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Unintentional neo-colonialism? Three generations of trade and development relationship between EU and West Africa

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ABSTRACT

This article argues that the limited economic transformation in West African countries is a function of the interaction between domestic elites' guest for political survival and the EU's international trade partnership with former colonies (Yaoundé Convention 1963-1975; Lomé Convention 1975-2000 and Cotonou Agreement 2000-present). The counterfactual argument, demonstrated clearly in a comparative study (of the Yaoundé era), is that in the absence of the EU's trade partnership, ruling elites would have had to negotiate their survival by promoting economic change instead of colonial continuity. As not all West African countries joined the Yaoundé Conventions (1963-1975), a comparison of the affiliated and the non-affiliated countries was conducted from 1960 to 1975. Analysis of the differences between the countries in these three areas (economic crisis, political crisis with economic origins and diversification) reveals two trajectories in West Africa: neo-colonialism (for affiliated countries); and economic change (for unaffiliated countries).

KEYWORDS

EU; West Africa; Neocolonialism: Yaoundé Convention: EEC

Introduction

A problem/gap arises in the three generations of literature assessing the three generations of trade and development partnerships between the European Union (and its progenitors since 1957, the European Community, EEC) and its former African colonies. These trade and development partnerships are as follows: Yaoundé Conventions I and II (1963-1975), Lomé Conventions I, II and III (1975-2000) and the Cotonou Agreement (2000-present). According to William Brown (2000), and Mark Langan (2014, 267), the literature has generally developed around two broad schools of thought: (1) the liberal school, which is broadly aligned with the EU's official account of the trade systems, viewing the partnership as fulfilling the development needs of the former colonies (see Rivkin 1966; Zartman 1970; Rivkin 1966; Gruhn 1976); and (2) the critical school, which criticizes the trade partnership in the language of neo-colonialism (in the 1960s), dependency theory (in the 1970s-1990s), and more recently neoliberalism (see Soper 1965; Wall, 1975, 152; Nwoke, 2009). The glaring problem is that both the liberal school and the critical school have placed the EU at the core of the trade systems, as either a hero (the liberal school) or a villain (the critical school), to the near-complete exclusion of Africa or

African ruling elites. Although there is a version of the early critical literature (see Nkrumah 1965) that documented the tendency for African elites to side with the (neo)colonisers or seek neo-colonial relations in order to secure their own political survival. This article will go one step further by placing Africa at the core of the trade and development partnership without necessarily absolving European actors.

Even a superficial overview of the process of negotiating these trade agreements reveals the central role played by African ruling elites. For example, William Zartman showed that some of the trade measures identified by some critical writers as neo-colonial in the 1960s, during the Yaoundé Conventions, were actually proposed and insisted on by African ruling elites (see Zartman 1971, 188). Furthermore, in their original form, the Lomé Conventions were in practice prepared by officials from Africa in a form of collective clientelism (see Ravenhill 1985; Gruhn 1976). But even more crucially, the current Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) (the Cotonou Agreement) was the first of the trade agreements whose negotiation was led by the EU, which insisted on the form and content of the agreement. As a direct result, after more than ten years after the original deadline of December 2007, most African countries were still refusing to sign and implement the EPAs, showing (as Heron and Evans surmised) that the EU's power over its former colonies may have been exaggerated all along (Heron and Murray-Evans 2017, 15). There is thus a gap in the literature regarding the role of African domestic ruling elites in the trade formulation and what informed this role.

This paper uses this gap to answer the neo-colonial question by studying the trade and development system from the African perspective. Focusing on the role of domestic ruling elites in West Africa, the article argues that the trade relationships were and are indeed neo-colonial, due not merely to the EU's design but to their interaction with African domestic elites' guest for political survival. Neo-colonialism here connotes the continuation of the (economic) colonial system through other means. I argue that because the ruling elites that emerged at the point of independence did so in a colonial economic environment, their survival depended on the continuation of the economic system, and the EEC trade partnership became a conduit for the negotiation of this continuation (This paper will use EEC and EU interchangeably according to the historical period). The counterfactual argument, demonstrated clearly in a comparative study (of the Yaoundé era), is that in the absence of the EU's trade, ruling elites would have had to negotiate their survival differently – that is, by promoting economic change instead of colonial continuity. The main contributions of this paper concern the Yaoundé era. As not all West African countries joined the Yaoundé Conventions (1963-1975), a comparison of the affiliated and the non-affiliated countries is fitting.

The first part of what follows set up the conceptual framework for the study, and the second part clarifies the method focus. The third part is a study of the Yaoundé Conventions; here, I compare the West African countries that were part of the EU's trade and development partnership with those that were not. The results reveal neocolonisation among the Yaoundé-affiliated West African countries and decolonisation for their unaffiliated counterparts. The main contributions of this paper concern the Yaoundé era, which offers an appropriate context for comparative study of the Yaoundé associates and non-Yaoundé associates. (No such study has previously been conducted). The paper opens up the possibility that West African countries would today

be much more diversified without the trade partnership and would have experiences more political crisis as well.

