

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING IN WEST AFRICA: NAVIGATING A NEW GLOBAL ORDER

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Abstract

A critical approach that strengthens the international bargaining power of West African states is regional integration. The collective bargaining of West African states in a changing global order is a critical issue for the future of the region. By finding new ways to cooperate and bargain collectively, West African states can protect their interests and ensure that they benefit from the opportunities of the global economy. The changing global order is characterized by increased globalization, technological innovation, and shifts in power dynamics. These changes are creating new challenges and opportunities for West African states. West African states need to adapt their approach to collective bargaining to meet these challenges and seize these opportunities. The study relies heavily on the postulations of Dependency Theory and Afrocentrism. This research study utilized qualitative forms of data sourced from secondary sources that include newspaper and magazine articles, textbooks, journals, and other print sources. The method of data analysis was also qualitative as the study engaged content analysis in a considerable volume of literature to expunge appropriate data for the study. This study revealed that collective bargaining of West African states is essential for the region's economic development and political stability. By working together through the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) therefore, West African states can pool their resources and negotiate more effectively with the world powers. The study also discovered that West African states can also strengthen their collective bargaining power through South-South cooperation. By working together with other developing countries, West African states can gain a stronger voice in the global arena. South-South cooperation can also help West African states to access new technologies and resources, which can give them a competitive advantage in the global economy.

Key Words: Regional-Interests, Negotiation, Collective-Bargaining, West-Africa, ECOWAS, World Order

Introduction

With the West's footprint receding in

Africa with the latest instance being Niger and the Sahel there is a growing chorus among African scholars for the end of the post-Cold War unipolar system. The West African region stands at a pivotal juncture in the 21st century, facing a rapidly transforming global landscape characterized by shifting economic powers, evolving geopolitical dynamics, and an array of emerging challenges. Against this backdrop, the collective bargaining efforts of West African states have gained paramount significance, as they seek to assert their influence, safeguard their interests, and harness opportunities within this new world order. Historically, West Africa has been a crucible of diversity, with its member states encompassing a mosaic of cultures, languages, and historical trajectories. The region is home to 15 countries, each with its unique socio-political, economic, and developmental challenges (Afolabi, 2015). Yet, in the face of common concerns such as transnational threats, trade imbalances, and environmental sustainability, West African states recognize the imperative of unity and coordinated action to foster stability, prosperity, and resilience.

As globalization accelerates, the interdependence among nations becomes ever more pronounced. West African states, collectively forming a substantial demographic and economic bloc, possess the potential to wield significant influence on the global stage. However, to capitalize on this potential, these nations must engage in strategic collective bargaining,

leveraging their combined strengths to negotiate favorable terms in international trade agreements, security pacts, and climate accords. Simultaneously, West African states are confronted with an array of challenges emanating from the evolving global order. Economic disparities persist within the region, necessitating concerted efforts to bridge developmental gaps. The proliferation of non-state actors, ranging from insurgent groups to multinational corporations, presents complex security dilemmas that demand collaborative approaches (Gawi & Abdulahi, 2024). Moreover, the existential threat of climate change calls for unified strategies to adapt, mitigate, and advocate for sustainable practices on a global scale.

This introduction sets the stage for an in-depth exploration of the collective bargaining efforts of West African states within the context of a changing global order. By examining the multifaceted dimensions of their interactions, from diplomatic negotiations to regional integration initiatives, we aim to unravel the complexities and potentialities that lie ahead. Through a nuanced analysis, we endeavour to shed light on the strategies and mechanisms that hold the promise of steering West Africa towards a more secure, prosperous, and resilient future during an evolving global paradigm.

Problem Statement

The current level of regional integration in ECOWAS is moderate.

The bloc has made significant progress in some areas, such as free trade and the movement of people, but there is still much work to be done in areas like the harmonization of economic policies and the fight against terrorism. The ECOWAS Common External Tariff (CET) was established in 1990 to help members reduce tariffs on intra-regional trade and has increased the flow of goods and services between ECOWAS countries. The ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons was adopted in 1979 and has been amended several times to allow ECOWAS citizens travel, live, and work freely within the region. ECOWAS has played a leading role in the fight against terrorism and other security threats in the West Africa region. The bloc has deployed troops to several countries to help restore peace and stability (Ohiri & Albert, 2023).

