

**THE EXPANDING MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMONWEALTH: A CASE STUDY  
OF GABON AND TOGO.**

**BY:  
NANA ADWOA AHENKAN BOAMPOMAAH AGYAPONG  
10943245**



**THIS DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA,  
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**DECLARATION.**

I, NANA ADWOA AHENKAN BOAMPOMAAH AGYAPONG, a master's student at the Legon Centre for International Affairs and Diplomacy, hereby solemnly declare that aside from cited sources in this work which has been appropriately acknowledged, this dissertation and the analysis drawn therein are my original work under the supervision of Dr Juliana Abena Appiah. I further declare that no part of this work has been published or submitted anywhere else for any other purpose.

*Juliana Appiah*



DR. JULIANA ABENA APPIAH

NANA ADWOA A.B. AGYAPONG

(SUPERVISOR)

(STUDENT)

.....27-11-2022.....

DATE

...27-11-22...

DATE



**DEDICATION.**

I dedicated this work to the Almighty God for giving me the strength and ability to carry it through.

To my parents (Nana Akwasi Agyapong-Boateng and Paulina Osei-Agyemang) and my siblings (Ohemaa Yaa Birago Agyapong and Maame Akua Poma Agyapong), for their support and prayers throughout this journey.



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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.**

ECOWAS	-	Economic Community of Western African States
SADC	-	Southern African Development Community
EAC	-	East African Community
CEN-SAD	-	Community of Sahel Saharan State
COMESA	-	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
AMU	-	Arab Maghreb Union
ECCAS	-	Economic Community of Central African States
CRS	-	Common Reporting Standard
EU	-	European Union
CMA	-	Capital Market Authority
CEPGL	-	Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries
SACU	-	Southern African Customs Union
IOC	-	International Olympic Committee
MRU	-	Mano River Union
OMVS	-	Senegal River Basin Development Organization
MNNA	-	Major Non-NATO Ally
AU	-	African Union
NATO	-	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
REC	-	Regional Economic Cooperations
UNECA	-	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
MOU	-	Memorandum of Understanding
CSO	-	Civil Society Organizations
FCDO	-	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
SIDS	-	Small Island Developing Countries

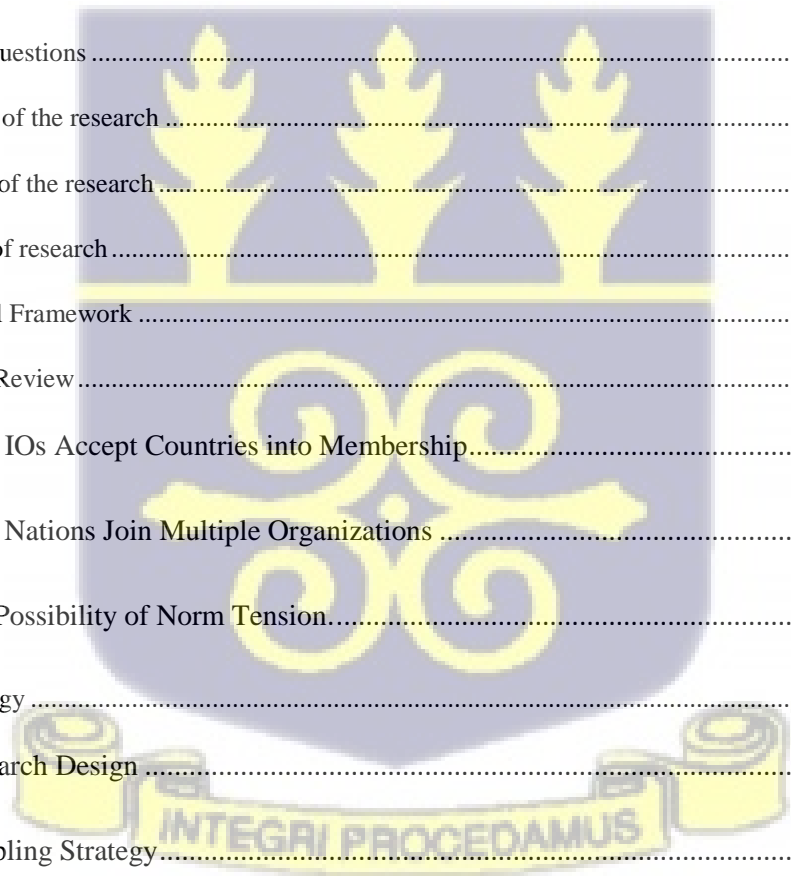


LDC	-	Least Developed Countries
SDG	-	Sustainable Development Goals
CHOGMS	-	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings
UEMOA	-	West African Economic and Monetary Union
UN	-	United Nations
UNHCR	-	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
HIV	-	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
AIDS	-	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome



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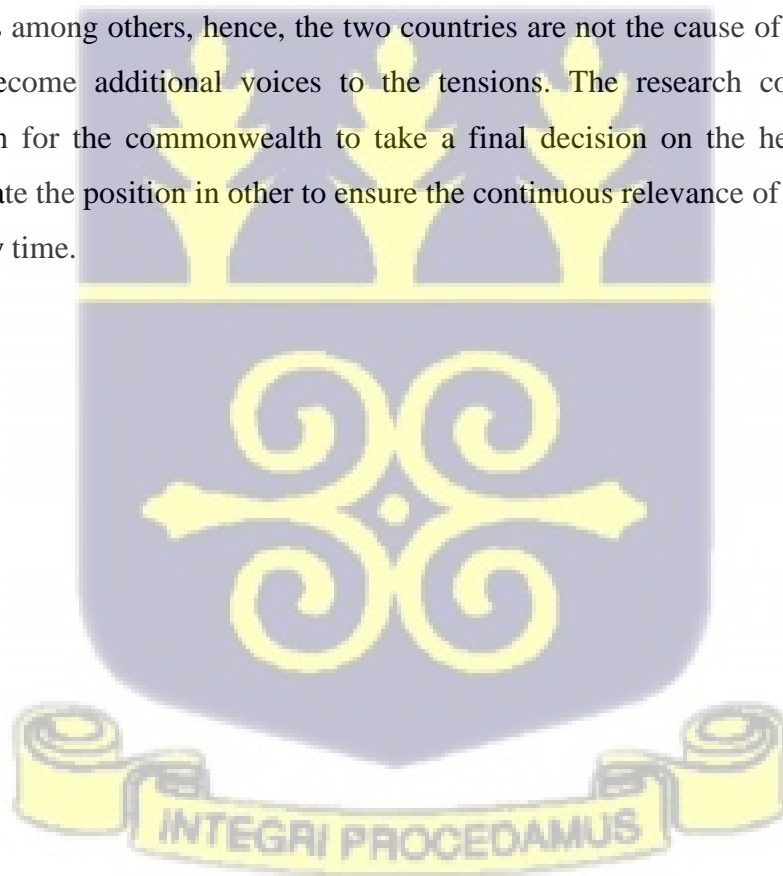
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**ABSTRACT.**

The Commonwealth of Nations is a unique organization that comprises the former British colonies in history, however, since 1995, their membership has included non-former British colonies. The rationale for this study was to investigate the rationale of the two new countries (Togo and Gabon) for joining the commonwealth; the membership criteria used to adopt them and the possibility of norm tension due to their membership. This research is qualitative study and with the help of thematic analysis, it was realized that Togo and Gabon joined the Commonwealth due to the economic, linguistic, development and access to the pool of other resources the organization provides. Further, the study uncovered that, the membership criteria used was commitment to the 16 principles stated in the *1971 Declaration of Commonwealth Principles* of which the two countries had committed to some of the principles and hence guaranteed their qualification for membership. Regarding norm tension, the study discovered that, the tensions had already begun in the Commonwealth over leadership, and commitment to the principles among others, hence, the two countries are not the cause of the tensions but have merely become additional voices to the tensions. The research concludes with a recommendation for the commonwealth to take a final decision on the headship so as to eliminate or rotate the position in order to ensure the continuous relevance of the organization in contemporary time.



## CHAPTER ONE

### RESEARCH DESIGN.

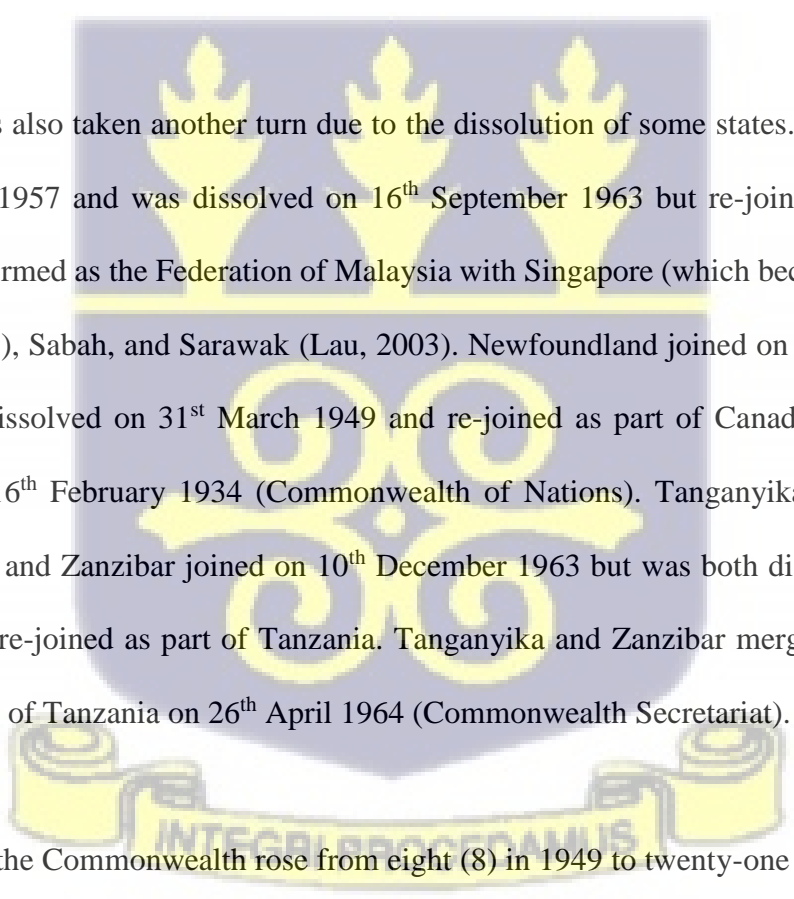
#### 1.1 Background of Study

The “Commonwealth is a unique organization that comprises the former British colonies in history. The majority of these countries is English-speaking countries. At the 1926 Imperial conference between Britain and their colonies collectively called the dominions namely Australia, the Irish Free State, Canada, Newfoundland, South Africa, India, and New Zealand, the British Commonwealth of Nations was formed (Britannica). It was at this conference that it was established that all nations were equal members of the British Empire and are not ruled by the United Kingdom but only owe allegiance to the British king or Queen (McIntyre, 2008) and were ready to freely cooperate in the pursuit of peace, liberty and progress”. It established its first law and act named the Statute of Westminster (1931) which became the implementation agency or body for the association. This act ensured that the dominions had the power to manage and control their domestic and foreign affairs and were at liberty to establish diplomatic relations (McIntyre, 2008).

It is important to note that, membership in the Commonwealth has varied over the years. In the first three decades of its creation, membership was solely for former colonies who had gained their independence. Membership was an independence gift for all states but it was optional hence some states decided to join while others did not join. For example, Maldives gained independence in 1965 but only joined in 1982, New Zealand gained independence in 1907 but joined in 1926, Singapore gained independence in 1963 but joined three years later, and South Africa gained nominal independence in 1910 but joined in 1926. While some countries took

their time to join, others rejected the membership completely; for example, Burma in 1948 gained independence but rejected membership in the Commonwealth.

Following the rejection of membership and some countries also taking their time to join the organization, other countries joined, left and re-joined. In 1961, after South Africa's membership elapsed due to its republic status, she reapplied but due to the ongoing apartheid at the time, she was not accepted into membership which led to her withdrawal; however, following the Democratic election in 1994, South Africa re-joined the commonwealth in June 1994. Similarly, Pakistan out of anger and frustration with the recognition of Bangladesh as an independent state left Commonwealth but re-joined in 1994.

The image shows a large, semi-transparent watermark of the University of Ghana crest in the background. The crest features three golden flames at the top, a central shield with a golden emblem, and a banner at the bottom with the motto 'INTEGRITAS PRO DOMINA'.

Membership has also taken another turn due to the dissolution of some states. Malaya joined on 31<sup>st</sup> August 1957 and was dissolved on 16<sup>th</sup> September 1963 but re-joined as a part of Malaysia. It reformed as the Federation of Malaysia with Singapore (which became a separate member in 1965), Sabah, and Sarawak (Lau, 2003). Newfoundland joined on 19<sup>th</sup> November 1926 but was dissolved on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1949 and re-joined as part of Canada following its suspension on 16<sup>th</sup> February 1934 (Commonwealth of Nations). Tanganyika joined on 9<sup>th</sup> December 1961 and Zanzibar joined on 10<sup>th</sup> December 1963 but was both dissolved on 26<sup>th</sup> April 1964 and re-joined as part of Tanzania. Tanganyika and Zanzibar merged to form the United Republic of Tanzania on 26<sup>th</sup> April 1964 (Commonwealth Secretariat).

Membership of the Commonwealth rose from eight (8) in 1949 to twenty-one (21) in 1965 to thirty-three (33) in 1966 to fifty-six (56) in 2022. Up until 1994, all 52 members of the commonwealth leaving out the last 4 to join namely Rwanda, Mozambique, Gabon and Togo, had a close connection with the British history and system. All the countries had the history of once being colonized by Britain, respected and owed allegiance to the crown. All these

countries had English as their official language and respected the rule of law, democracy and human rights. As the years go by, these states were allowed to become republics thereby not having the crown as their head. This led to the commonwealth becoming a “multiracial and polycentric organization” (Commonwealth Secretariat) hence a change of name from the British Commonwealth of Nations to the Commonwealth of Nations.

From the era of 1995 till date, which is referred to as the modern times of commonwealth, membership has transcended to non-former British colonies. This became legal following the 2007 Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Uganda after the adoption of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGMS) report 1971-2007; Harare Commonwealth Declaration, Coolum Declaration of 2002; Kampala Communiqué; Intergovernmental Group on the Criteria for Commonwealth Membership (IGCCM) Report; and The Aso Rock Commonwealth Declaration.

The democratic governance principle is the linchpin of the Commonwealth and has been maintained as the status quo despite the membership twist over the years. It is against that backdrop that Fiji Island, Pakistan and Zimbabwe due to a breach of democratic principles, were suspended from the Commonwealth although they were later reinstated ([www.commonwealth.org](http://www.commonwealth.org)).

Togo has battled with democratic governance for some time now, and Gabon is no different as their elections are marred with chaos: all these show the infiltration of new values and norms contrary to that of the Commonwealth being exercised by its new members. Admitting members whose democratic governance is conflictual with that of the Commonwealth is likely to create challenges. In ensuring members abide by the principles of democracy, Commonwealth often sends experts to member countries to assist their electoral processes; however, in assessing countries for membership into the organization, they are lenient and too

gentle in that they allow countries to join when they show just little effort of achieving those principles than being strict on them to incorporate the principle in order not to infiltrate the norms of the organization.

Togo for thirty-eight years (from 1967-2005) was under the rule of Gnassingbe Eyadema who has been described by many as a very difficult leader with his rule characterized by many autocratic features and since then, it has been recorded that his son Faure Gnassingbé has been ruling with an iron hand neglecting the Democratic principles. In the case of Gabon, it has been recorded that, Omar Bongo ruled for 42 years (from 1967 -2005) with gross disrespect for human rights, democracy and rule of law. Since 2009, the evidence has also proven that Omar Bongo's son Ali Ben Bongo has ruled Gabon with an iron hand for 13years to maintain their family legacy of handling government. It is under the leadership of these autocrats: Faure Gnassingbé and Ali Ben Bongo that the Commonwealth has accepted Togo and Gabon into membership without ensuring human rights, rule of law and democracy have been fully incorporated into their governance knowing very well that it is a requisite for members to commit to democracy and democratic principles including free and fair election and representative government (Melly, 2022).

Before Gabon and Togo joined, Rwanda had been accepted into membership despite gross disrespect for democracy and democratic principles for nine years before becoming a member and still neglects the principles. This is to say; a new terrain is emerging. First, it was Rwanda and now it is Togo and Gabon. The question then is who will be next and what is the fate of Commonwealth principles and norms in the years to come?

