

Nigeria's Role and Membership in the Economic Community of West African States (Ecowas): A Cost-Benefit Analysis of a Sub-Regional Integration, 1975-2024

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Abstract: *The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) always meant different things to different people. To some, it was a talk-shop Union for high-level government officials while others construed it as a cry for "utopia" resultant from the sub-region's past failings. However, this survey was meant to appraise and clarify issues on the ECOWAS, and highlighted its problems and prospects. None of the countries in the sub-region had established the firm pillars of an industrial economy, such as iron and steel and machine tools complexes; and the petro-chemical industry. The survey examined in detail the deficiencies vis-à-vis what made the leaders of the sub-region think it was worthwhile to form a union: an economic union. But there were previous efforts in the West African sub-region at integration before the ECOWAS Treaty was signed in Lagos in May 28, 1975. To this extent, the roles played, inputs made and the benefits that accrued to the integrating units, especially to Nigeria, were critically examined. Inclusive in the inputs were the immense human and material resources which Nigeria contributed to the ECOWAS which, unarguably, were at the expense of her citizens? This paper considered, against the backdrop of Nigeria's persistence in the ECOWAS effort of her national interests, foreign policy objectives and diplomacy in contradistinction to a citizen-oriented diplomacy. It undertook a juxtaposition of the ECOWAS efforts vis-à-vis pre-existing economic models in other parts of the advanced world, such as the African Economic Community, the Latin American versions and the New World International Economic Order. The analytical method was adopted and the findings included, among others, that Nigeria played the big brother role in the ECOWAS to the detriment of her citizens and national development and economy.*

Keywords: Economic community, ECOWAS, sub-region, industrial economy, pre-existing models, citizen's diplomacy, treaty, integrating units, talking-shop.

INTRODUCTION

This paper undertakes a cost-benefit analysis of Nigeria's membership of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); yet, it will historicize and survey the antecedents to its formation which are intergroup relations in the West African sub-region; and how these formed the basis and, indeed, made possible the signing of the ECOWAS Treaty in Lagos, Nigeria, on May 28, 1975. The paper will be written in the historical presence vis-à-vis the assumptive benefits that Nigeria hopes will accrue to it from her membership, leadership and 'unnecessary' exhibits of benevolence in the ambit of the ECOWAS. Consequently, further researches which would be written in the historical past could be undertaken by interested researchers or as a part two to this paper.

The period before the imposition of colonial rule and the quest for granting of independence to African countries was preceded by sustained intergroup relations by communities through warfare, trade and diplomacy. To say that the ECOWAS was given birth to only in 1975 will be denying the long relationship that existed among and between her peoples, who traversed the various ecological zones in order to acquire what could not be cultivated, produced and manufactured from particular zones. Prior to the ECOWAS period, more than a thousand ethnic groups lived in West Africa and had functional indigenous social, economic and political institutions which served their governance, socio-economic and community development needs. Suffice it to say that they also interacted with each other through loose confederations, conventions and co-operations (Edmond A. Allison-Oguru, 2011: 4-10).

Background to the Formation of the ECOWAS

The most successful effort in the sub-region's quest for collective self-reliance was the signing of the ECOWAS Treaty on May 28, 1975 in Lagos, Nigeria. As envisaged by the authors of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the sub-region required a monetary union with a supra-national international structure and a sophisticated multilateral payments system. As expected, it would have instituted a flexible adjustment mechanism which will be easy to operate by all (Akinyemi, Falegan and Aluko, 1984: 7). The initial signatories were Liberia, Nigeria, Togo, Ghana, Upper Volta, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Gambia, Benin, Niger, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania, Senegal and Mali. The Republic of Cape Verde joined later as the sixteenth Member State.

ECOWAS is the sumtotal of the desire for a sub-regional cooperation and for a collective front against the persisting problems of underdevelopment and the New World Economic Order. This forms the basic perspective of ECOWAS since none of the integrating states in the sub-region could boast of an economic superstructure with a firm industrial base, such as iron and steel, and machine tools complexes; and a fully developed petrochemical industry. By all observable standards, the economic statuses of member states at the point of inauguration were far from self-reliance. The integration became more urgent when events in the contemporary 'globalizing' international system showed that no single nation-state can independently pursue its economic, cultural, strategic and political objectives alone. The handy solution then was nations to enter into bilateral and multilateral arrangements and

agreements; and form international associations and/or co-operations with geographically contiguous States (Asiwaju, 1984: 32).

Although much has been written on the ECOWAS, Asiwaju advised that for a proper appreciation of the origins of the integration, signing of the ECOWAS into law, eliciting the problems inherent in the organization, appraising the merits and demerits accruing to Member-States, it is important to put the events in their proper historical perspective (Asiwaju, 1984). This is apt since the idea of some kinds of economic relations and co-operations, although loosely, had existed in pre-colonial times.

Intergroup Relations in Pre-ECOWAS West African Sub-region

The argument is not to insist on a historical assessment as the best approach to appraising ECOWAS, but to illustrate that the idea of people cooperating and integrating in the sub-region did not originate in a vacuum, but a continuum of its history.

Fundamental to historical thinking is, first, that there is always something for the present to gain from an awareness of the past, and second, there is a need for a serious assessment of the various roles which have brought to fruition the efforts "...which would appear to have dated further back, even beyond the European imperialist scramble and partition at the turn of the century" (Asiwaju, 1984). The argument here is that the spontaneous response of the leaders of the sub-region in signing the Lagos Treaty and the adoption of the Accra Protocol in 1975 and 1976, respectively, cannot be seen only in terms of the interestedness of the leaders, but was exacerbated by previous relations and co-operations among the peoples of West Africa in pre-colonial and colonial times. In essence, primordial circumstances contributed sufficiently in motivating the countries' leaders to decide on the ECOWAS in addition to contemporary issues.

Evidences abound in the history of the sub-region that suggest socio-economic relations between the kingdoms of Kanem-Bornu, Mali, Ashanti and the Yoruba states of Old Oyo, Badagry, Ketu and Ijebu. These were sustained since revenue accrued to these peoples. In European explorers' records, trade was the main medium of contact among the West African peoples; and also the principal instrument for cultural homogenization in the various received literature. The diaries of Captain Hugh Clapperton and the Lander Brothers (Richard and John) indicate extensive socio-economic interaction among the West African peoples and other peoples of Africa notably those of North Africa before the era of European political and commercial intervention. The Trans-Saharan routes with their northern termini along the Mediterranean Sea coast extended into the forest belt and to the Atlantic coast in the southernmost extremity of the region. Some of the important old and frequented highways were those from Badagry through Old Oyo to as far as Sokoto used by the Yoruba and Adja speaking peoples while trading to Hausaland and the Maghrib. In the east-west, Samuel Ajayi Crowther reported intense economic activities at Ketu, an ancient Yoruba capital. There were links between the Ketu, Ijebu and Benin to the East; and ancient Dahomey and Ashanti to the West (Asiwaju, 1984).

