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**Cross-border Migrations, Regional Integration and Conviviality
in the Gulf of Guinea: the Reality and the Prospects**

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Introduction

The Gulf of Guinea region has always been a sphere of migrations, the production of identities and trans-ethnic as well as inter-ethnic relations. Although many countries in West and Central Africa lay claim to the Gulf of Guinea (GG) for strategic, military or security reasons (Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, the Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome & Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo), only Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea (EQ), Republic of Congo, Angola and Gabon are Gulf of Guinea states *senso stricto*. The GG states are endowed with an infinite wealth of natural and human resources. Gold, oil, diamond, and bauxite amongst others abound and the first three African exporters of crude oil (Angola, Nigeria and Equatorial Guinea) are found therein. A large part of the African evergreen and mangrove forest are found in the GG. Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa is also found therein. Other economically important states in this region are Cote d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana and Cameroon.

These have combined to endow the region with colourful *metissage* of people. The mixing of people on the Atlantic coast of West-Central Africa pre-dates the colonial era. Such movements were in all directions, north-south or east-west involving Bantu speaking peoples. Some of the factors that account for inter-ethnic contacts at the *longue durée* in the modern period are the Slave Trade and commercial activities promoted by European traders and prospective colonial powers. The partition of Africa while creating and carving and crystallizing boundaries between colonial spheres thus restricting movements across the new frontiers triggered new internal movements under a labour imperative. This explains the movement towards colonial plantations and public work projects (stations, roads, railway construction sites). Developments following the First World War were also responsible for the reshuffling of peoples. The retreat of German forces to Fernando Po and the partitioning of the former German of Cameroon between Britain and France were responsible for a new series of migrations and the erection of new spaces frontiers likely to control population movements. The resulting contacts between peoples at this period gave rise to new forms of identity awareness, what Bourdieu called "social categories of perception" that were in reality "principles of a vision and division" of the world. Besides the colonial dichotomy between subject and citizen, new categories were introduced to take care of an awareness of the difference between insider and outsider e. g. the division between native and stranger. Independence inherited both this legacy also ushered in new forms of movements both within and across the post-colonial state boundaries: regular

movements across the linguistic divide in Cameroon, the continuing presence and movement of Nigerians (especially the Igbo) within and across the commercial cities of Cameroon, the movement of Anglophone Cameroonians to Nigeria.

The development of sub-regional economic schemes has been at the basis of new waves of migration in the Central African sub region. Although the dominant destinations are oil rich but human resource deficit countries such as Gabon and Equatorial Guinea in the post-1980 period or Nigeria in the 1970s, other countries have also hosted migrants from across the region. For example, migration towards Cameroon has been a function of its status as an economic and cultural power or its stability in a region marked by civil wars. Moreover the continuing patterns of ancient population movements where former colonial boundaries at times split the same peoples into different national spaces has been a very strong factor in permanent factor in what can be considered as cross border migrations. These migratory movements have given rise to new forms of distinctions between insiders and outsiders especially that of nationals and non-nationals that have come to be grafted to older distinctions derived from the colonial era, resulting in several crises (expulsion of non-nationals, xenophobic attacks, violent attacks, confrontations. Although belonging to the same economic community, the status of migrants in the CEMAC region has often been problematic within some countries (Cameroonians in Gabon and Equatorial Guinea, Equatorial Guineans in Cameroon, Central Africans in Cameroon) even resulting in diplomatic incidents or prolonged border closure. This situation is paradoxical not only because these countries all belong to CEMAC but also because they display characteristically very homogenous political, social and cultural characteristics that are supposed to cushion rather than exacerbate tensions resulting from cross-border movements and contacts between their peoples. On the contrary, Cameroonian migrants in Nigeria seem to live at greater ease with Nigerians in spite of the fact that Nigeria belongs to an almost entirely different economic social and fiscal dispensation (ECOWAS). Conversely, Nigerians have relatively enjoyed peaceful relations within Cameroon although there are incidents that tend to project their status as non- nationals (harassment by corrupt government officials, threats of expulsion, mass return home). Nigeria itself has also been the host of nationals of countries in the Gulf of Guinea besides the larger West African region but it appears to be more a starting point for migrations to smaller countries (Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Sao Tome e Principe) with its own crises.

This paper attempts to investigate the crises of identity which have often occurred with the contact of different people moving across recognised borders within the states of the Gulf of Guinea in the contemporary context. The question is: Can African countries lay

claims to transnational projects and still insist on practices that exclude non-nationals in their countries? How can this apparently be overcome in practical terms? The paper will set out to achieve the following objectives:

- To identify, characterise and classify the various cross-border movements in the Gulf of Guinea.
- Examine the nature and outcomes of contacts in areas of destination of migrants. In this regard, a small survey was made of the experience of non-nationals from the Gulf of Guinea living in Cameroon;
- Identify and examine the causes of crises arising from cross-border migrations especially as related to the identity question in the countries of designation.
- Examine the prospects for alternative models of regional integration in the Gulf of Guinea.

Pattern and Character of Movements

Because of the economic potentials of this region, the dynamics of migration date back to many centuries in time: the caravan traders from North Africa who came in search of spices and other commodities; the attraction of the strong Soninke Ghana empire that collapsed in the fifteenth century; the slave trading kingdoms, Muslim wars of conquest and colonial invasion orchestrated frequent movements across the territory (Metogo, 2006). Whereas in the past, people moved to escape conquest by Muslim Jihads, slave raiders, or to resist colonisation, the movements in the post-colonial era are almost entirely dominated by economic motives. The movements under economic incentives are strong and have dynamic patterns determined by changes in the economic fortunes of various countries in the region. For example, from the 1990s, EQ emerged from decades of misery to become the new El Dorado of the GG through black gold (oil) taking over from Gabon and Nigeria which had been prominent migrant destinations in the preceding two decades. Presently, Angola is also fast becoming a priced destination for migrants after the end of 25 years of civil war. For a long time, Chadian refugees sought refuge in north Cameroon and many have settled there permanently.

Internal movements

North-South Movements

These are movements from the dry Sahelian belt to the humid forest zones of the GG. The Sahelian belt of West Africa extends from Senegal to Cameroon. Examples of such movements abound and include: informal migrants from Burkina Faso and Mali who

seasonally migrate to work in the cocoa farms of Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire and Malian migrants working on the groundnut producing regions of Senegal. Outside of people heading for agricultural destinations are also a host of informal migrants whose primary destinations are the towns and cities along the coast of the GG. In these towns, they faithfully accept and execute odd jobs nationals often disdain. These include petty trading, security guards, garbage collection, gardening and ambulant shoe mending.