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

It has been established that membership in organizations over time causes organizational culture and values. These values are mostly driven by the common history of the members. Commonwealth values and culture include Democracy and good governance; human rights; International peace and security; tolerance, respect and understanding; freedom of expression; separation of powers; rule of law; sustainable development; protecting the environment; access to health, education, food and shelter; gender equality; the importance of young people in the Commonwealth; recognition of the needs of small states; and role of civil society- which is evident in the preamble of their charter. Increasingly, with the introduction of members with completely different histories and values, there is a projection of norm and value tension; hence, with the new scenario of French colonies joining, the question is: what is the fate of the Commonwealth?

The interest of the research lies in the rationale for the acceptance of non-anglophone countries into an anglophone organization considering the varying ideologies and principles both the anglophone and francophone hold. This study, therefore, seeks to uncover two things: what criteria were used in accepting Togo and Gabon into membership since the original membership criteria require that a member must at least have a British route and English as its official language which is not the case for these 2 countries; and secondly to understand if the principles held by the francophone countries different from that of anglophones like Commonwealth members tend to create tension.

## 1.3 Research questions

The study seeks to provide answers to the following research questions:

- Is there a possibility of tensions and conflicts arising in the Commonwealth due to the infiltration of Francophone norms and values?

- What criteria were used and the interpretation of the criteria for admission of the two countries into the commonwealth?
- What informed Togo and Gabon to join Commonwealth but not any other Organization?

#### **1.4 Objectives of the research**

The research has set the objectives as follows;

- To understand if the membership expansion has the tendency to create tensions and conflicts due to the varying norms and values.
- To explore the idea of redefinition or expansion of the Commonwealth and most organizations.
- To understand the rationale and motive of Togo and Gabon in joining Commonwealth

#### **1.5 The scope of the research**

The study centres on the new members of the Commonwealth of Nations: Togo and Gabon. The subjects of analysis are the rationale for membership on the parts of both countries: Togo and Gabon) and the organization (Commonwealth) and the possible norm tensions to arise.

#### **1.6 Rationale of research**

There is a growing trend of overlapping membership in international organizations. In 1995, Mozambique, a Portuguese-speaking country joined Commonwealth; in 2009, Rwanda also joined Commonwealth; Ghana has also joined La Francophonie and CEN-SAD, the USA joined ASEAN; Israel attained observer status in African Union; and several others. Other

countries are also still negotiating to join such organizations as Turkey to the EU, Ukraine to NATO, etc.

The above-mentioned happenings in the international political scene have made it necessary to investigate the reasons that account for these overlapping memberships and the bearings they have on organizational norms and cultures. The research focuses on Togo and Gabon in Commonwealth because, historically, Commonwealth has not accepted into membership any country that does not use English as its official language; after all, it is an anglophone organization. Rwanda has French as its official language as well as English hence it qualified to join the organization under the new criteria but in the case of Gabon and Togo, English is not their official language hence a breach of requirement 5 of the criteria which does not qualify them to be part but they are hence the researchers seeks to find out why and how they got there.

More so, the integrity and organizational culture of any organization are not let down by new members who do not uphold it but in the case of Gabon and Togo, there is no respect for democracy and democratic principles yet they were given membership status hence the need for the research to probe further to find the answer (s) to why this is happening and the possible norm tension it will create.

### **1.7 Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework that undergirded this study is the lock-in effect. Lock-in-effect emerged from the economic field of study but has also been employed by political scientists in their analysis. This concept falls under the terrain of the rational choice model, meaning rational logic is the key tool for the analysis of relations. This concept is also referred to as Principal-agent relations. Here, the principal refers to the various entities that come together to

form the body called the agents to act for their collective good. Since the 1990s, International relations scholars have used this theory to explain the organization and running of an international organization.

This concept argues that the lock-in effect is used by states to fortify their office in the organization in the long term by shaping the institutional design of the organization in a way that provides them with an advantage or additional benefit (Welz, 2020). The rationale for states forming an agent is to benefit from the division of labour as well as the pool of activities, risks and assets. Further, it is believed that states use international organizations to gain credibility on some international policies as well as hide their actual identity on international issues.

This concept is linked to neo-realism, neo-institutionalism, and constructivism. Neo realist in the sense that, states seek to gain even at the expense of others hence any organization that will ensure their goodwill warrant them joining. Constructivist on the grounds of shared norms and principles for their collective goal and neo-institutionalism on the grounds of all members benefiting not just a superpower. This means that this theory acknowledges the selfish ambitions of states to gain for their good but to be able to do that, there needs to be a collective effort through shared norms. According to this concept, states join international organizations and delegate authority to these agents because they want to benefit from them in terms of division of labour (Welz, 2020); however, states do not fully subscribe to the principles of the organization but only show some commitment to gain full benefit which then creates tensions about principles, norms and values.

Liberalism critiques the lock-in effect on grounds that, the rationale of states for joining international organizations is for collective benefit and efforts to eradicate common problems, especially for economic reasons. This implies that states commit all efforts to collectively

ensuring the good of all without seeking their selfish interest. It is however not the case as states are driven by their selfish desires to achieve what they want even at the expense of another. To that effect, liberalists' critique of the concept does not downplay its ability to critically analyze and explain the current trend in the commonwealth.

The essence of this theory in this study is that Togo and Gabon seek to attain some benefits that member countries of the Commonwealth receive like scholarships, access to larger markets, finding a new ally (UK) after falling off with their Colonial masters, and several others but has only shown some commitment to the principles of democracy and democratic processes by organizing elections but not fully committed in that, the elections are rigged and no respect for human right and no legislative representative. This theory, therefore, speaks to the reality of what is happening.

Increasingly, states join international organizations as part of reputation building. For instance, Togo and Gabon's relationship with France are increasingly deteriorating; however, by being part of the Commonwealth, they have other major global actors like Canada whose relationship with Togo and Gabon over the years has not been that strong but with Commonwealth, it can build a better relationship; Australia, New Zealand, and several other powers within the United Nation. This is believed to be power accumulation on the part of Togo and Gabon. This means that these countries join due to what they believe they can gain but not to build on the values hence creating tension in these organizational values as indicated by the Lock-in-effect principle.

Increasingly, post-Brexit, the United Kingdom is reasserting itself through the Commonwealth which is enticing new membership although the new membership predates the Brexit scenario. On the 17th of December 2021, following Britain's exit from the European Union, Australia

and Britain signed the Australia–United Kingdom Free Trade Agreement, which upon ratification will eliminate tariffs and increase opportunities for movement between the two countries (ABC News) Increasingly, trade and economic activities among members of Commonwealth are on the rise. In 2019, the Commonwealth members had a combined gross domestic product of over \$9 trillion, 78% of which is accounted for by the four largest economies: United Kingdom (\$3.124 trillion), India (\$3.050 trillion), Canada (\$1.652 trillion), and Australia (\$1.379 trillion) (International Monetary Fund, 2017). Although the Commonwealth does not have a multilateral trade agreement, research by the Royal Commonwealth Society has shown that trade with another Commonwealth member is up to 50% more than with a non-member on average, with smaller and less wealthy states having a higher propensity to trade within the Commonwealth. At the 2005 Summit in Malta, the heads of government endorsed pursuing free trade among Commonwealth members on a bilateral basis. (Commonwealth Secretariat). with such a scenario, it is projected that Togo and Gabon seek to share in this economic growth following their distorted relationship with their colonial masters which is better expounded by the lock-in-effect concept.

Politically, due to their shared constitutional histories, several countries in the Commonwealth have similar legal and political systems. The Commonwealth requires its members to be functioning democracies that respect human rights and the rule of law. Most Commonwealth countries have the bicameral Westminster system of parliamentary democracy. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association facilitates cooperation between legislatures across the Commonwealth, and the Commonwealth Local Government Forum promotes good governance among local government officials. Most Commonwealth members use common law, modelled on English law. The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council is the supreme court of 14 Commonwealth members (Zak, 2016). In as much as Togo and Gabon wants to gain access to new allies and share in their economic growth, they have not fully adopted the

principles and norms of commonwealth such as democracy, human rights and rule of law which explains what the principal-agent theory argues that states seek their selfish interest in membership of international organizations without fully accepting the norms and principles. To that effect, the researcher believes that the concept of the lock-in effect suffices for this study.

Despite the strength of the principal-agent theory to explain why states create and join international organizations and delegate power to them, there are some challenges to the concept. To begin with, it is argued that the concept is too complicated in that international organizations have more than one principal as there are several members in the organization and that an international organization that is an agent may end up being a principal in another organization. For example, states in Africa are principals of the African Union which is an agent but under United Nations, the African Union is also a principal. Also, the concept has been criticized as creating a delegation chain problem (Vaubel, 2006) (Drieskens & Reykers, 2017). This leaves some principals detached from the activities of the organization like in the case of United Nations Security Council members and the rest of the United Nations member states. Further, the concept is critiqued as causing the principals to abuse their powers as it is required of them to grant the agents power of discretion to act on their behalf without which they cannot function (Tieku, Trondal, & Ganzle, 2022).

The criticisms notwithstanding, members of an international organization join to gain irrespective of what it will cost them or another member. The researcher, therefore, believes that considering the projected rationale on the part of members and the fact that they do not qualify per the criteria of membership, then the lock-in-effect will be able to ascertain the rationale for the growing trend and the likely tensions to arise since countries are not fully committed to the organization's principles and norms.

## 1.8 Literature Review

This section is cited within a review of existing literature on overlapping membership and the rationale for acceptance into membership. There is a growing tract in the international system on dual membership or overlapping membership of countries in international organizations. Dual membership, in general, is not entirely wrong since there are sub-regional or continental groups that make it right for countries to join multiple organizations. For example, all African countries fall under the African Union; however, within the African Union, there are sub-regional groups like the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS) for the countries in West Africa; the Southern African Development Community (SADC) for the countries in South of Africa; East African Community (EAC) for countries in East of Africa; Community of Sahel Saharan States (CEN-SAD) for the countries in Sahel Sahara of Africa; Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) for cooperation about Eastern and Southern African countries; Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) for the countries within the north of Africa; Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) for the countries within the Central region of Africa, and several others. Considering that, Ghana is typically an African Union member because it is in Africa, but then also, by her location in Africa, it qualifies to be a member of the western bloc organization (ECOWAS). This is to say; the trend of dual membership is good as it helps in integration and economic growth.

On the flip side of this analysis, the new trend emerging in dual or multiple memberships is countries joining organizations or entities outside their domain. For example, Ghana is a member of the African Union and ECOWAS by its location in the world and within the continent respectively; however, in 2005, she joined CEN-SAD which was outside her jurisdiction. Similarly, in 2006, Ghana again joined La Francophonie which is a French-speaking organization made up of former colonies of France even though Ghana is an English-speaking country and a former British colony.

The problems the researcher finds are the rationale of some countries in joining organizations outside their domain, the criteria or basis for which the organization accepted their application and the tension it creates. This section situates the literature under three broad angles: why international organizations accept countries into membership; why states file for membership in some international organizations and the possibility of norm tensions.

### **1.8.1 Why IOs Accept Countries into Membership**

(Hollander, 2007) situated the discourse using Turkey. Geographically, Turkey lies partly in Europe and partly in Asia with the former being small than the latter. With such a position, Turkey is not necessarily a European country hence on the general front does not qualify to be part of the European Union as stipulated by the Copenhagen criteria; however, the Dutch state secretary of European Affairs Nicolai in October 2005 stated emphatically that, despite Turkey's position geographically, she is very useful to European Union to fight terrorism and serve as a bridge between the European Union and the Middle East. This implies that Turkey's membership in the EU will require her to democratize which will in some time come to affect her neighbouring middle-east countries which will promote stability and ensure security in the region. This establishes the fact that the European Union will accept Turkey into its family even though she does not qualify to be a part of them because they need to achieve an end of which Turkey becomes a means to that end which is to have access to the Middle East to control and democratize it through Turkey (Hollander, 2007). From this, it can be argued that, for Commonwealth to also accept Gabon and Togo into membership, there should be an end it seeks to achieve which these two countries become a means to it.

Membership in Commonwealth until 2007 was solely based on the notion that, one must be a former colony of Britain. Cameroon was a mandated territory of Britain and France but not a

colony of Britain as the country was divided to be ruled by both Britain and France. In 1995, Cameroon officially became a member of the Commonwealth while also having close ties to France and La Francophonie. (Pondi, 1997) established that Cameroon was accepted into membership in the Commonwealth because she is a country that abounds in opportunities and resources in diverse ways that need to be tapped and utilized for the growth of many. She possesses resources like rubber, coffee, palm, timber, tea and petroleum that are widely needed by most Commonwealth countries. As a stronghold of central Africa, it is strategically wise to be added to Commonwealth to provide the enabling environment for Commonwealth member countries to have access to the sub-region for their growth and advancement. Like Harrison (2014), (Hollander, 2007) and Braimah and Adam (2017), Pondi establishes that Cameroon was accepted into Commonwealth as a means to an end.

In 1995, Mozambique, a former Portuguese colony that gained independence from Portugal in 1975 joined the Commonwealth. Many factors contributed to the decision by the Mozambique government to join the Commonwealth. First, it is believed that Mozambique is surrounded by Commonwealth countries hence to maintain peace, ensure their security and promote their development, it was prudent to form alliances and cooperation with these neighbouring countries of which the only means was to become a member of a common group of them all which is the Commonwealth (Anafu, 2015). Aside from their security aspect, Mozambique since 1976 when it gained independence had aligned with the Commonwealth in solving African plight and problems such as the fight against institutionalized racism in Rhodesia and apartheid in South Africa which made them "Commonwealth cousins ". In all of this, Mozambique did not have a direct link to Britain or other Commonwealth countries outside its geographical space hence did not qualify to be a member of the Commonwealth as it is against the Harare Memorandum of membership. In light of their tremendous help, Commonwealth made an exception for Mozambique to become a member of the Commonwealth (Mole, 1998).

The interpretation of this is that it could be the case that, Togo and Gabon did not meet the principles of membership into Commonwealth but may have been admitted in the exceptional case as precedence had been set before

Similarly, (Barimah & Adam, 2017) provided some insight into the subject matter that, on the part of the organization (La Francophonie), they established the fact that they accepted Ghana into membership because they needed Ghana since she has been able to champion the course of global peace and development which is a core value for La Francophonie. Further, the organization established the fact that Ghana is surrounded by francophone countries namely Togo, Benin, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso and Mali which are members of La Francophonie hence to enhance cooperation and integration among them, Ghana needed to join the French-dominated organization. To this effect, it could be the case that, Togo and Gabon were accepted into membership due to their continuous relations with commonwealth countries and the fact that they are surrounded by commonwealth countries like Ghana.

### **1.8.2 Why Nations Join Multiple Organizations**

(Barimah & Adam, 2017) provided some insight into why the notion of dual membership and the justification for it. In this paper, it became clear that one of Ghana's ideas for joining La Francophonie even though it is not a formal France colony or uses French as its official language was that, La Francophonie shares in the vision and mission of Ghana since they subscribe to human rights, socioeconomic and cultural development, democracy and rule of law. Because Ghana contributes to and champions global peace, and the fact that she is surrounded by members of the organisation, she was accepted into membership. These reasons by the researchers may be valid and probably could be extended to the research on Togo and Gabon joining Commonwealth; however, there are some lapses in it. Almost all organizations

and regional bodies that Ghana is a member of promote the concept and idea of good governance, rule of law, democracy and several other values La Francophonie stands for hence the question then is: why did Ghana join another organization of the same agenda? Further, joining La Francophonie for integration purposes because Ghana's neighbours are a part of it does not hold entirely. This is because all of Ghana's immediate neighbours are part of ECOWAS hence for integration purposes, it can be achieved at the ECOWAS level which does not warrant Ghana joining La Francophonie. It is therefore the researcher's view that this work by (Barimah & Adam, 2017) does not entirely convince why Ghana joined La Francophonie and further argues that, there are underpinning reasons for joining the organization which could be the case of Togo and Gabon joining Commonwealth which this research seeks to uncover.

