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Adebayo Adedeji: Africa's Foremost Prophet of Regional Integration

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This chapter makes a claim for the importance of individuals in promoting the implementation of economic ideas through institutions. While the focus is on the ideas that were promoted, I argue that the intellect, character, experiences, and personality of individuals often shape institutions, which can consequently be used to disseminate these ideas to the practical realm of policy. I focus on the impact of the ideas of Nigeria's Adebayo Adedeji on the United Nations (UN) Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) between 1975 and 1991. Adedeji died in Lagos on 25 April 2018, with his funeral in Ijebu-Ode being attended by two former Nigerian heads of state—generals Yakubu Gowon and Olusegun Obasanjo; the president of Namibia, Hage Geingob; and the former president of Liberia, Amos Sawyer.

We assess the role, vision, and impact of Adebayo Adedeji, who is regarded as the contemporary intellectual father of regional integration in Africa (even if his ideas did not always translate into practice), as well as an important institution-builder. The chapter seeks to place Adedeji in historical context, highlighting the role that individuals with vision and forceful personalities can play in driving institutions to adopt ideas but also demonstrating the institutional, regional,

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and external constraints on the implementation of these ideas, which rely as well on the decisions and vested interests of powerful national governments and other important actors. The chapter further assesses the personal, intellectual, and professional background and influences that shaped Adedeji into a crusading prophet of regional integration and economic development.

A METEORIC RISE: FROM PRODIGY TO PROFESSOR

Adebayo Adedeji grew up in the small south-western Nigerian town of Ijebu-Ode under British colonial rule. This experience would leave a fierce anti-colonial mark on Adedeji in his later professional career. His middle-class parents were farmers who worked on a cocoa and kola nut plantation and left him in the care of his disciplinarian grandmother 'Mama Eleja', an enterprising, shrewd, and determined fish-seller and indomitable matriarch. The precocious Adebayo was an outstanding student who responded well to his grandmother's constant prodding. His father was also an important influence on the young boy, encouraging his son to study hard. Adebayo's father, Lawal Popoola Adedeji, made his son work on the family farm during school holidays, impressing on the young boy the importance of the 'dignity of labour'.¹

Adebayo completed his primary schooling between 1940 and 1943 at St Saviour's, a missionary school in Ijebu-Ode, before undertaking his secondary school education at Ijebu-Ode Grammar School between 1944 and 1949, where the principal S.R.S. Nicolas, a strict disciplinarian, had a big impact on the young prodigy. Adedeji wanted to become a gynaecologist, but the family fell on hard times. His father lost all his savings in a bank collapse, even as a plant disease destroyed the cocoa and kola nut trees on the family farm. Adedeji was thus forced to work as a researcher from 1950—at the age of twenty—with the West Africa Institute for Social and Economic Research, and thereafter with the Department of Lands in Ibadan. While working, Adebayo bought textbooks and taught himself Economics, History, British Constitution, and Geography, passing all four Advanced Level subjects in 1952.

He was then selected among an elite group of twenty students to be trained in the Western and Eastern Region governments. Adedeji resigned from the Lands Department in 1953 to obtain a one-year diploma in Local Government Administration at the University College, Ibadan: Nigeria's first university. He thereafter worked as an Assistant District Officer in the Western Region's Ministry of Local Government in Abeokuta. Adedeji later won a Western Region government scholarship to study economics and public administration at the University of Leicester in England, where he became president of the university's Economic Society, and married Aderinola Ogun in 1957. Three years later, he studied for a master's degree in Public Administration from Harvard University in the United States, before obtaining a doctorate in Economics from the University of London in 1967.²

Adedeji returned to Nigeria in 1958—two years before the country's independence from British rule—to take up a post as Assistant Secretary in the

Western Region's Ministry of Economic Planning in Ibadan, working twelve-hour days under some of Nigeria's most respected administrators such as Simeon Adebbo and Peter Odumosu. Here, he was widely recognised as a rising star but also had a fearsome reputation among more junior civil servants. By this time, the Muslim 'Brother Razaki' had converted to Christianity. Adebayo was transferred to the Western Region Ministry of Finance, and by the age of thirty-one, he was already one of the principal advisers to the regional government's Finance Minister, Oba C.D. Akran. In 1963, Adedeji—who had always described himself as a 'reluctant civil servant'—left government service to take up an academic post at Nigeria's University of Ile-Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University). Four years later, he had become a full professor of economics and public administration at the age of thirty-six. During his tenure, he transformed the university's Institute of Administration—as its Director—into an effective training ground for both Nigerian and African public servants.³

REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1971, at the age of forty, as he was about to begin a sabbatical at the University of Michigan in the United States, Adedeji was appointed Nigeria's Minister of Economic Reconstruction and Development by the military regime of General Yakubu Gowon. He would help oversee the country's difficult post-war rebuilding efforts. Nigeria's civil war of 1967–1970 had resulted in one million deaths and led to the destruction of much of the country's infrastructure, particularly in the secessionist Eastern Region. The discovery of large oilfields propelled Nigeria into the ranks of the world's largest oil exporters. Along with other cabinet colleagues and powerful mandarins, Adedeji crafted and implemented a five-year national development plan (1970–1974) that called for rapid industrialisation and resulted in the building of dual carriage-ways, flyovers, and electricity pylons across the country. He was also the founder and first chair of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), a programme to forge national integration and cohesion by sending the country's university graduates to different parts of the country to work and undertake community service.

Adedeji is widely regarded as 'the father of ECOWAS', the Economic Community of West African States. In 1970 he outlined a vision for regional integration in West Africa in an academic article published in the *Journal of Modern African Studies*, which identified six priority areas: facilitating the free movement of people, goods, and services; building a regional road network; creating a regional airline; establishing regional infrastructure to facilitate trade and investment; creating a clearing and payments union; and abolishing foreign exchange controls.⁴ Adedeji then turned theory into practice. While serving as Nigeria's Minister of Economic Reconstruction and Development, he convinced fifteen other West African leaders to establish ECOWAS, following tireless 'shuttle diplomacy' between 1972 and 1975 with his Togolese counterpart, Henri Dogo, across the West African sub-region.

He later captured these efforts in a memorable 2004 chapter 'ECOWAS: A Retrospective Journey', in which he described his painstaking initiatives, engaging in lively intellectual battle with Senegalese leader, Léopold Senghor, who sent him 'down' to his prime minister, Abdou Diouf, for criticising the poet-president's francophilia, while surprisingly crediting Ivorian president, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, with bridging West Africa's historical francophone-anglophone divide, which was crucial to the establishment of ECOWAS.⁵ Adedeji thereafter consistently argued that regional integration must be seen as an instrument for national survival and socio-economic transformation.⁶

In 1975, Adedeji became executive secretary of the Addis Ababa-based UN Economic Commission for Africa. The ECA had been established in 1958 to tackle issues of economic integration, industrialisation, transportation, commodity price stabilisation, human capacity development, social aspects and financing of development, as well as improving statistical data and research in Africa.⁷ Adedeji's sixteen-year tenure in office became the organisation's longest and most dynamic: he converted the ECA into a pan-African platform to continue his efforts to promote economic integration, leading to the creation of the Preferential Trade Area (PTA) for Eastern and Southern African States in 1981 (which later became the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa [COMESA] in 1993) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in 1983.⁸ Adedeji, who frequently worked 18-hour days, collaborated closely with successive Organisation of African Unity (OAU) secretaries-general in Addis Ababa, and became a confidant of and economic adviser to many African leaders, whom he met and addressed at annual continental summits.

Adedeji's intellectual beliefs, like those of the executive director of the UN Economic Commission for Latin America, Raúl Prebisch (1950–1963),⁹ were based on his analysis that Africa could not achieve economic growth as long as it did not develop national self-reliance radically to transform the continent's inherited colonial production structures, which had been built on the export of raw materials. He thus advocated an Africa-centred development paradigm with massive socio-economic transformation preceding and accompanying economic growth. Adedeji often focused on the need for Africa to rediscover a sense of cultural self-confidence in order to overcome its psychological dependence on its former European colonial masters. He criticised the discipline of development economics as focusing excessively on economic growth, rather than human development, and noted that its ideas were based on the experiences of industrialised countries, and thus not directly applicable to the African context. He condemned the obsession of the 'two-gap model' (which held that the lack of domestic savings or import purchasing capacity restricted foreign investment and development), arguing instead that foreign capital and foreign aid reinforced Africa's socio-economic dependence and had helped to create the continent's external debt burden of US\$250 billion by 1989. These ideas, which were controversial at the time, have since become more mainstream. Adedeji was also critical of African economists who championed what he

regarded as the blind imitation of inappropriate Western models.¹⁰ The context for his analysis was Africa's experience of shortfalls and negative growth in agricultural output and commodity exports between 1960 and 1975. He thus surmised that the continent's embrace of orthodox economic theories had resulted in declining growth rates, lack of diversification, and negligible self-reliance.¹¹