2. Theoretical Issues: Ruling Elites and Neocolonialism; Crisis and Diversification

The coinage of the term 'neo-colonialism' has been attributed to the first president of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2013, 134) who used it in his 1963 preamble to the Organization of African States Charter and in the title of his 1965 book Neo-colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism. The term assigns descriptive value to policies, infrastructures and agents within post-colonial African societies that have the function of granting continuity to colonial practices (Nkrumah 1965, 7). The essence of the term is that whilst African countries have won their independence and appear to have total control over their affairs, they are still controlled indirectly from the outside (Nkrumah 1965, 7). With relevance to the current article, Nkrumah argued that 'the Treaty of Rome, which brought into being the European Common Market, can be compared to the treaty that emanated from the Congress of Berlin in the 19th century; the former treaty established the undisputed sway of colonialism in Africa; the latter marks the advent of neo-colonialism in Africa' (quoted in Martin 1982, 229). Indeed, part of the European integration discourse centered on including African colonies in the European integration project to perpetuate the essence of the colonial system after formal independence (see Hansen and Jonsson 2014). Historical evidence pointing to a discourse on the integration of African colonies with the European project for exploitation does not necessarily answer any non-historical question; for example, of whether the trade systems, as they are currently structured, are neo-colonial or developmental. However, when the European integration project succeeded in creating a special trade and development relationship with the (former) colonies of its member states, Nkrumah's formulation was that the former colonialism of the French had morphed into the 'collective neo-colonialism of the European Common Market', enabling 'other States, hitherto outside the French preserve, to profit by the system' (Nkrumah 1965, 19).

This focus on the Europe, which was done to excess by subsequent critical writers, left out African partners which ought to be the focus of African writers. Frantz Fanon was another early writer whose formulations were crucial to the understanding and development of the theory of neo-colonialism. Although Fanon never explicitly used the term, his writings captured the essence of neo-colonialism (see Fanon, 2007). Fanon argued that ex-colonial powers would use their existing positions to preserve and even to reinforce their colonialist trade channels (Fanon, 1963: 97). But if neocolonialism is, as defined here, the continuation of a colonial economic system, it does not necessarily follow that Africans are helpless victims of it. Indeed, both Nkrumah and Fanon conceded to this point in their argument that some domestic political elites that took over from the colonial masters may logically have to seek such a continuation to preserve their political position. Such an attempt could be addressed using the theoretical framework of extraversion developed by Jean-François Bayart (Bayart 2000, 21). In extraversion, Bayart rejected the notion that African societies are passive objects of a dependency process by outside forces and argued instead that ruling elites in African countries tend to actively seek certain neo-colonial relationships to ensure their own political survival (Bayart 2000,

21). Bayart argued that 'the leading actors in sub-Saharan societies have tended to compensate for their difficulties in the autonomization of their power ... by deliberate recourse to the strategies of extraversion, mobilizing resources derived from their (possibly unequal) relationship with the external environment' (Bayart 2000, 218–219). Theoretically, Bayart's extraversion helpfully shifts the critical gaze on neocolonial relationships towards African ruling elites, who, as i will explain, stand to gain from such relationships by maintaining their power.

To illustrate this point, I start by considering the type of colonization in West Africa (the area of study). Samir Amin created an important geographical taxonomy of the various kinds of economic restructuring that occurred in Sub-Saharan Africa during the colonial era: (I) the colonial trading system of West Africa; (II) the system of concession-owning companies in the Congo basin; and (III) the system of reserves in eastern and southern Africa (Amin 1972). This essay is restricted to West Africa, whose trade/plantation economy reflects the colonial economic system. The plantation economic system has been described as the selection (by the colonial regime), production (by small-scale planters) and exportation (by the colonial state) of certain products (raw material) to Europe (Cooper 2014). Clearly, as Frederick Cooper has shown, there is a direct link between such economic restructuring and the social, cultural and legal elements of colonialism (Cooper 2014, 38). In other words, the plantation economy configured an internal colonial political settlement (with political elites, land laws, etc.) wherein social relations were determined according to the products and processes of production and exportation. For example, in Côte d'Ivoire, the social system (for example, the land tenure policy) was shaped by the requirement for cocoa and coffee, products that required lax land laws (Odijie 2018, 217). Furthermore, in most West African countries at the point of independence, political power was inseparable from economic power, either directly (e.g Côte d'Ivoire) or indirectly (e.g Ghana).