Even before the European 19th century Scramble and Partition of Africa, there were functional inter-State unions and co-operations, often for purposes of military defense and, occasionally, for socio-

economic ends. The Ekitiparapo was the most spectacular of such inter-state military alliances of the Ekiti, Ijesa and the Igbomina, which in the period between 1877 and 1893 countered Ibadan imperial designs in eastern Yorubaland. There was also the *Confederation des Nagots*, a grouping of the Yoruba States, between the Yewa and Weme Rivers (astride the present Nigeria-Benin boundary) that was formed in 1852 to combat Dahomean military menace in the area (Asiwaju, 1984). As mentioned earlier, there were notable conventions among Yoruba States and in the other traditional West African States, whereby market places were regarded in times of war as neutral grounds (Akintoye, 1969). This convention showed the premium traditional West African societies placed on peaceful co-existence and socio-economic co-operation. In strictly socio-economic terms, the sub-region had, within human memory, formed a complex whole. The long distance trade in all directions dated from antiquity and enhanced the concept and tradition of familial relationship among several regional and sub-regional groups in West Africa, and in Africa generally.

Another salient historical perspective and background to the formation of the ECOWAS was the Scramble and Partition of Africa. This created two distinct political environments, namely, the Franco-phone and Anglo-phone West African communities. In the Franco-phone areas, integration was easy since the organic conception of government constituted the base of a rigidly centralized administration of the French. The French centralist form of administration, the French language and a common CFA currency, fostered a high degree of homogeneity and made Franco-phone West Africa culturally and politically distinct. But the Indirect Rule policy in the British-speaking sector of the West African sub-region did not encourage such centralization, therefore, no homogeneity. However, there were such institutions as a Common West African Court of Appeal, Common Currency and Marketing Boards and the West African Conference of Governors of British territories. All these provided a common forum and services which helped to bring together territories that were administered as separate units. More integration efforts in coloniality were the inter-colonial State relationships between the French and British colonies, such as the Anglo-French Entente of 1904 and the Anglo-French Consultative Commission (Ade Ajayi and Smith, 1964).

The survey so far supports the fact that integration in the sub-region did not originate in a vacuum, and that, indeed, the partition and scramble of Africa and colonialism were interruptions to traditional and/or initial moves to integration in the sub-region. Therefore, while the European aim for partition was to map out areas, considered very economically viable to rule and exploit, they unwittingly cleft formerly closely-knit ethnic and group entities into British and French colonial domains. This is in spite of the fact that the peoples of West Africa had, before these times, strong historical, ethnological and cultural connections. This phenomenon is evidenced in situations such as those of the Yoruba, the Ewe, the Ashanti, the Agni, the Bariba, the Hausa, the Wolof and Mossi who became split during the partition into three distinct colonial spheres. The Yoruba, until 1918, were divided into British-Nigeria, French-Dahomey and German-Togo (Asiwaju, 1984: 36).

Thus, the formation of the ECOWAS in 1975 is a follow-up to the integrative and cooperative activities in the pre-colonial and colonial times. The awareness being created here is that the subject of integration in the sub-region is not a new one. Rather, the present enthusiasm is a continuation, and in

consonance too with the new trend all over the world for regional association of States for the purposes of accelerated and even development of their economies; and in the commensurate improvement in the level of living and welfare of their peoples.

The predominance of the primary sector; a high concentration of income; sparse diversification in its production system and an external market far outweighing the internal, compelled West African leaders by the mid-1970s to initiate a form of restructuring into a group if the political independence of the agglomerating nations was to retain its meaning and value. It was against this backdrop that the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was formed in May 28, 1975 with several aims and objectives. During an ECOWAS Conference in Lagos in 1976, Adamu Ciroma (1984: XVII) said that:

The broad objective of ECOWAS is the promotion of co-operation and development in all fields of economic activity particularly in the fields of industry, transport, telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, commerce, monetary and financial questions, and in social and cultural matters for the purpose of raising the standards of living of its people, increasing and maintaining economic stability, fostering closer relations among its members....

Broadly speaking, the objectives of the ECOWAS are ambitious. In Article 2, Chapter 1 of the Treaty establishing the ECOWAS, it is stated that:

It shall be the aim of the Community to promote co-operation and development in all fields of economic activity particularly in the fields of industry, transport, tele-communication, energy, agriculture, natural resources, commerce, monetary and financial questions and in social and cultural matters for the purpose of raising the standard of living of its peoples, of increasing and maintaining economic stability, of fostering closer relations among its members and of contributing to the progress and development of the African continent.

This Treaty shall by stages ensure:

The elimination of customs duties and other charges in respect of the importation and exportation of goods; the abolition of quantitative and administrative restrictions on trade; the establishment of common customs tariff and commercial policy towards third countries; the free movement of persons, services, and capital; the harmonization and promotion of the agricultural policies and projects in the fields of marketing, research and agro-industrial enterprises; common policy in the joint development of transport, communication, energy and other infrastructural facilities; the harmonization of economic and industrial policies, and the elimination of disparities in the level of development of Member-States; the harmonization of monetary policies; the establishment of a Fund for Co-operation, Compensation and Development; and such other activities calculated to further the aims of the Community as the Member-States may from time to time undertake in common. Even after the revision of the ECOWAS Treaty in 1993, the aims and objectives of the

ECOWAS remained basically the same excepting some modifications (Adamu Ciroma, 1984: XVII).

Ciroma (1984: XVII) further stated that:

It is crucially important ... that for ECOWAS to achieve its noble objectives the problems attendant on any attempts to form countries into groups would need to be correctly diagnosed and the right therapeutic dose prescribed.

This observation is based on the problems that cropped up in the immediate post-integration era. There was a need for effective co-ordination of investments in the sub-region, payment of compensations to member countries who would have suffered losses, and the gradual surrender by member countries of the powers to take economic decisions at national levels and its effect on their national policies and, perhaps, sovereignty. This dilemma arising from integration was very obvious to members (The Nordic Institute, 2024).

Certain questions have been raised in the bid to establish a justification for this research and to strengthen it. Among these are: to what extent has the ECOWAS Treaty been implemented regarding solving the Community's problems vis-à-vis balancing the principles and pragmatism? What degrees of commitment have member States proffered towards building a viable economic sub-region like their Western counterparts, such as the European Economic Community (EEC)? Integration involves political actors from distinct national settings shifting their loyalties, expectations and political activities towards a new centre with institutions possessing powers or jurisdiction over pre-existing national organs and elite. The Treaty instituting the ECOWAS in May 1975 in Lagos, Nigeria seemed utopian but construed realizable. This is so since it is a contractual form of interdependent co-existence among contiguous States that share common experiences, values, interests and aspirations; and agree to work together for set goals (Chidi Osuagwu, 2002: 4). This is irrespective of their national constitutions which established their sovereignties.

The contradictions inherent in the ECOWAS existence, and, in fact, in all other such forms of integration, are underscored by the fact that integration brings units together under conditions that cannot permit the satisfaction of their internal (national) system needs (Akinyemi, 1978: 61). This implies the acceptance by member-States of a supra-nationalism in contradistinction to the precepts of their national sovereignties and independence. In essence, by acceding to the Treaty they empowered the ECOWAS to exercise some degree of authority over member States.