Movements to oil producing countries (resource frontiers)

Another type of movement in the GG involves job-seeking migrants originating in countries with low economic growth rates ravaged by high levels of unemployment, to countries with high growth rates providing greater avenues for employment and prospects of a better life. The countries sustaining high growth rates in this region are basically those producing oil with the exception of Nigeria. Nevertheless, the Nigerian oil boom of the 1970s was a veritable magnet on the entire region drawing migrants from almost all countries but notably Ghana, Benin, Togo and Cameroon. The current wave of migration today is towards Gabon and EQ. Between 1997 and 2002, for example, real gross domestic product (GDP) growth for EQ stood at over 50.1% per annum. The growth rate for Gabon has not been very outstanding but the existence of a small population implies high GDP growth rates per capita (Table 1.0). Police estimates today show that migrants constitute over a third of the population of EQ (300 000) (Ori Obaji, 2008). Most of these immigrants are illegal and originate notably in Cameroon, Nigeria, Senegal and Mali. In Gabon, a large segment of the population is also made up of people who have escaped the difficult climate of the West African Sahel. The Sahelian countries mostly fall under the low income class and generate huge numbers of migrants. The countries called fragile, have potential for growth in real GDP but have been weakened by internal strife and civil wars and are thus are under reconstruction.

Other oil producing countries like the Republic of Congo and Angola have not witnessed striking waves of immigration because of domestic political instability. Actually they are just recovering from such strife and may soon have to face their own waves of immigrants. Like table 1.0 shows, many countries in the GG are of the low income bracket.

Table : Growth in Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for selected countries of the GG

Country	1997-2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
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Oil exporting countries

Algeria	4.9	3.3	1.2	0.6	8.6	1.1	6.0	2.8
Cameroon	4.5	4.0	3.7	3.3	2.2	3.5	3.8	4.6
Congo	2.7	0.8	3.5	8.8	6.2	-1.6	9.1	2.1
Equatorial Guinea	5.0	1.4	3.8	9.7	1.3	2.1	7.4	4.6
Gabon	0.0	2.4	1.1	3.0	1.2	5.6	3.9	7.0
Nigeria	6.8	1.0	1.6	5.4	6.2	5.9	6.2	8.1

Low income countries

Benin	5.1	3.9	3.1	2.9	3.8	4.6	5.1	5.7
Burkina Faso	5.7	7.3	4.6	1.1	5.5	3.6	4.5	6.6
Ghana	4.3	5.2	5.6	5.9	6.4	6.3	6.5	8.8
Mali	5.0	7.2	2.4	1.1	3.3	1.1	4.8	2.2
Niger	4.1	7.7	-0.8	7.4	5.2	3.2	4.4	4.5

Fragile countries

Sier ra Leone	3 .8	9 .5	7 .4	7 .3	7 .4	6 .8	5 .5	5 .9
Tog o	0 .0	5 .2	2 .4	1 .3	4 .1	2 .1	2 .5	3 .5
Gui nea	4 .2	1 .2	2 .3	3 .0	2 .4	1 .8	4 .5	4 .7
Gui nea Bissau	- 2.1	- 0.6	2 .2	3 .2	1 .8	2 .5	3 .2	3 .1
Lib eria	- 31.3	- .6	2 .3	5 .8	7 .5	9 .6	8 .6	1 4.3
Cot e d'Ivoire	1 .0	- 1.7	1 .6	1 .9	0 .7	1 .6	2 .9	4 .7

Source: International Monetary Fund (2008:55).

Though appealing to many because of the economic fall outs of migration seen in remittances, life has not always been very cosy for these migrants. There are often accused of being responsible for crime, political and economic problems. For example, in 1983, Nigeria had to expel illegal migrants whose presence had become pugnacious to the nationals. It was in this light that the expulsion of migrants from Nigeria in the early eighties occurred. Similar expulsions have occurred from Gabon and Equatorial Guinea recently.

Refugee movements

Africa has the highest number of refugees in the world. A refugee is defined by the UNO as any person who cannot return to his or her own country because of a well founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political association or social grouping. Refugees develop because of two main factors: Internal strife or civil war and Famine. Refugee movements due to internal strife in the GG include the following: Chadian refugees in Cameroon; Liberian refugees in Ghana; and Sierra Leonean refugees in Cote d'Ivoire. In addition to refugees, there are thousands of internally displaced persons in the region. These types of movements are recurrent in Nigeria due to ethic and religious conflicts and in Cote d'Ivoire due to political instability amongst others.

Deportations

Movements under the stress of deportation have become common originating mainly from the economically more viable economies in the GG. As indicated earlier, migrants are resented in most of these countries and are easily associated with criminal conduct, civil and political strife. A representation of how locals view migrants in EQ is painted by Engonga Marcello, cited by Ori Obaji, (2008). According to Engonga, a local sociologist, the influx of immigrants into EQ has increased the locals' wariness because they out-compete them from jobs and have an immense spirit of entrepreneurship to which locals are not accustomed. It is reported that migrants have virtually taken over the oil villages around the capital-Malabo. In Gabon, migrants are looked upon in the same way even though the more objective national affirm that immigrant workers are more faithful, obedient, ingenious and daring than nationals. For example, in Gabon, Cameroonians, Senegalese and others accept to live and work where Gabonese disdain.

Movements for education

Movements for education are equally important in the GG. Nigeria is a major pull on students within the ECOWAS zone of the GG. In the CEMAC zone, Cameroon pulls students from virtually all the other members of the economic and monetary community. For example, a large colony of students from Equatorial Guinea exists in the University of Buea-Cameroon. In the same light, there is an impressive number of students from Chad and the Central African Republic studying in the predominantly francophone universities of Cameroon.

External Movements

There is nevertheless a small but strategically important number of European and American migrants in the GG. A majority of them are involved in oil exploration along the coastal sedimentary lowlands of the region but notably in the Niger delta, and the Bakassi peninsula. Many are also involved in prospecting for minerals, exploiting forest, and in engineering and construction.

Chinese migrants are also becoming very significant in the countries of the Gulf of Guinea. They are involved in commerce, engineering and oil prospecting.

