, eighty percent of African petroleum products, which account for 16 percent of global production, are exported while real consumption of petrol-derived energy is only about 3 percent of global energy consumption. The utilization of wood as a primary source of energy is one of the key contributing factors to the rapid disappearance of forest resources on the continent. According to environmental scientists, the fast disappearance of tropical rain forests does not only contribute to climate change, but also eventually results in deforestation, which is a precursor to desertification.

## 3.2 Health Effects of Indoor Air Pollution

While wood burning itself is said to be "carbon neutral", in terms of its contribution to climate change, it is, however, a contributor to bio-degradation and air pollution, especially indoor air pollution, which results from utilizing wood as a source of energy in cooking. One of the major effects of exposure to indoor air pollution or the "smoky kitchen effect" is acute respiratory infections, which is one of the leading causes of infant mortality in developing countries. According to the data, in Sub-Saharan Africa, infant and child mortality due to exposure to indoor air pollution is estimated at 300,000 to 500,000 per annual. "As a cause of death and illness", the IJES emphasizes, "air pollution is a larger problem than tuberculosis, AIDS or malaria" (2013, p. 112), adding that air pollution causes an estimated four to five million new cases of bronchitis annually.

Brandon Barnes et al, in an article, *Indoor Air Pollution and Child Respiratory Health in South Africa*, published in the *Journal of Energy in Southern Africa*, note that combustion of solid biomass or wood fuels release organic compounds such as carbon monoxide (CO), sulfur dioxide ($SO_3$) and oxides of nitrogen "into the living environment" (2009, p. 4). Such toxic compounds, they observe, are "associated with Acute Lower Respiratory Infections (ALRI) amongst children less than five years old" (2009, p. 4). In their study, the authors also found out that children living in households that solely rely on pollution fuels or wood products for cooking are 2 to 4 times more likely to suffer from ALRI, compared to children in homes using electricity. Moreover, due to lack of electricity, especially in the rural parts of the continent, many hospitals and health posts operate below standards. There is virtually no laboratory equipment in most clinics and hospitals, and in cases where it is available, the disruptive supply of electricity, characterized by frequent outages tends to impede the operation of such equipment.

## 3.3 A Resolve to Tackle Common Problems

Against this backdrop of such grim data, it is undeniable that energy deprivation is one of the key underlying factors for abject poverty on the continent. In the case of West Africa, nearly 50 percent of the population live below the poverty line, or on less than $2 a day, yet one of the goals of ECOWAS, according to the former president of the ECOWAS Commission, Dr. Mohamed Ibin Chambas, is "bridging the infrastructure gap" among member states of the organization. In a 2007 speech at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, DC, Chambas noted, "Our immediate goal is therefore to create a borderless sub-region in which the peoples have access to opportunities…"(2007 speech: p. 12). As far back as 1983, ECOWAS leaders apparently realized that it will be extremely difficult for the people in the sub-region to begin

optimizing their full potential in all aspects of life in the absence of the accessibility, affordability and sustainability of efficient energy sources. As a result, ECOWAS heads of state adopted a broad energy policy in that year, designed "to promote long-term cooperation in the energy field, based on complementarities and mutual benefits (ECOWAS Energy Protocol, p. 9).

### 3.4 Electricity Disparity in West Africa

The severe insufficiency of electricity on the continent continues to stymie every aspect of socio-economic development in the region. The liberal World Bank's estimate of 28.5 percent of sub-Saharan Africans with access to electricity is far below the 40 percent margin in other under-developed regions of the world. Besides South Africa, the 28 giga-watts of electricity currently being generated in Sub-Saharan Africa, according to the World Bank, is basically equivalent to electric power being generated in Argentina alone. Specifically in West Africa, the disparity in energy accessibility among ECOWAS member states is very stark. For example, whereas 43.7 percent of the inhabitants of Ivory Coast have access to electricity, its immediate western neighbor, Liberia has an unenviable statistic of almost zero percent accessibility. As of 2011, an estimated 1,217 households in Monrovia, the Liberian capital had access to electricity, out of a total of 210,619 households. Moreover, in Sierra Leone, another ECOWAS member state, only six percent of that country's 4.2 million people have access to electricity.