Despite the laudable achievements of the ECOWAS block, it is dissuading that some ECOWAS countries are still facing political instability, which can make it difficult to implement regional integration initiatives. There is a wide range of economic development levels among ECOWAS countries, and this makes it difficult to agree on common economic policies and programs. Corruption is a major problem in some ECOWAS countries as the leaders are motivated by self-seeking interests and the interest of immoral international partners in the region. This corruption undermines the effectiveness of regional institutions and discourages investment and trade. ECOWAS

countries have a poor transportation and communication infrastructure. On Education, health, and manufacturing many of the states are struggling to stay afloat. This lack of infrastructure makes it difficult for them to produce or transport people, goods and services freely within the region. Despite these challenges, ECOWAS is committed to achieving regional integration.

The bloc has several initiatives underway to address the challenges and to promote further integration. These initiatives include the ECOWAS Single Currency scheduled to be introduced in 2027 to promote trade and investment within the region. Another initiative in development is the ECOWAS Economic Community which is a proposed economic union that would further integrate the economies of ECOWAS countries. In Africa's regional integration processes, the private sector is essential. Unreported regional trade has been on the increase in the region with thanks to informal trading networks, but intra-African trade has frequently trailed foreign trade in terms of promotion. Overall, unofficial trading networks show promise as valuable institutional resources for the growth of a more flexible and rooted regionalism. The development of suitable templates to gather precise data on the precise nature of trans-border trade and related activities, and on how these shapes and are shaped by broader economic and political forces in the region, is necessary for coherent planning to support more advantageous regional

integration.

West African countries have different priorities and interests. This can make it difficult to reach consensus on common goals and objectives and can also lead to disagreements and tensions between the countries. There is a lack of political will among some West African leaders to fully integrate their countries into ECOWAS. This lack of political will makes it difficult to implement the necessary reforms and policies to achieve full regional integration. Region-building efforts in the West Africa region have been largely disappointing. Only 12 percent of international trade in Africa has been intra-regional.

In 2013, between 10% and 15% of all formal and informal trade in West Africa were conducted between the 15 of the 17 nations that make up the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (Daniel & Dagar, 2014). Most West African economies are weak, and neo-imperial divisions are working against effective regional integration. Institutional capacity has also been deficient for national, sub-regional, and continental bodies to effectively promote regionalism. Region-building are efforts by states in a common geo-political region to cooperate in security, political, economic, and socio-cultural integration. Regional integration in West Africa requires strengthening the capacity of individual states to fulfil their core functions. This creates an opportunity for the member states to rely on

comparative advantage and specialisation. This agenda when coupled with massive industrialisation can move the region to better positions in the international economy.

Conceptualizing Collective Bargaining and Regional integration

Collective Bargaining

Collective bargaining is a negotiation process between employers and a union of employees to create an agreement that will govern the terms and conditions of employment (Morris, 2022). Departing from the Capitalist Theories of Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin, the global south that West Africa is a part of are like the workers or proletarians in the global system while the more industrial countries of the first and second world make up the bourgeoisie or the owners of the capital. Therefore, the global south includes all of Africa, South America, and Asia (Dados & Connwell, 2012). These states need to return to the negotiation table to demand better condition of economic as well as political relations between countries of the world. While the outcome of collective bargaining is collective agreements, the collective bargaining of states is governed by the sources of international law which include customs, treaties, conventions, municipal laws in some jurisdictions, etc.

Through various unions, collective bargaining provides a platform for people to negotiate contracts with their partners to determine their terms of relations. Collective bargaining is a way to solve problems associated with relationships between states or between states, international corporations, and international organizations. It is also the best means for raising awareness to partners about the national interests and aspiration of states. Indeed, through collective bargaining states or IGOs enjoy better conditions of relations in addition to several other benefits of participating in bilateral and multilateral foreign relations. A direct understanding of collective bargaining describes Trade Unions and their continuous fight for the fundamental rights of the working class. Their aim has always been to restore the balance of economic power in a country through collectively bargained trade agreements. According to AFL-CIO (2023), the freedom to form and join a union is core to the U.N. Universal Declaration on Human Rights and is an “enabling” right a fundamental right that ensures the ability to protect other rights.

