

SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION AND WEST AFRICA REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A PHILOSOPHIC CONSIDERATION

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Abstract

South-South Cooperation (SSC) is a term for the coalition of nations of the current Global South, within Africa, Asia and South America, formally designated as 'Third World', for surmounting developmental challenges of member nations in response to the hegemonic propensities of Global North key actors. The response informed the scheme of non-alignment conceived by its progenitors, among who include Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere in the 1950s. Economic community of West African States (ECOWAS), established on May 28 1975 through the treaty of Lagos is the umbrella body that encapsulates the countries of Western sub-region of Africa with the cardinal objective of forging cooperation for economic, political, social and cultural integration of member states for enhanced living standards and integral stability. It is membered by fifteen countries of the area to include Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d' Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal and Togo. ECOWAS was instituted as an African participation in the broader objective of South-South Cooperation. Questions abound as to the extent ECOWAS has justified in actions and administration, its cardinal objective in line with the visions of SSC. Through an exposition and analysis of ECOWAS activities, this paper presents the gains, problems and prospects of ECOWAS in the regional development of West Africa. The paper posits that the consolidation of the gains of SSC is hugely dependent on the developmental successes of various regional cooperation.

Keywords: South-South Cooperation, ECOWAS, Region, Development

Introduction

Different nations from one epoch or the other have formed League of Nations or commonwealth. Freedom is what defines man irrespective of the dilemma of determinism. Thomas Hobbes is of the view that freedom is a refined freedom, but there is a problem here. The Leviathan takes absolute responsibility for the state, not the sovereign, with the separation of powers for better and proper development of the state. The sovereign is against the commonwealth saying that it infringes on the human freedom. For him, submitting to the sovereign may ask: Are third world nations free? If they are free, why have they not developed all these things? We need to analyze what it is and show how some countries have tried to tackle the issue.

Meaning of Global South

People often use the term Global South or "Third World" as shorthand for poor or developing nations. By contrast, wealthier countries such as the United States and the nations of Western Europe are described as being part of the "First World." Where did these distinctions come from, and why do we rarely hear about the

“Second World?” Many times there is a clear distinction between First and Third Worlds. People refer to the two as "Third World/South" and "First World/North" because the **Global North** is more affluent and developed, whereas the **Global South** is less developed and often poorer.

The “three worlds” model of geopolitics first arose in the mid-20th century as a way of mapping the various players in the Cold War. The origins of the concept are complex, but historians usually credit it to the French demographer Alfred Sauvy, who coined the term “Third World” in a 1952 article entitled “Three Worlds, One Planet.” In this original context, the First World included the United States and its capitalist allies in places such as Western Europe, Japan and Australia. The Second World consisted of the communist Soviet Union and its Eastern European satellites. The Third World, meanwhile, encompassed all the other countries that were not actively aligned with either side in the Cold War. These were often impoverished former European colonies, and included nearly all the nations of Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and Asia.

Today, the powerful economies of the West are still sometimes described as “First World,” but the term “Second World” has become largely obsolete following the collapse of the Soviet Union. “Third World” remains the most common of the original designations, but its meaning has changed from “non-aligned” and become more of a blanket term for the developing world. Since it’s partially a relic of the Cold War, many modern academics consider the “Third World” label to be outdated. Terms such as “developing countries” and “low and lower-middle-income countries” are now often used in its place. The First World consisted of the U.S., Western Europe and their allies. The Second World was the so-called Communist Bloc: the Soviet Union, China, Cuba and friends. The remaining nations, which aligned with neither group, were assigned to the Third World. Because many countries in the Third World were impoverished, the term came to be used to refer to the poor world.

This 1-2-3 classification is now out of date, insulting and confusing. Who is to say which part of the world is "first"? And how can an affluent country like Saudi Arabia, neither Western nor communist, be part of the Third World? That raises another concern whether any country is created to be poor irrespective of any effort they may put. The story of Saudi Arabia, China and other developed third world countries has answered the question. But there is an exception, Africa, who has been lagging behind the developed or developing nations.

Man is naturally born into a state of nature and it is the responsibility of man to conquer this state of nature which is the equal playing ground for all peoples of the world and enter into an organized commonwealth of state for peace, progress and development. People have suggested that in spite of the natural head start of the state of nature given to all, Africa’s development story has been different due to colonialism. With colonialism, there has been a lot of capital and human flight that really hampered her growth. Africa also lost some of her uniqueness and

originality in the process. But one may still ask; is Africa the only continent that was colonized in the world? Why did others pick up from their fallen position and joined the league of developed worlds?