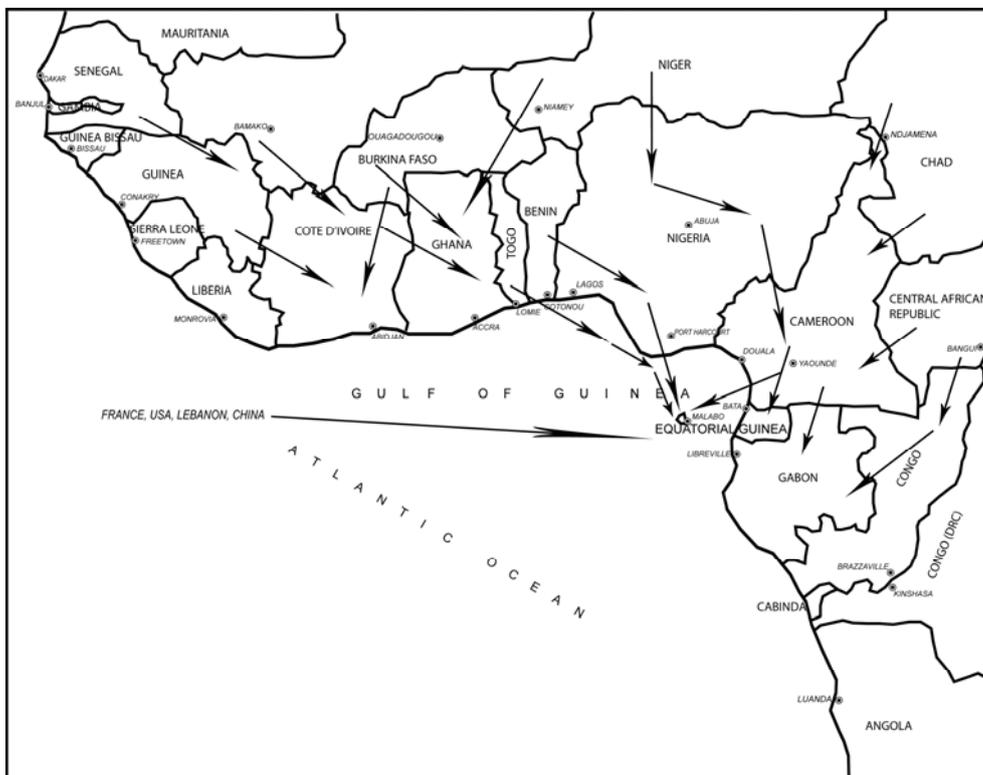


Fig. 1: Pattern of Labour Migration in the Gulf of Guinea

Nature and Outcome of Contacts in Areas of Destination

One can notice a variety of trends when it comes to the nature and outcome of contacts in areas of destination. The attitudes of nationals will fluctuate depending on a number of factors.

Occupation of Migrants: There is a difference in attitude towards migrants in occupations and professions where competition is high and those in which there is little or no competition. Migrants in menial jobs or in liberal professions (teaching, accounting, banking) are less the focus of resentment or hostility from nationals than are skilled blue-collar workers such as construction workers. This has also been a function of fluctuations in economic trends between boom, stagnation and recession or between poles of prosperity and lack of prosperity.

Political Implications of Alien Presence: This links internal politics of identity to migrant presence where there is the scare of the “alien” who can pass for a “national”. This is the situation of border peoples such as the Burkinable in Côte d’Ivoire (who may pass for a Dioula) and Nigerians in Cameroon (by reason of historical fact and who stand in a bad posture when some Anglophones are openly clamouring for secession). In fact, cross border peoples in general play on an undeclared and unofficial double nationality card and can actually live peacefully across borders. They may also tend to claim a singular status in

times of border disputes such as the armed movements claiming to fight for the independence of Bakassi independently from Nigeria and Cameroon at a time when the two were striking deal over the disputed area. In fact the area at the interface between CEMAC and ECOWAS in the Gulf became a haven of aimed groups of mixed nationalities.

Varying Political Climates and the Nature of Diplomatic Relations: Political moods have often dictated the way migrants are treated within the regions. The lax management of borders during the colonial period under a labour imperative led to mass free movement of labour migrants within the two regions irrespective of colonial sphere, labour needs being the over-riding factor. Plantations and public works of all sorts (railway, road and building construction projects in urban centres) were principal poles of attraction. At this period, distinctions between nationals and non-nationals either did not exist or were minimal since citizenship did not exist.

It is the political management of statehood by emphasizing boundaries that created the new category of nationals when the new status of statehood was equate with nationhood or elites sought to define or create the latter at independence.

The new governments, anxious to identify their own national territories as sovereign and independent states exacted immigration laws and regulations governing conditions of entry, residence and employment of non-nationals, the aim being to reduce the flow of immigrants as a whole and limit entry to authorised immigrants who were admitted on their special skills (Adepoju 2005b: 3).

In this dispensation migrants from the colonial era became an embarrassing and a complex legacy to manage in many countries (the lingering presence of Nigerians in Cameroon and vice versa, many West Africans in Côte d'Ivoire). Internal conflicts further led to new cross-border movements or reinforced the continuing presence of these "non-nationals" of a peculiar nature. For instance, the civil war in Nigeria which affected mostly the East from which most migrants in Cameroon originated, contributed to stabilise their presence in the latter country, despite stereotyping (e.g. the use of the term "Biafrais" to refer to Ibos).

When the incident of Nigerians massively repatriating from Cameroon in 2005 was reported by some press organs it immediately became the source of a diplomatic incident with the Nigerian government worried about the plight of nationals seemingly pushed out of a neighbouring country and Cameroon, apparently taken off guard by the events,

denying being at the basis of the incident and indicating that, if Nigerian nationals left it was voluntary. The incident was followed by top-level meetings between Cameroonian and Nigerian officials. As will be expected all else was diplomacy as usual as the press reported: pledge to good neighbourliness, protection of each other's nationals and eventual search for solutions. One point remained clear: a large number of Nigerians had opted to leave and take residence in their home country. Secondly, if one goes by press reports, conditions of residence had become more difficult for the majority and especially the less wealthy. The third fact is that the event, not being forced and organised repatriation, was not linked to the complicated border conflict that has strained diplomatic relations between the two countries. This is the more plausible because, despite official diplomatic differences over the settlement of the boundary dispute characterized by the ruling of the ICJ at the Hague and bilateral discussions, the question of residency of nationals of either side has never been the issue. Even when it was put up by Nigerian authorities in relation to the residents of the disputed Bakassi area under pressure from interest groups, Cameroon did not hesitate to accept that Nigerians could continue to live in that territory in the same way as other Nigerian nationals live in Cameroon. Prior to the massive return of Nigerians there had been an estimated two million Nigerians in Cameroon. These figures are polemical and differ according to the potential political issues into which they have to be put. When it comes to portraying them as the source of some trouble they are portrayed as being in excessive numbers. When it does not benefit such a cause the numbers are less gigantic. By and large Nigerians live peacefully within Cameroonian territory and enjoy even near-nationality status. The only clear difference is that they have to obtain residence permits. It is not clear how many of them have naturalized. The incident referred to above is the first ever of Nigerians returning to their homeland ever since the secession of Southern Cameroons from Nigeria in 1961. It has to be noted that the reverse is also true.

Following independence and reunification of Southern Cameroon with the French speaking Republic of Cameroon, many Cameroonians (English-Speaking for that matter) had either moved to Nigeria in search of jobs (especially with oil boom) or university education where the dominantly French University of Yaoundé was an important obstacle to higher education to many Anglophone youngsters. Concerning the former point, Cameroonians were not the only foreigners who were attracted to the opportunities offered by the oil boom and the economic and social development that was a derivative. When these prospects became dim, non-nationals in Nigeria were requested to leave, which many did or were constrained to with the crunch of deteriorating or deteriorated economic conditions. The category of Cameroonians who continued to live in Nigeria were university students

either self-sponsored or on Cameroon government scholarships. Movement to Nigeria on academic grounds became more restricted with the creation in Buea of a university on the lines of an English-speaking tradition. These developments have kept the number of Cameroon nationals living in Nigeria to a very low level proportionately in relation to that of Nigerian nationals living in Cameroon. The question that arises is: How was this possible? The question is apparently a banal one since everybody can point to the period of British colonial rule in Southern Cameroons. What is forgotten in this case is that the presence of Nigerians in Cameroon goes beyond the former territory of Southern Cameroons and that the ethnic origins are more diverse than the predominantly Ibo population of the colonial days. The other dimension of the question that cannot be answered in so clear terms is that of why Nigerian nationals did not immediately return after independence but rather continued to expand their presence in Cameroon to the point of integration. One needs to explore how they have been able to integrate when Southern Cameroonians were not able to integrate in Nigeria but rather preferred to associate with French speaking Cameroons and eventually have been integrating into the Cameroon social fabric (to be distinguished from the polity which is still problematic). This is the more so, as literature on Southern Cameroons colonial history has continued to highlight the Ibo scare as the ultimate reason for the political choice to dissociate from Nigeria in preference for Southern Cameroons.