Although integration in the international system has usually been prompted by socio-economic and political reasons, the emphasis in the formation of the ECOWAS was economic. The theoretical rationale, from the outset, for the formation of the ECOWAS was for the integration to affect positively the rate of growth of the Gross National Products of member countries. In the sub-region, some of the member-States of the ECOWA are economically well off than others, and integration was and, still is, intended to enlarge their market sizes. Firms in member-States that in the pre-ECOWAS period produced below optimum capacity would now, expectedly, reap the benefit of economics of scale. The

effect of a larger market size, therefore, ensures that the least unit cost of production within the integration area would stimulate demand and consumption, and ultimately leads to increased investment, therefore, economic growth. Economic growth simply means increased level of economic activity through increased trade, permitting exchanges with external economies, specifically of member-States; and enhance their inter and intra-industrial forward and backward linkages that would also cumulatively lowers the cost of production.

As stated earlier, the ECOWAS Treaty it was assumed would enhance economic efficiency via the effective utilization of resources and the harmonization of economic and trade policies which, in turn, would usher in a smooth and orderly system of trade among member-States. It devised sectoral programmes and their implementation entrusted to ECOWAS specialized agencies and institutions, such as the Community Court of Justice, the ECOWAS Parliament, the West African Health Organization (WAHO) and the ntergovernmental Action Group against Money Laundering (GIABA) (www.ecowas.int).

Economic integration usually gives rise to a polarization effect on some member countries. This effect refers to the ‘cumulative worsening of the relative or absolute economic position of a member country or some regions in the integrating area due to concentrated trade creation or attractiveness of labour and capital emanating from elsewhere. Here, Nigeria, which is the centre point of this study immediately comes to mind vis-à-vis her national interest and foreign policy (Modupe Irele, 1990: 2). The national interest and foreign policy of Nigeria will be viewed against the backdrop of the Five Protocols which emanate from the mandate of the ECOWAS Heads of State, and assisted by the Economic Commission for Africa and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This is provided for by Article 62 of the ECOWAS Treaty, which deals with:

- i. Contributions of member States to the budget of ECOWAS;
- ii. Re-exportation within ECOWAS of goods imported from third countries;
- iii. The Fund for Co-operation, Compensation and Development of ECOWAS;
- iv. Assessment of loss of revenue by member States as a result of trade liberalization within the Economic Community; and
- v. Definition of the concept of products originating from member States (Adebayo Adediji, 1984: XXVI).

These protocols have all been adopted, but it remains their implementation in the sub-region. Economic integration must be seen as distinct from economic cooperation. While economic integration means a closer degree of economic association arising through a formal agreement or occasioned by an informal circumstance, the countries involved expectedly begin to surrender some degrees of sovereignty and act as an economic unit. On the other hand, economic cooperation refers to a process whereby sovereign states cooperate with one another bilaterally or multilaterally through International Governmental Organizations (IGOs), such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Group of 8 (G-8). Hence, economic integration could be seen as an offshoot or an advanced form of economic cooperation. At no point has economic co-operation precisely become economic integration. It is more

a matter of moving along a continuum ranging from economic isolation, then to economic co-operation, and finally to economic integration (John T Rourke., 1999: 483). Some commentators have argued that, discernibly, the leaders of some of the ECOWAS member-States did not fully appreciate the actual tag, whether it is a co-operation or integration, pursuant to the signing of the Treaty. From the events in the post-ECOWAS period, pragmatism and enthusiasm obviously outweighed balancing the principles and precepts of the Treaty.

In Africa, for instance, the East African Common Market (EACM), with Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania as members, had reached the stage of graduating into a monetary union and was poised too, from all indications, to becoming the most successful integrative attempt in the continent. But, unfortunately, owing partly to the structural problems mentioned above among other factors, the organization failed. A change of regime in Uganda in addition to the plurality of ethnic nationalities, lacking in the moral will to aggressively support the union, and the apparent distrust that existed among its members, brought the EACM to an untimely end. Also contributory to the EACM's failure was the divergence in the ideologies pursued by the different countries of the Community. While Tanzania preferred the Socialist "Ujamaa" option, Uganda and Kenya preferred the Capitalist (Adediji, 1984: XXVI). In the southern and, even, in the northern parts of the continent, not much was achieved by the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC) or by her North African counterpart.

In the West African sub-region, the development of the idea of integration was slow but continuous. There were in existence interlocking economic arrangements between and among West African states, such as bilateral trade arrangements and preferential arrangements. Also were the French and Commonwealth preferences, functional and institutional co-operation schemes, commodity development schemes and monetary operation arrangements. Among the Francophone West African countries particularly, there existed several co-operative and integrative attempts, such as the *Union Douaniere de l'Afrique de l'Ouest* (UDAO) formed in June 1959 which was the first customs union of West African States and was later enlarged to have an economic focus and became known as the *Union Douaniere et Economique de l'Afrique de l'Ouest* (UDEAO) in June 1966 with Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Cote d'Ivoire (then Ivory Coast) as members; the *Communate Economique l'Afrique de l'Ouest* (CEAO) established in 1973 to replace the then defunct UDEAO; the Economic Community of Cattle and Meat (ECCM) formed in May 1971; the Organization of the Senegal Rivers States (OERS) established in 1968 by Guinea, Mali, Mauritania and Senegal, among others. It must be noted, however, that none of these arrangements stood the test of time (Adediji, 1984: XXVI).

For all the far-reaching economic co-operative efforts at the global level, the degree of activity and economic co-operation and integration at the regional level is even being advanced. The idea of regional integration is for regions to bring heterogeneous peoples together in the pursuit of a common goal; and indirectly, on the long-run, overcome their cherished nationalism. This is believed to have the potential of allowing for great cultural diversity and political experimentation. In the perspective of history, the logic of today's regionalism is that every coherent but disparately-membered unions aim at homogeneity. This is with a view to elevating the weakest member-States to the general and

perceivably the expected ECOWAS standard; and preventing any from equally falling below the essential break-even-level. Furthermore, the ECOWAS would help the integrating nations to forge a common front in the actualization of their (multi-faceted) developmental needs. It must be observed, however, that regional (whether economic, political, technological or financial) integration is more complex than the partitioning of towns and countries into nations as was the case in coloniality. Presently (2023), some authority must be left in the hands of national (sovereign) governments. This poses the problem of how new regional administrative entities can be created and the degree to which nations will surrender some of their authorities to a regional economic community that possesses fiscal, commercial and general administrative systems (Adamson Momoh, 1986: 3-4). The ECOEXIT of some ECOWAS member-States, such as Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Guinea Republics, would account for the dilemma of balancing principles and pragmatism that have plagued the Union (DW-dw.com, 2023).