Inadequate access to, or lack of electricity tends to adversely affect every aspect of life. Again, as the World Bank's energy assessment report has observed, as a result of such energy poverty, "School children often cannot read after dusk, businesses cannot grow, and clinics cannot refrigerate medicines or vaccines, and industries are idled hampering economic growth, jobs and livelihoods"(2011: p. 1). Of the 1.2 billion people in the world with no access to

electricity, a staggering 550 million, or 46 percent live in Africa (World Bank Fact Sheet, 2011). This means that primitive sources of energy such as wood, charcoal and dung are some of the alternatives available to them. Even in the agricultural sector, with the continent's growing population, Africa cannot transform itself into a food basket without transforming its agricultural production from subsistence farming to a mechanized level, because agricultural mechanization cannot be effected in the absence of electricity.

Besides food production, Africa's cash crop industry also needs electricity in order to sustain itself and be economically viable. Lack of electricity also translates into nerve-wrecking manual labor by farmers, which in turn, yields little harvest and insignificant commercial benefits, thus shackling farmers in the region into a perpetual cycle of poverty. For example, cotton from African farmers is underpriced on the world market, ostensibly because Western buyers claim that as a result of its manual processing, it is not as clean as its counterpart from other countries such as the United States, China and the EU countries (Esturd: 2008; FAO:2008; Woodward: 2007).

## 3.5 A Process of Implementation

The technical modalities having been put in place, the sub-region's electricity luminaries have now embarked on the challenging process of implementing the actual integration of 14 national power grids of the sub-region. A time frame has now been put on the full implementation of the projects; proponents reckon that the projects would be completed in 20 years, starting from 2003; this means that by 2023, West African leaders hope to be showcasing some tangible evidence of their cooperation in electricity integration to the global community. Five of the member states: Benin, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Nigeria and Togo will have the their

electrical systems linked up with three landlocked member states—Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger in order to boost their electricity supply capacities; the five coastal countries are among those with comparatively advanced electricity generational capacities, even though their electrical facilities are not yet up to global standards; WAPP has labeled this aspect of the projects as the *Coastal Transmission Backbone* (WAPP Priority Projects/2013).

According to the World Bank Group's *Energy Strategy* document, implementing the WAPP projects would entail a "Design Completion of Interconnection between zone A and zone B", which was earmarked for completion by 2006; "Completion of Institutions for the management of international electricity trading", is one of the preliminary tasks the World Bank has identified for WAPP. It involves erecting the necessary institutional mechanism for the actual implementation of the various projects. This portion of the preliminary tasks was due for completion by 2012, to be followed by full implementation of the various projects, which is slated for completion in 2023. With WAPP's Articles of Agreement completed and ratified, headquarters treaty consummated and fully operational, coupled with the setting up of ERERA—the regional electricity regulatory agency, it is clear that the institutional erection phase has been implemented.

### 3.6 Phases of Implementation

As stipulated in WAPP's *priority projects* catalog, completing the projects would primarily hinge on the full implementation of the five major phases in which the organization has sub-divided the projects. They are as follows: (a) *OMVG/OMVS Power System Development*, which includes hydropower projects within the Gambia, Senegal and Konkoure river basins; (b) *Coastal Transmission Backbone* involving the five electrically advanced coastal countries of

Benin, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Nigeria and Togo interconnecting their national grids so that together, they can link up with the landlocked, low-power-producing countries; and (c) *Inter-zonal Transmission Hub*, which entails replacing diesel power generators with low cost power. In other words, the low cost power generation will come from the above mentioned five member states, some of which have electrical energy to share because of the excess capacities from their hydropower installations. The other two phases are: (d) *North-core Transmission* and (e) *Ivory Coast-Liberia-Sierra Leone-Guinea Network.*

## 3.7 Structures and Functions of WAPP

As indicated earlier, the initial protocol by ECOWAS heads of state in 1999 was merely a public policy declaration. In that document, they urged their respective energy ministers and heads of state-owned electricity companies to begin the process of convening sub-regional conferences in order to formulate the necessary framework of this newly minted specialized agency. Following a series of high level meetings, energy ministers and directors-general of electricity companies adopted WAPP's *Articles of Agreement* (AA) in Accra, Ghana in October 2005 and the organization legally came into being in January 2006. The articles of agreement, which expresses ECOWAS's determination "to progressively remove technical, administrative and other barriers to trade in electricity, gas and other Energy Materials", (AA, p. 1), spells out WAPP's management structures, functions and mode of dispute resolution involving member states among other issues. Based on the AA's stipulations, WAPP comprises a General Assembly, an Executive Board, Organizational Committees, General Secretariat and Information Coordination Department.