BATTLING THE BRETTON WOODS INSTITUTIONS

Adedeji established a reputation for being a pragmatic economist more interested in solving problems than being constrained by ideological straitjackets. His most bruising intellectual battles were with the Bretton Woods institutions: The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). He led the ECA to develop in 1976 a 'Revised Framework of Principles for the Implementation of the New International Economic Order'. This document provided the theoretical foundation for the subsequent Monrovia Strategy of 1979, the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA), and the Final Act of Lagos (FAL), both of 1980. The focus of this quartet of reports—produced with teams of largely African economists at the ECA and in consultation with African policymakers—reflected Adedeji's core intellectual concern with the concepts of 'economic decolonisation' and 'self-reliance'. He firmly believed that economic growth must be accompanied by social justice and equity.¹²

The ECA's Revised Framework of 1976 called for more African expertise to promote socio-economic development and a move away from orthodox prescriptions on the efficacy of international trade as an engine for growth and social change. Adedeji argued against African countries continuing to export one or two primary products and importing consumer goods, as this increased the continent's external dependence. He also had a passion for national planning as well as for building a more effective and developmental state, which could allocate resources more rationally. Adedeji criticised Africa's failure to prioritise indigenous factor inputs, its over-reliance on foreign exchange from exports for these inputs, and the lack of participation by Africa's masses in production and consumption processes.

The ECA's Revised Framework also advocated greater self-reliance; the acceleration of internal processes of growth and diversification; and the eradication of unemployment and mass poverty to achieve a more equitable distribution of income. Self-sustainability was meant to bring about processes of development in which different components would mutually support each other, become linked to internalising demand and supply processes, and generate its own internal dynamic. At the core of this approach, domestic, sub-regional, and regional markets would replace foreign markets. The four pillars of development in this framework were thus self-reliance, self-sustainability, the democratisation of the development process, and more equitable distribution of the benefits of development. 'Developmental regionalism' was thus to be combined with 'developmental nationalism'.¹³

In a process led by Adedeji's ECA, the Revised Framework was incorporated into the Monrovia Strategy in 1979 with input from African development and planning ministers. The 'Lagos Plan of Action for the Economic Development of Africa 1980–2000' was adopted a year later by African heads of state. Both documents stressed many of the same points as the Revised Framework and sought to flesh out the intra-sectoral and inter-sectoral linkages required to develop Africa's agricultural and industrial sectors, as well as identify the need to involve Africa's evolving sub-regional bodies in development plans. The LPA identified seven strategic sectors for Africa's development: food and agriculture, industry, natural resources, human resources, transport and communications, trade and finance, and energy. The end goal would be an African Common Market, resulting in an African Economic Community (AEC).¹⁴ Eleven years later, African leaders agreed in Abuja in 1991 to establish an African Common Market by 2023 (a date later pushed back to 2028).

The World Bank's report *Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Agenda for Action*—overseen by American economist Elliot Berg—was published in 1981, a year after the Lagos Plan of Action. Curiously, African finance ministers had asked the World Bank to prepare the report despite their leaders having endorsed the LPA. Adedeji described the World Bank document as the 'antithesis' of his own plan, since its emphasis was on the external market and on continuing Africa's export-oriented trade, with agricultural exports being perceived as the engine for Africa's economic development. Where Adedeji stressed *regional* interdependence, the World Bank emphasised *global* interdependence. The *Agenda* blamed Africa's trade and exchange-rate policies for the continent's weak incentives for exports and did not place the same emphasis as Adedeji on the deteriorating external environment in which commodity markets had collapsed. Though African heads of state at the OAU rejected the World Bank's *Agenda*, and insisted on implementing the Lagos Plan of Action, the process revealed the continent's powerlessness. African governments had agreed on the first ever 'home-grown' continental development plan in 1980 but then called on the main funders of the World Bank to abandon their own blueprint in favour of an African strategy. The failure of external donors to do so inevitably led to the demise of the LPA.