The most advanced and controversial effort to achieve political integration and supranational organization is, however, evident in the European Union (Momoh, 1986: 3-4). This Western European organization has moved substantially toward full economic integration. It has also travelled in the direction of considerable political co-operation. It was founded in 1952 as the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) by the six countries of Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and West Germany. It was later transformed into the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) before it became the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1958. In 1967, these communities became the European Community (EC). Finally, in 1993, the EC became the European Union (EU) which represents the most current phase of the integrative evolution of Western Europe.

When the ECOWAS quest for self-reliance and sufficiency is viewed in the global context, it will be realized that the struggle of the developing world of the South to achieve a New World Economic Order, and the industrialized and developed countries of the North dominating economic relations, there arises a crisis: originating from non-industrialization of developing nations which export only agro-based, non-processed raw materials cheaply at a price they did not fix to the developed metropolis of the sub-region's former colonial masters.

In spite of the Declaration and Programme of Action for the establishment of a New International Economic Order (NIEO) and the Order and the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States adopted by the Sixth Special Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, and in spite of the optimism it generated subsequently, no concrete measures have been adopted at re-ordering international economic relations. This has led to according to Adamson Momoh (1986: 3-4):

- i. Deterioration in the levels and conditions of living in developing countries, and this situation is becoming worse by the day;
- ii. A high degree of economic, financial and technical dependence of developing countries on the advanced countries; and
- iii. The intransigence, non-co-operative and unsympathetic attitude of the developed countries.

Nigeria's National Development Objectives and Membership of the ECOWAS

The history of regional organizations is replete with the predominance of some leading countries which provide direction and serve as a moving force for the other less advantaged member nations. The countries that have successfully played this leadership role have been those that possessed some capability ingredients, including elements of relatively strong economic and military stature, and have been seen to have a sense of national direction and national political will bordering, at least, on ideological commitment. While France under Charles de Gaulle led the then European Economic Community (EEC now European Union), Egypt under President Abdel Nasser was the moving force in the Arab world. In sub-Saharan Africa, South Africa has been at the forefront of the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), and the United States is similarly leading the American sub-region in the Organization of American States (OAS). But these efforts have been tinged with dictatorial impositions.

Nigeria is a dominant economic power in the West African sub-region. Her population constitutes a substantial fraction of the entire Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), as well as her abundance of natural resources and a large number of, though, fledgling industries. Since most of the problems of the ECOWAS have been finance-related, and having comparatively human and material resources advantage over the other member-States, Nigeria has found herself contributing more to the annual budgets of the Community. This is more, when Nigeria sees herself, because of her endowments, as the natural leader in the sub-region. Nigeria has occasionally written-off some of the expenditures of the Community and ensures that the level of mutual distrust and conflict among members is reduced. There is no doubt that these are positive steps for which Nigeria can be commended, although the impact of the Country's efforts has not been as dramatic as observers expected. Indeed, Nigeria has been able to drag the ECOWAS along despite her obvious handicaps. This, in fact, entitles Nigeria to the claim of "Big Brother" in the ECOWAS (by the indices highlighted earlier). Thus, historians expect her to play this monumental role of projecting and ensuring the true integration (economic, political, cultural, linguistic, *et cetera*) of the West African sub-region. Evenso, the actions emanating from Nigeria vis-à-vis her leadership efforts in the ECOWAS have always been viewed with suspicion by less-endowed member States.

An Overview of the ECOWAS, 1976-2007

The Treaty which established the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Lagos, Nigeria, on May 28, 1975, was intended to serve principally as an instrument for the promotion and integration of economic activities, both for the interest of the entire sub-region, and of the individual countries that constitute the Community. But the organization was, and still is, expected to increase and improve the overall level of socio-cultural and political integration among the governments and peoples of the sub-region. Clearly, the goal of the ECOWAS, as envisaged in the dreams of the political leaders of West Africa then was to replicate the model of the then European Economic Community on the continent of Africa. These were the hopes of West African leaders in 1975 when the ECOWAS was born.

Presently (2023), however, not too many people may agree that the ECOWAS has achieved the objectives it set for itself. West Africa has lagged behind other parts of Africa in matters concerning economic co-operation. The Lagos Treaty aimed at creating a common market among about the 124 million people from sixteen (16) countries spread over 6.5 million square kilometres. Thus, from inception, the ECOWAS main focus has been on how to create an economically united and viable West Africa. Its main aim has been to foster an economic union of West Africa by gradually dismantling the existing customs arrangements and substituting in their place a single one for the sub-region (Ashok Kumar and Eghosa Osagie, 1978: 51). Article 12 of the Treaty states that:

There shall be progressively established in the course of a transitional period of fifteen (15) years from the definitive entry into force of this Treaty ... a Customs Union among the Member-States. Within this Union, customs duties or other charges with equivalent effect on imports shall be eliminated. Quota, quantitative or like restrictions or prohibitions and administrative obstacles to trade among the Member States shall also be removed. Furthermore, a common customs tariff in respect of all goods imported into the Member-States from third countries shall be established and maintained.

In addition, according to Article 13, Paragraph 2:

Within a period of two (2) years from the definitive entry into force of this Treaty, a Member-State may not be required to reduce or eliminate import duties. During this two-year period, Member-States shall not impose any new duties and taxes.

For eight years after that date, respective Member-States must: Progressively reduce and ultimately eliminate import duties. (Article 13, Paragraph 3)

During the final five (5) years, Member-States shall:

Gradually abolish existing differences in their external customs tariff. (Article 14, Paragraph 2).

Nominally, all member-states of the ECOWAS could derive substantial economic benefits from the envisaged elimination of tariff barriers and other trade restrictions. To do that, members-States have to foster inter-regional trade within the ECOWAS area. There were also agreements, at inception, to harmonize industrial policies and eliminate unhealthy rivalries in the production and marketing of industrial products, promote communications and transportation. Conditions that would be favourable for the free movement of persons within the ECOWAS sub-region was also to be created by member States, although this went with a condition that individuals involved in these trans-border movements would not remain in a particular country for more than 90 days without getting a visa and other necessary documents (Adepoju, Boulton and Levin, 2010: 120-144). The ECOWAS founding Heads of State also had in mind to achieve a common currency union and a political unification of the West African sub-region.

However, the consequent events in the West African sub-region since 1975 illustrate typical cases of frustrations and inactions that always characterized the integration schemes of developing countries, which, although well-conceived and established hardly have attained the desired objectives. Several factors account for the failures of the ECOWAS to achieve the much-needed economic and political

unification of the West African sub-region (Kumar and Osagie, 1978: 51). The list of the ills affecting the ECOWAS, although not exhaustive, includes the following:

Poverty

Many of the countries are so poor that they cannot even meet their financial obligations to the Community.

Focus

Many member-states of ECOWAS are at the same time members of other economic groupings, notably chaperoned by their former colonial masters. Thus, their *foci* have been divided over the years, and the danger of the ECOWAS breaking up, particularly if these constituent groupings are performing the same functions as the ECOWAS and better; and the fact that they must pay allegiance to their former colonial masters.