The General Assembly (GA), which is composed of representatives of all member states, who are heads of their respective national electricity companies, convenes at least once a year to deliberate on and adopt relevant resolutions; it is "the highest decision making body" of WAPP (AA: p. 2). In the GA gathering, two-thirds of national members present constitute a quorum and such quorum is competent to amend any portion of the articles of agreement or any standing policy stipulation, in keeping with the provisions of the document. The GA has the authority to elect six members of the Executive Board (EB). The seventh member of the Executive Board is the General Secretary, who is also elected during a separate electoral process by the GA as a result of a much more rigorous, competitive process. The seven-member Executive Board serves as the organization's management and implementing unit.

Among other things, the Executive Board's functions encompass directing activities of WAPP committees, making policy recommendations to the General Assembly and authorizing all major contracts of the organization. While the General Assembly is seen as WAPP's legislative arm, the Executive Board carries out traditional executive functions and the Organizational Committees play the role of cabinet functions. The committees comprise "technical experts drawn from the WAPP membership" (AA, p. 14), whose functions include advising the Executive Board on policy implementation. Put another way, members of WAPP's General Assembly and Executive Board are already top electricity officials in their respective countries, because members of the Executive Board, except the Secretary-General, are drawn from the GA and they function on an *ad hoc*, or a part time basis; it is only the Secretary-General who, as a senior civil servant of the sub-region, is meritoriously elected based on his or her expertise, in a parallel fashion to the recruitment process of the United Nations Secretary-

General. The Secretary-General is actually in charge of the day-to-day running of the organization.

The General Secretariat of WAPP constitutes the organization's "core administrative staff", which is an embodiment of "independent professionals" in charge of the actual running of WAPP's headquarters in Cotonou, Benin. Based on relevant provisions of the AA, heads of electricity companies comprising the GA would meet at their regular annual summits and adopt resolutions, the Executive Board will carve out the road map of implementation consistent with such resolutions, coupled with the technical input of the appropriate Organizational Committee and then the operationalizing of such policies are left with the General Secretariat.

In short, the Articles of Agreement is the basic law, or constitutional instrument of WAPP. It clearly stipulates in details the objectives, structures and functions of WAPP as well as other policy issues regarding the organization's finance, budgeting and legal issues that might arise in the future. For example, on the composition of the Executive Board, section 5.2.1 says, "The Executive Board shall consist of seven persons", adding that "Six of the seven members…shall be elected by the General Assembly" (AA, p. 11). As part of the structural set-up, ECOWAS has also put in place the necessary legal framework; a headquarters agreement granting full diplomatic status, similar to such status usually accorded United Nations agencies, has been secured with the Republic of Benin, which hosts the general-secretariat.

In order to ensure that electrical companies operating within the sub-region harmonize their standards of operation and that their technical facilities are easily integrated, ECOWAS has also established a uniform regulatory agency for the entire sub-region. Known as the ECOWAS Regional Electricity Regulatory Authority (ERERA), the agency's functions, among other

things, include "settlement of dispute relating to cross-border power exchange, enhance regional power policy, planning, technical regulation and integration of the regional energy sector" (ERERA press release, 2010: p. 1). It is interesting to note that decentralization is also becoming one of key features of institutions being established by ECOWAS. For example, while WAPP is based in Cotonou, Benin, ERERA is headquartered in Accra, the Ghanaian capital. Moreover, the main ECOWAS headquarters is based in Abuja, the Nigerian capital while the organization's regional development bank is located in the Togolese capital of Lome`.