Adedeji further used the ECA to launch the most sustained assault on the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) implemented from the 1980s by the World Bank and the IMF. African governments had accumulated massive debts, following the oil crises and economic recession of the 1970s and early 1980s, forcing thirty-five countries to accept the tough conditions set by these institutions in order to obtain loans. These conditions usually involved deep cuts in social spending in vital sectors such as education and health. Adedeji ridiculed the Bretton Woods institutions for their attempt to claim success from SAPs despite all evidence to the contrary. He noted that despite the implementations of the SAPs, Africa's gross domestic product (GDP) had, by 1988, declined from 2.7 per cent to 1.8 per cent; investment ratios had fallen from 20.6 per cent to 17.1 per cent; budget deficits had increased from 6.5 per

cent to 7.5 per cent of GDP; and the ratio of debt service to export earnings had risen from 17.5 per cent to 23.4 per cent.¹⁵ He scathingly criticised the World Bank for raising questions about the neglect of the institutional dimensions of development and the importance of domestic long-term visions and external factors only after its policies had failed. These policies caused widespread economic hardship across Africa,¹⁶ as the continent once again became a giant laboratory for socio-economic experiments by Western alchemists.

Adedeji coined the widely used term 'the lost decade' to describe Africa's rapid decline in the 1980s as GDP per capita fell by 2.6 per cent annually, the continent's share of world output and trade stood at 1 per cent, and armed conflicts proliferated in countries such as Uganda, Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique, and Somalia. He argued against what he regarded as the Bretton Woods institutions' approach of 'growth without development' and the export-led integration of African states into the world economy on massively unequal terms. Adedeji stressed the need for Africa to use its own resources to promote greater intra-African growth, prioritising agriculture, the sector in which about 70 per cent of Africans found employment.¹⁷

Adedeji led the development by the ECA of Africa's Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation (AAF-SAP) of 1989, which was the first comprehensive alternative to the SAPs and which all members of the UN General Assembly except the United States endorsed. The framework called for policy action in four key areas: strengthening and diversifying productive capacity; improving levels and distribution of income; radically changing patterns of expenditure; and creating appropriate institutional frameworks to support the adjustment of African economies in transformative ways.¹⁸ The framework further sought to end the dichotomy between short-term crisis management through adjustment programmes and long-term development goals. Consistent with the Lagos Plan of Action of 1980, the AAF-SAP advocated a revision of the structure of production and demand and urged African governments to refocus on domestic development and the optimal use of indigenous factor inputs.¹⁹ This effort was different from the Lagos Plan of Action, in that, rather than being solely a 'home-grown' African plan, it sought international consensus and support, even that of the World Bank and the IMF, by setting up an international advisory board. A critical lesson had thus been learnt: it was not enough to win the battle of ideas. Africa also had to have the power and resources to implement these ideas.

This time, the World Bank responded more constructively. Three months after the AAF-SAP was published, the Bank produced in 1989 the report *Sub-Saharan Africa – From Crisis to Sustainable Growth: A Long-Term Perspective Study*, which sought to achieve synergy with the African Alternative Framework. Adedeji would later describe the World Bank report as 'a major contribution to the emergence of common ground in laying the basis for concerted action in forging a brighter future for Africa'.²⁰ Though there were still some areas of disagreement between the ECA and the World Bank, the latter was now

prepared to admit that it might have been wrong in some of its assumptions about SAPs, and it did not have all the answers to Africa's development challenges. Despite the publication of this report, however, the operational and lending arms of the World Bank and IMF still continued with the implementation of the SAPs as they had before, without properly considering their social costs (particularly on Africa's health and education sectors) and without properly consulting African governments and other continental actors.²¹

ADEDEJI: AN AFRICAN CASSANDRA?

Adedeji also led efforts to craft the 1990 African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation.²² He often challenged what he regarded as Africa's 'mindless imitation' of Western development models and pushed instead for a human-centred view of development and integration, which involved the full participation of Africa's then 800 million citizens. S.K.B. Asante, the renowned Ghanaian political economist who wrote a book on Adedeji's development strategies in 1991, described him as an 'African Cassandra': a visionary prophet who saw the future clearly, but whose prophecies often went unheeded until it was too late.²³ In the end, the World Bank and IMF reversed the large cuts in education and health spending that had decimated Africa's socio-economic sector in the 1980s and 1990s. Debt relief also became fashionable more than a decade after Adedeji had warned about the unsustainability of Africa's US\$250 billion external debt in the 1980s.