To some degree, therefore, neo-colonialism (continuation) or decolonisation (liberation) mainly occurred in the economic sphere, which also determined the political and social systems. This point is buttressed by the following observation: in African countries that underwent a shift in economic focus away from their colonial products in the 1960s, there was an attendant change in the political and social systems that survived the colonial system. Nigeria provides a useful example here. The shift in the colonial mode of production (the exportation of cocoa and groundnuts) to petroleum products as the economic basis of the Nigerian state completely transformed Nigeria's political and social landscape (Herskovits 1975, Nagziger 1973, 531; Turner 1980). The ruling elites who had led the country to independence were completely discarded and replaced by new ruling elites as oil became the country's economic basis; a new political system supervened; a new constitution emerged specifically to regulate the new oil economy (Joseph 1983); and a new social system/policy emerged, including the Land Use Act, which nationalized all minerals in Nigeria for successful exploitation (Ebeku 2002). These changes, along with the state revenue sharing formula, federal character and so on, all reflected the importance of oil as the new fiscal source. The structure and politics of grievance/crisis in Nigeria also changed. For example, previously, leaders from the northern part of the country had threatened to secede, whereas southern leaders specifically from the east were the main supporters of 'one Nigeria' (Lynn 2006, 257; Anderson 2012, 138; Mwakikagile 2001, 4; Mathews 2002, 35). After the discovery of oil (which was mainly found in the southeastern

region), however, northern leaders became the biggest supporters of a unified Nigeria, whereas their southeastern counterparts wanted to secede.

The real question of decolonisation is therefore one of change in the economic focus, which will necessarily affect the political system. Whilst the discovery of natural resources is an easy route to economic change, a price or production crisis in the existing basis of state rule is the most natural route to economic change. The economic activities (such as the exportation of cocoa beans and coffee) that formed the basis of state rule at independence were unsustainable in terms of both price (due to international price fluctuation) and production (due to the diminishing returns created by the relationship between resources and output) (Odijie 2018, 218). There is little incentive to continue the production of colonial products with no domestic use value during a price or production crisis. Furthermore, ruling elites become vulnerable to political crisis and dislodgement during such crises due to the link between economic and political stability. Therefore, following a reduction in export prices, the pursuit of political survival is bound to direct ruling elites towards 'controlled' economic change (controlled because the elites have to be in charge of the shift, as in Ghana in 1962–1966, to prevent new elites from emerging as a result of the new economic activities) to retain their position. On the micro level, price reduction or a production crisis naturally induces planters to reallocate production factors, but the macro level is much more relevant here because ruling elites in Africa control production decisions via marketing boards (Williams, 1985). In ordinary times, with no price or production crisis, ruling elites are not likely to seek economic change. However, during a price crisis, the political rationality of ruling elites is altered because economic crisis invariably leads to political crisis; diversification becomes a strategy for political survival.

By creating an incentive for economic diversification, negative price fluctuations may therefore lead to the disintegration of the political and social system instituted by the colonial regime. In light of this, any system (trade or development), especially after independence, that functions to guarantee the existing economic system against the vagaries of world market prices or other crises is essentially neo-colonial in that it prevents the political conditions for change and promotes continuity along a certain path. Such a system also guarantees the present political and social system, by extension. Given their fear of losing power, African ruling elites might rationally seek such a system of protection. Such an attempt, as hinted above, should be better addressed with a theory that acknowledges the political rationality at the core of the domestic ruling elites (for example, extraversion) as opposed to one that is focused on the external agent in the trade or development relationship.

The EEC's trade systems allowed African ruling elites to directly negotiate guaranteed export products through price and other support systems. In doing so, the EEC's trade partnership prevented political crisis in West African countries (as i shall show below). In the Yaoundé Convention of 1963 West African ruling elites in former French colonies requested price support and market advantages (Marcussen and Torp 1982, 49). The EEC agreed to provide price support, but used this leverage to install its own policy preference for reciprocal trade, which became the focus of critical studies for their imperialistic elements. As shown in the following section, West African countries that were not affiliated with the EEC in the 1960s experienced price reduction and political threat/crisis (leading ruling elites to lose their positions), and attempts were made at economic

diversification for the sake of political survival. These countries therefore experienced economic liberation/decolonisation (i.e. changes in their economic focus, accompanied by changes in their social and political systems). My argument, therefore, is that the EU trade partnership is neo-colonial not because it is exploitative or imperialistic, but because it is extraversional in guaranteeing the present economic system in West African countries and thereby removing the political conditions required for economic change. After the Yaoundé era, at the entry-points to the EU trade relationship in 1975 and 2000, West African ruling elites negotiated to preserve the existing export system through several mechanisms, the most obvious of which was a system of price support. This continuity, I hypothesise, perpetuated a static production system in West Africa and created a neocolonial system.

Methodology

I compare the Yaoundé-affiliated and non-Yaoundé-affiliated West African countries in terms of (1) level of economic crisis, (2) level of political crisis and (3) attempt to diversify away from the colonial economic focus. The economic activities that formed the basis of the colonial economy (such as cocoa) are today unsustainable in terms of both price and production (available production factors). Following a reduction in export prices (or diminishing returns), the pursuit of political survival is bound to direct ruling elites towards economic change in an attempt to retain their position. Therefore, an international market crisis in the early 1960s separated the affiliated from the non-affiliated countries in the three respects mentioned above.