### 3.8 Costs of Implementation

In earnest, WAPP has begun carrying out its mandate. According to WAPP's *Status of Priority Projects/2013*, for the moment, aggregate cost of the projects is estimated at $26.4 billion dollars (2013, p. 1); that's a herculean task for a sub-region whose average per capita GDP (gross domestic product) is estimated at $600, but almost everyone within the international development community seems to appreciate the imperative of this huge task and the development potential it holds within the sub-region. However, initially the WAPP projects seem to be attracting external support and investment, although the sub-region would need much more substantial investments, mainly from the private sector in order to realize such a grandiose dream. For example, the *Status of Priority Projects/2013* reports that the 225-kv (kilovolts) Burkina-Mali Interconnection Project has begun, following a pre-investment study that was financed by a couple of funding agencies led by the European Investment Bank (EIB) (2013, p. 1). This aspect of the projects is slated for completion in 2018. Moreover, the 330-kv Cote d'Ivoire-Ghana Interconnection Reinforcement Project, which spans 296 kilometers of

transmission line has begun with financial support from the EIB's EU-Africa Infrastructure Trust Fund, the African Development Bank and the Ouest Bank Africaine de Development (West African Development Bank) among others. This portion of the projects, which will connect electrical grids of in the Ivorian city of Akoupe-Zeudji with the Ghanaian city of Dunkwa-2, is estimated at 131 million euros (about $150 million) and 2016 has been tagged as its completion year (WAPP Priority Projects/2013).

At this point in time, nine projects with an estimated cost of 1.2 billion euros are currently being implemented while 12 projects are still in various stages of feasibility study. The impending ones include the colossal 450-megawatt Regional Power Generation Facilities that will be simultaneously located near the Ghanaian city of Domunli and the Beninois city of Maria Gleta. According to the WAPP secretariat, "46 hectares of land at Maria Gleta with free zone status has been granted by the Government of Benin" (WAPP Priority Projects/2013, p. 2); the Ghanaian Government is also in the process of securing 40 hectares of land on its territory for the project in order to give the projects a perpetual status. The wisdom in these intensively thorough negotiations is that those integrative projects should be able to enjoy sufficient legal insulation so that they might not inadvertently fall prey to any unforeseen diplomatic rift in the future.

WAPP already has begun making some socio-economic impact on inhabitants of the sub-region. For example, on December 24, 2013, hundreds of residents in two Liberian cities of Ganta and Sanniquellie took to the streets in jubilation when their street lights were turned on for the first time in 23 years (2013: The New Republic/AllAfrica.com)! As a result of the civil war, which plagued the country for 14 years (from December 24, 1989 to August 3, 2003), Liberia's electrical infrastructures were totally wrecked, because they were deliberately targeted by many

of the warring factions. The restoration of electricity in Ganta and Sanniquellie became possible because the two rural communities were linked up with the national power grid of neighboring Cote d'Ivoire. According to WAPP, a substantial portion of this project, which is part of the 329 million Euros (about $350m) *Cote d'Ivoire-Liberia-Sierra Leone-Guinea Interconnection Project*, has been completed; the remaining aspect, designed to provide electricity for a total of 18 rural communities in Liberia, is expected to be completed by the end of 2014 at the cost of 9.6 million Euros.

## Chapter 4

### 4.1 Positive Effects of Electricity

Since the creation of ECOWAS 39 years ago by West African leaders, it has been slowly making some headways in its strides to carry out its mandate, but if it succeeds in completing the comprehensive electrification of the entire sub-region, especially the rural segment of the sub-region, it will perhaps be the single most important project that would have a practical impact on the life of nearly everyone of the poor rural dwellers masses who constitute a majority of the 250 million inhabitants of the sub-region. For example, ECOWAS has effected a policy of free movement of people in West Africa by instituting a uniformed passport system for citizens of all 15 member states; by formulating an insurance scheme for vehicles registered within the sub-region, in addition to other integrative projects. But in as much as those policies are aimed at bringing socio-economic benefits to the people of the sub-region, none of the afore-mentioned policies would directly have a positive impact on the ordinary people living in every nook and cranny of the sub-region as the provision of electricity. Most of the people in Africa don't need a passport because they typically don't travel abroad. Clearly, this is not the case with the

availability of electricity, because the generation of electricity affects the nitty-gritty of life. The provision of electricity would, therefore, have a transformational impact on all aspects of life and development within the sub-region as I will later illuminate in this chapter.