The collective bargaining envisioned for the West Africa region stems from the stream of thought that all states in the region can achieve more together than they can alone. When producing or exporting states band together, they’re much more likely to get decent foreign exchange earnings and be treated with more relevance and respect in the international system. Regional Organisations of

International Government organisations can be set up for the purpose of negotiating the interests of the states on behalf of their members. Collective bargaining is possible when allies recognize economic or trade opportunities between themselves and decide to shape the scope of negotiations towards desired ends. Collective bargaining with recognized unions is the best way to get decent balance of payments and other favorable conditions (TUC, 2023).

Regional Integration

In its earliest appearance in Africa, integration became a political instrument to deal with the systemic power imbalance in the international system (Stephenson, 1997:125). It was directed by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) (now referred to as the African Union AU) and the Economic Commission on Africa (ECA). Amongst the reasons for the quest was the response to last vestiges of colonialism as well as to spur political and economic progress in the continent. Functioning international systems necessarily requires a high degree of integration and to integrate in general denotes making a “whole” out of “parts” of sovereign entities (Mitrany, 1966:35). Integration turns separate states into components of a rational international system. Integration also designates a relationship among units in which they are mutually interdependent and jointly produce system properties. The North-South political divide and Africa's high level of reliance on the West led to the need to encourage

political, economic, and sociocultural cooperation among states (Eke & Ani, 2017: 64). Ironically, the escalation of conflicts in several African States in the years following their independence also made it necessary to establish regional organizations that could aid in lowering violent conflict on the continent.

Africa's regional and sub-regional integration faces many difficulties that have made it very difficult for regional organizations and the continental integration framework, AU to operate efficiently. Inadequate funding is one of the biggest issues preventing regional integration in Africa and it has created an opportunity for the continent to be influenced by actors outside the continent. Due to insufficient funding, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), the military wing of ECOWAS, has experienced numerous setbacks in many of its peacekeeping operations in West Africa. It is well known that maintaining peace requires expensive logistical support, housing, food, military supplies, and personnel salaries. Lack of proper funding has led to premature termination of some peacekeeping operations in the past.

Regional integration in West Africa is hampered by the obstacles of hegemonic politics, in addition to the serious challenges posed by the imbalance in economic levels of development. The utopia of sub-regional and continental economic cooperation and integration through

ECOWAS, is threatened by neo-colonialism, which also undermines the necessary political will to make the necessary economic concessions that will better integrate the west Africa region (Nwosu, 2000:555). On the African continent, regional integration has been severely hampered by poverty and underdevelopment of nation-states. Major capital projects and infrastructural development has forced some regional organizations or member states in West Africa to rely on funding from non-member states such as China, Russia, France, the United States, BRICS, the European Union, the World Bank, etc. Liberian President Charles Taylor opposed the rise of ECOMOG because it would weaken his position of power and military influence (Adisa, 1993). ECOWAS's other members frequently express concern over Nigeria's hegemony in the regional bloc. Despite the fissiparous tendencies exhibited by language differences among Anglophone, Francophone, and Lusophone countries, Nigeria is the engine driving the ECOWAS economy (Osuntokun, 2006:114–115).

In the ECOWAS region, the existence of the protocol on free movement has not eliminated the practice of border closures as frequently witnessed between Nigeria and the Republic of Benin. Both states have, on different occasions, restricted the movement of people from one ECOWAS member state to another. Such political decisions hinder the effective integration of the West Africa region. ECOWAS member states that are

culpable of such acts give the reasons that free movement has socio-economic implications on their respective states that must be guarded more closely (Adeniran, 2012). Nigeria has closed its borders to Chad, Benin Republic, and Cameroon at different times in a bid to enhance her national interest. Ghana also ensures that West Africans don't spend more than 3 months in the country at a time unless they regularize their papers by applying for residence permit or the Ghana card. In West Africa it is no surprise that the ECOWAS has failed to implement the much talked about Common Monetary Union.