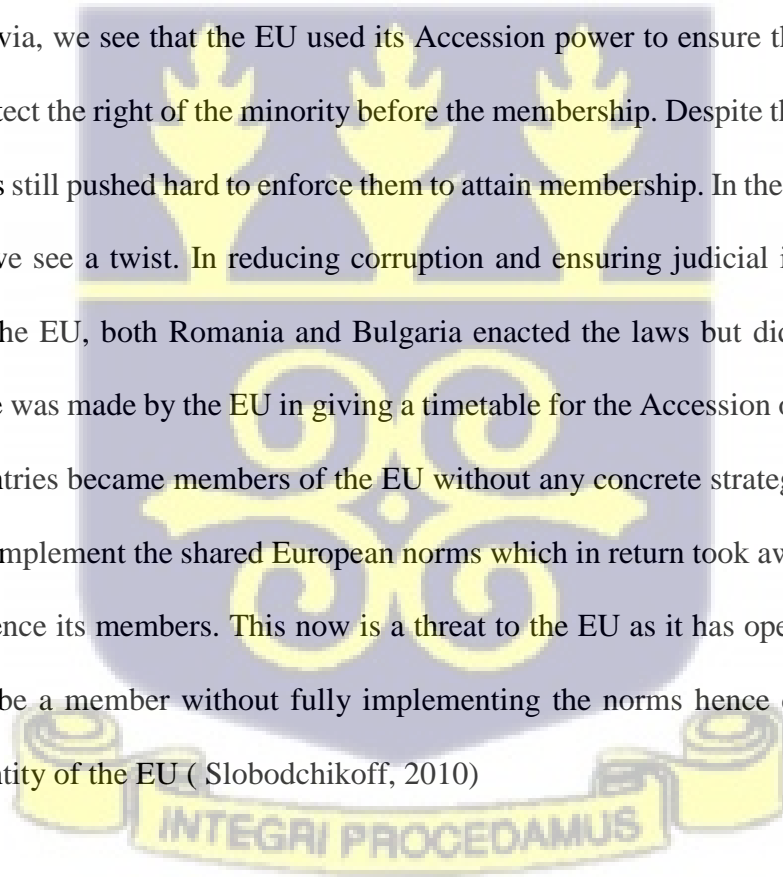
Togo and Gabon are the 55th and 56th members of the Commonwealth. Before the acceptance into membership, Rwanda was the last member to be accepted. Rwanda was accepted in 2009. In 1996, Rwanda applied together with Yemen and Palestine but due to Rwanda's genocide issue which had just ended and the crisis with Palestine and Yemen, Commonwealth decided to put all three under review. Yemen and Palestine did not proceed with their application but Rwanda kept knocking at Commonwealth's door for her membership until she was granted in 2009 (Banerji, 2010). The question that arises is why did Rwanda keep asking for 13 years to be accepted into Commonwealth? To answer this question, (Muhammad & Hutami, 2021) argue that, Rwanda joined Commonwealth because it was a foreign policy decision. By building an alliance with France, Rwanda was receiving aid and other assistance from France while France also had the avenue to business investment in Rwanda. This implies a mutual relationship and benefit between the two. Before Rwanda cut ties with France, the genocide crisis occurred between the Hutu and Tutsi groups in Rwanda. The Hutu had allegiance to France while the Tutsi had allegiance to Britain due to the protection that was provided to them during the war by their neighbouring British colonies: Uganda and Tanzania. Upon Tutsi

assuming office, the France ambassador to Rwanda was expelled and the Rwandan ambassador to France was recalled back home which officially cut the ties between France and Rwanda. Uganda provided a home for the Tutsi, hence they had some inclination toward Britain; hence after cutting ties with France, they built a stronger relationship with Britain (Muhammad & Hutami, 2021). Togo for example has relatives and descendants of her people in Ghana hence could it be the case that, she joined Commonwealth because the second home to her citizens is a part of it? The writer seeks to probe further to know whether such reasoning influenced Togo and by extension Gabon's decision to join Commonwealth

### **1.8.3 The Possibility of Norm Tension.**

On the flip side to the argument of Turkey's membership to the EU, Turkey is still deemed as an outsider to the EU due to the different values and norms held on to by the EU as against that of Turkey. Turkey not being a democratic society with a functioning market economy that provides stability and welfare to its people is seen as a threat to the EU if admitted into membership as it will open the floodgate for all countries within the European circus to be part of EU without upholding democracy and having a functioning market economy. EU expects Turkey to undergo a social, political and economic change to reflect the norms and values of the EU to protect its image and serve as a guide to all. Further, in the case of Turkey, EU members are worried due to its religion since the majority of its population are Muslims which will in turn as members alter the identity and nature of the EU with the Islamic culture which is in contention with the EU. With the adoption of Poland and Hungary into the EU, there have been tensions over rule of law due to gross disrespect of this principle hence EU is very conscious of whom to admit into the EU due to the limited power of the EU to impose sanctions after their accession over breach of the core values. Norms tensions are very disturbing as it weakens the organization. With the EU facing a similar challenge, this research seeks to find the fate of the Commonwealth in the issue at hand.

EU integration is very instrumental in ensuring peace and stability in Europe. Member states are expected to adopt the European norms according to the Copenhagen criteria which can be summed into 3 items: political stability; economic stability and acceptance of the European Community Acquis. It must be noted that these are to be met before membership and once accepted into membership, the EU can do little to ensure states fulfil these completely. In this Accession structure, stage 2 is the institutionalization of the norms which in the case of the EU is found in the Copenhagen criteria and the Madrid Treaty (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). The last stage is norm internalization which is basically about the acceptance of it by all which is a very difficult and slow pace movement. Some take a whole generation to do that. Considering Estonia and Latvia, we see that the EU used its Accession power to ensure that they adopted measures to protect the right of the minority before the membership. Despite the cost involved, these 2 countries still pushed hard to enforce them to attain membership. In the case of Bulgaria and Romania, we see a twist. In reducing corruption and ensuring judicial independence as established by the EU, both Romania and Bulgaria enacted the laws but did not implement them. A mistake was made by the EU in giving a timetable for the Accession of both countries hence both countries became members of the EU without any concrete strategy to ensure that they adopt and implement the shared European norms which in return took away the power of the EU to influence its members. This now is a threat to the EU as it has opened the gate for any country to be a member without fully implementing the norms hence divergent norms become the identity of the EU ( Slobodchikoff, 2010)



The European Union enlargement agenda is used as a means of promoting integration through peaceful means. It is used as a tool to transform and tame dictators in countries like Spain and other central and Eastern Europe into democracies and free markets which are values and norms of the European Union. To them, the enlargement is to promote stability in the Western

Balkans namely Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia; to ward off foreign influence like that of Russian and Chinese, and to reaffirm Turkey's position as a key European partner (CRS report, 2021); however, all these are to be done without alteration of the core values and principles of the organization enshrined in the Copenhagen criteria. One challenge the EU faced is over-democratic backsliding and wearing the rule of law in member states like Poland and Hungary, in addition to corruption and democratic deficits. One of the core values of the EU is to ensure regional peace and stability; however, the Western Balkans poses a security threat due to the continuous deterioration of Peace and stability in that part of the region. According to the global watchdog, in 2021, these Western Balkans are deemed partly free which was a downgrade from free in 2019. In the same Western Balkan region, corruption and organized crimes are the order of the day (European Commission). According to the 2020 EU communication on EU enlargement policy, it was established that the fight against corruption has diminished hence the records of countries are on the rise hence the impossibility of wandering corruption free in those regions (Csaky, 2021). In the Western Balkan region, disputes are on the rise with the most difficult one being that which exists between Kosovo and Serbia. Aside from these disputes, there are border disputes, ownership disputes, minority rights, and justice. It is against these backdrops that the EU in 2018 established that it will not be admitting members from this region due to fear of value and norm conflicts (European Commission)

(Barimah & Adam, 2017) although it was justifiable for Ghana to be accepted into membership of La Francophonie, there is a challenge. On the flip side, the tension created as a result of the membership of Ghana in La-Francophonie now is that Ghana has to respect the French culture at the same time the British culture to gain the necessary resources and help needed to champion the course of French education in Ghana without committing to respect and uphold the cultural and organizational norms of La Francophonie. This then means the gate has been

open for all to join the French organization without fully committing to their culture hence creating a new culture that will clash with the old culture.

In conclusion, from the above literature, it is established that membership in organizations outside the purview or terrain of a country is always considered by the organization largely and mainly to achieve an end using the applicant country as a means. Aside from the organization's mentality, the applicant country also has an end such as access to larger or new markets, growing trade, technological advancement, funds, etc. to achieve using the organization. Further, one threat new membership seeks to pose is norm tensions which the European Union and several others have had their fair share of it. The question then is, what are some of the likely norms and tensions new membership in the Commonwealth prone to create for the organization?

### **1.9 Methodology**

As per the objectives of this study, a qualitative study was employed. To better explain the linkages and rationale for the constant overlapping membership globally with much emphasis on Commonwealth concerning her new members, the qualitative method was the best. Qualitative research requires the collection of non-numeric data and analyzing them to better understand concepts, experiences and opinions on a subject matter. It provides scholars with an in-depth insight into a problem and helps generate new ideas for research (Pritha, 2020).

#### **1.9.1 Research Design**

The research design refers to the entire approach within which the research is conducted and integrates all its components coherently and logically to ensure an effective address of the research problem. It includes the method of data collection, analysis and interpretation. For this work, the suitable research design was a case study (Creswell J. W., Clark, Gutmann, &

Hanson, 2003). Case studies are comprehensive studies and analyses of a single person, group, event or community (McLeod, 2019). The case study approach fits well in the understanding of the commonwealth and her new members as it is a study of just one community with an emphasis on two sub-members in understanding overlapping membership and the likely norm tensions it can create.

### **1.9.2 Sampling Strategy**

This study employed a purposive sampling strategy. Purposive sampling is a conscious act of selecting informants who have in-depth ideas and knowledge on the subject at hand in the research under study (Creswell & Clark, 2011)

### **1.9.3 Sampling size**

It is expected that, in a qualitative study, a researcher employed a sizeable number of respondents to ascertain and correlate valid and reliable data for analysis and interpretation. For this study, respondents consisted of the country director of Ghana to the commonwealth, Commonwealth officers and academics at the University of Ghana.

### **1.9.4 Data Collection Technique**

Primary data for the study was collected through online and in-person interviews. The interview was used as a medium to ascertain answers to the research questions from these highly skilled and well-vexed resource persons. In addition to the primary data, secondary data was used as well. The secondary data was sourced from articles, journals, reports and books on a similar subject matter. This study used the desk review method.

### **1.9.5 Data Analysis**

In this study, thematic data analysis was used as the analyzing tool for the data. Thematic analysis is a method of analysis for qualitative data which usually applies to a set of texts to identify a common theme or pattern within the collected data to provide an enlightening

description of the phenomenon. After the interview, the researcher familiarized herself with the data and transcribed the recorded audio into the text to code and generate the themes needed for analysis. The researcher then reviewed the themes, identifying the key issues raised and based on the recurring themes, provided the analysis.

### **1.10 Ethical Issues**

1. Permission of the department to was sought for the interview to be carried out
2. Participants were informed before administering the interview and they signed the consent forms.
3. Confidentiality and anonymity of information provided were assured to participants who wanted to be kept secret.
4. All cited sources in the study were acknowledged

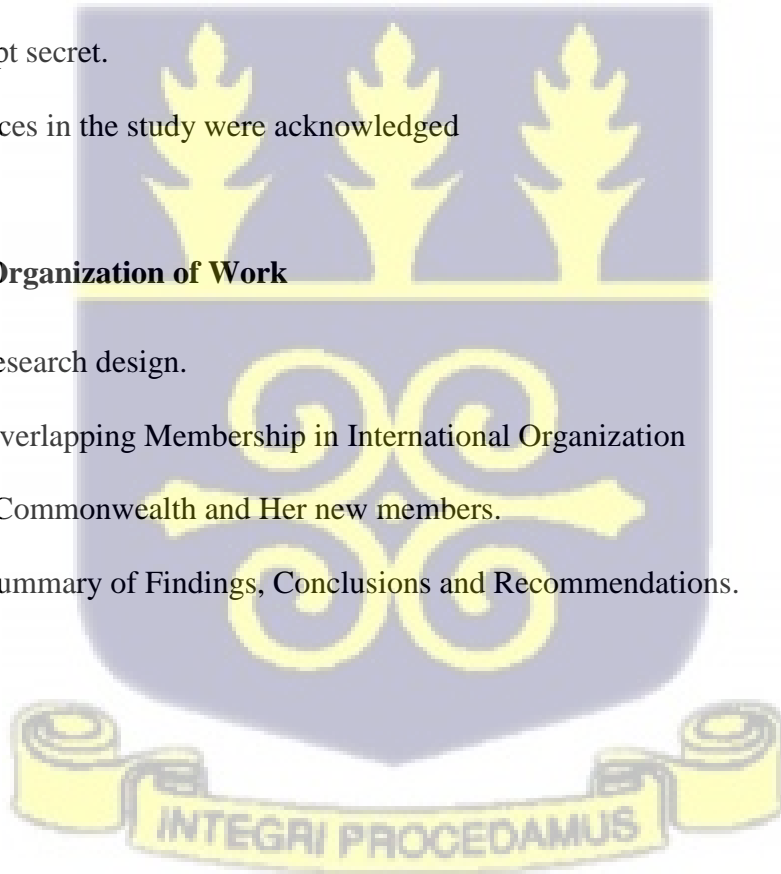
### **1.11 Organization of Work**

Chapter One: Research design.

Chapter Two: Overlapping Membership in International Organization

Chapter Three: Commonwealth and Her new members.

Chapter Four: Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations.



## CHAPTER TWO

### THE SPAGHETTI BOWL EFFECT AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS.

#### 2.1 Introduction

The growing nature of the international space as a global interdependent village has warranted the need for integration. Integration is very useful for global growth. Despite the usefulness of integration, multiple memberships of countries in different international organizations create challenges in all aspects, although it helps serve the interest of the countries. This chapter is an overview of multiple memberships: the meaning of multiple memberships, the manifestation of multiple memberships, and the prospects and challenges it poses to member states and international organizations.

#### 2.2 Definition of International Organizations and Spaghetti Bowl Effect.

An international organization is an institution or body that draws its membership from more than two countries that are bound by a formal agreement such as charters, treaties, and constitutive acts, among others. They are established for several purposes such as the collection of information and monitoring trends like in the case of the World Meteorological Organization; provision of aid and services as done by the World Health Organization; provision of bargaining forums like in the European Union and settling dispute like in the case of the World Trade Organization. International Organizations provide a political institution through which states can work together to achieve common objectives and foster cooperative behaviour.

Historically, overlapping membership has been termed the Spaghetti bowl phenomenon. This term was coined by Jagdish Bhagwati in 1995 to refer to multiple memberships in trade

organizations. Originally, Preferential Trade Agreements (PTA) complicated trade due to the increased number of tariffs and rules of origin. As a result, membership in multiple organizations was believed to have generated an escape route from tariffs by having duty-free access to markets with no tariff on imports with many trade partners which is a very appealing option to policymakers if states are in substitution to free trade. The Spaghetti bowl refers to a situation where a country belongs to more than one preferential trade agreement in both its dealing with other African countries and non-African countries. Overlapping memberships have to do with countries maintaining membership in two or more regional organizations either political or economic to enhance trade and economic liberalization (Chacha, 2014)

### **2.3 Motivation for Overlapping Membership**

To be able to understand the motivation for overlapping membership, one must look into and understand the motivation for states joining international organizations.

Economics is one of the driving forces of international membership and overlapping membership. According to the neo-functionalist, states join international organizations due to the projected economic gains which is evident in the number of economic regional organizations springing up. This implies that states join international organizations to seek means of growing their local economies. Considering the diverse economic levels of members of an international organization, the organization provides an avenue where different economic policies are learnt and adopted and growth policies are promoted for the economic gains of all. As developing countries cooperate and collaborate with developed countries, the former can devise a growth pattern to the levels of the latter; according to ( Kim & Schmitter, 2005) Ireland is a clear example of this which is evident in its economic growth after joining the European Union. This implies that countries will join as many international organizations as possible that promises economic growth, leading to multiple or overlapping memberships.

Another reason that drives states to join international organizations, eventually leading to overlapping membership is the idea of a common identity. According to constructivists, the idea of a common identity that has been built over time tends to influence countries to join international organizations. Alexander Wendt argued that drawing from the Cold War era, the alliance kept their common identity of fighting on one side leading to the formation and continued existence of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (Wendt, 1994). This has further been interpreted that, the prevention of some countries from joining NATO is about the idea of a common and shared identity. Against this backdrop of the shared and common identity, the joining of the Commonwealth by the francophone countries has become a headline in most international discussions since the commonwealth was established for formal colonies of Britain.

Similarly, it was surprising when Ghana also became a member of La Francophonie which is meant for French colonies. Haas also argues that states come together to form a supranational body due to their common or shared identity (Abbott & Snidal, 1998). Further, with the ongoing ideological battles, in order for states' ideology to continue, they join multiple organizations to influence their members to follow that ideology. This is mostly seen among the superpowers or advanced countries as they can wield more power in an international organization to influence the smaller countries to act by their will.