In measuring economic crises, I compare the GDP growth of the affiliated and nonaffiliated countries during the Yaoundé period (using World Bank date). Generally, the affiliated countries experienced more growth. For detailed report, I provide a detailed analysis of Ghana (unaffiliated) and Côte d'Ivoire (affiliated), and then extrapolate to other West African countries. The selection of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire to represent the unaffiliated and affiliated groups is fitting because the two countries had similar export portfolios, predominantly cocoa beans, in the period under study, and cocoa prices offer a useful predictor of economic crisis, political crisis and governments' attempt to diversify. In measuring political crises with economic origins, one approach is to identify a period of economic crisis (a commodity crisis, for example) and explain political crises within that period. I use military coups and the mass arrest of members of the political opposition as proxies for political crisis. This selection is fitting because researchers have pointed out that in post-colonial Africa, military coups are much more likely to occur during periods of a loss of political legitimacy (which can occur during economic crisis). Similarly, the mass incarceration of opposition usually occurs when ruling elites feel threatened. Indeed, in unaffiliated countries, such as Ghana and Guinea, cocoa prices have served as an indicator of periods of the mass incarceration of members of the political opposition (as well as diversification). However, attempts by ruling elites to diversify offer another proxy for economically induced political crisis.

To measure diversification (attempt), I examine the changes in the composition of exports for all West African countries by 1975, using 1960 as the base year. I use World Bank data showing the three top export products (in value) in 1960 and in 1975. The aim is to reveal changes in the composition of exports in both the affiliated and the nonaffiliated countries. The findings do not adequately capture diversification attempts by the countries' respective governments due to episodes of failure (for example, Nkrumah's diversification efforts in 1960s cannot be captured in export products – and diversification could be more domestically oriented). Therefore, I analyze a couple of countries in detail to demonstrate their active attempts to diversify. Analysis of the differences between the countries in these three areas (economic crisis, political crisis with economic origins and diversification) reveals two trajectories in West Africa: neo-colonialism in the form of the continuation of the colonial economic system (and the accompanying social relations of production); and decolonization in the form of a process of economic change. There are limitations to my selections; for example, other factors may explain the differences between the affiliated and non-affiliated countries. For example, some scholars have explained patterns of growth and development in Africa in terms of institutions inherited from the colonial era (Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson 2001). France colonized most of the affiliated countries, whereas the non-affiliated countries, with the exception of Guinea, were colonized by Britain. Therefore, it is tempting to view their divergence solely in terms of differences in inherited structures. However, the inclusion of Guinea in the unaffiliated group complicates any such reading. France colonized Guinea, like Côte d'Ivoire, but Guinea's government did not sign the Yaoundé trade conventions. Guinea pursued diversification during the commodity crisis because its colonial products, which had formerly received price support from France, were grossly uncompetitive, creating a threat to ruling elites.

Divergence during the Yaoundé Era

Differences in Economic Crisis

The first difference lies in the level of economic crisis, measured broadly by the difference in growth rate influenced by international commodity crises. In the 1960s, West African states were dependent on the exportation of colonial agricultural commodities. Ruling elites followed the colonial practice of establishing marketing boards through which taxes were extracted from commodity producers. The earnings from these marketing boards were the main source of state revenue and foreign exchange. For example, coffee and cocoa accounted for 75% of Cote d'Ivoire's export earnings in 1960-63. Unsurprisingly, therefore, a sustained commodity price slump led to a foreign exchange crisis and domestic economic problems. There was a price slump in most West African colonial export commodities in the early 1960s (see World Bank 1986). Taking 1954 as the base year, the price of cocoa, one of the products most heavily exported from West Africa in the 1960s, fell from 127.4 dollars/kg to 49 dollars/kg in 1961, and to 37 dollars/kg in 1965 (World Bank 1986, 9). The price of coffee decreased from 176.4 dollars/kg in 1945 to 96 dollars/kg in 1961 (ibid.). Similarly, the price of groundnuts fell by 50% between 1954 and 1961/62 (ibid.). Against this background, association with the then European Economic Community (EEC) created a gulf between Yaoundé-affiliated and non-Yaoundéaffiliated West African countries during the first development decade, the 1960s.