More still it is not like the First World is the best world in every way. It has pockets of deep urban and rural poverty, says Paul Farmer, co-founder of the nonprofit Partners in Health and a professor at Harvard Medical School. "That's the Fourth World," Farmer says, referring to parts of the United States and other wealthy nations where health problems loom large.

Defining Developing Nations

In general, nations are typically characterized by economic status and key economic metrics like gross domestic product (GDP), GDP growth, GDP per capita, employment growth, and an unemployment rate. In developing countries, low production rates and struggling labor market characteristics are usually paired with relatively low levels of education, poor infrastructure, improper sanitation, limited access to health care, and lower costs of living. Developing nations are closely watched by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, which seek to provide global aid for the purposes of projects that help to improve infrastructure and economic systems comprehensively. Both organizations refer to these countries as lower-middle or low-income countries

Maybe the solution is to come up with a classification that is based on data. That's how the World Health Organization categorizes countries. It uses the term "low-and lower-middle-income countries," or LMIC for short. This acronym is sometimes split in two: LICs and MICs, pronounced "licks and micks" and sounding like an old-fashioned kind of candy. The LMIC category is based on World Bank statistics that divide up countries by gross domestic product: There are low income, lower middle income, middle income and high income. Developing nations, or LMIC, can be the target of many investors seeking to identify potentially high returns through possible growth opportunities, though risks are also relatively higher. While developing countries are generally characterized as performing poorer economically, innovative and industrial breakthroughs can lead to substantial improvements in a short amount of time.

Developing nations becomes a better choice for it promises better health care systems, better schools, better ways to bring water and electricity to people. So "developing world" seemed to be a good solution. However some people dislike the term 'developing nations' because it assumes a hierarchy between developed-developing nations which replaces the colonizer-colonized relationship. Some still like it saying that it shows a potentiality to improve. One thing that must be certain is that there is no perfect world, even in the so-called developed nations, there are still some challenges that if care is not taken, will pull them down to a developing or third world level. Hence no one should castigate the developing nations as backward, lazy, ignorant, irresponsible etc. for many rich countries are in the

south: Australia, New Zealand, Argentina, Chile, to name a few. Now let us look at the response of Africa to the call of development.

Aims and Objectives of ECOWAS

ECOWAS was formed in order to tackle the problem of underdevelopment in Africa. The aims of the Community are to promote cooperation and integration, leading to the establishment of an economic union in West Africa in order to raise the living standards of its peoples, and to maintain and enhance economic stability, foster relations among Member States and contribute to the progress and development of the African Continent. To achieve this, they made plans for the harmonization and coordination of national policies and the promotion of integration programmes, projects and activities, particularly in food, agriculture and natural resources, industry, transport and communications, energy, trade, money and finance, taxation, economic reform policies, human resources, education, technology and health. More still it was established to create a common market through the liberalization of trade among member states and the removal of obstacles to the free movement of persons, goods, service and capital.

To achieve the above, ECOWAS created equality and inter-dependence of member states to foster solidarity and self reliance and for the maintenance of regional peace, stability and security. Being mindful of the basic necessities of life: food, shelter, and clothing, the organization helps the members in the development of agriculture, forestry, livestock and fisheries in order to ensure food security. They also enhance agricultural production through processing locally, animal and plant products; and protect the prices of export commodities on the international market.

To ensure the self sustainability of each member state and create room for all round improvement that eventually qualifies a nation to be a first or developed world, of importance to note is the positive effects of Cooperation which can also be called synergy. Countries, states, organizations and firms, individuals from time to time come together to form an ally in order to achieve a common goal or purpose. The stronger the cooperations, the more advanced or developed the nations, states etc. With this in view, ECOWAS has established many cooperations to help the member states ranging from:

Agricultural development and food security: Here she encouraged Member States in the development of agriculture, forestry, livestock and fisheries in order to ensure food security and to enhance agricultural production through processing locally, animal and plant products; as well as protecting the prices of those commodities on the international market. The establishment of an early warning system; and the adoption of a common agricultural policy especially in the fields of research, training, production, preservation, processing and marketing of the products of agriculture, forestry, livestock and fisheries have

really helped the developing nations. Any country that is agriculturally strong has a low risk of economic crisis for agriculture forms the base of every stable economy, providing the necessary raw materials for industrial productions.