Julius Nyerere (1976:331-336) at the immediate post independent period "the boundaries which divided African states are so nonsensical that without our sense of unity they would be a cause of friction. Member states of West Africa pursue their national interests at the expense of regional interests, and this continues to pose a significant obstacle to the achievement of regional goals (Tanko, 2010:45). An instance of such moves was the 1998 French-funded and Senegal-led peacekeeping mission in Guinea Bissau that was prematurely terminated in 1999 due to Nigeria's refusal to take part (Okereke, 2009: 575). Ani (2013:201-202) disagreed, arguing that Nigeria's withdrawal was caused by the "huge economic burden it placed on the state." Felix Houphouet-Boigny of Cote d'Ivoire, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, and Leopold Senghor of Senegal believed that

economic integration should precede political integration. Regional integration is a necessary road for the development of strong regional economies and political networks. Overlapping membership of international organisations constitute a serious challenge for the effective regional integration in West Africa. Overlapping membership hinders effective integration where there are differences in ideologies (Adeyinka, 2001:211). Poor bilateral relationship between countries also constitutes hindrance to regional integration within the ECOWAS bloc.

Theoretical Underpinning

Marxism

Marxian political economy was developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the 19th century (Marx and Engels, 2002). Their most important work, *The Communist Manifesto*, was published in 1848. Marx and Engels argued that capitalism was a doomed system that would eventually be replaced by socialism and communism. Marxian political economy was further developed by other thinkers, such as Vladimir Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, and Antonio Gramsci. These thinkers applied Marx's ideas to different historical contexts and contributed to the development of different strands of Marxism.

Marxism is a social, economic, and political philosophy that examines the impact of the ruling class on the laborers, leading to uneven distribution

of wealth and privileges in the society. It is a critical theory of society that aims to emancipate the working class from economic exploitation. Marxian political economy is a branch of Marxism that focuses on the analysis of the economic system of capitalism (Wood, 2002, Harvey, 2005). It argues that capitalism is a class society in which the ruling class, the bourgeoisie, owns the means of production and exploits the working class, the proletariat. The proletariat is paid a wage that is less than the value of their labor, and the surplus value is appropriated by the bourgeoisie. Marxian political economy has been influential in the development of many other theories of political economy, including dependency theory, world systems theory, and critical theory. It has also been used to analyze a wide range of social and economic phenomena, including imperialism, globalization, and inequality.

Marxian political economy is still influential today, but it has been criticized by some for being outdated and deterministic. However, it continues to be used by scholars and activists to analyze the political economy of capitalism and to develop strategies for international development (Wolf, 2016).

Changing nature of the global order

Globalization, the process that results in the integration of economies and societies through an increasingly free flow of ideas, people, goods, services, and capital, is frequently seen as an unstoppable force that is being

imposed on the world by some nations and organizations like the IMF and the World Bank. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are the Bretton Woods Institutions. They were established in July 1944 at a gathering of 43 nations in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, in the United States. Their objectives were to encourage global economic cooperation and aid in the post-war economy's reconstruction. Plans for an International Trade Organization (ITO) were also part of the original Bretton Woods agreement, but they were shelved until the World Trade Organization (WTO) was established in the early 1990s. They were based on the theories of three important experts: British economist John Maynard Keynes, US Treasury Secretary Harry Dexter White, and US Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau (Bretton Wood Project, 2019). In terms of trade and economic relations, they aimed to create a post-war economic order based on the ideas of consensus decision-making and cooperation. A multilateral framework was deemed necessary by the leaders of the Allied nations, especially the US and Britain, to combat the destabilizing effects of the previous global economic depression and trade conflicts.