We posit that the presence of Nigerians in Cameroon was possible because of the absence of a threat that they could pose to the new state of Cameroon. Secondly, that it was the accommodation between nationals and non-nationals did not develop into problems of exclusion as we will see below. Thirdly the argument will hold that that the return of Nigerian nationals is symptomatic of the degeneration of economic conditions and the austerity of the packet of measures put in place under successive structural adjustment plans (SAP). The crisis in Cote d'Ivoire was also testimony of how integration or partial integration of non-nationals could lead to the most obnoxious political developments in the current contexts where the contours of the polities are just being shaped. Occasional problems of conviviality between Cameroonians and nationals of Gabon and Equatorial Guinea fall into this category.

Experiences of Non- Nationals of some Countries of the Gulf of Guinea in Cameroon

Identity of non-nationals

Respondents for the survey were drawn from four of Cameroon's neighbors, Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea (EG), Chad, Central African Republic (CAR) and Congo. Out of

the 101 persons interviewed, 50 were from Nigeria (which has the largest number of foreigners living within the Cameroon), 37 from Equatorial Guinea, 8 from Chad and 3 each from CAR and Congo Brazzaville. This sample was selected through a combination of quota, purposive and snow ball techniques methods. The first two groups were targeted according to the proportion of their residents in Cameroon given that these are the most important communities of foreigners within the national territory Nigeria out distancing Equatorial Guinea in this regard. These were countries with the most active trans-frontier population movements in the southern part of Cameroon with the highest concentrations being in the cosmopolitan regions of the Littoral and South West where the study took place. In fact, the study was conducted in Buea, Douala and Kumba in the main. The other communities were sought for and respondents identified. This was not easy, this accounting for their relatively low figures in the sample. Table 2 presents the current areas of residence of the respondents.

Table 2: Distribution of Residents according to Residence

Residence	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percentage
Konye	6	5.9	5.9
Buea	38	37.6	43.6
Douala	50	49.5	93.1
Yaounde	1	1.0	94.1
Kumba	1	1.0	95
Other	5	5.0	100
Towns			
Total	101	100	

The mean age of the respondents was 34.5 (standard deviation: 12.9) with range 56 (lowest age 19, highest 77). This points to the wide range of persons that we interviewed, this likely to be representative of different age groups. Two thirds of the sample was male (66.3%) while the rest was female. Table 3 segregates the sample according to sex and country of origins.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to Gender and Country of origins

GENDER	COUNTRY					
	NIGERIA	EQUATORIAL GUINEA	CHAD	CAMEROON	CONGO	TOTAL
Male	37	19	7	3	1	67
Female	13	18	1	0	2	34
Total	50	37	8	3	3	101

The disproportion in favour of men within the sample results from the fact that there are more male immigrants than female ones and from their availability in public places where the interviews were conducted. While 64 respondents declared their religious affiliation as Christian and 5 said they were Muslims, as much as 32 did not respond to the question. Around two fifth (39.6) of the sample were married as opposed to 56.4% unmarried and 4 widowed. Eight of the married respondents had got married to Cameroonians.

Most respondent (71.3%) had moved into the country for the first time only within the past ten years (2001-2010) although movements date as far back as the 1970s (table 4 indicates the date of first entering into the country). Figures about other movements into the country confirm the idea of regular movements into Cameroon and into different urban centres (see table 4). The motives of these movements are given in decreasing order as studies for students (38.6% from Equatorial Guinea in the main, although not exclusively), business (26.7%; Nigerian traders in the majority), employment (16.8%), marriage (9.9%), visits (5%), acquisition of nationality (1%), evangelism and unspecified other (1%). These motives tie in closely with the occupations of the respondents.

The statistics point to the wide gamut of activities these immigrants are involved in. It is interesting to note that there are even unemployed persons looking for jobs in the sample. In terms of actual employment only 50.5% of the sample declared they were employed as against 47.5% and two non-responses. Nigerians are the most employed being self-employment as traders (majority), mechanics, hair dressers, farmers, Christian

missionaries, teachers and dress maker. Dates of first employment correlate closely with date of first entering into the country.

Table 4: Date of first entry into the country

Period of first entry into country	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Frequency
1970 -1980	13	12.9	12.9
1981 - 1990	3	3	15.8
1991 - 2000	13	12.9	28.7
2001 - 2010	72	71.3	100
TOTAL	101	100	

The respondents from Nigeria possess certificates of all levels just as they are involved in a wide variety of occupations or professions. The respondents from Equatorial Guinea are in the majority secondary school leavers as they pursue their studies in Cameroon. One needs to observe the little educated from the three other countries (Chad, CAR, Congo) as well as the well educated from Nigeria and Equatorial Guinea. There are also uneducated people from four of the five countries under study.

Visits to home country

Nearly half of the sample (45.5%) do not visit their home countries regularly while only 18.8% do so less than once a year, 23.8% once a year and 4% twice a year. Only two persons said they visited their home countries four or more times a year. Respondents from Nigeria are among those who do not return to their home countries most (26) although some of them say they do so less than once a year (16). It is significant to note that only 22 persons from Equatorial Guinea visited once a year and that some do not return at all. The Chadian, Central Africans and Congolese do not return at all.

Employment situation

Only half of the sample (50.5%) was employed. This employment follows the type of occupations indicated above. The unemployment figures are swelled by the students from Equatorial Guinea without which only 14 of the respondents are really unemployed. It is important to note that 12 of these respondents are applicants from four of the five countries which point to the fact that Cameroon also attracts people looking for jobs. Nigerians are most employed and mostly as traders although one can also find them in a variety of other

occupations. A third of this sample (34.7%) is self-employed. Most respondents have been employed between one and ten years (34 out of 55), while only 6 were between 11 and 20 years, 4 between 21 and 30 years and 2 between 31 and 40 years. It is interesting to note that some of the respondents have worked for as much as 40 years. The employment situation correlates with date of first movement into the country.