The availability and accessibility of electricity in West Africa is bound to tremendously boost agricultural growth within the sub-region. The current level of food production in Africa is severely deficient, partly because farming is done through near primitive means. In most instances, there are no facilities for irrigation, meaning that farmers are totally reliant on climatic conditions for farming. At times when a drought situation occurs, farming is disrupted, but when electricity eventually becomes available, especially in the rural parts of the sub-region, local farmers are most likely to gravitate towards mechanized farming methods. The World Bank is estimating that with the current trend of investment in the energy sector, "only 50 percent of the SSA (Sub-Saharan African) population will have access to electricity by 2030"(Africa Electricity Initiative, p. 1). In as much as 50 percent will fall short of target, it would still be a vast improvement over the current situation on the ground, in which only 10 percent of rural dwellers have access to electricity, according to the same World Bank.

Another problem facing farmers in Africa, which the availability of electricity would help to diminish, is food security. Manual agricultural activities in the absence of electricity do not only result in reduced crop yield during drought conditions, but also lead to the rot and destruction of farm produce during bumper harvests when the rains fall. This is simply due to the lack of storage facilities in nearly every part of Africa. Of course, food storage infrastructures need electricity in order to function in terms of food preservation. Because of the lack of electricity, when there is an abundance of food, especially seasonal, perishable food products such as fruits and vegetables, farmers are forced to sell at severely reduced prices. Even with

such low prices, perishable food items end up getting rotten because there are no storage facilities. Lack of electricity also translates into the unavailability of light agro-industrial facilities to transform farmers' produce into finished food products for export. But once electricity becomes accessible to farmers and they begin boost their agricultural outputs, earning some added income as a result of their enhanced agricultural activities, rural poverty, which is so endemic in Sub-Saharan Africa will gradually be alleviated.

The educational sector also stands to benefit from the accessibility of electricity. Whereas students in developed countries and other parts of the world are easily linked to the Internet and the sophistication of 21st-century global communication networks, their counterparts in most parts of Africa are still at the periphery of global communication, largely due to the lack of electricity; many students in rural Africa don't even know how a computer looks, let alone how it functions. But if the WAPP initiative comes to fruition with an across-the-board provision of electricity, schools will begin to have access to modern technological facilities that are crucial for learning process. The introduction of new, innovative learning tools in schools in Africa will most likely motivate vast majority of young people and enhance their appetite for learning. In the specific case of West Africa, where the five Anglophone members—The Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone--have a uniformed examination system for their middle school (9th grade) and high school (12th grade) senior students, electricity and its attendant Internet accessibility will enable students to learn about what other students are learning in other West African countries via the Internet. Currently such exams, which are administered once a year by the West African Examination Council (WAEC), are carried out without the students and even the teachers knowing about what is actually being taught within the school systems of other countries in the sub-region (2014: Aluko).

Besides grade schools, institutions of higher education will also immensely benefit from electricity provision; teaching hospitals of the various colleges and universities in West Africa, science laboratories, libraries are all potential beneficiaries of affordable electricity. Lack of electricity is an impediment to efficient academic research because students and professors in most parts of the continent are currently limiting their scholarly research to reading books, most of which are outdated. But with electricity and Internet access, African academics will have the opportunity to connect, interface or network with their counterparts in other parts of the world, easily gather and share information on pertinent academic issues. Obviously, the benefits of such technology-driven academic collaboration are unquantifiable.

Another time-consuming developmental constraint posed by electricity deficiency is the lack of interfacing within most banking institutions in Africa. Whereas in many other parts of the world, banking customers can access their accounts in almost every branch of a banking institutions with which such customers have their accounts, this has most often not been the case with most banking institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa. Even within the same city, opening an account at one branch of a bank does not necessarily mean that one would access such account at another branch, because networking facilities are not available in many parts of the continent. Of course, with the availability of electricity, banking institutions would have little reasons to give excuses about any lack of interfacing by their various branches throughout the sub-region. Such a scenario would not only bring much needed relief to a myriad of bank customers, but it will also enhance efficiency because the current state of affairs usually leads to an unnecessary waste of time.