The IMF's primary goals are to maintain exchange stability and harmonize monetary policies among its members to foster a stable environment for global trade. It was anticipated that it would offer short-term financial support to nations having trouble with their balance of

payments. The World Bank, on the other hand, was created to help improve the ability of nations to trade by lending money to war-torn and underdeveloped nations for development and reconstruction projects. In recent years, cracks in that US-led model have deepened. China, a dominant force in global economics as well as a military powerhouse testing the limits of Washington's influence. As a point of departure, this section of the research study asks, "will the BRICS emerge as an alternative economic and geopolitical pillar to the US and its allies?" There have always been complaints in the Global South, imbalances in the global economy, giving rise to fears that the US might weaponize the dollar through sanctions, they have done with regards to Russia. As a result, BRICS member states are taking individual and collective are attempting to increase bilateral trade in their respective currencies while reducing their reliance on the US dollar.

Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) leaders gathered for a three-day summit that caught the attention of capitalists, socialists, and communists all over the world between August 22 to 24 2023. To spare South Africa, the embarrassment of hosting a leader with an ICC warrant against him related to Moscow's war in Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin participated in the Johannesburg summit via video conference. Since South Africa is a party to the International Criminal Court, if Putin had visited, South Africa would have

been required by law to detain him. While the backdrop for the summit is the Ukraine conflict and rising geopolitical tensions between the United States and China, the BRICS meeting is likely to highlight the group's growing influence as a force challenging a long-dominant, Washington-led global order. The growth of BRICS is anticipated to be a top priority. It's a popular club. At least 40 nations, ranging from Algeria to Argentina, have expressed interest in joining the alliance. In terms of purchasing power parity, the combined GDP of the five BRICS countries now exceeds that of the G7. The BRICS nations collectively account for 26% of the world's nominal GDP. Despite this, they only have 15% of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) voting power (Adler, 2023).

Then-Prime Minister of Britain Gordon Brown announced a "new world order" at the G20 summit in London in 2009, in which developed and developing countries would cooperate to tame the excesses and inequities of globalization (Collinson, 2023). The "new progressive era of international cooperation" was proclaimed by Brown at the height of the world financial crisis. G20 discussions highlight the disintegration of hopes for a world order based on Western rules, the division of the world into democratic and autocratic camps, and how internal populism and protectionism in many states have undermined efforts to promote free trade. As the financial cost and political complexities of

addressing climate change become more apparent, bold statements about reforming carbon economies are now met with opposition.

The president of G20 member state, Russia couldn't risk traveling for the 2023 G20 summit in India because of the risks of being detained for war crimes on an international warrant because of the conflict in Ukraine. President Xi Jinping of the world's newest superpower, China, also couldn't attend the summit for sketchy reasons. There were concerns and speculations that the latest rounds of the G20 summit may exacerbate tensions already present between many developed and developing countries, which is contrary to the group's stated goal of fostering understanding. Naturally, any escalation in mistrust between developing nations and Western democracies at the G20 benefits Putin and Xi. Saudi Arabia, Iran, Ethiopia, Egypt, Argentina, and the United Arab Emirates are the newest members of the BRICS group, which also includes Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. The action was widely perceived as China taking another step toward forging a new international system in which it would preside over a coalition of developing nations and compete with the US and its allies. President Xi's absence from the G20 assumes a completely new significance in that context. Xi's absence could offer Biden an opening to push forward his relationship with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, signaling a further rise in India's powers and

significance in the international system (Collins, 2023).

However, India is probably only going to go so far given its historical non-alignment status, which is evolving into a position of trying to be a part of both camps. By failing to strongly denounce Russia's invasion of Ukraine, New Delhi has let the West down and has benefited from cheap Russian oil because of a boycott by countries that are US allies. India is a key participant in both the BRICS and the G20, where it is recognized as a rising power that is still a developing country.

Discussion

Following the renewed wave on Unconstitutional Changes of Government in the Sahel, the Alliance of Sahel States (AES/ASS) has risen (Okoli, 2024). The coalition formed by Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, aims to foster stronger military and diplomatic ties among its member countries in response to growing security threats in the Sahel region. As these states have experienced recent political instability and military coups, their alliance has outstretched concerns about regional stability and the future of broader West African integration, especially through the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Although the AES was established as a response to complex internal and external security pressures, it poses potential challenges to ECOWAS's integration efforts.