Relations with nationals

We set out to measure relations between the non-nationals and the nationals in neighbourhoods, work places, worship sites and associations as well as between children and in the public. We also wanted to understand their experiences in cross-country marriages and friendships with Cameroonians as well as likely domains of conflict. Relations within the neighbourhoods were rated by the majority (96%) as friendly, cordial or welcoming as against only 4% which assessed them as unfriendly. Almost in the same way, 90.1% of the sample thought that relations at work were good as against only one person who declared that they were negative. Only two thirds (67.3%) of the sample opted to give an opinion about relations at religious worship sites this being positive. The rest did not give any opinion. The trend of positive relations was confirmed with 94.1% reporting good relations in public with only 4% thinking that they were discriminatory or hostile. Relations within associations were considered to be good by 39.6% with another 10.9% speaking positively about the freedom of association accorded to foreigners. Relations between children are considered to be good by the 35.6% that opted to address that issue¹.

Only 14 respondents indicated that there were marriages between members of their families and people of the host country. These relations were generally rated positively: 6 persons reported happily married couples while 8 reported love and respect between in-laws. Almost half of the sample (45.5% as against 52.5) reported friendship relations between their families and people of the host country. These relations were positively rated: they were said to be marked by love and respect (33) or by partnership in development (13). Only one person reported a conflict and in business. This was related to exploitation in a business deal.

The values highlighted in coping within the host country are hard work (14.9%), fidelity at job site (2%), cordial relations with neighbours (41.1%), respect for the law and

¹ The high numbers of none responses for relations between children (64.4%) as well as relations at worship site and associations imply that results will only be applicable to those who come into contact with nationals in those places.

citizens (36.6%), good management of financial resources (2%) and support for spouse (2%). A third of the respondents (33.7%) have a positive view of Cameroonians in the domain of interpersonal relations and ethos. However, 14.9% identify certain vices (drunkenness, flirting, maltreatment of tenants by landlords, vindictiveness) in their host country. The other lessons are more personal to the respondents.

Relations with officials

Tables 5, 6 and 7 indicate the domain of contact with officials, their motives for these contacts and experiences with the officials respectively. Only 7 of the 23 respondents who came into contact with council officials thought that the relations with its officials were good as against 9 who thought that they were the object of victimization when they were known to be illegal immigrants. Six others reported embarrassment. This trend is reported with taxation officials where only 6 respondents say the relations are friendly whereas 15 reported exploitation or embarrassments. On the contrary, it is significant to note that immigration officials are judged to be good and duty conscious by almost a third (31 as against 22 who hold a contrary view). Views are divided about utility provision officials and national police officials. Relations with school officials are rated as friendly by 14 respondents while 4 think that the former exploited foreigners. Motor park officials are assessed by two fifth of the sample as good while another fifth hold a contrary view.

Table 5: Domains of contact with officials

Domain of contact	Frequency	Percentage
Taxation	22	21.8
Immigration	54	53.5
Utility provision services	6	5.9
Church	2	2
National police	17	16.8
National social insurance fund	1	1
School	19	18.8
Bank officials	2	2
Landlords	7	6.9
Motor Park	10	100
Hospital	2	2
Other areas	1	1

Table 6: Reasons of Contact

Reason of contact	Frequency	Percentage
Payment of council dues	23	22.8
Payment of taxes	22	21.8
Establishment or renewal of residence permit	54	53.5
Payment of utility bills	6	5.9
Discussions of church matters	1	1
Collection of pension	1	1
Enrolment and study	20	19.8
Accommodation	6	5.9
Security	17	16.8
Establishment of travel documents	1	1
Others	2	2

Table 7: Experiences with Officials

Type of official	TYPE OF EXPERIENCE ENCOUNTERED				
	Indignity and duty conscious officials	Exploitation of foreigners who do not satisfy residency requirements	Embarrassment when in default	Insufficiency in provision of service	Little respect for foreigners
Council officials	7	9	6	1	0
Taxation officials	6	10	5	1	0
Immigration police	31	16	5	0	1
Utility consumption officials	1	2	2	1	0

Church officials	1	0	1	0	0
National police officials	8	6	2	0	1
National social insurance fund	0	1	0	0	0
School officials	14	4	0	0	0
Bank officials	1	1	0	0	0
Landlords	3	3	1	0	0
Motors park officials	37	20	7	1	1
Hospital	0	2	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	1
Total					

Assessment of relations between home country and host country

Relations between the home countries of respondents and Cameroon are unanimously rated on a positive note as very good (71.3%) and good (28.7%). The treatment of foreigners by nationals is described as very good (59.4%), good (37.6%), bad (2%) and very bad (1%). We will conclude on a very positive relationship that will tie in with the assessment of the relations reported above.

Problems, Solutions and Lessons Learnt

Problems encountered are the same that will be observed by the nationals. These are essentially social problems that have little to do with their status as immigrants. This points to the normality with which they live their situation to the extent that one can talk of them feeling at home. The proposed solutions are also common place and consistent with the problems identified. The lessons learnt by half of the sample (51.6%) are personal moral ones with no direct bearing on relations with nationals. Almost two fifth (38.3%) speak well

of Cameroonians when they refer to their own lessons. The latter are referred to as kind, understanding, peaceful, undiscriminating, hard working, well educated and blessed with bilingualism. This contrasts with only 18.9% who attribute negative characteristics to their hosts: vindictiveness (11.8%), exploitative as tenants (1%), drunks and flirts (1%) or not business conscious (5%).

Perspectives for the future

The majority of the respondents (82.2%) say the future in largely positive terms as very bright (5%), bright (75.2%) or normal as against only 9 persons who think it is not promising and 8 who are uncertain. On the contrary, close to three fifth plan to stay in Cameroon.

One can be tempted to conclude that Cameroon and Cameroonians have good attitudes towards non-nationals within the Gulf of Guinea to the extent that it could be a model. This contrasts with other countries (Gabon, Equatorial Guinea) where non-nationals are occasionally harassed. This is due to Cameroon's central position as a junction point between countries in Central, West and North Africa. One can wonder at this level of tolerance towards non-nationals in a country where non-natives in some metropolitan areas are labelled and treated as strangers according to an autochthony ideology that unfortunately found its way into the constitution (Yenshu Vubo 1998, 2003 2005, forth coming). This apparent hospitality is also at variance with the rather irregular delays in the naturalisation process observed of recent as well as a law prohibiting double nationality for Cameroonians dating back to the post-independence days characterised by repression. What the study also portrays is a period when non-nationals are not harassed as at earlier times.

Explaining the Situation

Two factors account for the nature of relationships that develop between nationals and non-national within the Gulf of Guinea namely badly defined national boundaries that automatically define nationality and problematic regional integration schemes.