Throughout the period of the Yaoundé Conventions, the countries affiliated with the EEC grew more quickly, on average, than their non-affiliated counterparts See Figure 1. This difference in the average growth rate between the two groups of countries is greater

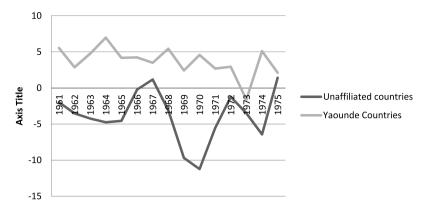


Figure 1. Average growth rate. Yaoundé-unaffiliated countries: Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Gambia Yaoundé-affiliated countries: Benin, Togo, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Madagascar, Mali and Niger

if we consider that Nigeria grew very fast from 1969 to 1974, due to its transition to oil production (from –1% in 1968 to 24% in 1969 and 25% in 1970), therefore increasing the average for unaffiliated countries. From 1961 to 1975, the GDP growth of the affiliated Cote d'Ivoire (annual percent) was 8.1% on average, whereas that of the unaffiliated Ghana was 2%. Of the unaffiliated countries, Nigeria had the highest GDP growth, 5.3%, but this was mainly due to oil. Indeed, on average, Nigeria's 1961–1968 growth rate was 0.18%, whereas that of Cote d'Ivoire was 8.6%. Meanwhile, the GDP of the affiliated Togo grew by an annual average of 7% throughout the period. Of the affiliated countries, Senegal experienced the smallest GDP growth (2.5% average), and the best of the non-affiliated countries (with the exception of Nigeria, for which oil distorted the overall picture after 1968) was Liberia, with a 3.6% annual GDP growth. Whilst Yaoundé countries in West Africa experienced an economic boom between 1961 and 1965, the unaffiliated countries all experienced contraction and crisis, both economic and political.

The difference between the two groups of countries is best captured in the difference between the affiliated Côte d'Ivoire and its neighboring non-affiliated Ghana (for a comparative study of the two countries in the 1960s, see Foster and Zolberg 1971). This selection is fitting because both countries had similar export portfolios (in cocoa beans) in the 1950s. Both countries were also fundamentally colonial economies with roughly the same levels of product and market concentration (see Odijie 2016). The point of divergence came during the 1960/61-1966-commodity crisis.

Jeffrey Ira Herbst wrote that 'the modern economic history of Ghana began with the government's response to the initial foreign exchange crisis in December 1961' (Herbst 1993, 21). More accurately, however, Ghana's modern economic history began with the government's response to a reduction in cocoa prices that immediately rendered the country's previous development plan redundant (Krassowski 1974, 45). The 1961 prices of cocoa beans were approximately 50% lower than those in 1958, and just under 40% lower than those in 1954 (Scandizzo and Diakosavvas 1987: 124; Fitch and Oppenheimer 1966: 85; Krassowski 1974, 45). The British Commonwealth did not have a commodity stabilisation scheme in cocoa (as it did in sugar) hence the country depended on international market. More importantly, the massive drop in cocoa prices had not been envisaged in the

five-year development plan introduced in 1959 (Second Development Plan, 1959: 7). According to detailed readings of the plan, 80% of the overall capital requirement was to be drawn from local resources (Second Development Plan, 1959; Krassowski 1974, 1). The main sources of local financing were (1) the existing accumulated reserves of the central government and (2) the reserves of the Cocoa Marketing Board (CMB). However, the feasibility of the CMB's contribution was dependent on cocoa prices. The reduction in prices also affected foreign reserves; for example, the import bill rose from £95 million in 1958 to £163 million in 1961, while that of exports increased at a lower rate, from £110 million to £120 million, in the same period (Krassowski 1974, 45). As a result, government reserves decreased sharply; the foreign exchange reserves inherited at independence, which stood at £178 million in 1958, fell to £73 million in 1961 (Central Bureau of Statistics 1961)

The Ghanaian government's initial response to the fall in cocoa prices, and the ensuing balance of payment crisis, was to prepare an austerity budget and stick with the plan. In collaboration with the economist Nicholas Kaldor (Roger 2005, 135), the finance minister F. K. D. Goka hastily prepared an austerity budget. The budget introduced a consumer tax, a new purchase tax, and a compulsory 5% saving levied on all income exceeding 330 USD per annum. The budget was an attempt by the government to maintain the 1959 development plan and make up for the shortage in government income by introducing new form of taxation. However, the first attempt to collect the mandated revenue led to a major strike among transport workers in Ghana's two biggest cities: Accra and Kumasi (Roger 2005, 135). Members of the opposing political party exploited the strike to emphasise the growing cost of living. The social crisis became a full-blown political crisis as the ruling elites started to lose support from their stronghold. By extension, the commodity crisis of 1961 occurred in all of the non-affiliated countries. Nigeria, for example, cancelled its development plan in 1961 (Ojedokun 1972, 836), as did Guinea (World Bank, 1966c) and the rest of the non-affiliated countries. A political crisis ensued in the non-affiliated countries (see below).