Cooperation in industry, science and technology: In order to create a solid basic for industrialization and promote collective self reliance, ECOWAS ensures, on the one hand, the development of industries essential for collective self-reliance and, on the other, the modernization of priority sectors of the economy especially food and agro-based industries building and construction industries metallurgical industries mechanical industries electrical, electronics and computer industries pharmaceutical, chemical and petrochemical industries forestry industries energy industries; etc.

In the area of energy, It is an established fact that the so called first worlds have improved tremendously in the area of energy supply by its constant supply and regularity whereas the third worlds are seriously lagging behind. Hence to meet up, ECOWAS had to establish appropriate cooperation mechanisms with a view to ensuring a regular supply of hydrocarbons. They promote the development of new and renewable energy particularly solar energy in the framework of the policy of diversification of sources of energy; The duty of harmonizing their national energy development plans became paramount in other to ensure particularly the inter- connection of electricity distribution networks and to articulate a common energy policy, particularly, in the field of research, exploitation, production and distribution. The problem of energy in the underdeveloped countries ranges from low generation, uneven distribution, poor maintenance of facilities, extortion from the poor masses for unused energy through inflated estimated bills. None remuneration of the skilled technicians leading to shortage of manpower, low funding of the energy sector that sometimes lead to its privatization.

With regard to social welfare, the developed countries have a provision for low income earners and those without job. Being mindful of the basic necessities of life, they make provisions for the less privileged through monthly stipends to carter for their basic needs. They provide free basic education, medical services, food, shelter and clothing from the tax payers money, creating a balance between the rich and the poor: a hallmark of a developed country. On the contrary, the third world countries are known for their lust for power that leads to irregularities and proneness to all sorts of evil. The resultant effect is gross selfishness and indifference to the plight of the poor masses that die in their numbers of hunger and poverty even when the country is blessed with resources. It has been proven that the major militating factor of the third world or underdeveloped countries is mismanagement of resources and not of lack of fund. There is no proper

scale of preference in the agenda of the third world countries or rather lack of check and balance in the implementation policies and that is why they are backward.

There are other areas of cooperation that need urgent attention such as the Environment especially in the event of natural disasters. Hence there is urgent need to protect, preserve and enhance the environment, control erosion, deforestation, desertification, locusts and other pests. Another area is Transport where some of our roads or highways can best be described as death traps, our seaports and airports in real poor conditions; Railway systems totally collapsed. Transport also promotes tourism for good road network spins development and it also promotes trade and relations. ECOWAS has cooperation on the area of women development to prevent the unjustified marginalization on women and to involve them in the politics of the day.

Why Has ECOWAS Not Been Successful?

There are many factors that contributed to this negative stand. Bribery and corruption takes the lead and others follow. This corruption has eaten deep into the system of the Global South that every sector of their lives is negatively affected; politically, economically, educationally, healthwise and security wise. said Kenneth Ukaoha

According to K.Ukaoha, since 1975 formation of ECOWAS key instruments and protocols seeking to position cross border trade as a tool for wealth creation and poverty reduction including ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS), the Free Movement Protocol (supported with the Rights of Establishment and Rights of Residence), Common Industrial Policy, Supplementary Protocol on Competition and the Common External Tariff (CET) among others have tried their best but achieving little result. He spoke thus;

Despite all the above efforts at building a regional market and full trade and economic integration through the existence of these requisite trade protocols and instruments, attainment of full integration in ECOWAS still appear to be a mirage. The trade and integration process in West Africa had suffered this noticeable setback largely owing to the poor implementation of these policy instruments put together and adopted by the regional leaders.

The Challenges

Despite the progress made in recent years, developing countries still face a wide range of challenges and experiences that span areas such as economic growth, environmental and social conditions, which are often multifaceted and difficult to overcome. The positive news is that many of these answers could be found within the Global South.

ECOWAS is facing a myriad of security and economic issues that threaten to shake the region's relative stability and economic progress. The challenges range from terrorism and violent extremism, to piracy, political instability, elections-related violence, drug trafficking or deadly viruses. These, as well as other security and violence-related issues are hardly limited to one country alone, but tend to lead to the spillover of instability across the region. As security in the sub-region remains tenuous and peace fragile, economic progress came to a halt.