Critics have noted that Adedeji's Lagos Plan of Action lacked a practical mechanism for achieving its objectives, as well as a timetable and detailed assessment of the costs for implementing these ideas. The LPA also failed to provide quantitative linkages between sectors and sub-sectors.²⁴ Adedeji's calls for self-reliance were further criticised as vague and impractical, and some critics regarded as foolhardy what they saw as efforts to delink Africa from the global economy. Furthermore, the LPA had some African critics. During a Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) conference with the ECA in 1982, several authors castigated the plan for being quiet or ambiguous on such issues as communal versus private ownership of land, the need to define how to prioritise agricultural and industrial exports, and the role of foreign investment in development. African scholars further criticised the LPA as having been naive about state agricultural policies in Africa, for ignoring the class dimensions of governing regimes on the continent and for assuming that African leaders were interested in promoting the welfare of their own citizens.²⁵ Other critics like the *Financial Times* dismissed Adedeji's ideas as 'statist'.²⁶ These criticisms partly reflected the fact that the LPA was a political consensus document adopted by all of Africa's fifty governments. While the plan was accepted by the OAU, it was, however, ultimately left to gather dust on the shelves of African development ministries, as the continent lacked the resources to pay for its implementation.

Describing Adedeji's tenure at the ECA, Kenyan scholar Gilbert Khadiagala argued that his leadership 'did not entirely transform the institution into an autonomous source on African ideas on development'. Khadiagala further noted that divergent national practices and Africa's declining international leverage ultimately led, instead, to the widespread adoption of the World Bank's SAPs.²⁷ Even in terms of regional integration—the idea with which Adedeji is most closely associated—bodies like ECOWAS, COMESA, and ECCAS have failed to achieve their integration goals, and, in 2019, only about 12–15 per cent of Africa's trade was still conducted among its own countries. Adedeji himself conceded in 2004 that 'no effective integration has taken place in ECOWAS', arguing that politics and not economics would ultimately determine the success of regional integration efforts in Africa.²⁸ Like Prebisch in Latin America, a frustrated Adedeji later lamented the inability of African governments to match their rhetoric with reality.²⁹ African leaders provided rhetorical political support to Adedeji's development ideas, but they often lacked the domestic discipline to implement them, and, more importantly, the external technical and financial resources suggested by the plans were not provided by foreign donors.

ADEDEJI IN SEMI-RETIREMENT: REGIONAL INTEGRATION, DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE, AND REGIONAL HEGEMONS

After retiring from the ECA in 1991, Adedeji continued his regional integration efforts in Africa: he served on a committee to review the ECOWAS treaty in 1992; he was on another body to transform the OAU into the African Union (AU) in 2002; and in 2007 he chaired the committee which audited the five-year integration efforts of the AU. The December 2007 audit of the AU called for an acceleration of regional integration on the continent, and it made concrete recommendations for strengthening the AU and Africa's sub-regional bodies.³⁰ The report further advocated strengthening national mechanisms to accelerate economic integration; incorporating decisions of regional bodies into national institutions; adhering to the AU decision to recognise only eight Regional Economic Communities (RECs); focusing the RECs on activities to create an African Common Market and African Economic Community by 2028; and strengthening the AU's internal mechanisms for more effective coordination and harmonisation of the RECs.³¹

By the time Adedeji retired from the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)—a plan strongly pushed by South Africa's president, Thabo Mbeki, with its secretariat in Midrand—in July 2010, thirty African countries had signed up for the APRM review (forty members in February 2020) and twenty-three governments had gone through the process, which Adedeji chaired between July 2007 and July 2010. Under the APRM process, each country prepares a national programme of action after undertaking a self-evaluation, which involves government officials, civil society, and the private sector. The

APRM Panel of Eminent Persons then submits a country review report to help African governments identify institutional, policy, and capacity weaknesses, before recommending remedies for these shortcomings. The peer review mechanism is intended to encourage countries to adopt sound policies, priorities, and standards for political, economic, development, and sub-regional and continental integration through shared experiences.³² The mechanism was thus not crafted as a punitive process to impose sanctions on errant governments, but later as an inclusive and voluntary process to assist a country's own development efforts.