In contrast, however, in 1961, the original EEC trade partnership established in the Rome Treaty expired in 1960, pending the Yaoundé Convention of 1963. In the meantime, the ruling elites in Côte d'Ivoire negotiated with France in 1961 to introduce a temporary trade system that separated Côte d'Ivoire's production from world-market prices. As a result, France offered to continue preferentially importing Côte d'Ivoire's principal agricultural products - including cocoa, coffee and bananas - via a quota and a guarantee of prices higher than world-market prices (World Bank, 1963a: 10). In 1961, therefore, France purchased 100,000 tons of Ivorian coffee (more than 70% of Côte d'Ivoire's coffee production at that time), at prices more than double those of the world market (3.20 French francs per kg. c.i.f., compared with world-market prices of 1.40 to 1.60 French francs per kg, c.i.f.). The 1961 figures included Algeria's yearly consumption of about 10,000 tons of coffee. Following Algeria's independence in 1962, the guota was revised downward to 88,000 tons (Campbell 1978, 80). The ruling elites in Benin, Togo, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Mali and Niger negotiated a similar arrangement pending the Yaoundé Convention of 1963. The 1961 temporary arrangement is an important starting point because it offers a framework for understanding the Yaoundé Conventions. In the negotiations on Yaoundé Convention I, African ruling elites requested the continuation of the 1961 price support system. The 1963 Yaoundé Convention was therefore a seamless

continuation of the 1961 temporary trade arrangement in respect to the price advantages and market preferences/quotas (see Barnes 1967, 18; Alschuler 1998, 72; Tuinder, 1978, 99). The guaranteed price offered for cocoa by the EEC in 1963/64/65 was a third higher than the world-market price (World Bank, 1967b, 36). This allowed the governments of Yaoundé associates to subsidize the continued production of cocoa and other colonial products to generate artificial growth regardless of the world-market crisis (see World Bank, 1963, 15), which was creating problems in non-affiliated countries.

For example, there was a huge difference in the producer prices paid to cocoa farmers by the governments of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. In 1961, the government of Ghana decided not to reduce producer prices despite a reduction in international prices. The government therefore subsidized cocoa planters. This was done for political reasons. From 1960 to 1966, according to the World Bank, 'with the exception of 1963/64, the Cocoa Board [...] heavily subsidised producer prices' (World Bank, 1967a, 19). Cocoa farmers in Ghana earned 220.46 cedis/MT in 1960-63 (Mar, 1985: 130). There was a price reduction in 1963/4 when it became difficult for the government to keep up with the subsidies. Côte d'Ivoire, however, paid producer prices that were equivalent to 275.77 cedis/mt in 1961 and 276.65 cedis/mt in 1962 (ibid.). But by 1965/66, when the government of Ghana reduced producer prices even further due to a further reduction in cocoa prices, Côte d'Ivoire paid three times' Ghana's producer prices.

Differences in Political Crisis and Level of Diversification

Relatedly, the second difference between the Yaoundé countries and their unaffiliated counterparts in the 1960s lay in the degree of political crisis, especially political crisis with economic origins. Due to the link between economic and political power, a sustained reduction in world commodity prices (from 1961 to 1966) not only created an economic crisis but also presaged a political crisis. On average, the unaffiliated countries experienced much more political tension/crisis than the affiliated countries in the 1960s. For example, some researchers have traced the earlier coups d'état in West Africa to a reduction in economic performance (see Wells 1974; Kposowa and Jenkins 1993). If we use the number of coups d'état as an index for political crisis, unaffiliated countries experienced on average twice as much crisis as the affiliated countries during the Yaoundé Conventions. Nigeria, Ghana and Sierra Leone experienced eight military coups during the Yaoundé Conventions, while Togo, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger and Madagascar together experienced six. Benin was an outlier among the affiliated countries (experiencing four coups), although its coups did not have economic origins.

Ghana is the typical case among the non-affiliated countries. Colin Legum argued that 'the whole complexion of Ghana politics changed as a result of the crisis of 1961', with a marked reduction in the general support for Nkrumah (Legum 1964, 149). This loss of support was due to the direct link between economic prosperity and political legitimacy in Ghana and in Africa at large (Killick 1978; Biney 2011, 81). The economic crisis of 1961 led to a partial loss of political legitimacy and emboldened the opposition, to which the ruling political elites (the Convention People's Party) responded by gradually but forcefully consolidating a one-party state (see Killick 1978, 100). Furthermore, several researchers have shown that in Ghana, economic crisis resulting from the cocoa price crisis created

the context for military coups (Killick 1978: 303; Aryeetey, Harrigan, and Nissanke 2000, 34). For example, the 1965 cocoa prices were the lowest since the late 1930s, and there was a military coup in Ghana in 1966. Coincidentally, however, cocoa prices gradually recovered after the 1966 coup. The new government (the National Liberation Council, NLC) increased producer prices as soon as international prices rose, which happened only a few months after the coup. This price-trend reversal encouraged the military government to increase producer prices and resume its investment in the cocoa sector. By 1967, cocoa prices had almost fully recovered, reaching 83% of their 1958 level, the highest since 1959. The price of cocoa continued to increase until the end of the decade. However, the NLC held elections in 1969 and Kofi A. Busia, a minister in the NLC government and a former leader of the opposition during the Nkrumah years, emerged as Ghana's new prime minister. Busia's deposition occurred in January 1972 following another drastic reduction in cocoa prices (see Owusu 1972, 74). Explaining the origin of the 1972 coup, Jon Kraus wrote that 'the Busia government would undoubtedly have experienced less erosion of its support had it not confronted a sharp 44% decline in the average world cocoa prices in 1970, upon which it depended for about 60% of its export earnings and a substantial portion of budget revenue. This compelled it to adopt a somewhat "austere" budget', as well as retaining 'the same producer price paid to cocoa farmers,' despite the reduction in real prices (Kraus 1988, 477).