The Alliance's emphasis on

sovereignty and self-reliance highlights a critical shift that may alter the power dynamics within ECOWAS, straining its goals of regional unity and collaborative problem-solving. Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, all struggling with extremist violence, have faced challenges from terrorist organizations like Al-Qaeda, ISIS affiliates, and Boko Haram (Haruna, 2022). The Alliance's formation follows the military coups in each of these nations, a shift that ECOWAS has formally condemned, resulting in ECOWAS-imposed sanctions on these countries (Olubiyo et. Al 2024). However, the AES, emboldened by their respective new military-led governments, represents a desire to adopt an alternative approach to security and governance outside of ECOWAS's influence.

The Alliance of Sahel States poses multiple risks to ECOWAS integration efforts, particularly in security, political governance, and economic cooperation. Firstly, the AES's stance against external intervention, including from ECOWAS, undermines collective security efforts and could weaken ECOWAS's ability to address regional threats. Should other countries in the region adopt similar nationalist or sovereignty-focused ideologies, ECOWAS's influence could be further diluted, leading to a divided approach to regional security. A fragmented security landscape weakens ECOWAS's capacity to respond to crises effectively, especially as violent extremism continues to plague the Sahel.

Secondly, the Alliance's preference for military-led governance challenges ECOWAS's democratic principles. ECOWAS has repeatedly sanctioned the AES countries for their coups, reinforcing its mandate to support democratic governance.

However, the AES's explicit support for military rule could encourage other states facing instability to consider similar paths, which would compromise ECOWAS's democratic agenda. This could result in the erosion of the regional norm of democratic governance that ECOWAS has worked to establish. If member states become increasingly tolerant of non-democratic regimes, ECOWAS risks losing its moral authority on political governance issues. Thirdly, the Alliance may affect economic integration in the region. ECOWAS has long aimed to achieve economic integration through policies that promote free trade, customs union, and a single currency. The AES's political divergence may create practical obstacles, as sanctions imposed on AES members by ECOWAS have already led to disrupted trade flows and restricted financial transactions.

If tensions escalate, AES members may consider economic alliances outside ECOWAS structures, potentially creating parallel economic policies that will undermine ECOWAS's unified market goals. The AES members have shown remarkable commitment to their cause, and for this reason they have opened their doors for states like Russia and China who

are willing to support their agenda against capitalist forces including western governments and other African states. External interference in the internal affairs of West African states is a major challenge to peace, stability, and development in the region. This interference can take many forms, including military intervention, economic relations, political meddling, and the support of armed groups. There are many reasons why external actors interfere in the internal affairs of West African states. Some do so for strategic reasons, such as to protect their own interests or to gain influence in the region. Others do so for humanitarian reasons, such as to prevent or stop human rights abuses. Still others do so for ideological reasons, such as to promote democracy or human rights. Regardless of the reasons, external interference can have several negative consequences for West African states. It can destabilize the region, prolong conflicts, and undermine democracy and human rights. It can also lead to resentment and distrust of foreign powers, which can make it more difficult to address the underlying causes of conflict.

Of all the negative effects of external influences in West Africa, this research article is concerned with foreign influences that negate the region's political economy and relations that undermine democracy and human rights. The lack of industrial capacity in the manufacturing of a wide range of products is a challenge in the West African region. Therefore, member

states are highly interested in foreign partnerships that can help them improve their industrial capacity. Issues of product similarity pose a threat for regional integration amongst ECOWAS member states and have severely hampered their relations. In other words, the double coincidence of want is a problem that African States frequently face. This is what happens when integration takes place between or among developing or underdeveloped countries that depend on the export of raw materials and very small industries (Osuntokun, 2006:115).

External interference can work against regional integration and make collective bargaining of member states even more difficult. Undue interference can lead to the suppression of dissent, the denial of basic rights, and the erosion of the rule of law. The challenges of external interference in the internal affairs of West African states are complex and there is no easy solution. However, by taking steps to strengthen regional cooperation, promote good governance, encourage dialogue and mediation, and build trust between West African states and foreign powers, the region can make progress in addressing these challenges. The foreign policy of non-alignment must be central to the relations of West African states with other parts of the world.