Badly defined, blurred and problematic Frontiers

National boundaries that were arbitrary demarcated by colonial powers were totally oblivious of the realities of transethnic or expansive universal ethnic spaces. This had the effect of Balkanizing and containing groups that stand astride the modern states of the region, controlling with it the movement of people. This had been compounded by the post colonial state resort to dogmatic principles of the blurred concept of statehood such as the

OAU principle of maintaining boundaries inherited from colonialism, backtracking or questioning the colonial policy of condoning labour movement across boundaries under a labour imperative and the definition of citizenship in essentialist terms as related to roots or ethnic ancestry, this being closely to an ethnic vision of the “nation-state”. In the case of the last point, the paradox is that this new form of ethnicity was grafted to tribal preoccupations (unresolved differences) that the new countries were grappling with pulled as they were between national cohesion and competition between elites that resorted to their groups of origin for some form of legitimacy. Such trends in political attitudes tended to place itinerant peoples without a tense of “homeland” and people whose homelands were either not in any single country or stood astride two countries in a rather awkward, marginal problematic or advantageous position. In the case of the Hausa and Fulbe they have taken up residence in almost every country of West and West Central Africa and can take advantage of their trans-territoriality and status of a people of all countries. On the contrary, they may either fit into local politics defined in term of locality or autochthony or be excluded or marginalised.

For instance, in Cameroon the Fulbe succeeded to have a comfortable position in the Ahidjo era as a dominant ethnic category both in the North and the whole country but this position was reversed and challenged by both the successor regime of Mr. Biya and local peoples (both in the North and elsewhere) as aliens. The Mbororos faction of this group is particularly the focus of conflicts by people who consider themselves as indigenous peoples or “first arrivals”. Consequently, the Mbororos have tried to reverse this situation by defining themselves as indigenous minorities, a category borrowed from transnational jargon but completely perverted by political elites at state and local levels. Even when accepted within the political game, these peoples can only fit in as marginal because the locals are or should be given priority as the real actors.

In some cases, border peoples can enjoy the privilege of near dual citizenship without the defining legal qualifications. In this case, they can only be at best active participants in one or maintain an obscure precision within the two. Such an ambiguous status can also be observed with border peoples who move to areas across the border and feel at home across borders to the extent that they totally ignore the existence of inter-state boundaries. This has been observed over the years with the Efik and its neighbours who have inhabited the Cameroonian peninsular of Bakassi to the extent that this was used as an argument by Nigeria to assert its sovereignty over the area. Ever when the dispute over the area was resolved in favour of Cameroon the status of these “Nigerians” was one of the lingering contentious issues.

The same is true of movement of border peoples (Dioula, Senoufo) between Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire, whose ancient kingdoms and territorial limits extended astride the current borders of the two countries. Movement of peoples of Burkinabé origin and settlement within the North of Côte d'Ivoire or in the reverse direction either in the colonial or post-colonial eras was at times in a spirit of total ignorance of the partitions into different states. These free cross-border movements overlooked and even encouraged by the Houphouet Boigny regime have actually been the source of political suspicion from southerner politicians whose definition of citizenship in ethnic terms tended to assimilate the Northerners (Dioula, Senoufo) to Burkinabés.

This triggered the ill-defined concept of *ivoirité* that was more of a political tool: there were no documents to define the concept although it was used extensively to exclude "aliens" in the broad sense but more specifically (and paradoxically) nationals suspected or assimilated by ethnic identity with citizens of Burkina Faso. This is the more so as this was inscribed exclusively within politics of exclusion and did not extend to actions such as mass expulsion. Politicians from the South (Bedié who invented the political dimension of the term and, even to some extent, Gbagbo) increasingly tended to restrict the real identity of Ivorians to origins from the South albeit imprecisely. This development accounts for the long period of political confrontation (more than a decade) where the dominant question was that of whom an Ivorian was and, by extension, who could become the President. Successive presidents from the South tended to be comfortable with the view that *ivoirité* might not accommodate all northerners, some of whom were suspected of being foreigners because sharing ethnic affinity with Burkinabés although this fell short of openly excluding Northerners. It is the increasing resort to this hardly veiled argument that led to an attempt to topple the Gbagbo government by a group essentially from the North this leading to the protracted civil war. The stress on the identification of citizenship as a prelude to elections and the eligibility of Ouattara (Northerner) for the presidency, a question that touches on his "questioned" citizenship or nationality, validates our point.

Closely related to this question of definition of the status of cross border peoples is that of the management of borders. In fact, no policies exist other than the affixation of territorial limits and sovereignty on either side of territorial divides. This leaves ordinary people with no choice than to ignore the arbitrary colonial creations and violate the boundaries, deeply connected as they have been since time immemorial with peoples divided by the post-colonial boundaries.

Problematic Regional Integration Schemes

One way out of this problematic situation seemed to have been the regional integration schemes starting with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which was a veritable precursor in the design of policies to manage mass cross-border migration (Adepoju 2005a: 4-7, 2005b: 5-13) and then, more recently, the Economic Community of Central African states (CEMAC). Although the former has achieved relatively greater success than the latter in terms of achieving a “borderless” policy where citizens can move freely across inter-state boundaries or where restrictions are reduced to the minimum, both schemes have faced recurrent crises in relations between national and non-nationals where the same factors are at play.

These schemes seem not to have adopted common labour policies which would have taken care of all categories of workers, migrants and nationals. Economic prosperity in some countries has attracted workers from countries with less opportunities but recession in the former countries has also led to the expulsion of non-nationals (Ghanaians from Nigeria) as well as xenophobic attitudes towards them from nationals (either fuelled or condoned by governments). This was the case with Nigeria’s expulsion of citizens of certain ECOWAS countries at a time when this regional organization was designing policies to cope with cross-border migrations (Adepoju 2005b: 6). In fact, this organization has had a chequered history in the implementation of its own measures towards a border free zone, some countries being complacent about non-nationals in periods of peace, economic prosperity and political stability but resorting to hostility towards non-nationals in periods of recession, with the justification that aliens aggravated a “host country’s economic conditions” (Adepoju *ibid*) while forgetting the latter’s contributions to the very countries in labour, professional skills, training in educational sector and business. The illusion (as with most ideologies of identity politics) is to explain social crises - in this case worsening economic conditions (unemployment, fall in real wages) - by resorting to a vilification of the Other presented as the scapegoat. In some cases this scapegoat can be political as in the case of certain ethnic groups suspected of collusion with nationals to tilt the balance of the vote. This is the effect of ethnically defined conceptions of the national-state in terms of space and citizenship.

In either case both elites and local peoples are active, the first as flag bearers (in the name of protectors of peoples or national interests) and the second as principal victims. Either way, the observed effect is the diversion of attention from the real causes of the

problems to some imaginary aliens who should be held responsible and the development of short-lived nationalist feelings which serves no other purpose than to rally nationals around a leadership class (whatever their performance might be) and thus serve as a political tool. To suggest that there may be manipulation would be far-fetched. What is at work is a two fold process where disenchanted locals may attack non-nationals who are perceived as the source of misfortune for nationals as well as criminals as against the good nationals - by dint of some sort of purity principle (ivoirité or congolité) while a leadership is resorting to the expulsion of non-nationals also blamed for some unfortunate incidents pitting the latter and nationals treated as alleged irregular migrants. This is the case of Cameroonians who have been regularly attacked and vandalized in Equatorial Guinea and Gabon by nationals both as a result of personal conflicts with nationals and because the former seem to be taking advantage of economic prosperity much more than nationals. Such incidents have been accompanied by expulsion by governments of host countries whose action seems to complement that of people at lower level. In retaliation, students of Equatorial Guinean origins living in Buea, Cameroon were also brutalized by youngsters who believed they were acting in a “patriotic” spirit.