Another possible proxy for political crisis is the mass incarceration of political opposition during periods of economic crisis. Indeed, in October 1961, during the commodity crisis, Kwame Nkrumah arrested leading members of the opposition party. Those arrested included the candidate for the United Party (the second main political party) in the 1960 presidential election, Dr. J. B. Danquah; Mr. Joe Appiah, deputy leader of the Opposition; other leading United Party members; leaders of the recent strikes; and newspaper editors (Keesing's Contemporary Archives 1961, 1848). The Nkrumah government released some of the political prisoners (including Dr. J. B. Danguah) in 1963/64, but rearrested them in 1964/65. In Guinea, where there was no opposition party, the Sékou Touré administration outlawed trade unions in October 1961 following a teachers' strike. The regime arrested the leaders of the strike and expelled the Soviet ambassador Daniel Semyonovich Solod. Similarly, in October 1961, President Tubman of Liberia declared a state of emergency to deal with a general strike and riots. He also arrested some individuals for plotting against him. Although there was a major political crisis in cocoa-producing Nigeria during this period, the crisis was not directly linked to economics, although fueled by dwindling revenue. In the unaffiliated countries, a second round of political crises occurred in 1965/ 66, when commodity prices fell even further. For example, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone experienced several coups only months apart.

The third difference between the affiliated and unaffiliated countries was the latter's attempt to diversify away from colonial production systems. Such attempts to diversify are another proxy for economically induced political crisis. Diversification during economic crisis occurred as an attempt to create a new basis for state rule (to guarantee political survival), resulting in deviation from the colonial mode of production. Table 1 captures the changes in the main export products of West African countries up to 1975, using 1960 as the base year.

Of the top three main export products (by value), two products, on average, were changed by the unaffiliated countries. Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone changed two of

Table 1. Changes in top three export products by value: 1960–1975.

Affiliated (no. of changes)	1960	1975
Ivory Coast (0)	Coffee, cocoa, timber	Coffee, cocoa, timber
Benin (2)	Palm kernels, groundnuts, palm oil	Palm kernel products, cotton, cocoa
Togo (2)	Cocoa, coffee, palm kernels	Cocoa, coffee, palm kernels
Burkina Faso (0)	Livestock, shea nuts, cotton	Livestock, cotton, shea nuts ²
Senegal (0)	Groundnut products, fish, phosphate ³	Groundnuts, fish, phosphate
Madagascar	Coffee, rice, sugar	Coffee, cloves, lima beans
Mali (1/2)	Livestock, groundnuts, fish/cotton	Cotton, groundnuts, livestock
Niger (0)	Groundnuts, livestock	Groundnuts, livestock
Non-affiliated (no.		
of changes)		
Nigeria (2)	Cocoa, palm kernels, groundnuts	Crude oil, cocoa, tin
Ghana (2)	Cocoa, timber, gold	Cocoa, other goods, minerals
Liberia (1)	Rubber, iron ore, cocoa/coffee	Iron ore, rubber, non-conifer logs
Sierra Leone (2)	Palm kernels, coffee/cocoa, iron ore	Diamond, iron ore, others
Guinea (3)	Coffee, bananas, palm kernels	Bauxite, aluminium, pineapple
Gambia (1)	Groundnuts, palm kernels, fish	Groundnut, palm kernels, cotton

Sources: Ivory Coast (World Bank, 1978b: 338); Benin (World Bank, 1964d, Table 3; World Bank, 1979a: 137); Togo (World Bank, 1968b, Table 15; World Bank 1974; Table 3.3); Burkina Faso (World Bank, 1964c: 34; World Bank, 1975c, Table 3.2); Senegal (World Bank, 1968a; 1979c, Table 12; World Bank, 1979c); Madagascar (World Bank, 1966a; World Bank, 1979b, Table 15; World Bank, 1979: 88); Mali (World Bank, 1966b, Table 40; World Bank, 1978b, Table 3.2); Niger (World Bank, 1964a: 34;); Nigeria (World Bank 1961, Table 18; World Bank, 1977b: 38); Ghana (World Bank, 1967a, Table 1A; World Bank, 1977a; 16); Sierra Leone (World Bank, 1964b, Table 21; World Bank, 1979d: 39); Liberia (World Bank, 1963b, Table 11; World Bank, 1975a, Table 3.2); Guinea (World Bank 1981, 77); Gambia (World Bank 1966a; World Bank 1975b)

their main export products, and Guinea changed all of its main export products. Liberia (which was never colonized) and Gambia (which gained independence in 1965) each changed only a single product. However, of the affiliated countries, only Benin and Togo changed two of their top three main exports, and the changes (to cocoa/coffee) were made in the line of products protected under Yaoundé price stabilization.