Monetary and Fiscal Problems

Importantly, the monetary and fiscal matters of the member-States are still tied to the currency and market regimes of their colonial masters. The ECOWAS sub-region consists of not less than four currency blocks. These are those that belong to the franc zone and sterling area. Liberia, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau belong to neither while Liberia is tied to the U.S. dollar. Guinea in 1960 had introduced its own franc. This in turn has affected the free flow of goods and services, capital movements and unilateral transfers. The inconvertibility of these currencies has created a divide - Francophone and non-Francophone states, therefore, necessitating the use of convertible foreign exchange to settle financial claims arising from the intra-West African trade (Kumar and Osagie, 1978: 51). Also, the persistence of import and export duties and taxes in trade among member-states within the ECOWAS continues to negate the spirit, objective and purpose of the ECOWAS. Foreign markets, and not ECOWAS markets, still form the attraction for ECOWAS member-states (Ibodje, 1989: 6).

Infrastructure Problems

Inadequate basic infrastructures have militated against the growth of anticipated intra-regional trade within the ECOWAS. The internal and international road network system is still in its infancy; modern harbours/quays are inadequate for the efficient handling of import and export goods; and the post and telecommunications system is undeveloped, costly and unreliable. The negative spillover effects are the direct adverse effects on productive activities in industry, agriculture and trade (Nduba Echezona, 1993: 121).

Conflicting Interests

One would have thought that the trade liberalization provisions of the Lome Convention of 1976 that sought for increases in the volume of trade, for instance, with the European Union, and instituting a common customs union of member-States, would have encouraged substantial percentage of trade. But the effect of the political, ideological and linguistic differences that have existed among member-states, especially from the colonial period, have continued to create mutual distrust, while the many

cases of border disputes which have become persistent and perennial within the sub-region continues to affect integration. Most often, therefore, there is the ready argument that much would be done to improve the life-string of the ECOWAS if all the cords of past colonial history which created allegiances and zones are severed (Rourke, 238).

Political Instability and Security Vacuum

Integration theorists basically assume that participating States have stable politics and a measure of security and community (Mobolade Omonijo, 1990: 34). This does not seem to be the case in the West African sub-region where integration appears to be desired but not needed. There is no single ECOWAS member-state that is free from political and economic crises. Unarguably, the persistent unstable democracy in Nigeria has undermined the country's capacity to carry along other weak but willing member states.

There is also the problem of the ECOWAS diverting its attention from building a united and stable West African economy to strategic issues. Formed in Banjul in Gambia on August 7, 1990, by member-States such as Gambia, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria and Togo, the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) became a major distraction from the pursuit of the ideals of ECOWAS which in the main is economic integration (Olonisakin, 2011: 11-26). A lot of crises from Liberia to Sierra Leone, and the consequent deployment of troops to quell their internal problems caused a premature jump from economic unification to the politicization of the ECOWAS, allowing the political aspects of the process to overshadow the economic (Olufemi Fajana, 1978: 30).

While it is obvious that the ECOWAS is yet to achieve its aim of economically liberating and unifying the nations of the West African sub-region, the efforts made so far cannot be dismissed with a wave of the hand. ECOWAS has made impressive achievements, such as in the maintenance of some levels of peace and stability in the sub-region through an agreement on the avoidance of war among member-states; the award of contracts for the linking of all the capitals of member-states with telephone lines; the organization of several sporting events that would foster unity among member-states; and the formation of several youth associations such as the West African University Games (WAUG) that would mobilize the sub-region's youths toward regional unity, among others (Okon Udokang, 1978: 78).

Nigeria's Economic Diplomacy within the Ambit of the ECOWAS

Economic diplomacy refers to the conscious use of a country's high economic standing to influence other countries to adopt its policies and programmes. Usually, the States so compelled and/or influenced are left with no wide ranging choices. This is particularly the order when the country wielding the diplomatic power is usually in a position to determine the continued existence, or not, of the less economically privileged countries. Thus, poorer countries that have no other hope of economic survival, in turn, perceives the Union as the means through which they can strengthen their own economies and polities alike.

Since her independence in 1960, events in Africa, especially the gaining of independence of the other colonies and, subsequently, of their economies, became the prime objective of Nigeria's foreign policy thrust. Nigeria took a number of measures that aimed primarily at removing the constraints on the development of trade; and at increasing the degree of economic co-operation between her and other African States. Indeed, Nigeria as a result of her geographical size and obvious potentials consciously plays a leading role in the economic development of Africa, and for her own economic expansion within and without.

In all, the element of self-interest has made Nigeria liken the survival of the ECOWAS as the backbone of her own economic and political survival; and concomitantly has expended much human and material resource in the protection and advancement of the Community. Since Nigeria is relatively economically better off than most of the members States, it is inevitable that she will bear the lion's share of the costs of running its affairs. Corresponding political responsibilities will be likely to follow in terms of her role within the institutions of the Community, although the experience of other regional groupings has shown that this is not always the case. It is not under debate that Nigeria's national interests, which are the development and expansion of its economy, the raising of the standard of living of its population, and the future physical security of its territory, can be effectively achieved through joint balanced and sectoral programmes in production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services on a regional basis (www.ecowas.int). At present, all indications are that Nigeria, being one of the leading architects of the Community concept, is obliged and anxious to encourage and maintain its development and continuity. From a practical political standpoint, it is perfectly rational that Nigeria should continue to regard her future security - economic, political and military - as tied to the survival of the Economic Community of West African States (Fajana, 1978, 23).

At the conception of the ECOWAS, the acceptance of economic integration in West Africa was hindered mainly by, first, the lack of political will on the part of the integrating States vis-à-vis surrendering some or most of their sovereignty to a supranational authority; and second, of the fear of becoming circumscribed by the more developed countries, such as Nigeria and Ghana. The ECOWAS, of course, at its full stage would be expected to ensure the economic development of the entire West Africa. However, this is yet to be. Economic nationalism, which is partly reflected in the unwillingness to relinquish any part of their not too-distantly-acquired freedom, largely accounts for the relatively slow progress of the economic integration process among West African States. With her strong economic and political influence in the sub-region, Nigeria has been in the forefront of major activities in the Community.

Specifically, Nigeria has made more financial contributions to the ECOWAS than any other member State, for instance, having contributed immensely to the ECOWAS Fund for Co-operation, Compensation and Development, which is used in helping countries with exceptionally deficit balance-of-payments problems; and as well as compensate member-countries that have suffered losses as a result of their application of the provisions of the ECOWAS Treaty. Nigeria has maintained its position as the highest contributor to the ECOWAS budget since the 1970s; and went to the extent of writing off the financial obligations of some member-States of the Community. The Nigerian government

donated a piece of land in Abuja, her Federal Capital Territory, for the construction of the ECOWAS Secretariat. She has been the major contributor to the funds and manpower needed for the effective functioning of the Secretariat; and in no small measure to the establishment of relevant regional financial institutions, which are considered basic to a meaningful economic integration in the West African sub-region (Omonijo, 1990: 34).