The availability and accessibility of electricity will also attract foreign direct investment (FDI) within the sub-region. While there has been a rise in Africa's share of global investment in

recent times, the continent, however, remains at the fringe of the global economy, accounting for only 4.7 percent of foreign direct investment (FDI), or $36.9 billion in 2011, according to Ernest & Young and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNTACD). Considering the fact that Africa accounts for about 14 percent of global population, the imperative of improving investment climate on the continent needs no over-emphasis. Energy deficiency seems to be one the underlying factors for such negligible trend of investment. In order for multinational corporations (MNCs) to be attracted in setting up some of their large manufacturing plants on the continent, they must be assured of the sustainable sources of uninterrupted electricity. If WAPP succeeds in implementing the various projects it has earmarked, West Africa might attract a substantial portion of FDI, which might translate in some of the major MNCs relocating their assembling plants in ECOWAS countries. The sub-region's youthful demographics make it a potential hub for a vibrant, relatively affordable workforce.

Moreover, scores of colleges, universities, technical and other institutions of higher learning in Africa are annually putting out graduates who are most often in search of employment, a situation that could gradually be mitigated with the facilitation of an enabling environment for job creation. Besides that, working hours will also be increased when electricity becomes accessible, thus enabling many public and private agencies to run a 24-hour shift system. Currently, many agencies in Africa operate only day shifts (9 a.m. to 5 p.m.), due to the dark environment; the presence of electricity will radically change such medieval working culture which tends to stymie efficiency and productivity.

Accessibility of electricity also has the potential of stimulating a boost in personal Internet utility. Whereas in the developed world and in most other developing countries, Internet can be accessible in private homes, in most parts of Africa, it is still limited to "Internet cafes",

which are similar to coffee shops in Western countries. In other words, those who want to access Internet services go to the Internet café and pay some fees, which are often in Untied States dollar, in order to access their email and other social media accounts. For example, $5 is paid for a 30-minute Internet service in an Internet café. With such limited time, it is unthinkable for one to even contemplate conducting research; WIFI and other public Internet services are still an unaffordable luxury in most parts of Africa. The availability and accessibility of such modern amenities are contingent on the availability of electricity, hence the needy necessity of the WAPP project.

## 4.2 The Need for Private Investment

As a specialized agency of ECOWAS, WAPP declared from the onset its determination to collaborate with "public and private electric power entities in the West African region"(2006: WAPP Business Plan, p. 5). But so far, the organization's activities in the past eight years have been primarily limited to the coordination or synchronization of state-owned electric power grids of the 14 member states with no or little involvement of the private sector. This is understandable though, because in the past, African governments did not open the energy sector, especially electricity generation, to private investment. Governments in Africa largely regarded electricity provision as a national security issue, which was too risky to put in private hands; they were therefore, reluctant to liberalize the electricity market.

The popular perception is that many of the governments are insulating the electricity sector from economic liberalization mainly for political reasons. That is, many of those regimes, which had been authoritarian in the past, might be harboring suspicion that if the national grids

of their countries are controlled by commercial interests, such private entities might one day blackmail the national governments for political reasons. For example, the ruling elites might be thinking that if owners of electric companies are aligned with opposition political parties, they could plunge a nation into darkness, just to score a political point. Of course, the unintended consequence of such iron-fist energy policy by most African governments in the past is that at the moment, there is no viable local or expatriate private partner in electricity production for the ECOWAS countries to interact with.

In any case, political elites of the sub-region must fulfill their pledge to liberalize the energy market so as to attract FDI. As Edgard Gnansounou, a West African electrical engineer currently working for a Swiss company has observed in his article, *Boosting the Electricity Sector in West Africa: An Integrative Vision*, "the cooperative approach the electricity systems are undertaking within the West African Power Pool project, although positive in a number of instances, is not sufficient to cope with the challenge of attracting the required funds no meet future regional electricity demand"(2013: p. 23). He's suggesting that unless governments of the sub-region strategize and carefully liberalize a viable regional electricity market, WAPP's capacity FDI would remain very limited. Before mobilizing resources for possible investment, foreign investors must be convinced that whatever investment they make will eventually yield the desired results.