Further for peace and security issues, states join international organizations leading to multiple or overriding memberships. National security is one of the most essential concerns for every nation, hence the realists argue that states join international or regional organizations due to power relations. According to Mearsheimer, as a result of institutional commitments, states can protect themselves from external forces through the formation of security alliances which is evident in NATO (Mearsheimer, 1994). As states fear for their security and peace, they reach out to organizations that can guarantee their security. For fear of the Soviet Union's threat,

some states came together to form NATO as a security alliance envisioned to dissuade Soviet belligerence. For fear of their security, Ukraine and other small states around Russia decided to join NATO since it is a peace and security alliance. Similarly, members of NATO joined because of security reasons. The EU has multiple potential members eager to join, supporting the argument that security and peace are one of the most fundamental and common reasons why states are keen on joining a regional organization (Abbott & Snidal, 1998).

It has been further argued that multiple memberships in an international organization promote prestige and commitment to integration. As continents and regions seek to integrate themselves for their collective good, sub-regional groups are formed to help the integration process. For countries to boost their image as one that supports the integration of the continent, they join multiple organizations in disguise of facilitating the process. As a result of this prestige and name that comes with membership, states join without their full commitment (Abbott & Snidal, 1998).

Another driving force of international organization membership and by extension, overlapping membership is foreign policy objectives. Using Ghana as an example, one of her foreign policies is good neighbourliness which means she needs to extend her arms to her neighbours. To be able to better achieve that, she builds alliances and joins organizations with her neighbours. To reach out to her French neighbours and build relations with them, she joined La Francophonie. Similarly, to integrate better with the people in the Sahel–Saharan region, she joined the Community of Sahel–Saharan States (CEN-SAD). Similarly, she accepted membership into ECOWAS. Under her first president, she fought hard to have a united Africa where they could share ideas and resources and gave aid and grants to member countries to build their relationship. In their quest to promote peace among her neighbours, she has continually contributed troops to support peacekeeping missions. The same can be said for

many countries, their foreign policy objective drives them to join multiple organizations to fulfil them.

Moreover, states engage in overlapping or multiple memberships because it creates or increases their chances of manoeuvre. It has been argued by (Pratt, 2021) and (Puig, 2014) that, as states engage or join multiple organizations, it gives them more room to operate in all spheres of work. This further means, they are provided with better bargaining powers which helps them to succeed in pursuing their substantive interest needed to aid their growth. The realist also subscribes to this ideology and argue that multiple memberships allow powerful states to exert their influence across multiple organizations and pursue their interest ( Panke & Stapel, 2022) The smaller states joined multiple organizations to expand their policy scopes. More to this, when states are dissatisfied with their status in an international organization, they decide to join multiple organizations to obtain channels best suited for the achievement of their interest.

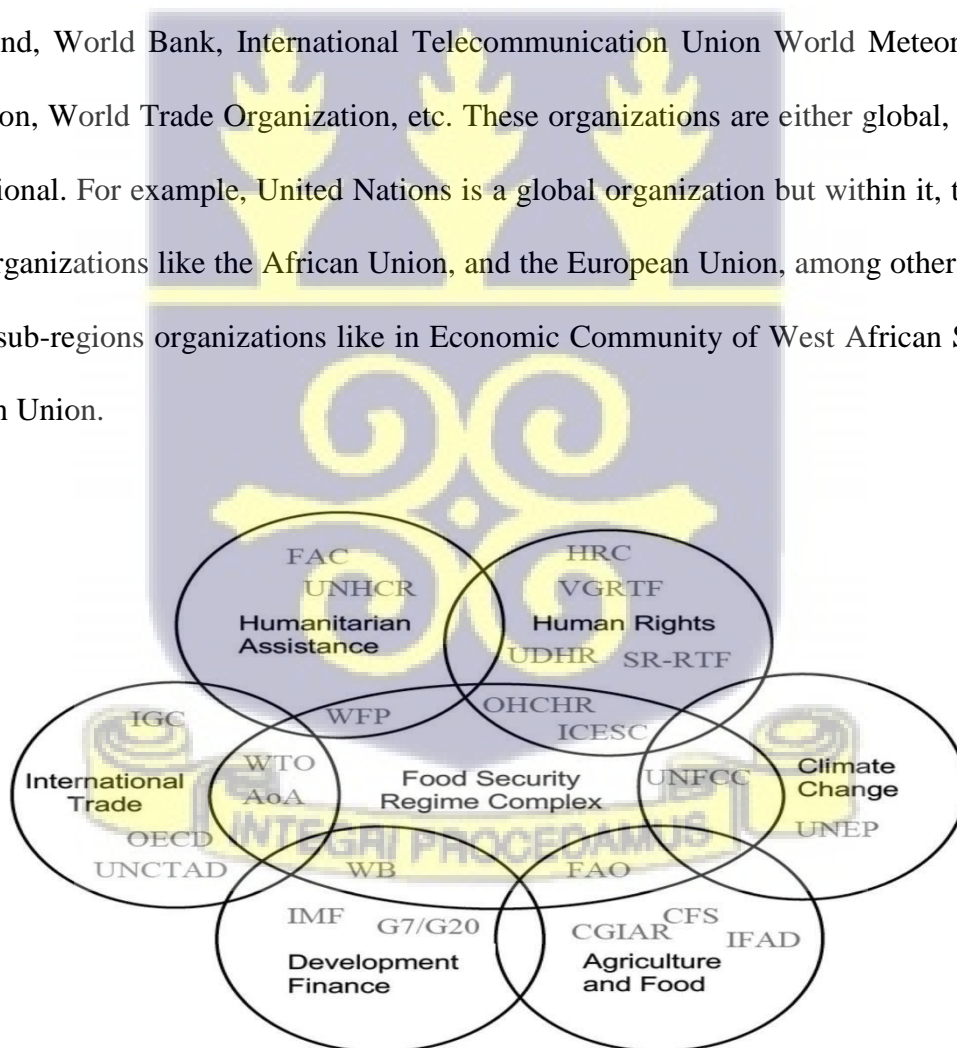
#### **2.4 Manifestation of Overlapping Membership**

In 1815 and 1815, the Congress of Vienna laid the foundation for some European states to come together as an entity. This has laid the foundation of what we have today as International Organizations. This Congress was born out of the French Revolution in 1789 by Napoleon Bonaparte and it changed the world order from then until March 1814 when Napoleon was defeated in Paris and was forced to abdicate to restore the balance of power. This Congress sought to find a regulating means for relations among countries and established the rules for bilateral and multilateral Diplomacy and the codification of customary diplomatic relations. The subsequent conference was held to assess the extent to which the measures adopted in 1815 yielded results but since they couldn't achieve all, it led to a cycle of follow-up conferences. In the 1860s, the cycling multilateral conferences were substituted by the Public

International Unions which had regular general assembly sessions with permanent secretariat and secretaries. In no time, these conferences and unions became known as International Organizations.

The membership of Intergovernmental organizations ranges from one region to the entire world region. Some of these organizations serve one particular purpose (like World Health Organization which is solely about health) or multiple purposes like the United Nations or North Atlantic Treaty organization. These organizations serve either economic, political, social or a blend of all these purposes. Examples of international organizations are United Nations, European Union, African Union, World Intellectual Property Organization, International Money Fund, World Bank, International Telecommunication Union World Meteorological Organization, World Trade Organization, etc. These organizations are either global, regional or sub-regional. For example, United Nations is a global organization but within it, there are regional organizations like the African Union, and the European Union, among others, which also have sub-regions organizations like in Economic Community of West African States in the African Union.

Figure 1:

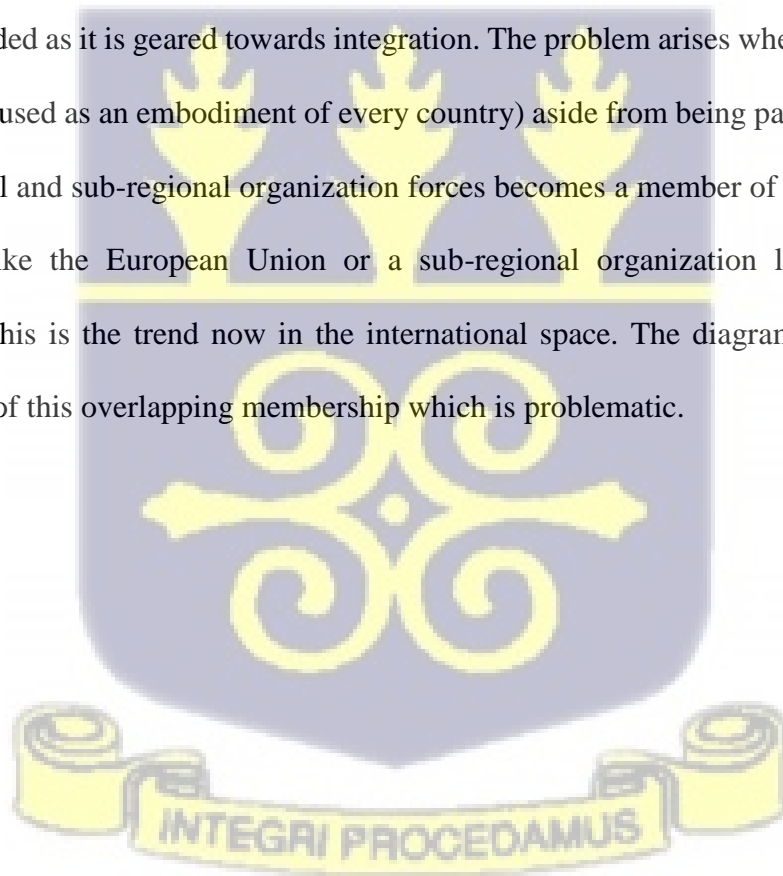


(Margulis, 2020)

The diagram above gives an overview of some international organizations and their purposes. For humanitarian purposes, we see that First Aid and Resilience for Cultural Heritage in Times of Crisis (FAC), World Food Programme (WFP) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have been established. Human Rights Council (HRC), Voluntary Guidelines to support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security; (VGRTF), Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food (SR-RTF) and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESC) have also been established for human rights purposes. World Trade Organization (WTO), Agreement on Agriculture (AoA), World Bank (WB), World Food Programme (WFP), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESC) and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) have also been established to ensure food security and regime complexity. Similarly, for climate change issues, we have United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to help out. For trade purposes, World Trade Organization (WTO), International Grains Council (IGC), Agreement on Agriculture (AoA), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) have been established. For agriculture and food, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), child-friendly school (CFS), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the and Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) have been established to regulate it. Lastly, we have World Bank (WB), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and G7/G20 to regulate it. From the same diagram, we see the that WFP, World Trade Organization (WTO), Agreement on Agriculture (AoA), World Bank (WB), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Office of

the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESC) and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) are established for more than one purpose while the others are single-purpose organizations

With this background laid out now, the issue of overlapping or multiple memberships appears. Ghana in the International space is a member of the United Nations and regionally, she is part of the African Union. By her location within Africa, she is also part of the Economic Community of West African States. This is an overlapping membership as all these organizations have different policies and structures that may conflict with each other but cannot be avoided as it is geared towards integration. The problem arises when Ghana (in this case, Ghana is used as an embodiment of every country) aside from being part of her original global, regional and sub-regional organization forces becomes a member of another regional organization like the European Union or a sub-regional organization like East Africa Community. This is the trend now in the international space. The diagrams below give a pictorial view of this overlapping membership which is problematic.



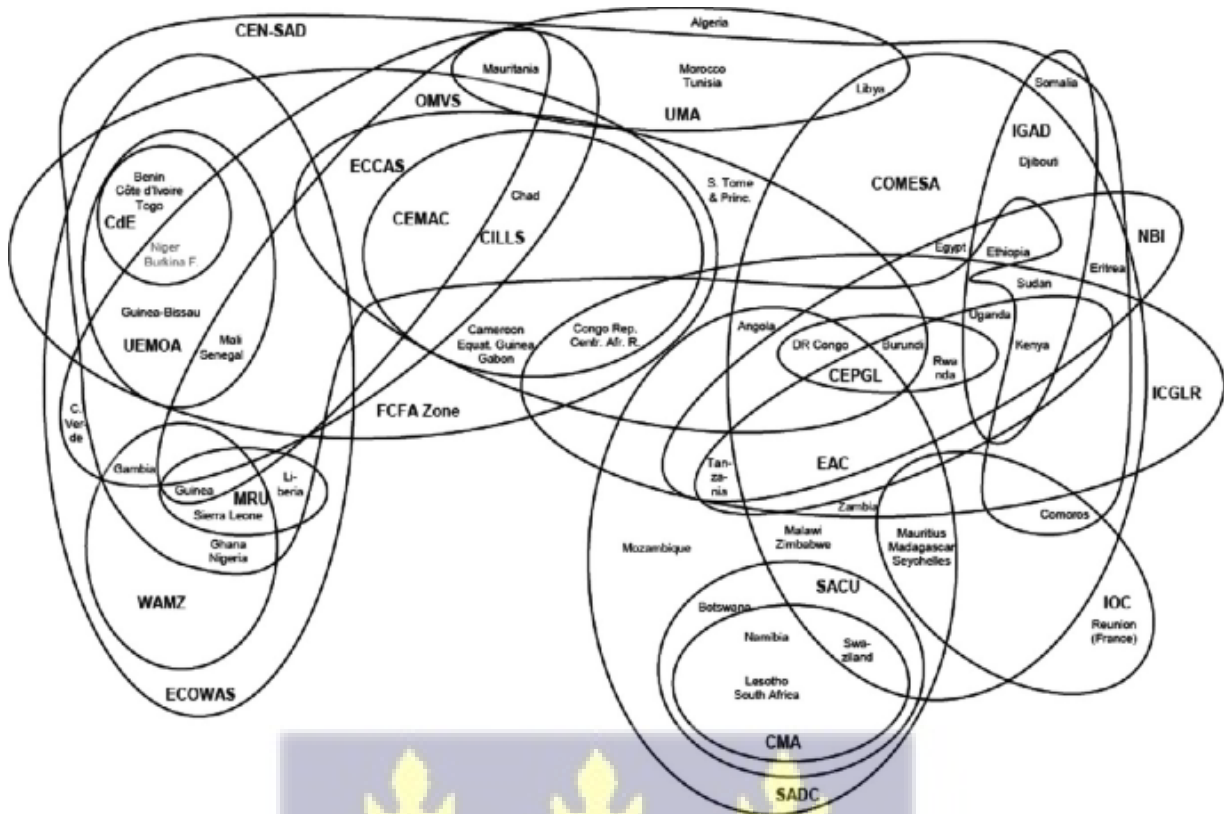


Figure 2: (Asche, 2021).

In Africa for example, there are 15 regional economic communities although only 8 of them are regionally recognized. These communities are sub-organizations established purposely for a particular region. From the diagram above, we see some members of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Southern African Customs Union (SACU) and East African Community (EAC) belong also to Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL). Similarly, International Olympic Committee (IOC) members also belong to Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Further, SADC members are split into COMESA, EAC, SACU, CEPGL IOC and Capital Markets Authority (CMA).

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on the other hand had its members split into the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), the West African

Monetary Zone (WAMZ), West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), The Mano River Union (MRU) and Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). The Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) members also split into ECOWAS, COMESA, SADC, IGAD, IOC, ECCAS, MRU, Union du Maghreb Arabe (UMA), UEMOA, and the Senegal River Basin Development Organization (OMVS). The challenge here is the fact that these organizations have different treaties and charters, norms and principles that distinguishes them from the other hence a country belonging to more than one tends to create some form of norm tensions for the organization.