Furthermore, Nigeria is in the lead of the advocacy to foster large flows of trade and means of capital production among member-States of ECOWAS; and particularly involved in the enactment of several protocols dealing on specific areas of importance to the Community. For instance, the free movement of persons within the Community area, the re-exportation of goods imported from third countries and the assessment of loss of revenue by member-States, among other protocols. As a matter of fact, Nigeria went all out to ensure full implementation of the protocols and the Treaty. This is clearly portrayed in the influx, in the 1980s, of nationals of other ECOWAS states, notably Ghana, into Nigeria, and their subsequent accommodation by the government even when such was not favourable to Nigerians vis-à-vis employment. Similarly, Nigeria undertook to transfer expertise and skills to other West African countries as well as to grant scholarships to other Africans in her tertiary institutions (Adepoju, Boulton and Levine, 2010: 120-144). The mobility of labour arising thereof helped Nigeria to assert and maintain her role as the 'Big Brother' in the ECOWAS; and undertook to supply crude oil to new oil refineries in other West African countries, notably Senegal and Cote d'Ivoire.

Perhaps, the economic diplomacy of Nigeria within the ambit of the ECOWAS has been most clearly illustrated in the formation and sustenance of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in providing the largest contingent of soldiers. Evidently, as at 1995, barely five (5) years after its formation, a little less than two-thirds (about 3,000 soldiers) of the strong ECOMOG force was made up of Nigerians (Olonisakin, 2011: 11-26). Besides, Nigerian officials have at various levels made statements of commitment, which leave no one in doubt about the degree of the involvement of the government in peacekeeping in Liberia (Omonijo, 1990: 34).

In spite the criticisms of the Nigerian government vis-à-vis the ECOMOG, it continued to expend high human, material and financial support. It is generally agreed by scholars that the ECOMOG peacekeeping force was a noble objective, but that the timing for Nigeria's involvement was bad. It was a time when the country was faced with a protracting economic depression and other burning domestic political problems. Apart from the fact that her military strength was being drastically reduced, the financial implication of Nigeria's role in the ECOMOG was staggering. Available sources show that for the Liberian operation alone, Nigeria committed more than 6,500 soldiers each of who was on an allowance of five US dollars (\$5) daily which amounted to about N175.5 million in eighteen (18) months. Furthermore, the logistics and the feeding of the soldiers involved in the effort also placed a rather high demand and pressure on the country's financial reserves. According to Etim Anim (1990: 20):

From the onset, the ECOMOG Mission was a big sacrifice on the part of the participating states especially Nigeria, but they embarked on the mission to promote one of the fundamental objectives of the founding fathers of the sub-regional body which is peace, unity, economic well-being and stability of the sub-region. The ECOMOG force could not be anything different except to those who do not wish Africa well.

The Nigerian government found strength in the above indented statement. It became a policy objective to ensure peace and stability in the sub-region. As the then Nigerian Head of State, President Ibrahim Gbadamosi Babangida, put it in a press briefing on ECOWAS: “where one out of every three West Africans is a Nigerian, it behoves on her to prevent or avoid the deterioration of any crisis, which would threaten the stability of the sub-region, since it will in turn affect Nigeria”. Babangida pursued that it was imperative that in the event of such potential threats Nigeria, in collaboration with others, was duty-bound to respond appropriately by taking adequate measures to ensure peace, tranquility and harmony in the sub-region (Donald O. Omagu, 2001: 267).

As a response to the claim, in many quarters, that neither Liberia nor Sierra-Leone was geographically contiguous to Nigeria, Military President Babangida referred to the fact that the African continent remains the cornerstone of Nigeria’s foreign policy. Generally, it must be observed that Nigeria’s contributions proved absolutely critical to the successes recorded by the ECOMOG (Segun Adeyemi, 2003). Undoubtedly, without a country like Nigeria in the sub-region, able and willing to play such a role, it would have been arduous to attain the successes recorded in the peace efforts in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

The implication of Nigeria’s involvement and role in ECOWAS has been adjudged both positive and negative. Whereas the country expended so much in keeping the West African sub-region together, she at the same time ensured steady market for her products and services. Being the most important economic power in the sub-region, it has been in Nigeria's thinking that her economy would be sustained at its current growth tempo or even better improved if the West African sub-region remains in peace. Thus, she undertook to give all that this would cost her, especially, as it is also expected that the benefits derivable from the ECOWAS by Nigeria would be more in the long run.

The ECOWAS in Nigeria’s Economic Development: Cost-Benefit Analysis

Since independence, Nigeria’s role as the leader of the African continent has been particularly instrumental to the liberation - economic and political - of several African countries. A notable example was the role she played in the fight against the racist regimes in southern Africa. During the Cold War also, Nigeria spearheaded the non-aligned posture among African countries (at least in principle, even if not in practice) as a member of the Non-Aligned Movement. Even the major powers of the world consider Nigeria’s opinion on continental affairs as the one that matters most; and the one to seek. Nigeria served as the canvassing ground for ideologies by contending blocs during the Cold War. That was, perhaps, why it was necessary for them to lend support in either way during the Biafra-Nigeria

Civil War between 1967 and 1970. No bloc could afford to lose Nigeria. Rather, they cast their lots in pursuit of who would possess her.

Consequently, Nigeria has continued to play a leading role in Africa and the Black World; and has been the natural spokesman for Africa on the international scene. Nigeria wields a strong influence in the African Union and in the West African sub-region. Most of her trade relations are with African nations although they are so poor that they do not even contribute substantially to her foreign reserves and surpluses in international economic relations. Again, Nigeria undertook to be one of the largest contributors to the African Development Bank (ADB) after the agreement establishing the Nigeria Trust Fund (NTF) was signed on February 26, 1976 between the ADB and the Federal Government of Nigeria. The purpose of establishing the NTF was to assist in the economic development of the neediest African states at an interest rate of 1% and at a repayment period of 25 years. Nigeria's total commitment to the NTF as at December 31, 1978 was \$64m for 13 projects being executed in 18 ECOWAS member-countries (Ernest Achonu, 1979: 11).

In the 1970s, when the clamour for the South-South Co-operation became loudest, Nigeria and Togo led other West African countries to the formation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in May 28, 1975. Ever since, Nigeria has contributed about one-third of its annual budget, bearing the bulk of the costs for the peace-keeping efforts in the sub-region; and of the running of the Community's Secretariat, among others. The ECOWAS has certainly been a heavy burden on the nation's economy and people. Nigeria, soon after the ratification of the protocol relating to the Free Movement of Persons and the Right of Residence and Establishment in May 1979, had a mass of West African nationals flooding into Nigeria, a development that inconvenienced Nigerians and generated a lot of criticisms of the government. However, in spite of Nigeria's 'Big Brother' roles in the sub-region and the accolades received from both within and outside the Community area, it has not been an easy ride living up to this responsibility.

The subsequent paragraphs of this paper would examine the losses and benefits that Nigeria would have incurred from her overtly magnanimous disposition towards sponsoring ECOWAS solely in the West African sub-continent. The cost to Nigeria in the ECOWAS cannot be overemphasized. Nigeria has made tremendous commitments to the success of the ECOWAS effort. This posture has created a lot of problems for the country and its governments. It is important to note that these problems are not only internal but also external. Some of them have emanated not only from within Nigeria but from the West African sub-region or the ECOWAS, the African continent and the rest of the world. Nigeria's intentions have either been severally misinterpreted or misconstrued by both her nationals and foreigners.