Adedeji was the lead panellist of the South African APRM country review process, which took place between 2005 and 2007. The Country Review Report, which was released in 2007, acknowledged the country's political and economic progress, but it criticised the slow pace of socio-economic transformation and growing inequalities, cautioning about the growing threat of xenophobic attacks in the country.³³ Like the proverbial ostrich that buries its head in the sand, the notoriously thin-skinned government of Thabo Mbeki strongly objected to the report's criticisms, arrogantly and irresponsibly dismissing the xenophobic threat as 'simply not true'.³⁴ Adedeji would once again prove to be a Cassandra: in May 2008, 62 foreigners were killed in South Africa and about 100,000 people displaced in horrific attacks against foreigners. Between 2008 and 2015, an estimated 3500 largely African migrants were killed in similar attacks in South Africa.

Having edited in 1996 a book called *South Africa in Africa: Within or Apart?*, which recognised the country's pivotal role in promoting regional integration on the continent,³⁵ Adedeji later set out his views on South Africa's political economy in 2007 in a chapter titled 'South Africa and Africa's Political Economy: Looking Inside from the Outside'. In it, he reviewed South Africa's political economy within the broader African context. Adedeji called for South Africans to 'deconstruct' their colonially inherited political economy, and he cautioned the country not to pursue the timid approach of other post-colonial African states that had failed to transform their colonial inheritance. He lamented the abandonment by the South African government, under pressure from external financial actors like the World Bank and IMF as well as foreign investors, of the more socially activist Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP)—implemented from 1994—for the more conservative Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) macroeconomic strategy—adopted in 1996. He called, instead, for an effective and equitable 'developmental state' in South Africa that would reduce social inequalities.³⁶

Adedeji was equally scathing in his criticisms of his own country, observing in relation to Nigeria's declining global standing in 2004: 'No country that is confronted with a long period of political instability, economic stagnation, and regression, and is reputed to be one of the most corrupt societies in the world, has a moral basis to lead others. If it tries to, it will be resisted'.³⁷ The scholar-technocrat had turned down the chance to become Nigeria's foreign minister in 1975, agreeing instead to chair a landmark review of his country's foreign

policy.³⁸ He also turned down the chance to head Nigeria's interim government after the annulment of democratic elections by the military in June 1993, but he agreed to serve as a member of the country's National Political Reform Conference set up to chart Nigeria's political future in 2005. While many countries would have grasped the opportunity for such a distinguished international figure to lead them, Adedeji's attempt to secure the presidency of Nigeria after retiring from the ECA in 1991 proved unsuccessful. Nigerian politics remain dominated by military generals, moneybags, and mediocrity: no Nigerian leader in forty-seven years had entered State House with a university education until Umaru Yar'Adua in May 2007.

Adedeji effectively announced his retirement from public life at the AU summit in Kampala in July 2010 after over five decades of dedicated service to the continent. The earlier tributes paid to him by three African elder statesmen are worth recalling as they illustrate his immense contributions to regional integration and development in Africa. Nigeria's General Yakubu Gowon—in whose cabinet Adedeji had served for four years—described him as 'a very practical and dynamic man who could hold his own in any place anywhere in the world'; Senegal's Abdou Diouf called Adedeji 'a man who has played a considerable role in propagating an authentically African way of thinking about economic and social development'; while Zambia's Kenneth Kaunda noted that 'Africa will forever be grateful to him for the analytical and objective approach that he has adopted in his work'.³⁹ In a 2006 book, Adedeji was named among the world's fifty leading thinkers on development in a list that stretched back to such figures as Karl Marx.⁴⁰

It is often said that no prophet is honoured in his own land. Nigeria's Cassandra has been no exception. Adedeji was not given the opportunity to lead Nigeria, but his country and continent owe a great debt of gratitude to one of their most accomplished intellectuals and public servants.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

Adedeji was widely regarded as the intellectual 'father of African integration'. He challenged Western-dominated conventional wisdom and won the support of his continent through his courageous policy battles with more powerful international adversaries, led by the World Bank and IMF. He emerged as a major world figure, but, ultimately, he was a tragic prophet whose visions for regional integration and development went largely unfulfilled. Regional integration in Africa was concerned with promoting economic development in countries with largely illiterate populations, weak infrastructure, and poor governance.

Adedeji did have a keen political understanding of what regional governments would support and championed the idea of 'home-grown' development and notions of self-reliance built on the specific experiences of African countries, as well as on regional ownership of these ideas. Even the most corrupt and venal African governments saw the importance of the ideas championed by

Adedeji. He consistently sought private sector participation in his regional initiatives, acting as a public intellectual who often wrote his own speeches and sought to appeal directly above the heads of national governments to broader audiences in universities, think tanks, the private sector, and other forums. He employed impressive communication skills to explain complicated economic ideas, turning the ECA into an intellectual think tank where he and his staff could develop plans to transform the global economic system in ways that addressed the acute disadvantages of their own continent.