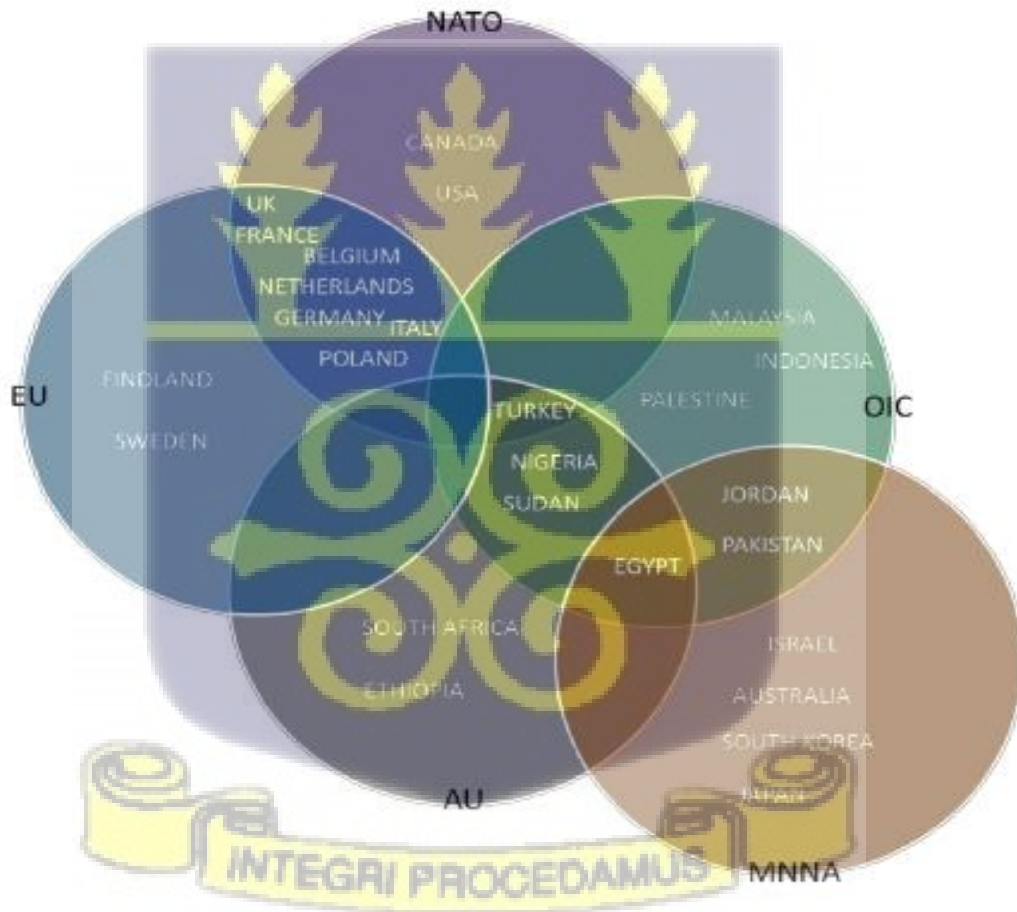


Figure 3: (Isa, 2012).

Moving away from the messy overlapping membership in Africa, we see the same happening in the international space. Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) like the United Kingdom (UK), France, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, Italy and Poland also belong to the European Union (EU). Similarly, members of the African Union (AU) like Turkey, Nigeria, Egypt and Sudan also belong to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) with Egypt belonging to Major Non-NATO Ally (MNNA). Aside from Egypt, MNNA also has Jordan and Pakistan belonging to OIC. OIC and AU's Turkey also belongs to NATO. This is not the entirety of overlapping membership as almost all countries of the world find themselves in such situations. If all organizations had the same agenda, motive, structure, charter and complete make-up, then this wouldn't have been problematic but since it is not so, then it creates challenges such as norm tensions which this research seeks to uncover.

### **2.5 Impact of Overlapping Membership**

Overlapping membership as earlier indicated occurs as a result of the springing of multiple international or regional organizations within a continent in the global space. The rationale of states for joining multiple organizations is that most organizations have different policies and mandates hence for states to benefit or solve their challenges in such issues, they join these organizations (Nolte, 2018). There are two sides to the argument about the impact of overlapping membership: one school mostly subscribed to by authors like Malamud, Gardini, Gomez-Mera and several others believes that overlapping membership results negatively like creating friction and division among members in the organization (Nolte, 2018). Another school held on to by authors like Sanahuja, Riggiozzi, Tussie, and Nolte argues for the positivity of overlapping membership in that it deepens regional cooperation and by spillover effect, global cooperation (Nolte, 2018). This section of the work throws more light on the impact from both sides.

### 2.5.1 Positive Impact

It is argued that overlapping international organizations lead to collective development. As earlier indicated, states joined organizations because each organization is established with a particular mandate to deliver. In light of that, (Kellow, 2012) argues that overlapping membership creates redundancy which ensures that, any issue that may be neglected or overlooked by one organization will be addressed by another organization. This means that, if Country A has security challenges but belongs to Organizations 1, 2, 3, and 4, the guarantee of one of the four organizations providing the necessary security threat solution is much higher than it is if she belongs to only one organization. This means that, with overlapping membership, there is a guarantee of development and more opportunities for countries which is not the case in a single organization arena (Nolte, 2018). This claim is highly debatable as one cannot tell when an issue has been neglected or has only been left for a strategic reason. It is believed that multiple or overlapping memberships improve upon the economies of scale of member countries. Economically, countries that have access to larger markets can produce more goods at a very lesser price which means more profits or gains (Niekerk, 2005). In light of that, when a country finds itself being a part of more than one regional organization, it implies that that country has access to different markets which then makes it very large for exportation and more benefits due to the economies of scale. This in return creates a lot of employment as more workers are needed to produce enough for all the regional organizations. This larger market access creates firm competition for member states which brings about quality goods and services for all. This further brings about investment opportunities to member states which helps boost their economy and help in their development (Mariadoss & Pomirleanu, 2014) This further means that, overlapping membership promotes the win-win argument where a state will lose at one end for another state and gain at another end at the expense of others too.

Further, political integration is perceived to boost the image of the continent or members of the region. If all African regional bodies for example tend to pursue democracy, rule of law, human right promotion, and all other democratic features, it projects the African continent as one that is democratic. If Africa has just one or two regional organizations, it does not speak much about the continent on their fight for democratic governance but if more regional groups spring up with more focus on these democratic features and most countries are eager to join them to ensure the democracy, then it makes Africa prominent in the light of democracy. This image then helps attract more foreign investment as each investor looks out for a peaceful area to invest to have value for their money. In SADC for example, about 80% of their cost and revenue flows are from donors hence it attracts more members outside the south African region of the continent.

### **2.5.2 Negative Impact**

Africa's integration has long been talked about from the era of pan-Africanism to independence to post-independence. To ensure effective integration of the region, regional blocs were created of which eight are officially recognized by the African Union despite the fourteen in total. This was a good idea; however, the overlapping or spaghetti bowl phenomenon of African integration has rather made integration more complex and confusing due to the high political commitments and institutional requirements. Of the 55 African countries, 1 belongs to no sub-regional organization; 6 belongs to only one sub-regional organization; 22 of them belong to 2 sub-regional organizations; another 22 belong to three sub-regional organizations, and 4 belong to 4 sub-regional organizations (Muhabie , 2015). Each of the RECs has its mandate and commitment principle different from each other due to the lack of harmonization that exists in the continent. These political commitments come with resource draining as each body requires the same attention (Muhabie , 2015). It has been argued by some scholars that, with

the rate of overlapping membership draining the resources of countries in Africa, the continent is prone to poverty as some countries will not be able to keep up the pace any longer. It is therefore right to argue that, overlapping membership results in resource-draining which when care is not taken, will lead to the poverty of some countries that engage in multiple organizations.

Further, each of these sub-regional organizations differs in composition, market size, capital and population which makes them conflictual with one another. One of the challenges of the African Continental Free Trade Area is policy harmonization. (Ojo, 1990) asserts that, due to the complex nature of each REC, member states who belong to multiple organizations find it problematic to implement the protocols. This argument is further backed by (Biswaro, 2012) that, belonging to multiple organizations tends to conflict and competition since these organizations do not complement each other. This then makes it even more difficult to harmonize and coordinate it. Exemplifying this: if Ghana belongs to ECCAS, ECOWAS, SADC and COMESA, bearing in mind that each organization ensures that, members trade among themselves to promote growth where preferential treatment is to be given to member states but not to outsiders. It means, by SADC protocol, Ghana is to give South Africa preferential treatment over Nigeria; but per the ECOWAS protocol, Ghana is to give preferential treatment and vice-versa of what has been stated. Here, it makes it difficult for Ghana to operate in both organizations without breaking protocols. Breaking protocols comes with sanctions hence Ghana would have to be paying for sanctions when all it did was obey protocols that conflict with each other. This is regarded as breaking, burdening and complicating the rules of origin.

Another challenge posed by overlapping or multiple memberships is divided loyalties and the lack of commitment to the obligations set by the regional trade agreements thereby hampering the implementation of policy (Jakobeit, Hartzenberg, & Charalambides, 2005). In a study

conducted by Feng and Genna in 2003, commitment to the regional organizations demands the forging of domestic institutions and state policies to meet the mandate of the organization to bring about full gains of membership. This is easy to achieve or accomplish if all organizations worked in harmony or if a state belonged to only one organization. In the midst, overlapping membership countries tend to put bits and pieces together in the different organizations without their full commitment which in turn leads to organizations not being able to reach their targets as members split their commitment, resources and personnel for all organizations they belong to.

Drawing from the spillover argument, overlapping membership tends to lead countries to coerce their party agreement. In 2016, South Africa agreed with European Union to boost their trade relations; because South Africa has trade relations with Lesotho and Zimbabwe and it is a larger and bigger economy, it coerced these 2 smaller countries into opening up to Europe rendering them disposed to a hot-blooded economy of Europe which will eventually corrupt their intraregional relations. The effect of their overlapping membership out of coercion is the killing of the economy of these small economies and the condemnation of their sovereignty to be dictated to by another economy (Fanta, 2021)

## **2.6 How Overlapping Membership Creates Norm Tension**

Norms of international organizations are the principles that articulate the shared standards of appropriate behaviour of all members. These principles may be included in their charter, constitution or constitutive act. They include but are not limited to: the promotion of democracy; good governance; gender equality; debt relief; sustainable development, and deregulation. human security, and the responsibility to protect (R2P (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). It is believed that, as states expand their international relations and join multiple organizations, the transfer of the norms and principles of the various organizations tends to

corrupt the other organizations. Also, as states battle with different norms, it creates some tension. This section throws light on the subject of overlapping membership creating norm tension as one of the negative side effects of the idea of overlapping or multiple memberships or what is known as a spaghetti bowl.

Due to the varying principles international organizations have, it has been argued that multiple or overlapping memberships lead to norm tension since there will be infiltration of norms from one organization to another. Considering Israel's fight for membership in the African Union, some authors have argued that, Israel being a member of the AU will lead to norm tension because Africa stands collectively for the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). On the flip side, Israel aligns with the west making it pro-west which is not according to the standards of the African bloc hence admitting Israel into full membership has the potential of infiltrating the African position on alignment.

In the commonwealth currently, there is a norm tension regarding what the organization stands for. The organization was created for English-speaking countries but now has Portuguese and French-speaking countries hence the infiltration of French and Portugal norms such as language which then raises the question as to whether the official language of the commonwealth is changing. Among the French-speaking countries, democracy and democratic principles are not the norms hence acceptance into membership of an organization that accepts and practice democracy and all its principles questions the norm trend arising among commonwealth members. Respect for human rights has been grossly disrespected by the non-commonwealth original members from Rwanda downwards hence now, the gateway for disrespecting human rights has been open; conflicting with the principles and norms of the organization.

## 2.7 Conclusion

International organizations are bodies made of a set of norms and rules meant to govern the actions and inactions of states in the international arena. Examples of international organizations are United Nations, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, European Union, African Union, and several others. They are established by treaties and charters as well as other legal personalities. International organizations are bound by norms such as democratic principles, rule of law, human rights, and several others that serve as their identity. For the last decade or two, overlapping membership has become the norm whereby states join multiple organizations which either serve the same purposes or do not. The rationale for joining multiple memberships has been discussed as peace and security reasons, common identity reasons, creating bargaining powers, prestige, foreign policy, and economies. There are two sides to the argument of whether multiple membership or overlapping membership should be embraced and adopted. The positivist school of thought thinks it increases the economies of scale of countries, leads to collective development and boosts member countries' image on subject matters. The negativist school of thought on the other hand also argues that multiple memberships challenge the integration process, it also brings about conflict between organizations, lead to divided loyalties and lack of commitment and it also leads to the coercion of smaller countries by bigger countries into third-party agreements. The last challenge which this paper seeks to delve into is the challenge of norm tensions in international organizations due to the varying norms each organization has hence members joining multiple of these organizations will infiltrate one's norm and cause tensions within the organization.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE COMMONWEALTH AND HER NEW MEMBERS.

#### 3.1 Introduction

The expanding nature of the international space has warranted the springing up of several international organizations. States' quest to satisfy their national interest and pursue their foreign policy has warranted the need to join several organizations. This section analyzes the five years journey of Gabon and the eight years journey of Togo into Commonwealth Membership using the concept of Lock-in-effect. The analysis also includes the membership criteria, commonwealth acceptance, the possibility of norm tensions arising and the future of the commonwealth following this new membership.

#### 3.2 Togo and Gabon's Rationale for Commonwealth Membership

The growing nature of the international space as a global interdependent village has warranted the need for integration. Integration is very useful for global growth. Despite the usefulness of integration, states are believed to join multiple organizations for several reasons such as to satisfy their foreign policy, enhance economic values, increase their economies of scale, and gain access to larger markets, among others ( Ozkan & Cetin, 2016) This section of the work deals with the rationale or reason for which the two countries: Togo and Gabon filed for membership in the Commonwealth.

##### 3.2.1 Togo's Position

The key question that arose when it became public knowledge that Togo was filing for Commonwealth membership was: why that move? This question stemmed from the fact that the Commonwealth is an anglophone organization meant for former colonies of Great Britain,

hence why would a francophone and former colony of France file for membership to such an organization? The only logical justification was the intended benefit Togo will gain as a member. In an interview conducted by the African news delegation at the 2022 Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Kigali, Rwanda, it was clear from the statement of the foreign minister: Robert Dussey, that, Togo's rationale for membership was due to the intended developmental aid that will yield development; access to larger economies and markets which by extension leads to economies of scale; and access to the anglophone culture and language (Kana, 2022). Expanding further, it is implied that, because of their membership, some of the Commonwealth funds for technical cooperation will be made available for their citizens to help make living better and improve their development trajectory. With France as the colonial master and ally, why then seek an alliance with Britain which is implicitly an enemy of France?

According to Mohamed Madi Djabakate, Togo's relationship with France and the francophone fraternity over the years has not yielded the intended growth level: *"France is to be blamed for the economic woes of Togo and the French culture and language does not support their development"* (Kana, 2022). In a work by (Fatchina, 2022), it has been established that France, despite giving independence to Togo and all its former colonies still rules them indirectly where trade and all commerce are done using their currency. In comparison to Britain, it has given the mandate to all its members such as Ghana, and Nigeria, among others to use their currencies to run their government. From this analogy, it becomes clear that Togo seeks freedom for its economic growth from the control of France.

Togo's foreign minister also clearly indicated that, in the African continent, it is very evident that, the most promising and fast-advancing countries are anglophone countries of which the majority are commonwealth members. Hence for Togo to secure her aspiration of economic growth, it must become a part of the commonwealth since it has been established that "the

Commonwealth uses its Technical Cooperation Fund (CFTC) and the Association of Commonwealth Countries, to enhance the economic growth of its members” (Aurel, 2017). Linguistically, Togo has been trying to inculcate English as its official language just like Rwanda did, hence, to be able to achieve that, they need anglophone help which is guaranteed under the Commonwealth membership.

### 3.2.2 Gabon’s Position

Gabon just like Togo is also a French colony that sought membership in the Commonwealth, her rationale for joining the Commonwealth is not so much different from that of Togo. One of the driving forces for Gabon’s membership in the Commonwealth is leadership ambition. The current president of Gabon, Ali Bongo even before becoming president took a stance on the need for Gabon to be a member of an anglophone organization to ensure modernization. As an African country, the best way to achieve that was to become a member of the Commonwealth. His logic is that, outside the French-speaking zone, his citizens are handicapped as they do not speak English which is the most dominant language. This explains the logic of his visit to Kigali to learn how Rwanda has been able to “marry” English and French in the same society, and his constant sending of teachers to Ghana to learn the language. To better achieve this objective after he failed in 2014, he filed for membership in the Commonwealth to aid her.

Aside from his ambitions, the economic diversification of Gabon was a driving force. In the years of 1970s and 1980s, the oil revenue of Gabon made it one of the riches but has over the years lost that status hence the need for economic diversification to ensure sustainable development. Just like Togo, the francophone fraternity has not helped them to achieve that hence the need to resort to other measures such as seeking the help of the Anglophone fraternity. This move is to help them adopt the development models of the anglophones. For

this economic diversification to work, they need the tertiary sector to play a key role which can be done if they are bilingual.