The far-reaching involvements of Nigeria in the ECOWAS have been in the area of finance. Nigeria expends huge amounts of money, running into billions of dollars, on financing several programmes and projects in the West African sub-region. For instance, the scholarship granted from the 1970s to nationals of other West African countries to study in Nigerian universities cost the Federal government not less than N11 million by the end of 1980. Nigeria has also been heavily involved in the training of the military personnel of most West African States as well as in other forms of technical assistance.

These benevolent gestures mean that the country spends what would otherwise have been used in the development of Nigeria and raise the standard of living of her citizens (Iya Abubakar, 1981: 99). Furthermore, the contributions of Nigeria to the ECOWAS budget and to the ECOWAS Fund for Co-operation, Compensation and Development rank the highest among the contributions from member-states. Nigeria alone contributes not less than one-third of the Community's budgets, and heavily to the Fund whose uses seldom apply to her direct developmental needs. This generated, and still generates, lots of criticisms from Nigerians on why there should be so much commitment to a venture from which the country might never benefit. A similar point is the contribution the country makes to the African Development Bank (ADB) and its concomitant Nigerian Trust Fund (NTF) programme to which the country has already committed lots of funds (Iya Abubakar, 1981: 99).

Perhaps, what constituted the greatest drain on Nigeria's finances was the fund she committed to the peacekeeping efforts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The ECOMOG force has Nigeria as its highest contributor, not just in terms of military personnel but also in finances. Nigeria ostensibly undertook this responsibility to ensure the security and peace of the West African sub-region, not minding the implications. Thus, huge funds were committed to the ECOMOG project when the Nigerian economy, back home, was what could have been referred to as crisis-ridden. Omagu (2001: 263) said that:

... there was serious disquiet about the financial implications of the ECOWAS mission at a time when domestic finances was in dire straits. Apart from being responsible for a third of the regular ECOWAS budget, it has been reported that the ECOWAS mission gulped a whopping US\$ 30,000 per day. In aggregate terms, the government has admitted having spent about US\$ 4 billion by mid 1995.

The argument becomes what business a country like Nigeria had in promoting peace in countries that are neither geographically contiguous to her nor strategically important to her economic development. There are also outstanding human resources that Nigeria has expended in her bid to promote integration in West Africa and, by extension, advance and maintain her role as the 'Big Brother' within the sub-region. Nigeria has, for instance been the highest contributor to programmes, projects and activities involving expertise or professionalism. From activities as virtually insignificant as the deployment of Nigerian judges to serve in the Gambian judiciary (Federal Ministry of Information, 1979: 2), to very wide activities, such as the deployment of military personnel to the ECOMOG force, Nigeria has clearly demonstrated her 'Big Brother' role. Many other areas of mobility of labour and expertise also abound. Presently (2023), several Nigerian academics and professionals are in other countries of the West African sub-region, working and improving on the academics and technical enterprises in those areas. These professionals are highly paid by the Federal Government at a time when Nigerian schools and universities, as well as the private sector, hardly have enough experts to ensure continuity and future expansion; and resources are scarcely able to satisfy the basic human and material needs of the teeming population of the country.

To say that Nigeria by her acts of benevolence in West Africa engaged in expending unnecessary material *largesse* in terms of human and financial resources, deprived Nigerians of the use of these for their own development, would be stating the obvious. To also say that Nigeria's involvement in peacekeeping in West Africa meant that it progressively lost not just a substantial amount of her military expertise but also a substantial number of soldiers, thus, military strength, would equally not be an overstatement. As a matter of fact, some of the young army officers, who were part of the ECOMOG troops, lost their lives (Omagu, 2001: 263). This way, the Nigerian military strength continued to diminish by the day, a trend that was reflective of Nigeria's poor outing when Boko Haram insurgents struck from the 2000s.

Another area in which Nigeria suffered from her benevolence is that of the loss of faith in leadership. Nigerians are increasingly coming to terms with a belief that the government is an institution that cares less about her citizens. They perceived the government as having sacrificed her national interests in pursuance of a fame, which did not have any positive impact on their standards of living and general economic development. Again, Nigeria's insistence on having Africa as the cornerstone of her foreign policy since independence has continuously depleted the country's foreign reserves drastically. This line of reasoning stems from the fact that many African countries are so poor that their economic relations with Nigeria leaves nothing that could be ploughed back into her economy.

Nigeria's increasing emphasis on inter-African relations nexus her foreign economic policy stems partly from the leadership role which the country is expected to play in Africa by virtue of her size and partly from an acknowledgement of the fact that (Onyema Omenuwa, 2000: 23-24):

In a world where the developed nations have maneuvered international trade into such a position that African countries have been mapped out for the economic role of perpetual suppliers of *raw* materials for the industries of the advanced countries.... In a world where the developed nations surreptitiously discourage active industrialization in developing countries, the only way black Africa can develop her industrial power and achieve the attendant international influence and political power is to buy one another's industrial products ... and generally to co-operate with one another in economic affairs.

In pursuance of this goal as the leader of the African continent and, particularly, of the West African sub-region, therefore, Nigeria has ensured that the import and export channels between itself and the other West African countries, particularly, those which she shares common boundaries have remained open. She has also suffered most from the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons and the Rights of Residence and Establishment as her economy is the strongest in the sub-region and, thus, looks attractive to the citizens of other member-States of the ECOWAS. ECOWAS citizens trooped into Nigeria in their numbers, a trend that left many Nigerians either unemployed or underemployed in their own country. The implication of this has, therefore, been that the country's inter-African economic relations are guided not by what she stands to gain but by what she claims to be.

Furthermore, there are claims that since the economies of African states are highly dependent on the developed countries, particularly in Europe and the United States, the implication of trade relations with African countries is that the gains also go to the imperialist powers and none to Nigeria (Fajana, 1978: 17). Another basic feature of most African countries is that primary agricultural products and mineral resources constitute the bulk of their exports, and the industrialized nations often do not need these commodities. The international markets have been so manipulated that the import needs of African countries are those goods in which advanced industrial countries have a comparative advantage. This again, means that Nigeria's relations with ECOWAS member States short change her in foreign exchange earnings while the metropolitan powers gain more. Thus, the structure of their economies and the pattern of their demand appear to have made it necessary for African countries to depend upon external (non-African) sources of supply for many of the products needed for development, as well as to sustain current economic activities.

There is also the problem of mistrust and fear of domination by and within the ECOWAS community. Some non-viable member-States are already feeling that Nigeria is colonizing them (Fajana, 1978: 17). This fear has been accentuated by allegations that the ECOWAS will create a free trade zone which will favour the more developed West African countries at the expense of the less economically advanced. In her economic diplomacy in West Africa, Nigeria has had to be very cautious and very gradual in her approach so as to win the confidence of her neighbours. This is of great necessity because if the country loses the trust and confidence of the other members, all her efforts would have been counterproductive.