Adedeji travelled the length and breadth of Africa to try to understand the problems of regional integration and development through lived experiences. He insisted on excellence and hard work from his bureaucrats and enjoyed generating new ideas. He also realised that he had to relate such concepts to practical action and muster political support to implement his vision. He acted as a technocrat working behind the scenes in a powerful bureaucracy. He shared an aversion to the operation of blind market forces and regarded politics as inseparable from economics. Adedeji regarded regional integration as a means to promote peace and socio-economic development. He was a far-sighted visionary who often saw the future more clearly than the leaders he sought to advise. In the end, he failed to achieve his vision and never lived to see his aspiration for an African Common Market fulfilled. Adedeji turned out to be a visionary Cassandra: his calls for Africa to focus more on its own development priorities, for the health and education cuts imposed by the Bretton Woods institutions to be reversed, and for the debt crisis to be urgently addressed, while often turning out to be correct, went unheeded until it was too late. If he failed to achieve his goals, it was a heroic failure born not of lack of ambition or application, but of power.

NOTES

1. I have relied on the entertaining biography by Temilolu Sanmi-Ajiki, *Adebayo Adedeji: A Rainbow in the Sky of Time* (Lagos: Newswatch Books, 2000).
2. The information in the above two paragraphs have been summarised from ‘The Order of the Funeral Service of Professor Adebayo Adedeji’, 6 July 2018, pp. 19–20.
3. Sanmi-Ajiki, *Adebayo Adedeji*, pp. 110–122.
4. Adebayo Adedeji, ‘Prospects for Regional Economic Cooperation in West Africa’, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 8 July 1970, pp. 213–231.
5. See also Adebayo Adedeji, ‘ECOWAS: A Retrospective Journey’, in Adekeye Adebajo and Ismail Rashid (eds.), *West Africa’s Security Challenges: Building Peace in a Troubled Region* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 2004), pp. 21–49.
6. See Adebayo Adedeji (ed.), *Africa within the World: Beyond Dispossession and Dependence* (London: Zed Books, 1993); S.K.B. Asante, *African Development: Adebayo Adedeji’s Alternative Strategies* (Ibadan: Spectrum, 1991); Reginald Cline-Cole, ‘Adebayo Adedeji’, in David Simon (ed.), *Fifty Key Thinkers on Development* (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2006); Bade Onimode and

- Richard Synge (eds.), *Issues in African Development: Essays in Honour of Adebayo Adedeji at 65* (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1995); and Bade Onimode et al., *African Development and Governance Strategies in the 21st Century: Looking Back to Move Forward. Essays in Honour of Adebayo Adedeji at Seventy* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2004).
7. Adedeji, 'ECOWAS: A Retrospective Journey', p. 234. See also Adebayo Adedeji, 'The Economic Commission for Africa', in Adekeye Adebajo (ed.), *From Global Apartheid to Global Village: Africa and the United Nations* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press 2009), pp. 373–398.
 8. Adedeji, 'The Economic Commission for Africa', pp. 373–398.
 9. See the insightful biography by Edgar J. Dosman, *The Life and Times of Raúl Prebisch, 1901–1986* (McGill: Queen's University Press, 2008).
 10. Adebayo Adedeji, 'The ECA: Forging a Future for Africa', in Yves Berthelot (ed.), *Unity and Diversity in Development Ideas: Perspectives from the UN Regional Commissions* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), pp. 253–256.
 11. Adedeji, 'The ECA: Forging a Future for Africa', pp. 257–258.
 12. Adedeji, 'The ECA: Forging a Future for Africa', pp. 258–259.
 13. The above two paragraphs are summarised from Adedeji, 'The ECA: Forging a Future for Africa', pp. 259–262 and p. 269.
 14. Adedeji, 'The ECA: Forging a Future for Africa', pp. 262–265.
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 16. Adedeji, 'The ECA: Forging a Future for Africa', pp. 256–257.
 17. Asante, *African Development: Adebayo Adedeji's Alternative Strategies*.
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33. See African Peer Review Mechanism, ‘Country Review Report: Republic of South Africa’, African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) Country Review Report, 2007.
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