One assertion of the lock-in effect is that states join international organizations and give their power to the agent to benefit from the division of labor as well as the pool of activities, risks and assets. Togo and Gabon have indicated on grounds of development, economic gain, linguistics, and international reputation that they have joined the Commonwealth not because of what the organization stands for or believe in but because of how valuable the organization will be to them in fulfilling their mandates and plans of growth. This justifies the essence of the lock-in effect theory in this study.

### **3.3 Commonwealth's Criteria for Gabon and Togo's Membership**

In as much as the two countries sought to secure their interest in the principal, the principal had a procedure by which the two countries could become agents. As earlier indicated in Chapter 1, (Mole, 1998) argued that, in the case of Mozambique joining the commonwealth, it was just an exception that was made by the Commonwealth due to the help given by Mozambique in the Commonwealth's quest to fight for what they believe in and similarly, Hollander(2007) argued that, the EU will only accept Turkey even though they don't meet the criteria for membership because they want to use Turkey as a means of democratizing the middle east and (Barimah & Adam, 2017) argued that La Francophonie accepted Ghana into membership because she is surrounded by La Francophonie members; however, from all the respondents, this is not the case because every membership in an international organization is strictly by the principles and values held on to which is stipulated in their charter or treaty. Considering that, after a country has realized how much they need commonwealth membership, there is a procedure that must be followed.

As agreed at the 2007 Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Uganda, any country that seeks membership must be willing to accept and comply with the 16 Commonwealth values, norms and principles stipulated in the “1971 Declaration of Commonwealth Principles” (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1971). These values include respect for democracy and democratic principles; respect for rule of law and judicial independence; ensuring free and fair elections; good governance; protection of human rights and equal opportunity for all. After these and many other codes of conduct have been met, the process of joining the commonwealth begins.

Democracy is required as both a style of governing where the views of the populace are taken into consideration in governance and as a style of decision-making where all people come together to make a single decision mostly by vote. Embedded in the democratic value of the Commonwealth are three key principles namely human rights, civil society and pluralism. Democracy requires citizen participation in decision-making in free and fair elections, and the ability to oppose the majority or leadership freely, and it gives room for freedom of speech on matters of governance that ensure accountability and honest government (Srinivasan, 1998). There are three main styles of decision-making that are used in democratic systems of any kind: majority vote; consensus; and proportional outcomes. The commonwealth ensures democracy through electoral support. The mandate of the secretariat is to help member countries strengthen their democratic processes and enable citizen participation and representation during elections through a full electoral cycle approach (Srinivasan, 1998). During elections, the secretariat deploys an independent observer group to give an objective assessment of the country’s democracy and offer possible and workable recommendations to be followed. The election observation approach is legally ratified in the “Revised Guidelines for the Conduct of Election Observation in Member Countries”, which was adopted at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in London in 2018 based on the UN’s

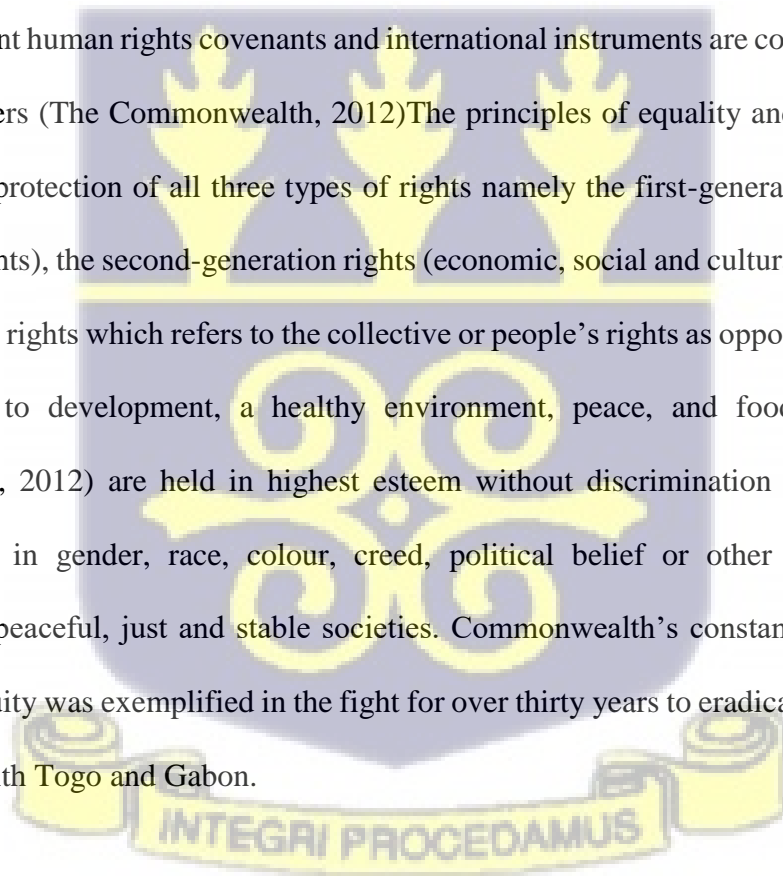
Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation (DoP) adopted in 2005 (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2018).

Further, under the auspices of the Commonwealth Electoral Network, member countries share their experiences and lessons from the election observance with one another. They deal with issues of voter education and electoral participation; independence of election management bodies; voter registration; managing the influence of incumbency; election cybersecurity and political finance. Also, under the Commonwealth Election Professionals (CEP) Initiative, election training and assistance are provided for member countries based on the election observer team's recommendation. This initiative was launched in 2013. The technical assistance provided is based on issues of voter education and youth engagement; electoral cybersecurity throughout the electoral cycle; electoral and constitutional reform; boundary delimitation; women's political participation; media training for election reporting, among others. The overall essence of democratic principles is to ensure stability and development (The Commonwealth, 2012).

In the case of Togo and Gabon, despite the authoritarian leadership engaged in, both have shown commitment to democracy. In Togo, Faure was initially installed as President by the military following his father's death; but in 2020, he secured his seat with 71 percent of the vote during the election. During the election, some officials from African Union, as well as ECOWAS, were granted entry for observation but not civil society observers. On the subject of fair representation, members of the national assembly were elected through proportional representation which the ECOWAS and African Union deemed as an election held in a calm environment. Further, in Togo, there is a multiparty political system where there is room for new parties to spring up and candidates are allowed to run as independents; however, the Gnassingbe family party controls the presidency hence there is not much that can be done.

On the part of Gabon, there exist multiparty elections but the President maintains control through patronage and repression. The president as well as members of the national assembly are elected through popular votes. Although there is an election, it is not free and fair because the electoral commission and constitutional court are both headed by longtime Bongo family allies hence there is no independence for members or citizens leaving post-election violence by protestors over the election crisis. Further, the opposition is not involved in the governance affairs as even the parties are fragmented due to the government's restriction on gathering.

Secondly, the human rights principle requires that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other relevant human rights covenants and international instruments are constantly adhered to by all members (The Commonwealth, 2012) The principles of equality and respect for the promotion and protection of all three types of rights namely the first-generation rights (civil and political rights), the second-generation rights (economic, social and cultural rights) and the third-generation rights which refers to the collective or people's rights as opposed to individual rights - rights to development, a healthy environment, peace, and food security (The Commonwealth, 2012) are held in highest esteem without discrimination on any grounds whether rooted in gender, race, colour, creed, political belief or other grounds as the foundations of peaceful, just and stable societies. Commonwealth's constant help to ensure equality and equity was exemplified in the fight for over thirty years to eradicate apartheid and will continue with Togo and Gabon.



In Togo, the human rights situation in the last three years has not been the best due to mass killings, extrajudicial executions, bombings, and rapes, among others which the government has turned a deaf ear to it despite all the appeals and condemnation from the International Human rights community. Further, in Togo over the same period prisoners were found dead in

their cells, arresting of media personnel, killing of opponents, among others. In the current dispensation, however, there has been some improvement even though violations still occur discretely.

In Gabon, the human rights issues are not so different from that of Togo. Human rights reports show the unlawful killing of people by the government, torture of people, harsh prison conditions, judicial manipulation, interference with privacy, detaining of political officers, restriction on freedom of expression, media suppression, the inability of citizens to change the government through a free and fair election, child labour, and restriction of freedom of movement, among others. In as much that this goes on, the government has taken some steps to help identify, investigate and prosecute all persons found guilty of these acts.

The third value is International Peace and Security. The Commonwealth is committed to ensuring all members live peaceably with one another. Following the cold war and the two world wars, all international organizations have taken a keen interest to preserve the long-standing peace that has existed using the principle of agreeing to disagree. Due to the varied viewpoint of member countries, conflict and crisis are expected but members are to ensure they can reach a consensus and tolerate each other's view on subject matters. Here, open dialogue and mutual respect is the key. As a result of this principle, any act that tempers peace and security is condemned. It is against this backdrop that South Africa's membership was not renewed during the apartheid era and the constant help to settle the issue. Similarly, in the Suez crisis, Commonwealth ensured peace was restored after they were slapped in the face by Egypt following their commitment to ensuring world peace (The Commonwealth, 1998). Through the efforts of good offices and special envoys, the commonwealth has been able to maintain peace in and out of the commonwealth including the 1980 Zimbabwe independence aftermath crisis; the 1986 fight against apartheid in South Africa; the 1991-1994 multiparty democracy

transition in Malawi, Seychelles, Mozambique and Zambia; the 1994 Bangladesh violent clash and national strikes; the 1991 public unrest between the Guadalcanal and Malaita islanders in Honiara; among others (Amazon.com). Togo and Gabon, despite the unstable governance, have managed to maintain peace within the country and hence qualify to be a member of the Commonwealth.

Togo contributes to regional peace, security, and stability through strengthened security institutions, professional security forces, empowered civil society organizations, and resilient local communities. It is against this backdrop that there is the École du Service de Santé des Armées de Lomé that develops and provides needs-based training courses which are to improve the operational capacity of the ECOWAS Standby Force. Further, Togo provides military and police service to seven UN peacekeeping missions around the world. This shows their commitment to helping maintain peace and order in the world. Also, the Republic of Togo and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to collaborate on establishing the ‘African Centre for Coordination and Research in Cybersecurity which will promote cybersecurity and fight cybercrime.

Gabon on the other hand is deemed as the light of stability for her neighbours. Gabon has helped ensure peace and security by convening and organizing constant peace conferences as well as meetings which include behind the scene meetings. Further, Gabon has also staged mediations which were seen in the resolution of the longstanding conflict in the Central Africa Republic between the protagonists. Further, Gabon commanded the African standby force for the Central African Republic crisis resolution and aftermath (Messene, 2017)

The fourth principle or value is tolerance, respect and understanding. Commonwealth ensures a constant need to “*promote tolerance, respect, understanding, moderation and religious freedom which are essential to the development of free and democratic societies*” (The Commonwealth, 2012). They believe that for the principle of peace and prosperity to be achieved, respect for the dignity of all human beings is critical (The Commonwealth, 1998). To the commonwealth, all members and people are unique and diverse in their way which must be always respected. Togo and Gabon’s laws ensure that all persons are given equal rights although not fully done but their commitment to ensuring this gives them the platform to be a member of the organization.

Gabon has laws that protect all persons within the country. On the part of refugees, the government works with UNHCR to protect, provide and assist refugees or asylum seekers. The refugees and asylum seekers are given equal access to public services although there are some difficulties in receiving this assistance. Irrespective of racial differences, all persons are granted the same civil right as other citizens. The indigenous ethnic groups are granted the same civil rights as all citizens but the challenge is that they experience societal discrimination. Further, the law prohibits any discrimination against people with either mental, physical, accidental or congenital disabilities and they are given equal access to public services such as healthcare, and education, among others. The challenge with the right of persons with disability is limited enforcement of the rights in some cases. More so, persons with HIV and AIDS face stigma in society but the Ministry of foreign affairs works closely with NGOs to mitigate this.

Togo on the other hand also has laws that protect all persons within the country. Just like Gabon, they provide protection and basic needs for refugees and asylum seekers with the help of UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies. Some laws protect women and children from abuses such as rape, and domestic violence, among others even though women still face some

discrimination against men in areas of education, inheritance, and pension benefits, among others. Further, some laws protect all persons with disabilities be it mental, physical, intellectual, or sensory, among others. The challenge with this principle is that the government has not effectively enforced these measures. There are also laws in Togo that forbid any act of violence or discrimination against persons with HIV and AIDS. In as much as there are laws that protect all persons, people who identify themselves as homosexuals are not given the same protection but rather, they are sentenced to up to three years of imprisonment if found which shows that the principle of understanding has not been fully implemented.

The fifth principle is freedom of expression. To this end, member countries are expected to ensure peaceful and open dialogue leading to a free flow of information which is guaranteed by free media or press that enhances democratic principles. Togo's constitution provides room for freedom of expression which covers the press. Although the constitution guarantees freedom of expression, the government restricts these rights and as such, some journalists have had to face penalties for their utterances. Togo government also restricts online freedom where people are not free to tell their minds electronically. Gabon on the other hand has also established laws that guarantee freedom of expression which applies to members of the press as well. The difference between Togo and Gabon is that the government of Gabon, unlike Togo, respects this right. Gabon from one angle uses libel and slander laws to restrict the media from criticizing them. For online freedom, the Gabon government does not restrict internet content nor do they monitor private online communication.

The sixth principle is the separation of powers. In as much as the democratic principle ensures fair and equal representation, the work of each of the arms of government is expected to be separated. Considering this, the executive arm has a well-defined role in the implementation of all policies established by the executive and the judiciary to ensure the utmost respect and

interpretation of the law. This principle leads to the seventh principle. The way to make sure that a government does not become tyrannical is to insist on the 'separation of powers between the body making the laws (the governing party) and the judiciary who interprets and enforces them (The Commonwealth, 2012).

The seventh principle is rule of law. The rule of law stipulates that a ruler must not govern arbitrarily but according to legally agreed on procedures and standards of governance. Togo has been assessed by the world justice project on eight grounds in rule of law namely no corruption government, restriction of government powers, open and transparent government, fundamental human rights, regulatory enforcement, and both civil and criminal justice. In the assessment, Togo ranked 103 in 2021 but did better by moving up to 101 in 2022 due to their efforts to prosecute corrupt officers and room for some transparency but not to the fullest. In Togo, the constitution stipulates judicial independence but in reality, the courts are heavily influenced by the executive office. As a result, executive influence and judicial corruption tend to limit the constitutional right to a free and fair trial (Freedom House, 2022).

On the other hand, the laws of Gabon stipulate that officers found to have engaged in corruption were to face judgment although these laws are not effective. A clear example was the arrest of a former minister of transport and member of parliament in 2019 to face charges on counts of corruption. In Gabon, theoretically, all arms of government do their mandates but the reality is that the parliament and judiciary are weak and controlled by the strong executive president (Freedom House, 2022).

The eighth principle is the principle of good governance. The Commonwealth is committed to ensuring and promoting good governance through the respect for rule of law, transparency and accountability of government actions and to rooting out at both the national and international levels, all forms of systemic and systematic corruption (The Commonwealth, 2012). It is

evident from the reports of Togo and Gabon on the measures ensuring rule of law, the transparent and accountable governance, among others that efforts are being made to ensure good governance which is an uphold of the eighth principle.

The ninth principle is the principle of sustainable development. To the Commonwealth, one of the means of eradicating poverty is by ensuring all-inclusive growth alongside preserving and conserving the ecosystem of the world in addition to promoting social equity; all of which can be done through sustainable development. To them, sustainable development will help meet the basic needs of most of the populace and they further state that economic and social progress is the key to enhancing sustainable democracy. In light of that, they are stanch to eliminating *“wide disparities and unequal living standards as guided by internationally agreed development goals”* (The Commonwealth, 2012). To this end, they are poised to build a resilient economy and promote social equity through the value of technical assistance, capacity building and practical cooperation in promoting development. They are further committed to ensuring an *“effective, equitable, rules-based multilateral trading system that guarantees the freest possible flow of multilateral trade on fair and equitable terms to all while considering the special requirements of small states and developing countries”* (The Commonwealth, 2012). This principle further acknowledges the growing importance of *“information and communication technologies as powerful instruments of development, delivering savings, efficiencies and growth in our economies, as well as promoting education, learning and the sharing of culture”* (The Commonwealth, 2012). In light of that, the Commonwealth is committed to strengthening its use while enhancing its security to advance our societies.