Has one ever wondered how key development solutions between and among countries of the Global South are conceived, exchanged and shared? The answer is: South-South cooperation. From providing know-how and practical technologies suitable for local conditions to tackling issues of food insecurity, poverty, and sustainable agriculture through innovative solutions, the important impact of South-South cooperation is gradually making itself felt. In recent years, South-South and its close ally, Triangular Cooperation (TrC), have gained momentum in the development dialogue, having been acknowledged as an important mechanism in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Imagine a perfect triangle, with two or more countries of the global South being the two extremes and its last, third vertex – typically a multilateral institution or a resource partner – perfectly closing the polygon, by providing support through South-South cooperation by the provision of financial, human, technical and in-kind resources. To give some examples ... in recent years, Northern partners have been implementing TrC projects, including through trust fund arrangements. For instance, a TrC project of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on sustainable rice value chain development was launched in 2014, in collaboration with the Republic of Korea, to strengthen the business and entrepreneurial capacities of rice producer organizations and small-scale enterprises in selected countries in West Africa.

Another TrC project was launched in 2016, in partnership with Japan, to promote sustainable agriculture, rural development, food security, and trade and achieve poverty alleviation in Africa. The project aimed to

support the implementation of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) — the regional framework for agricultural transformation, wealth creation, food security and nutrition, economic growth, and prosperity.

Taking into account the current COVID-19 pandemic, these types of collaborations are now more meaningful than ever. It is crucial to understand that South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) can play an effective role in addressing the challenges and vulnerabilities of food systems in the developing world, especially in view of the detrimental effects of COVID-19 and other related shocks. What better time to start doing this, as we celebrate this month the UN South-South Cooperation Day (12 September).

Coming back to the global South countries, how is this benefiting the real recipients? How is South-South cooperation helping countries map out their capacity needs and knowledge gaps and finding sustainable, cost-effective, long-lasting, and economically viable solutions? It is for these reasons that an effective and efficient early warning and response system that would provide information on the prevention, mitigation and subsequent response to crises is urgent in ECOWAS. A fully functioning early warning and response system would additionally help prevent the recurrence and relapse into conflict.

Mr. Sosorbaram Lkhagvaa a 34-year-old from Mongolia, is one of the many beneficiaries of the FAO-China South-South Cooperation program, who is now working in a greenhouse farm supported by the program. He received direct training from Chinese experts deployed under the project, in the cultivation of different types of vegetables, integrated pest management in greenhouses, and the construction of passive solar greenhouses. Sosorbaram now dreams of establishing his own farm, and his passion for farming is indisputable.

Over the past ten years, the program has been able to reach more than 70,000 direct beneficiaries, like Sosorbaram, at the grass-roots level in rural areas and several hundreds of thousands of indirect beneficiaries. Our journey in the global South does not end here. South-South and Triangular Cooperation are clearly effective means of enhancing access to science, technology, and innovation, sharing of knowledge and expertise, as well as developing the national capacity making the voyage one of endless paths and possibilities.

Third World and Education

Many rural schools are nothing more than cement block, thatch or mud buildings, about the size of a large suburban garage or small warehouse, with four or five rooms. There are generally no windows, doors, or electricity, and few academic and athletic facilities other than a chalkboard, maybe some desks and chairs and courtyard where children play rough games. Schools are considered well equipped if they have a dirt soccer field.

Rural families often make great sacrifices to send their children to school. The children in turn feel a lot of pressure to perform well, get good jobs and provide for the parents and relatives that made so many sacrifices for them. In many cases, children go to school and learn to read but fail to improve their lives. Even students that are bright and privileged to attend university find there are no jobs waiting for them when they graduate unless they have connections. Although even the poorest families consider education to be of utmost importance, many families can't send their children to school because schools are in short supply, too expensive or too far away and children are needed to do chores or make money. Children from a wide range of ages and abilities often attend the same class. Bright students are often selected by the family to go to school while slow learners have to stay home and help with chores around the house.