There are several reasons why West African countries should remain non-aligned in international relations. The

Cold War was a time of great tension and conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union. West African countries that align themselves with either side risk being drawn into international skirmishes. By remaining non-aligned, West African countries could integrate more and focused on their own development. Non-alignment will continue to help ECOWAS states promote regional cooperation among member states by engendering more cooperation with each other on issues of common interest, such as trade, security, and development. Non-alignment can also help West African states to protect their national sovereignty of West African countries. When countries are not aligned with any power, they are less likely to be pressured or coerced into taking actions that are against their own interests.

Non-alignment should be central to the collective bargaining of West African states for more recognition and significance in international political economy by helping to promote a more just and equitable international order. When countries are not aligned with any power, they are more likely to speak out against injustice and inequality. Of course, there are also some challenges to remaining non-aligned in international relations. It can be difficult to balance the interests of different countries and when states are not aligned with any power, they need to be careful to balance the interests of different countries. This can be difficult, especially when there are competing interests. It can be difficult

to resist pressure from the major powers because major powers may apply pressure non-aligned countries to take sides in their conflicts. West African countries need to be prepared to resist this pressure. West African countries need to find ways to promote regional cooperation while still maintaining their non-aligned status. Despite these challenges, I believe that the benefits of remaining non-aligned outweigh the costs. West African countries should continue to pursue a foreign policy of non-alignment to avoid being drawn into conflicts between the major powers, promote regional cooperation, protect national sovereignty, and promote a more just and equitable international order.

Conclusion

Although BRICS influence in global affairs will continue to expand, the group will continuously offer more attractive economic and diplomatic alternatives to the US-led international system that emerged with the Second World War. While these fascinations might be more cajoling than fundamentally altering the current international system, the emerging order will create an association of states that are apprehensive of the current world order. Hostilities between World powers in the global East and West as the east try to forge a more assertive path in a changing world is an issue that West African states must be sensitive about. As these states share different foreign policies and national interests, the spirit of pan Africanism and the goal of political integration in the region would mean

that West African leaders must vigorously question how to proceed with such institutions in the nearest future.

Almost all states in the region find themselves within the spectrum of globalization, development and underdevelopment. Their experiences following colonialism till present times should have created some lessons across the region that member states must come out to discourse. Thinking together becomes doing together as the common strategy for the region's future will guide the new bond and approach to international negotiations with which ECOWAS must drive West Africa.

To be successful, BRICS will have to manage the different priorities of its member states, which will be a difficult problem for the co-operation to solve. IMF and World Bank have tried over many years to accomplish gloomier ambitions than the laudable BRICS agenda. While the Structural Loans of the Bretton woods institutions have brought some states out of poverty and stabilized others, it has pushed many other states into further debt and penury. The assurance of other alternatives to the IMF and World Bank must be carefully reviewed, because it would be double jeopardy for West African states to be indebted to the East and West at the same time. Many West African states already find themselves in this East West loan dilemma. Nigeria is a leading example.

But as an approach for a more sustainable future, such international politics in addition to other international cooperation and agreements that ECOWAS member states and going into should be jointly bargained. If the ECO was already launched and active, ECOWAS could have for instance bargained for an organizational membership of the BRICS. This will drive the economy of the region and reduce the risk to member states. For this reason and more, West African states must settle their differences, get more cohesive and pursue a more decisive path. They can jointly fight off the vestiges of French intimidation of some ECOWAS member states. They can restore democracy and confidence in coup affected states. They can insist on standards of development and set common goals and better targets. When the national interests are more integrate a better strategy would be highly expedient.

A more crucial political organization with power to formulate a common foreign policy, common planning for economic development, a common currency, and a common defense system is what West African states need to transition into a better position globally. These amongst other stratagems are what West African states must unanimously bargain with the world on. This suggestion will permit the reduction of national sovereignty for the regional framework to take charge of more duties. That way all member states will contribute to the concerns of foreign

interests in the sub-region.

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