According to the World Bank (2022), Togo is on track to achieve sustainable development and inclusive growth. Togo is an agricultural-based country that provides two-thirds of the country’s jobs. The challenge Togo faces is its inability to improve its productivity due to structural challenges. Also, Togo is growing in urbanization as the cities are expanding but

the challenge is their inability to capitalize on it. Gabon since 2009 has been working with the Green Plan by Ali Bongo which is to turn Gabon into an emerging economically sustainable economy. The country is working with the Gaborone Declaration for Sustainability in Africa to harness its natural resources and work towards a green economy (White, Olendo, & Banak, 2021).

The tenth principle is the principle of protecting the environment. This principle is linked to the principle of sustainable development which shows their continued commitment and support to protecting and conserving our natural ecosystems and also affirm that sustainable management of the natural environment is pivotal to sustained human development. To achieve this, they recognize the essence of “*multilateral cooperation, sustained commitment and collective action*” (The Commonwealth, 2012), which can be achieved by addressing the issues of adaptation and mitigation of climate change and “*facilitating the development, diffusion and deployment of affordable environmentally friendly technologies and renewable energy*” (The Commonwealth, 2012), as well as preventing illegitimate discarding of toxic and hazardous waste and putting an end of desertification and erosion.

Gabon is naturally a forest zone where the land is blanketed by the forest and its rivers tumble and nourish the land. Gabon has preserved its ecosystems and species. They have adopted a policy for forest protection through the ban on exporting whole-log timber and carbon emission reductions. In 2007, it established the National Agency for National Parks to achieve the goal of protecting 30 percent of its land and ocean as well as 30 percent goal for freshwater. As it stands now they have been able to create 13 national parks and two world heritage sites to protect the environment; including the 20 marines protected environment offshore from 26 percent of its ocean territory (Adhya, 2022)

Togo on the other hand has established a partnership with Young Volunteers for the Environment to help protect its environment. Since 1990, more than a 40percent of Togo's forest reserves have been lost and its continued use of charcoal and coal has contributed immensely to its high rate of deforestation. The policy adopted ensures more planting of trees, more usage of improved stoves (through the transmission of natural gas and electricity) and more efficient production of charcoal (Høystad, 2022).

The eleventh principle is access to education, healthcare, food and shelter. Achieving any of the principles requires good health of both leaders and the populace which can be made possible through affordable health care, education, clean drinking water, sanitation and housing for all citizens with much emphasis on the essence of the need to promote good health to combat both communicable and non-communicable diseases. They further identify the right of all persons to have *“access to safe, sufficient and nutritious food, consistent with the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security”* (The Commonwealth, 2012).

In Gabon, up until 2011, only 44.4% of the populace has secondary education with 46.5% having had quality education by the world standard in 2011. Their public education system was disadvantaged by the overcrowded classes due to the limited number of classrooms, limited teachers and teaching materials among others. To enhance their access to education, they partnered with the *“Agence Francaise De Developpment”* to reduce the infrastructure deficits by building 500 new classrooms in Libreville, and Port-Gentil to accommodate an additional 25, 000 students and also aiding the ministry in charge of education to improve upon the quality and conditions of the school. On healthcare, new stocked-up rehabilitated medical centers have been put up in Libreville and north of the country; and several other projects are underway to strengthen their healthcare system and make it accessible to all.

Togo with help from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nation and the World Food Programme has also enacted a new school feeding law to fulfil the right to food and healthy diets among children in their quest to eliminate hunger and reduce poverty. In 2011, the Togolese government introduced the National Insurance Scheme to curb the cost paid at service for access to healthcare.

The twelfth principle is Gender equality. They establish that gender equality and women's empowerment are essential components of human development and basic human rights. The advancement of women's rights and the education of girls are critical preconditions for effective and sustainable development. This principle is about women empowerment, girl child education, female leadership and participation in governance; and ending violence against women and girls, gender and climatic change.

Before 2021, Gabon had a low financial inclusion of women which resulted in only 30 percent of women having a bank account, and uneven income distribution between the two genders (World Bank, 2022). To curb this, in 2021, Gabon enacted new laws that decrease the risk of violence against women and eliminates economic discrimination. two months after, a new labour code was enacted to improve women's labour rights and opportunities (Tavares, 2022). These enacted gender reform laws allow women to choose their line of work without intimidation from the opposite sex, women are now allowed to own properties just like men, and women are allowed to receive financial credits or loans.

In Togo, women enjoy only 84% of the rights men enjoy on average. This appears to be above the average for Sub-Saharan Africa. On political rights, there is still discrimination against women: women hold only 18.7% of seats in the national parliament, and only 29.8% hold managerial positions, among others. On property rights and inheritance, women only enjoy 80% of the rights men enjoy. In terms of entrepreneurship, women still suffer discrimination as they are limited in their ability to create or manage a business: in 2017, only 20% of

businesses were owned by women, it rose to 25% in 2018 and 27% in 2019 which shows some progress but not encouraging (Kakpo, 2020).

The thirteenth principle is the importance of youth in the Commonwealth. They recognize and appreciate the role and impact of the youth in promoting development, peace, and democracy and in protecting and promoting other Commonwealth values, such as tolerance and understanding, including respect for other cultures. To Commonwealth, the future success of the Commonwealth rests with the continued commitment and contributions of young people in promoting and sustaining the Commonwealth and its values and principles, and they are committed to investing in and promoting their development, particularly through the creation of opportunities for youth employment and entrepreneurship (The Commonwealth Charter). It is based on this principle that in 1974, the Commonwealth established the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) and the 1998 Plan of Action on Youth Empowerment to empower the youth and train them for the future (The Commonwealth, 1998).

In 2007, Togo designed the National Youth Policy with the ultimate goal of instilling national values in the youth and aiding them to be active in societal activities. This policy has five areas of focus namely: ensuring good healthcare, access to quality education and technology, ensuring the youth acquire effective skills and technology needed for the job market, promoting equality among the youth and creating a socio-educational environment necessary for their development and growth. Also, Togo designed the “*Youth Employment Project*” as part of the “*National Strategic Plan for Youth Employment*” and a “*Four-Year Action Plan of the National Youth Policy 2014-2017*” (Government of Togo, 2007). Lastly, Togo signed and ratified the “*African Youth Charter*” (2006); all geared towards the growth of the youth and ensuring their active participation in the development and growth of the nation.

Gabon also has a national youth policy adopted in 2011 at the first national youth forum. This policy is meant to help develop the youth through the creation of a ministry for youth development, citizenship and associations; strengthening the technical and operational capacities of the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Leisure; restructuring of the National Youth Council to reflect the needs and attributes of the youth, to strengthen the entitlements of Youth Parliament; to ensure and enforce the role of the youth in governance and decision making, to instill the culture of volunteerism in the youth, and create a mobility scholarship for the youth to enhance their access to education and states resources (Government of Gabon, 2011).

The fourteenth and fifteenth principles are closely related. The former deals with the recognition of the needs of smaller states while the latter deals with the recognition of the needs of vulnerable states. The former assists small and developing states in the Commonwealth, including the particular needs of small island developing states, in tackling their particular economic, energy, climate change and security challenges, and in building their resilience for the future; while the latter collaborates to find ways to provide immediate help to the poorest and most vulnerable including least developed countries, and to develop responses to protect the people most at risk.

The last principle is the role of civil societies or other bodies. Commonwealth recognizes the important role that civil society plays in our communities and countries as partners in promoting and supporting Commonwealth values and principles, including the freedom of association and peaceful assembly, and in achieving development goals (The Commonwealth, 2012). This principle is basically about partnership. Building partnerships is a Commonwealth value of great significance. To the Commonwealth, “successful partnership depends on mutual respect and friendship”. What matters is not what people are, but what they can contribute to the common purpose. The partnership builds on experience, drawing lessons from the past and

cementing shared friendships; and it looks to the future as it tackles the challenges of the present. The Commonwealth is an excellent example of this kind of partnership. The Commonwealth is, or ought to be, a successful partnership of governments and peoples from around the world who work for a common purpose. It functions by consensus decision-making and emphasizes cooperation and collaboration, which requires all participants to consider reasonable compromises (Srinivasan, 1998).

Following the democratic renewal in 1990, the Civil Society Organization (CSO) of Togo took a different turn from the scared and sidelined position it had before. Currently, more than 50% of the populace belongs to a civil society group that works collectively to ensure the growth and development of its people. Civil society groups are given the mandate to air their views on national issues which are taken into consideration by the government. Under the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), the role of CSOs in Togo has become more effective since the APRM initiative comprises 37 CSOs.

In Gabon, the CSOs are grouped into two (traditional and modern). The former is based on religion and ethnicity and hence does not have a role to play in the political system but the latter which is about NGOs tends to participate in governance by letting the voice of the minority be heard. The modern CSOs collaborate with the government to ensure the development and growth of its members of national policies adopted.

According to the respondents of this study, to become a member of the Commonwealth requires not necessarily ensuring all principles are fully implemented but rather, showing commitment to adhering to them and achieving the utmost of it. In light of this, Gabon and Togo's commitment to these principles through the adoption of policies and collaborations with international bodies to improve upon it shows their qualification for membership in Commonwealth, and with that, they qualify to proceed with the membership process.

Although Togo and Gabon have shown commitment to the values of the Commonwealth, it is evident that only some values have they shown commitment to. One of the aspects of the principle of lock-in-effect is that, in as much as members of principles seek to achieve their aim by sharing in the division of labor and resources, the principals do not fully commit to the core values of the agent thereby undermining the agent.

First, the interested country shall express interest in the Commonwealth to the Secretary-General who shall then respond by engaging in an informal assessment of the country to ensure the basic principles have been met by the country. Here, the democratic test may be conducted by observing their electoral process, and engaging citizens and leaders in diverse conversations to ascertain the necessary information. With that done and the secretary-general is convinced that the country under investigation can be allowed to be a member, member states shall then be informed and consulted on their thought about the country. When consultations are completed with the member states, the country seeking membership shall then be allowed to officially apply for membership and provide verifiable documents showing the Commonwealth principles and values such as democracy being respected and upheld. The member countries shall then vote or reach a consensus on the status of membership of the country (The Commonwealth, 2007). This is the general commonwealth structure for membership; however, there are exceptional cases.

### **3.4 Possibility of Norm Tension?**

The research sought to identify the possibility of tensions arising in the commonwealth due to the new membership; however, from all the respondents, tensions are not going to arise because they already exist in the commonwealth even before the admission of the new countries due to the varying culture, norms and ideologies each member country holds. This section of the work sheds light on some tensions that have risen in the commonwealth even

before Togo and Gabon joined to buttress the respondents' claims. These tensions have mostly been around who takes what position or leadership as well as an approach to some of the values and principles of the Commonwealth.

As part of the Commonwealth agenda, equality must be given to all persons without discrimination either based on sex, age, or tribe, among others; however, the rights of some minorities in society are discriminated against under the tag of LGBTQ+. The Commonwealth, over the years, has ensured young girls are given equal access to education and women are given fair representation in all aspects of life; however, the transgendered are not given the same treatment. In 2011, the secretary-general of the Commonwealth in his keynote speech stated clearly that discrimination against people who are gay or bisexual is wrong as the commonwealth is committed to tolerance, equality, respect and understanding. Similarly, his successor, Patricia Scotland, has also dedicated her tenure to ensuring discrimination against gays is halted and the criminal punishment taken off their heads. Despite all these efforts by their leadership, in 33 of the commonwealth countries before the joining of Togo and Gabon, same-sex marriage or intercourse is deemed criminal which calls for years of imprisonment such as 10 years of imprisonment in Jamaica, 14 years in Kenya, 20 years in Malaysia; life imprisonment in Tanzania, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Barbados, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Guyana, among others. On the other side, 19 of the countries accepted gays in their societies (<https://lens.civicus.org>). This shows how unbalanced some issues in the commonwealth are in that, it is not always member states approach the values from the same angle. Unanimously, the respondents of this research asserted the fact that this challenge will continually persist as governments are bound by their culture, and traditional and national constitution hence laws like LGBTQ+ when identified as not upholding their culture and norms will never be accepted. It can therefore be said and concluded that some tension on equality, tolerance, respect, and

understanding will not arise because of the new members but rather, they will only add their voice to it by supporting one side of the coin.

Another area of tension in the commonwealth is leadership. The leadership crisis revolves around the office of the queen and that of the secretary-general. Following the election of Patricia Scotland as secretary-general, Britain has engaged in open antagonism since they are not able to “rule” the people, hence in Scotland’s bid to retain office the second time, Britain sponsored the Jamaican foreign minister to pursue their political ambition. This has created tensions as Britain has made it clear from its actions that they are the rulers and the first among equals which have not been taken lightly by Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) officials who have come out to say that Britain must lead from behind. In a similar light, the position of the head of the organization is in contention. Some members are of the view that, if the Commonwealth believes in democracy and equality, then the position of the head must not be limited to only the royal family but it must be opened for rotation among all member countries. In light of that, some members are willing to become a republic to eliminate even the king or queen as head of the Commonwealth and 14 members of the Commonwealth. In as much as this is the norm, 6 of the 14 members have declared their intentions of breaking away from their colonial past and removing the queen or king as their head of state. which may cause a huge blow to the Commonwealth if care is not taken. Aside from the fight for rotation of the position of the head, some members are calling for the elimination of that position completely and leaving everything in the hands of the secretary-general (Sue, 2022). From the respondents, 80% agreed to the fact that, in the coming years, the idea of rotation of the head will become the norm and the challenge will be how many years a country can hold the office and if retaining the seat will be allowed. The other 20% holds the belief that the biggest economies of the Commonwealth will not accept having the same slot as the smaller economies which will generate more tensions. The tensions have already begun on leadership hence any

decision or statement made by either Togo or Gabon will not be news as they will only be adding their voice and hence cannot be the cause of tensions.

The lack of upholding common principles of the organization causes a huge blow to the Commonwealth which may escalate to undermine the organization if measures are not put in place. One of the principles members are to uphold is their financial contribution to the organization. Member countries are expected to make contributions to the organizations to aid in their activities run by the office of the secretary-general for the good of all members. This has, however, been approached by members in different ways. The major financial contributors of the organizations are Canada, Australia and Britain but since 2012 has constantly reduced their contribution to the organization and focused on bilateral relations and contributions. Britain for example, 2016 dedicated their conservative government investment to bilateral relations which has currently caused the challenge of members seeking their interest above the organizational interest. Similarly, the Commonwealth has a migration policy where member states are expected to work together to solve the current migration crisis; however, Britain behind the back of commonwealth members has devised a new Economic and Migration Agreement with Rwanda to aid the two countries to solve their migration issues which have generated a lot of tension among members because the migration challenge of the entire organization has not been pursued or given the needed attention which is weighing down most countries hence for member countries to take a sole decision that only satisfies their selfish interest is set to undermine the organization. This will lead to members making such decisions in other matters, rendering the organization less effective (Sue, 2022). One of the respondents argued that this is not a new thing as the majority of international organizations face this, especially the ones involving bigger economies hence such issues are bound to happen all the time. In light of that, he suggested that the Commonwealth needs to ensure policies and decision taken by member countries does not lead to the fallout of some other members.

The Commonwealth in their charter has international peace and security as one of the fundamental values they are committed to. This is an operative polygonal system which is based on international law, inclusiveness, justice, and equity as the best footing for achieving consensus and progress on major global challenges that threaten world peace. They have committed to helping the United Nations achieve world peace which means any act that goes contrary must be collectively fought against. To the commonwealth, they are ready to help fight all actions that are coupled with the consequent tragic loss of human life and severe damage to political, economic and social stability by working together as a diverse community of nations, individually, and collectively under the auspices and authority of the United Nations, to take concerted and resolute action against it (The Commonwealth, 2012). In the heat of the Russian-Ukraine crisis which had killed several people and hence needed to be solved to prevent a major global challenge, the Commonwealth members were expected to collectively fight for any measure that could help bring peace and stability. However, this was not achieved due to the members' selfish desire, which led to the organization not presenting a united front at the United Nations; to the extent that even nine of the Commonwealth countries abstained to vote on any decision (Sue, 2022). This has caused scholars to question whether the commonwealth is working (Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 2022) or if it is just a metric that exists not for the essence of the world.

Another Commonwealth principle is human rights where members have committed to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other relevant human rights covenants and international instruments to ensure respect and equality for all people by protecting their first, second and third-generation rights and eliminating discrimination on all grounds whether race, gender, colour, political affiliation or all other reasons (The Commonwealth, 2012). On June 10<sup>th</sup> 2022, Human Rights Watch (HRW) wrote a piece about Rwanda to the Commonwealth

Heads of government to take action before allowing Rwanda to host the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. According to the HRW, Commonwealth has been silent on Rwanda's human rights record which undermines its credibility and integrity(<https://www.hrw.org>). To them, Rwanda has no respect for rule of law, no upholding of human rights, bad governance and abuse and suppression of the media hence could not host the meeting. This warranted several controversies and tension in the Commonwealth causing some divisions but this has also resulted in some good as Rwanda has now begun talks with its opposition (Sue, 2022).