The trends point to the following:

- Absence of a citizenship policy within regional schemes. It is not clear whether clear cut policies exist in the common management of citizens within single regional schemes as the focus is on facilitating movement of people while the issues of residence and the protection of non-nationals are completely overlooked. People may move but the binary distinction between nationals and non-nationals is a serious operational obstacle to the enjoyment of integrated spaces;

- The contrasting pulls between two political drives that generate contradictory demands and expectations on individual state spaces. This is the contradiction between “nationalist drives” and regional integration schemes. Protecting these “national” spaces have become an instinctive mode of governance for leaders to the extent that regional integration schemes emerge only in contradiction to a certain form of primordial nationalism. As Nyamnjoh (2007) remarked with globalization, one illusion of regional schemes is that people are invited to feel at home everywhere within a regional scheme but are reminded that the bounds of the state have not yet disappeared. The fate of the migrant is the extreme dimension of the dilemma of the person in the South torn between the unfulfilled dreams of both a nation state in the making and the increasing promises

of a universal existence that transcends the bounds of the nation-state. In the words of Serge Latouche:

Ce qui est proposé aux populations du tiers monde ... consiste en une identité nationale absurde et une appartenance fallacieuse à une communauté universelle. La première est absurde théoriquement et pratiquement. Théoriquement, car la nation n'a pas de sens dans une communauté universelle, pratiquement, car les nations créées par l'Occident ne correspondent pas à aucune maturation locale. La seconde est fallacieuse car le statut de l'homme, ironiquement réduit à une abstraction, est vidé de tout contenu par la seule différenciation maintenue, créée et exacerbée, celle de la quantité des richesses disponibles. Ni citoyens du monde à part entière, car le suffrage est censitaire, membre d'un clan ou d'une ethnie, puisque cela a été détruit, ni national d'un Etat authentique, car la politique « nationalitaire », née artificiellement de la colonisation, n'a d'autre racine à affirmer qu'un mimétisme généralisé, « l'occidentalisé » du tiers monde est un clochard/The model that is proposed to the peoples of the Third World ... is some absurd notion of nationality and an apparently false notion of belonging to a universal society. The former is both theoretically and practically absurd : theoretically because the concept of nation has no place in a universal community ; practically because nations created by the West have no local roots. The falsehood in the latter is explained by the fact that human value is ironically transformed into an abstract concept and emptied of any meaning because it is reduced to sustained differences, created, amplified and assessed on the sole basis of available riches. The westernised persons of the Third World are homeless persons : they are neither citizens of the whole world (the vote is supposed to be based on some form of tax-based eligibility) nor members of clans and ethnic groups (the latter have been destroyed) or nationals of any authentic states because the nationalistic policies of the states that derive from decolonisation have no other roots to offer than a generalised mimicry (Latouche [1989] 2005 : 113).

This has been aggravated by the fact "the popular rhetoric around globalization is all about free flows of factors of production (including labour) and consumer goods, regardless of attempts by states to control or confine them" (Nyamnjoh 2007:76). In this regard, Vidal Villa (1996) has argued that one of the main obstacles that stand in the way of globalisation is the nationalism of nation

states. As a result, the growing tendency towards internationalism or transnational fashions as found in regional continental or sub-continental regional blocks find difficulties of application because of recourse to prevailing and perennial state-building logics of the inter-state system and the near ethnic appeal of nationalism. Serge Latouche (op. cit.: 122) has captured the logics of state building in the following words:

Cet ordre national-étatique sera dans le temps, et du même moment, un ordre international-étatique. L'État-nation est le sujet du droit international, il est souverain. Nulle puissance légitime au-dessus, nulle dessous. Les sociétés qui n'ont pas adopté la forme nationale-étatique n'ont pas d'existence juridique, elles sont à découvrir, à conquérir et à civiliser. L'ensemble des souverains qui dominent la planète forme une société des nations, ou une association contractuelle des États membres.

/ This nation-state order will be in time and at the same time an international-state order. The nation-state is governed by international law. It is sovereign : It has no power above or below it. Societies that did not achieve the nation-state form do not have a legal existence, and by dint of that, have to be discovered, conquered and civilised. The whole set of sovereign entities that dominate the planet constitute a society of nations or a contractual association of states.

This is at the basis of the tendency to continue to inscribe economies within the confines of the nation-state which is the principal obstacle to labour mobility. Global level arrangements of a political nature (common passports, common currency) have thus often been oblivious of local level issues (residency within the region) that should constitute some of the building blocks of viable integration. In the final analysis, elites within some states within the regional integration schemes in question tend to adopt the same posture as ethnic groups within states as they perceive regional integration as nothing more than a patchwork of entities with no strong ties between them. In fact, the reality is not far from that observation as the CEMAC region has been identified as the least integrated of such projects in Africa.

- This situation is compounded by factors related to levels of economic growth and political history with the region. The relative underdevelopment of the regions characterised by substantial differences in prosperity between countries provokes the movement of people to periodic

poles of job creating opportunities across borders. Identity issues related to nationality become central in the competition for scarce jobs, firstly, between persons with the same level of competence and, then, between persons of different levels of competence. In the final analysis, the natural expectation is that nationals have a priority over non-nationals. Nationals who end up clinching jobs are often the object of resentment and even hatred. When recession sets in, elites would tend to primarily target non-nationals for retrenchment that constitute parts of austerity measures. Failures are even attributed to these very non-nationals. Such discriminatory attitudes, perceptions and practice derive from an implied and an assumed regular function of states that have to provide jobs for nationals either as a matter of responsibility that goes with sovereignty or as social policy type palliatives to ward off unrest and contestation from discontented groups. In either case, the state presents itself as not yet ready for the reality of regional integration that appears as an alien structure either imposed externally or a fashion in which no one believes, the reality (of power, economy, international responsibility) being with the state.

This situation makes of these sub-regional schemes largely incomplete or dwarfed projects, this being a function of political history. It is evident that, although CEMAC has extended its influence to Lusophone (Sao Tome e Principe) and Hispanic (Equatorial Guinea) spheres - demographically insignificant anyway -, its elementary origins and primary territorial limits coincide with the former French colonial sphere of the Afrique Equatoriale Francaise (AEF) while the political motive can be imputed to the lingering neo-colonial influence of France. This argument is buttressed by France's continual involvement in the activities of this organisation ever since the birth of UDEAC (Union douanière et économique de l'Afrique centrale) through the subsequent transformations in status and configuration to CEMAC in its present form, added to the former colonial power's paternalistic posture in the control of key issues especially in terms of monetary policy (through the franc and the central banks) and leadership. Such a situation abstracts issues of control from member states and transfers such to the former colonial power, the presence of the two non-francophone states making no difference. The regional integration scheme thus appears to be an affair of heads of states obliged reluctantly into a contractual relationship over which they have no real control. It can be said to hang above states that are themselves also hanging above their own societies or constitute "un Etat sans nation" (a state without a constituent nation) in the way Alain Touraine (2000: 83) pondered about the European

Union. In this regard, such a scheme is doubly removed from society and social concerns such as labour concerns and relations between citizens of all countries. Moreover, the involvement of the former colonial power in setting matters of hegemony (Cameroon vs. Gabon) alienates countries and strengthens nationalist feelings rather than cooperation that is necessary for collective policies. The occasional animosity towards Cameroonians in Gabon is not unrelated to the competition for ascendancy in the region, such a competition being fuelled by French preference for the latter country. The abstraction of the scheme from the societies of the states concerned can explain the low level of integration within the region: in fact, it is the lowest in the African region.