In Ghana, the commodity crisis of 1961 led to the government's attempt to create a new economic basis for state rule by diversifying away from cocoa beans (Fitch and Oppenheimer 1966: 82-83; Roger 2005: 135; Killick 1978). The government ceased all of its pending investment in the cocoa sector and proceeded to diversify the economy. This also occurred in 1971 under the Busia administration. The post-1961 development strategy was an attempt to find a new economic basis for political legitimacy; this amounted to an effort to change the structure of the Ghanaian economy by implementing industrialization and mechanization. For a study of the development attempt, see Killick (1978). Similarly, in Guinea (un-affiliated), the 1960/ 61-commodity crisis led to an attempt to change the economic/social bases of the state (see World Bank, 1966a: 22). In contrast, Togo, Senegal, Niger, Gabon and Burkina Faso followed Côte d'Ivoire's development trajectory. These affiliated countries experienced less economically induced political crisis, resulting in fewer attempts to diversify. The 1961 price and political crisis did not affect them.

Conclusion

To conclude: the importance of price support to ruling elites is evident from the negotiating position of African countries during the Yaoundé era. The first meeting held by African ruling elites to identify a common position identified commodity price support as the most important issue (Zartman 1971, 32). When they met in December 1960 to formulate their position, West Africa's leaders all agreed on the need to demand price stabilization from the EEC (Zartman 1971, 29). Accordingly, when they met again in March 1961 at Yaoundé, the price stabilization of colonial exported products was the main point of agreement (ibid.). In September 1961, in another meeting, price stabilization was again notable among their demands. Price support was still the emphasis when African ruling elites meet to negotiate Yaoundé II. As William Zartman noted, when African political leaders called for a renewal of Yaoundé, 'they commissioned President Diori to make another trip to Brussels and press again for price stabilization' (Zartman 1971, 188). Although critical writings usually suggest that the Yaoundé Conventions exploited West African countries, there is no evidence that the EEC, with the exception of France, benefited from the trade partnership in any way (see Marcussen and Torp 1982; Zartman 1971: 24; Fieldhouse 1986, 15). On the contrary, other EEC members had to import raw materials from Yaoundé-associated states at prices generally higher than world market prices, and furthermore discriminated against other third-world products (which was not pleasing to West Germany at the time). The real beneficiaries of the Yaoundé Conventions, it seems, were ruling elites in West Africa, who negotiated the trade advantages to secure their political survival against the threat posed by the reduction of world market prices.

In the 1960s, the West African countries that were not associated with the EEC during the Yaoundé era experienced a crisis that shifted the political logic for survival toward economic diversification. This finding contributes to a body of literature showing how threats to political survival are critical junctures that explain institutional changes. As Fitch and Oppenheimer observed, it took the commodity crisis to induce Nkrumah to invest seriously in diversifying the economy (Fitch and Oppenheimer 1966, 82). We thus gain the sense that African countries need crises to compel ruling elites to change their course by instituting institutional changes at critical junctures. In light of this, future research on the Lomé Conventions and the current EPA is urgently needed. It seems that the effect of the Lomé Conventions was similar to that of the Yaoundé Conventions in terms of guaranteeing the current economic system. For example, in John Ravenhill's formulation, 'Lomé is a form of clientelist relationship – an attempt by weak states to construct a particularistic arrangement that would preserve their position in the EEC market and provide insurance against the insecurities of the marketplace' (Ravenhill 1985, 3). The two main features of the Lomé Conventions were (1) preferential market access and (2) a commodity price stabilization system, STABEX (from the French Système de Stabilisation des Recettes d'Exportation), which was instituted in the form of price support. In principle, STABEX provided export-earning stabilization for several commodities, which was good for the EEC because of the commodity crisis of early 1970s. But in light of the attempt made by unaffiliated countries to diversify in the 1960s, research is needed on the effect of the Lomé Conventions along this path. While it seems that the effect of the Lomé Conventions was similar to that of the Yaoundé Conventions, Lome seem to have promoted a specific (but problematic) form of diversification through the inclusion of more products (such as sugar) in its price stabilization.



Notes

- 1. The slight increase in the export bill despite the reduction in cocoa prices was caused by an increase in the quantity of cocoa beans exported; for example, exports increased from 197,000 tonnes in 1958 to 405,000 tonnes in 1961 (Fitch and Oppenheimer 1966, 85). As a result, planters were paid more and government revenue decreased. The balance of payment on the government's current account dropped from more than £11 million in 1958 to a £52 million deficit in 1961.
- 2. I have used the 1972 data, as data are unavailable for 1975.
- 3. These are data for 1962, as the 1960 data were not available.

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