Following the arguments of bilateral meetings and policies behind the backs of member states, there is a growing idea of “what is in it for me” among members especially the small island developing countries (SIDS) and the least developed countries (LDCs) in the Commonwealth where they are willing to forgo the commonwealth culture to embrace others provided there is something to be gained at the end. Following the disrupted world order through a hike in oil prices increasing fuel and domestic transportation, disruption of the food supply chain, high cost of manufacturing and imported goods, and disruption of the financial markets, among others; the commonwealth bond is weakening as the policies being made favour some commonwealth countries but makes budgetary planning difficult for others. Members of the LDCs and SIDS especially are stressed by the rising level of their debt which the Commonwealth cannot currently help them hence talks of seeking more multilateral and bilateral help from China and other bodies. This has created a lot of challenges and tensions in the Commonwealth as they are unable to decide for the future of all members (Sue, 2022). In light of that, with Gabon and Togo being members of la- Francophonie as well, in times of crisis like these will resort to France for help which will increase the current tension but they will not be the cause as it has started already.

In chapter 1, ( Slobodchikoff, 2010) argued that the high corruption and lack of judicial independence happening in the EU is as a result of Bulgaria and Romania's membership and EU 2020 enlargement report stated that decline in democratic principles and disrespect for rule of law emerged as a result of the membership of Poland and Hungary into the EU. This implied that, EU never had these tensions until their new members; however, in the case of this study, it was not discovered to be the case. It has been argued unanimously by all the respondents that these challenges exist in the Commonwealth even before the membership of Togo and Gabon. To this extent, it cannot be said on authority that Togo and Gabon will be the cause of tensions arising in the Commonwealth but rather, they will be additional voices to the ongoing tensions in the commonwealth.

### **3.5 What is the Future of the Commonwealth?**

As of the 1990s, the projection of the Commonwealth by most scholars was the expansion of British rule which is termed neo-colonization as most members were formal colonies hence with the queen as head, it was a new terrain of colonial rule. Over time, with the joining of Cameroon and Mozambique in 1995 and Rwanda in 2009, the narrative began to change; it was not just neo-colonization but actual colonization since the latter countries were not formerly ruled by Britain. The question about the future of the Commonwealth became the major talking point. From there, it was projected that the Commonwealth expansion will not be to just the former colonies of Britain but also to non-former colonies of which now, Togo and Gabon's membership has confirmed.

The infiltration of other cultures like that of the French is gradually gaining roots in the Commonwealth thereby altering some core principles. The Commonwealth before Togo and Gabon had been struggling with upholding some core principles: Rwanda has made it difficult for Commonwealth in upholding democracy and democratic principles ever since they joined

due to the authoritarian rule their president is engaging in. Struggling to find their way around it, Togo and Gabon have also joined under authoritarian regimes with their presidents fighting hard to maintain their family legacies rather than serving the populace. The fight therefore against authoritarian rule and disrespect for rule of law, democracy and democratic processes is projected to get harder in the commonwealth in years to come if measures are not put in place to ensure members uphold such practices before being accepted into the Commonwealth. In addition to the fight against democracy, rule of law and the democratic process, the fight against equality, tolerance, respect and understanding is projected to grow bigger and more difficult. As of January 2022, 33 of the 54-member countries had criminalized LGBTQ+ in their countries (kaleidoscopetrust.com) against the code of no discrimination under any circumstance, tolerance, respect and understanding. The Commonwealth has been struggling to solve this challenge but it has not proven futile. Togo as a new member had criminalized same-sex activities even before joining the commonwealth (US Department of State) with Gabon on the other hand not criminalizing it but having no legal protection for such individuals against discrimination and no legal recognition of their activities (Alix-Isa, 2019). The truth of the matter is, countries may be forced to be like Gabon which legalizes LGBTQ+ but provides the individuals with no protection. In that sense, it is fair to say, in the coming year, the Commonwealth members will have on paper, acceptance and tolerance of these homosexuals to fulfil their side of upholding the core values of the Commonwealth but will not enforce them or even give protection to them.

Economically, as indicated in chapter one of this work, as of 2019, the collective Gross domestic product of commonwealth members was 9 trillion dollars although it was mostly from the four largest economies namely Australia, Canada, India and United Kingdom, the addition of Togo and Gabon adds 23.67 billion dollars to the current GDP of the Commonwealth. With the new membership, the commonwealth is projected to increase in the

number of members as it has been over the years thereby increasing their economic growth further.

Adding to the growing debate on leadership, the commonwealth in the future is bound to see leadership dynamics. (Ware, 2009) during the Commonwealth at 60 celebrations projected that leadership dynamics will happen by their 100th anniversary. To him, with the demise of the queen who is the head, a crisis will emerge as some members will stand by the decision of rotating the position of the head and not only limiting it to the British monarch while others will stand by the decision of replacing the queen with Prince Charles. To (Ware, 2009), the cord that binds the commonwealth is the queen who managed the difficult role as the head hence her demise will be a big blow to the organization. In a 2009 poll conducted in 6 regions, most of the respondents answered the question of who should be the next head by saying there should be rotation. This view was shared by many other countries as well which shows the people's appetite for a change hence in the coming years, there is the projection that a rotation of the head will be the order to reflect the true nature of commonwealth as a voluntary association who believe in democracy and equality.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

The Commonwealth fraternity has grown from the initial eight members to 54 as of June 2022 before the Commonwealth Heads of State Meeting and is currently at 56 with Togo and Gabon as new members. This chapter of the work, with the help of the respondents and existing literature, has shed light on the rationale of Togo and Gabon to join the Commonwealth on grounds of seeking their interest and ensuring development which the francophone fraternity has not provided them. With Togo and Gabon being French countries, there was the question of what membership criteria were used; it has therefore been established that the 16 principles and membership criteria stipulated in the 1971 Harare Declaration and the Commonwealth

charter respectively were used to accept the two countries into membership. Following their membership, there has been a projection of tensions arising due to the new members but it has been established not to be the case as the tensions exist even before their membership and the future of the commonwealth is one with dynamics on leadership and approach to the principles and values.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION.

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the discoveries of the study, concludes and tenders relevant recommendations based on the findings of the study. The study was conducted within the concept of lock-in-effect which sets out among others to expatiate the rationale for membership in international organizations by countries. Lock-in-effect was selected because it resonates with the fact that states join organizations, and give their power to the organization which is termed the principal to gain their intended interest in joining the organization. A qualitative method of data collection was used to gather the information needed to understand the rationale of two French countries: Togo and Gabon for joining an anglophone organization: The Commonwealth and what membership criteria were used to admit the two countries.

#### 4.2 Summary of Findings

The study sought to answer three key questions to better understand the expanding membership of the Commonwealth using Gabon and Togo as case studies.

On the part of the subject of what influenced the two countries to join the Commonwealth, it became evident from the study that, the only logical justification for a Francophone country to join the Commonwealth, was the intended benefit they will gain.

According to the respondents, Togo filed for membership in the Commonwealth due to the intended developmental aid guaranteed; access to larger economies and markets which by extension leads to economies of scale; and access to the anglophone culture and language. This stems from the fact that Commonwealth through their technical cooperation and funds help member countries to attain development. It was made known in the study that, Togo and

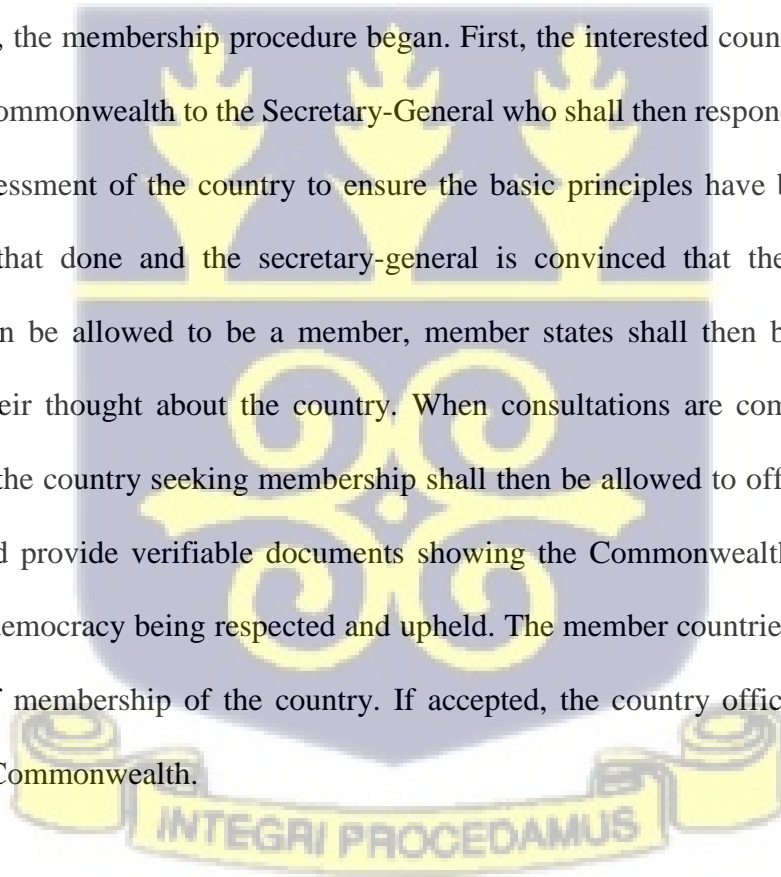
France's relationship over the years has not helped the former to develop hence the need to seek new allies since most of her neighbours in the Commonwealth are developing. Further, Togo seeks to find economic freedom from the colonial master. Since independence, Togo has transacted businesses and commerce using the colonial master's currency which is not the same for British former colonies hence one of the motivations for joining the Commonwealth. Linguistically, Togo has been trying to inculcate English as its official language just like Rwanda did, hence, to be able to achieve that, they need anglophone help which is guaranteed under the Commonwealth membership.

Gabon on the other hand joined the Commonwealth for reasons not so much different from that of Togo. Gabon's membership of the Commonwealth is said to be the realisation of its President's ambition. Considering the limitation of the Francophone culture and the dominance of the Anglophone culture in the world, Ali Bongo has always made it a dream to make his country a member of the dominant culture of which membership in the Commonwealth is the surest way. After failing in 2014 to turn his country into an English-speaking country, there was a need to start the process of commonwealth membership to gain the necessary assistance. In addition, another driving force for Gabon's membership was economic diversification. The oil revenue of Gabon put it in the spotlight in the 1970s and 1980s but with the current growing economic trend, its economy is not booming as it was projected to be hence the need for economic diversification which is guaranteed under the Commonwealth membership.

After the two countries realized how beneficial the commonwealth will be to them, they filed for membership. The Commonwealth has criteria for membership which comprises 16 principles stipulated in the Commonwealth charter as adopted in 1971 under the "1971 Declaration of Commonwealth Principles" (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1971). The criteria include democracy, human rights; international peace and security; tolerance, respect and

understanding; freedom of expression; separation of powers; rule of law; good governance; sustainable development; protecting the environment; access to education, healthcare, food and shelter; gender equality; the importance of youth in the Commonwealth; the role of civil societies. recognition of the needs of smaller states; recognition of the needs of the vulnerable needs; and the role of civil societies. From the study, it became clear that the Commonwealth requires members to at least show commitment to abiding by these principles. To that effect, Togo and Gabon have shown much commitment through the policies adopted and programmes rolled out to enhance the well-being of their citizens.

Having satisfied the basic requirement of showing commitment to the principles of the Commonwealth, the membership procedure began. First, the interested country shall express interest in the Commonwealth to the Secretary-General who shall then respond by engaging in an informal assessment of the country to ensure the basic principles have been met by the country. With that done and the secretary-general is convinced that the country under investigation can be allowed to be a member, member states shall then be informed and consulted on their thought about the country. When consultations are completed with the member states, the country seeking membership shall then be allowed to officially apply for membership and provide verifiable documents showing the Commonwealth principles and values such as democracy being respected and upheld. The member countries shall then vote on the status of membership of the country. If accepted, the country officially becomes a member of the Commonwealth.



The last objective the study was to uncover the possibility of norm tensions in the commonwealth. Togo and Gabon belong to the francophone fraternity hence joining the anglophone fraternity was seen by many as engineering tensions in the organization; however, in the course of this study, it was discovered not to be the case. Tensions around leadership as

to who becomes the secretariat, and even the head of the organization. There are 2 views on the headship which are: rotation of the position and elimination of the position completely. Current members of the Commonwealth have already made their voices known on the subject hence the two new countries will not be the ones to cause this tension. Further, other tensions on upholding the principles of the Commonwealth have risen in the commonwealth: some members do not uphold democracy to the core, and the principle of tolerance and equality is not held on to as the rights of LGBTQ+ members are neglected. Further, their quest as members of the commonwealth to ensure international peace and security has not been pursued to the core which became clear in the heat of the Russian-Ukraine war when the members could not unite to stand for what they believe in. All these tensions had begun even before Togo and Gabon joined the Commonwealth hence the respondent and the researcher concluded that the two countries will not be the cause of norm tensions in the organization.

### **4.3 Conclusion**

International organizations are bodies made of a set of norms and rules meant to govern the actions and inactions of states in the international arena. Examples of international organizations are United Nations, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, European Union, African Union, and several others. They are established by treaties and charters as well as other legal personalities. International organizations are bound by norms such as democratic principles, rule of law, human rights, and several others that serve as their identity.

The Commonwealth fraternity has grown from the initial 8 members in 1926 to 54 as of June 2022 before the Commonwealth Heads of State Meeting and is currently at 56 with Togo and Gabon as new members. This study has thrown more light on the rationale of Togo and Gabon for joining the Commonwealth which was more based on economic, linguistic and developmental reasons. Further, the study has elaborated on how Togo and Gabon have

fulfilled the membership criteria by showing commitment to the 16 principles of the Commonwealth stated in the “1971 Declaration of Commonwealth Principles”. Lastly, on the subject of norm tension, it became clear from the study that Togo and Gabon will not be the cause of such tensions arising in the Commonwealth as it had started already even before their membership.

#### 4.4 Recommendation

The study, based on the data gathered makes the following recommendations for the Commonwealth and future research.

- ❖ Future research can delve much into what does the 16 principles of the Commonwealth require from members. The Commonwealth website clearly states these principles but no further explanation is given as to what each principle looks out for. In light of that, it is therefore the recommendation of the researcher that the commonwealth must update its website stipulating the requirement for each principle or future research can be conducted to explain better each of the principles.
- ❖ On the subject of what each principle requires, the commonwealth must design a target and model on how members should approach the principles.
- ❖ A Commonwealth session should be held for all member states to take a final decision on the issue of headship of the organization.
- ❖ The Commonwealth must ensure all members completely uphold all the 16 principles before becoming members but not just show commitment. Rwanda as a case study, when joined the Commonwealth had not upheld the principle of democracy and even after 11years of membership has not fully held their end of the deal. The European

Union faces the same challenge with some of its members in the western corridor leaving problems and tension behind. In light of that, all new members after Togo and Gabon must fully satisfy all the 16 principles so that in an instance like that of the Russian-Ukraine war, a united front can be presented and as well, citizens of each country shall enjoy equal treatment and benefits.



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## APPENDIX

### INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Can you tell me about your activities in the commonwealth so far?
2. What is your take on overlapping membership in international organizations?
3. What do you think influenced Togo and Gabon to file for membership in the Commonwealth?
4. What are the commonwealth membership criteria?
5. Following the last 4 accepted members into Commonwealth, would you say that there is a change in commonwealth membership criteria?
6. What informed the commonwealth into accepting Non-Anglophone countries like Gabon and Togo into membership?
7. What does the commonwealth seek to achieve with Gabon and Togo's membership?
8. How does Togo and Gabon fulfil the membership criteria to warrant them membership?
9. Do the commonwealth norms such as democratic governance, human rights and rule of law still exist considering the last four accepted members do not regard that?
10. Considering the commonwealth uses English as its official language. With the new membership, how are member countries expected to relate to the different cultures?
11. What measures have been put in place to ensure the francophone culture and norms do not clash with that of anglophones?
12. What are the possible norm tensions to arise with the new members from different culture?
13. Considering the death of the queen, do you foresee the new members causing any troubles in leadership?