The Way Forward: Role of Philosophy

Third world countries or developing nations can easily improve through sustainable development. One thing is for a nation to be developed and another is for that development to be sustained. People have blamed many factors for the cause of underdevelopment such as poor economy, lack of quality education, bad leadership and so on. However in my own opinion, corruption is the bane of every nation's success for it cripples the common good for private gains. One of the major causes of underdevelopment is corruption which for Chaturvedi (2006:72) "is a behavior which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private, regarding pecuniary or status gains or violate rules against exercise of certain types of private, regarding influence". For Aghamelu (2006:92), corruption means "evil, dishonesty, pollution, vice, baseness, degradation, dissolution or immorality". Corruption according to Social Science Encyclopedia (1985:165) is the perversion or abandonment of a standard. Chuta(2004:2) gives a clearer view of the concept of corruption. For him:

The word corruption presupposes on the one hand, in a given system, there is a standard or blueprint of behavior

expected of persons who operate within that system, there are rules or an agreed code of conduct which members are meant to conform to for the healthy running of the system. These guiding principles are constructed around such absolute universal and eternal values such as honesty, uprightness, decency and modesty.

One of the misconceptions of development is that it is infrastructural only

Development is not only infrastructural but also human focused. Kayode (2002:67) writes thus:

Development is not just to make the poor wealthy but to make the poor productive. The need of the poor ... is not relief but the release of their inherent potentials for individual growth, enhanced productivity and higher social and political responsibility. This way, development turns man into an asset and not a liability.

Markandya (1990:22) is of the view that what make up development depends on what social goals are being advocated by the development agency, government, analysts or adviser. We take development to be a sector of desirable social objective.... The element of this sector might be: increase in income per capita, improvement in health and nutritional status, educational achievement, access to resources, a fairer distribution of income and increase in basic freedoms.

As regards the character of developing nations, and their agenda for sustainable development, Ake C. (2001:43) clearly stated that the problem is not that development failed as it was not really in the agenda in the first place. From all indications, political conditions in developing nations are the greatest impediments to development. Thus the absence of developments in developing nations can be traced back to absence of ideal political leadership that could use the forces and resources of the nations to spurn sustainable developments. Sustainable development according to Elliot (1999:77) is defined as a political system that secures effective citizens participation in decision making; an economic system that provides solutions for the tensions arising from disharmonious development; a production system that respects the obligation to preserve the ecological base for development; a technological system that fosters sustainable patterns of trade and finance; an international system that fosters sustainable patterns of trade and finance; an administrative system that is flexible and has the capacity for self correction. To achieve this sustainable development, philosophy comes in as a veritable tool for moral

and intellectual enrichment of the human persons who operates the activities in the critical areas of life. Throwing more light on this, Omoregbe(1990:197) notices thus:

... authentic development in any nation can only mean primarily the development of the human person, and this consist mainly in the development of his mind and will. The training of the mind to see things critically and to seek the meaning and intelligibility of things is an important aspect of the development of the human person. This is part of the contribution of philosophy to the development of the human person.

On this premise, Plato(1997:178) said that it is either that the philosophers acquire the kingly power in state or that those who are now called kings and potentates be filled with a genuine philosophy. This means that unless political power and philosophy be united in one person, there will be no development of nations. The objective and pragmatic qualities of a philosopher fosters national consciousness that drives productivity, stability and secular development. These can only be made possible in an atmosphere of freedom which simply means the absence of coercion. We have different types of freedom: psychological, social, and physical. For one to have an authentic, these three must be balanced in a person.

For the libertarians, freedom is identified with the protection of all people their properties from the violation of the natural rights while for the socialists, freedom is needed to overcome social, political and legal inequalities. It is only in true freedom that man discovers himself and his potentials. This rhymes with Frantz Fanon's(1967:30) view that man freedom is always responsible and engaging, hence he wrote: "I find myself suddenly in the world and I recognize that I have one right alone; that of demanding human behaviour from the other. One duty alone; that of renouncing my freedom through choice." Supporting Fanon, Dewey(1960:267) has this to say; "The freedom worth fighting for is secured by the abolition of those oppressive measures, tyrannical laws and modes of government. It is liberation, emancipation, the possession of active manifestation of rights, the right of self determination in action". Therefore the value of freedom enhances development amidst other factors. One may quickly ask; what is a value? According to Eneh(2001:82);

Values are what the civilized and rational minds cherish esteem, prize preciously, and have an inclined

attitude for, while disvalues are what we reject abhor and disapprove as detrimental to life. They are the principles or standards of a person and society for the good or benefit of the personal or societal judgment of what is valuable to life.

However because of the divergent and conflicting views about the meaning of value, many schools of thought emerged such as Naturalism and Anti-naturalism, emotivism, perspectivism, motivism, and situationism. Nevertheless when these values are analysed in terms of their functions and inter relations, some general principles emerge that fosters the growth and development of any nation .

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