Since nearly all the WAPP member states are not economically potent enough to effectively finance the various projects, they need to put in place pragmatic energy sector investment policy and a uniformed regulatory system in order to attract private investment. Even though WAPP now has a regulatory agency following the creation of the ECOWAS Regional Regulatory Agency, it is state-centric in focus; it needs to incorporate consumers and investors'

concerns in its regulatory framework. For a sub-region with a combined gross domestic product (GDP) of $78.4 billion (2012: CIA's World Fact Book), it will be difficult for ECOWAS countries to finance the various projects, which are currently estimated at $26.4 billion, without substantial private investment to complement loans streaming from the World Bank, European Investment Bank, African Development Bank and other donor agencies to the various state-owned electric companies.

## 4.3 Summary

By resolving to integrate their national electrical grids in realization of the commonality of their interests and shared development objectives, West African leaders are also synchronizing the practical application of the theoretical frameworks of regional integration eloquently articulated by David Mitrany, Ernst Haas, Alexander Wendt, Susan K. Sell, Monica Herz and other leading proponents of regionalism at various historical moments of human development. Perhaps it has finally dawned on West African political elites that as leaders of under-developed countries, they are all aboard the same proverbial boat and therefore, collaborating for its smooth sail to the desired shore of development is the most viable option, as opposed to any unilateral attempt to rock it against the vital interests of all.

Considering the foundational structures which are being erected by leaders of ECOWAS in terms of feasible legal parameters, collective development goals, collaborative technical blueprints, comprehensive regional regulatory framework and vibrant sub-regional governance architecture among others, there are sufficient reasons to perceive WAPP as a potential model for regional integration. If one considers regional integration as a sort of a building block for accelerating global development, then WAPP is on the right track. In other words, if the

enthusiasm and vigor with which West African leaders are approaching the WAPP projects are adopted by leaders of other sub-regions of the continent, it might lead to a boost in African electricity production, which might eventually result in electricity accessibility by most, if not all the inhabitants of the continent.

Moreover, the ambitious declaration in 2012 by the United Nations General Assembly, urging leaders of the global community to ensure energy accessibility for all inhabitants of the world by the year 2030 can best be achieved through the gradual process of regional integration. Countries with shared socio-economic interests and cultural identity ought to harness their meager resources towards the realization of such grandiose global objective. As leaders of under-developed countries with a large segment of their population still living below the poverty line, West African leaders have realized that electricity deficiency is a formidable impediment to all forms of socio-economic development; they have therefore, identified sustainable supply of electricity as a cardinal mechanism for poverty alleviation. The availability, affordability and accessibility of electricity will also reduce poverty by attracting foreign direct investment within the sub-region, which might translate into jobs creation. Besides that, West African leaders strong believe, as reflected in their initial protocol of December 10, 1999 declaring the creation of WAPP, that their capacity for development will be enhanced through the integration of their national electrical systems and policy coordination rather than going it alone.

In retrospect, this paper has so far indicated that:(a) multiple economic experiences and orientations accelerated the establishment of ECOWAS, the parent body of WAPP on May 28, 1975; (b) that at its inception, West African leaders had envisioned free movement of their citizens, vibrant economic integration encompassing trade liberalization and the harmonization of socio-economic policies for the physical, infrastructural development of West Africa for

mutual benefits; the synchronization of the sub-region's energy resources among others as some of their cardinal objectives.

This paper has also briefly surveyed some early scholarly thinking about the concept of regional integration as an imperative motivated by shared interests and shared aspirations. Beginning with David Mitrany's *functional theory*, the paper also reviewed the constructivist as well as the essentialist perspectives on regionalism. For Mitrany, regional integration divorced from the turbulence of national politics, was not only a mechanism for trans-national cooperation and development, but also a potential tool for consolidating peace by de-emphasizing the negative attributes of nationalism, which he believed, facilitated the eruption of two devastating global wars during his life time. Ernst Haas's *neo-functionalism*, which foresaw "spillover effects" of regionalism on the socio-economic, political and technical climate and Alexander Wendt's constructivist approach were also considered in chapter 2.