The ECOWAS sub-regional scheme's own problems of a political nature are slightly different although they contain certain dimensions of what can be observed in the CEMAC region. Instead of one dominant colonial history under one power (as with the French in the AEF), the sub-region came under the control of three colonial powers, Britain, France and Portugal. As such, some states belong to different unions with ideologies and programmes that may not tie in completely or even conflict with those of the regional union. This is why the UEMOA economic scheme and the Banque des Etats de l'Afrique de l'Ouest are serious obstacles to a global integration project involving all countries in that sub-region such as a common monetary policy. ECOWAS' "bold attempt to stimulate the kind of homogeneous society which once existed in the sub-region" (Adepoju 2005) has only achieved little success at institutional level with the society left out of its programme. The concern is with easing free movement of people and maintaining the reality of boundaries inherited from the colonial period.

Prospects for alternative models of regional integration in the Gulf of Guinea

A problematic status for migrant non-nationals has emerged and with it a crisis of conviviality within some countries at specific periods at both official and societal levels. We have explained this situation in relation to the rather dogmatic and idealised definition of the nation-state as one absolutely coinciding with colonial territorial boundaries and within whose bounds citizenship and nationality are framed in respect to ethnic origins to the exclusion of others. Such a restricted and narrow definition is facing difficulties of an operational and ideological nature. Operationally, it is oblivious of colonial antecedents that moved peoples across territorial boundaries under a labour imperative, the trans-territorial character of some border peoples and the emerging reality of internationalism/transnationalism, triggered by the end of economic nationalism and globalisation that goes with it. In ideological terms, the current form of the nation that

Benedict Anderson (1983: 15) defined as an “imagined community – and both imagined as limited and sovereign” and, which is the key contextual idea on which modernity was premised (Llobera 1996; Touraine 2005), is coming under serious challenge (Latouche [1989] 2005: 110). In fact, a major and decisive crisis of the nation-state order that is likely to lead to the transformation of the world system constituted around nations (“la fin de la société des nations/the end of a world articulated around nations” Latouche op. cit.: 136), characterised by a trans-nationalisation of economies, a “de-territorialisation” of societies, and globalisation of culture (Warnier [1999] 2007; Appadurai 1996), renders the stress on the latter anachronistic.

This trend is compounded by challenges from forces from below which are weakening national communities in favour of ethnic communities (“affaiblissement des communautés nationales et le renforcement des communautés ethniques”/the weakening of national communities and the strengthening of ethnic communities) in the name of cultural rights (Touraine 2005: 267) . “Au total, l’État national est beaucoup moins qu’avant un cadre général d’identification collective/ All in all, the nation state is much less than before a general framework for collective identification ”, concludes Alain Touraine (ibid. : 65). Edgar Morin ([1965]1999 : 170), on his part, feels that it has simply lost its mobilising utopia: « La fécondité historique de l’État-nation est aujourd’hui épuisé/The historical thrust of the nation-state has been sapped».

Paradoxically, African elites had adopted a totally different option - that of the old form of the nation-state - at a time when these developments set in, precisely at the end of the 1960s (Wallerstein 1991: 72-73; Wieworka 2004: 283).

Avec Fanon pour prophète, ils ont choisi la théorie ethnique de la nation au dépense de la théorie élective, il ont choisi identité culturelle – traduction moderne du Volkgeist – au ‘plébiscite de tous les jours’ ou à l’idée d’association séculaire’. Si, avec une régularité sans faille, ces mouvements de libération ont secrété des régimes d’oppression, c’est parce qu’à l’exemple du romantisme politique, ils ont fondé les relations interhumaines sur le modèle mystique de fusion, plutôt que celui - juridique – du contrat, et qu’ils ont pensé la liberté comme un attribut collectif, jamais comme une propriété individuelle/Under the prophetic inspiration of Franz Fanon, they chose the ethnic theory of the nation as against an elective theory. They preferred cultural identity, a modern Volkgeist, at the expense of [Renan’s] ‘everyday plebescite’ or the idea of ‘secular pact’. If all liberation movements without exception gave birth to repressive regimes, it is because they, in the manner

of political romanticism, founded interpersonal relations on the mystical model of fusion rather than that of contract. They conceived liberty as collective rather than an individual issue (Finkielkraut 1989 : 99).

As such, fashions of nation-building sought to achieve the dream of uniting heterogeneous people through a certain mystique of fusion, the international dimension being a resort to protecting boundaries and restricting citizenship to ethnic nationals (to the exclusion of migrants some of whose presence in their host countries date back to the colonial period) or, in an ambiguous manner, to naturalized persons as well as cross-border migrations, with the attendant difficulties which we have shown.

These limitations argue in favour of a rethinking of the current practices and the search for solutions consistent with the spirit of the times. Above everything else, this has to start with the leaders abandoning the anachronistic vision of the nation-state. This implies a rethinking of citizenship within regional integration schemes, the possibility of common labour policies and a redefinition of residency conditions (requirements, responsibilities, entitlements and rights). These go beyond the classical inter-state management of movements of persons and expectations of neutrality as related to participation in local political life (eligibility for certain offices and the right to vote at certain levels) as in other spheres (economy and culture). This rethinking process can gain inspiration from either experiences from other regions that have worked (European Union) or from local experiences of tolerance and accommodation of migrants taken over from the colonial era (Nigeria and Cameroon; Cote d'Ivoire during the Houphouet era), the hosting of refugees from neighbouring countries and reciprocity in border free attitudes. Above these piecemeal national policies, there needs to be a critical assessment of the regional integration projects. There is a definite need to move beyond the current style of regionalism. Edgar Morin has in favour of confederate forms as a way out: "L'idéal à annoncer au monde n'est plus l'indépendance des nations, c'est la confédération des nations, qui leur assure l'autonomie dans l'interdépendance"/The ideal to be proclaimed is not the independence of nations. It is the confederation of nations that can guarantee autonomy in interdependence" (op. cit.: 172). This is the more so in an area where countries share a common destiny within the same geographical space with identical demographic, historical, cultural and economic realities. One can thus argue in favour a Gulf of Guinea Union or Entente with a confederate status but that is an idea to explore out of the current configuration of the regional schemes.

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