In chapter 3, the paper has attempted depicting the state of energy deprivation in Africa, which apparently motivated West African leaders to carve out the West African Power Pool (WAPP). The dismal statistics from authoritative sources, which basically indicate that Africa is still at the periphery of global development, are encapsulated, while some of the negative effects that the lack of electricity imposes on the largely poverty-stricken inhabitants of the continent are also recounted. With such unenviable statistics, the establishment of WAPP is therefore presented as a new integrative paradigm designed to address a specific problem of commonality facing the West African sub-region. Chapter 3 also reviews the energy protocol heralding the creation of WAPP, the process of organization by the designated experts of the 15 member states, the governing structures and functions of the new specialized agency, followed by a review of the actual implementation of the various projects, coupled with their projected costs.

So far, nine projects valued at about 1.2 billion euros are being implemented while 12 projects remain in pre-implementation stages.

Anticipating that the various projects will come to fruition within the 20-year time frame earmarked by the ECOWAS leaders, the paper discusses in chapter 4, some of the potential benefits to be derived from the availability of electricity in touching everyday life; the potential for boosting agricultural production, ensuring food security, improvement in learning environment, expediting research by institutions of higher learning and stimulating efficiency in workplace culture are some of the positive effects of electricity discussed in chapter 4. In a nutshell, this paper perceives WAPP as a forward-looking, an innovative idea, or *a model for regional integration*, which promises to improve the livelihood of West Africans and foreign residents within the territorial confines of the sub-region, provided the political elites will formulate the necessary correlative policies in implementing their goals.

## 4.4 Conclusion

Certainly, the task before WAPP is a herculean one, but the enthusiasm with which the sub-region's technocrats have embarked on the projects tends to inspire optimism. To ensure that all loopholes that have the propensity to result in a legal quagmire are thrashed out, the Energy Ministers and Directors-General of state-owned electric companies initially ensured that all necessary legal frameworks regarding membership qualification, obligations, dispute settlement, withdrawal of membership, administrative structures and mode of governance were all put in place. The technocrats expended five years of meticulous negotiations on this process, which

also included securing the organization's headquarters agreement with the host country, to ensure WAPP's perpetuity. Now that WAPP has embarked on an implementation phase, ordinary folks in the sub-region are beginning to experience its practical impact and feel for themselves its potential for transforming their lives.

However, the diligence and enthusiasm of the electrical engineers, who largely constitute the implementing unit of WAPP, must be correlated and reinforced with the necessary policy adjustments in order to speed up the process of implementation. In the original ECOWAS protocol adopted by the Heads of State and Government on December 10,1999 in Lome`, Togo, the West African leaders pledged to ensure private sector involvement in the sub-region's energy sector development. But in my assessment, I did not see any credible evidence of substantive private sector involvement in the projects currently earmarked by WAPP.

## 4.5 Policy Recommendations

Considering the prevailing economic reality within the sub-region, I deem it necessary to proffer the following policy recommendations to the leadership of ECOWAS: (a) That ECOWAS leaders swiftly adopt a policy of **pragmatic partnership** with local and expatriate entrepreneurs in order to mobilize private investment in the energy sector. This entails all the member states committing themselves, either through a protocol, or a treaty--consistent with existing protocols--to wholly or partially privatize the various state-owned electric companies. As a starting point, ECOWAS governments should sell at least 40 percent shares of their corporations to private interests, with a provision that at least 15 percent of such shares will be

specifically reserved for local entrepreneurs. Such provision is necessary to promote local entrepreneurship; this will empower business-minded citizens of the sub-region to play an integral role in the socio-economic development of their respective countries and (b) That ECOWAS promulgate a **no monopoly** policy in electricity production and create an enabling environment that will engender competition. Such policy could be in the form of ensuring loan guarantees for local entrepreneurs desirous of establishing electric companies and other relevant provisions.

The pragmatic partnership paradigm coupled with a no monopoly policy, is necessary because in the past, state-owned corporations were not effective in corporate management, partly due to various forms of political interference. Cronyism, over-bloated workforce fueled by political patronage as well as non-payment of electricity bills by political elites and their plethora of associates were also some of the reasons for state-owned electric companies' failure. Against this backdrop, if some of the public shares are sold to commercial interests, the various boards of directors of those public corporations will now have board members who may not necessarily be political cronies, thus bringing sound management principles to boards' deliberations. Such entrepreneurial input might translate into prudent management policies resulting in cost-saving operation and efficiency. It is only with such open-minded, farsighted policies that the West African Power Pool will really become an exemplary model for regional integration.

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