Lastly, the ECOWAS has battled with the creation of a monetary union for West Africa. The initial proposed plan stipulated in Article 36 that:

It shall be the responsibility of the Trade, Customs, Immigration, Monetary and Payments Commission among other things to: as soon as practicable, make recommendations on the harmonization of the economic and fiscal policies of the member-States; (and) give its constant attention to the maintenance of balance of payments equilibrium in the Member-States.

After some years, the ECOWAS member-states envisaged the creation of an economic union. Article 54 of the Revised Treaty of the ECOWAS provides that an economic union shall be achieved within a maximum of fifteen years of the commencement of the regional trade liberalization scheme adopted in 1983 and launched on January 1, 1990.

Article 55, Paragraph 1(iii), of the Revised Treaty further states that: Member-States should undertake to complete within five years following the creation of a Customs Union, the establishment of an economic and monetary union. Some of the ways this is to be achieved would be through the harmonization of monetary, financial and fiscal policies, the setting up of a West African monetary union, the establishment of a single regional Central Bank and the creation of a single regional West African currency. The point being made here is that as West Africa gets set for a single currency regime

by 2005, several problems will confront Nigeria. For one, it would mean a devaluation of her currency - the Naira, which is more valued than the other currencies in use in the sub-region. Moreso, any attempt to raise the value of the evolving West African currency unit to that of the Nigerian Naira means that the other countries would go bankrupt. The devaluation of the Naira would be inevitable in the event of a common currency. It is noteworthy that Nigeria has tried over the years to raise the value of her currency, thus, the introduction of a common currency will constitute an obstacle towards her plan to actualize the dream of introducing the Naira to the centre of an increasingly competitive international monetary market system.

The critics of Nigeria's membership and role in the ECOWAS perceive it as a conduit pipe for siphoning Nigerian resources for the benefit of the other members. Thus, Nigeria itself is left to bear the cost of the economic development of the poorer and less-privileged members. ECOWAS is a drain on Nigeria's financial resources from oil wealth and is, thus, believed to be a major setback to the process of real economic development. It has, indeed, been argued in many quarters that Nigeria stands a better chance of survival and attainment of her economic development goals without being a member of the ECOWAS (Onwuka, 1988: 4-5).

Much as Nigeria's membership of, and generous role in the ECOWAS, has meant the loss of huge amounts of financial and human resources and brighter economic prospects for the country, there have been benefits which the country has derived from this membership.

For one thing, Nigeria has been able to assert herself as the leader of the West African sub-region, a fact the other countries of West Africa have accepted. They do appreciate as well that Nigeria has done much to improve their economic and political conditions. Indeed, the supranational apparatus for the control of the sub-region per the ECOWAS is controlled, for the most part, by Nigeria. It houses the administration and bureaucracy of the Community by providing the land, in her own capital territory, on which the Secretariat of the ECOWAS has been built. Most of the staff of the Secretariat are Nigerians, especially at the lower cadre. Thus, Nigeria has been able, through the ECOWAS, to reduce problems of employment in the country.

Another important factor to consider is that Nigeria has a larger and ready market for her industrial and other products, although the extent of this engagement is abysmally low and almost insignificant. There are, however, promising signs which indicate better prospects for the future. Made-in-Nigeria goods occupy a very respectable position in not just the West African sub-region, but also in the entire Africa and the world. Nigeria has been able to develop her production industry to an extent at which the products easily penetrate West African markets. Again, the economies of these countries and their survival in a dynamic and competitive world economic system would depend so much on how improved their trade relations with Nigeria are. Therefore, Nigeria has come to be regarded as a pacesetter and a champion in West African production and trade (Omenuwa, 200: 24).

The most important benefit of Nigeria's membership in the ECOWAS is the international recognition and respect she has earned. As has been noted earlier, Nigeria is clearly perceived by the developed

world as the spokesman for Africa. Nigeria's opinion on matters and issues that affect Africa are sought first and are usually accepted as being representative of the views, aspirations and desires of the African continent (Fajana, 1978: 30). It was only recently that South Africa became a voice in Africa's international relations. Furthermore, Nigeria has been able to win the confidence of her immediate neighbours as well as other countries of the West African sub-region.

With her extension to member countries of most of their essential needs, such as electric power, technical assistance and the entering into military pacts, Nigeria has come to make ECOWAS members believe that their continued existence in the Community and the attainment of their national development goals hinge on their levels of mutual relations with Nigeria. In a similar vein, Nigeria, by her activities in the ECOWAS, has ensured the security of her territory. This stems from the fact that none of her neighbours can be used by any external power as a base for military action against her. All these have been made possible by her benevolent disposition in the ECOWAS. Nigeria's neighbours can even mobilize their own military in defense of Nigeria in the event of an external aggression. This would even be conceived at a higher level when they understand that doing so would mean the defense and sustenance of whatever facilities and services that have been extended to them by Nigeria (Udokang, 1978: 57-58). Nigeria also derived other benefits that outweighed respect and recognition. She was, for instance, unanimously nominated by all member-states of the ECOWAS to host an ECOWAS Trade Fair (Uzor Maxim Uzoatu, 1989: 14-15). This, as expected, would boost her economy since it would mean the best opportunity to present her manufactured goods and services to the other countries of the West African sub-region and the entire world. The Trade Fair would also prove that the country can guarantee a violent-free investment market for existing foreign and intending investors since countries from other parts of the world would be expected in Nigeria for the fair.

In a pre-Trade Fair assessment, if it brings the desired prospects to fruition, Nigeria and Nigerians would benefit immensely vis-à-vis an added fillip to her economic development. Similarly, a Nigerian was sworn in on May 25, 2004, as the pioneer Chairman of the newly formed Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU) which was made up of about fifteen (15) member-countries of the ECOWAS. As part of her burgeoning presence in continental and international affairs, Nigeria participated in the World Trade Fair in Japan in 2005 (Nigeria: Bulletin on Foreign Affairs, 1980: 5-6).

Obviously, although some commentators might think otherwise, the costs of Nigeria's membership of, and role, in the ECOWAS outweigh the benefits she derives. Even so, the gains of economic integration do not all come at once. Economic integration is a process that is virtually infinite. As the integrating States achieve progress, the gray areas of the relationship are continuously amended, and the gains become higher as the goal of an eventual economic union becomes realizable (investmentpolicy.unctad.org, 1993).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The analytical method adopted in the research laid bare the facts on the costs and benefits of Nigeria's membership, continued membership, and role in the ECOWAS. Deductively, the real cost of Nigeria's membership of the ECOWAS far outweighs her seeming and assumptive benefits. Nigeria has played the big brother role in the ECOWAS to the detriment of her citizens and national development and economy. The expectations of Nigeria vis-à-vis her continued membership of the ECOWAS have not been realizable because the problem areas of the Union have made it impossible for the gains of economic integration to be fully reaped, at least, for now. Moreover, the leaders of the integrating States lack the political will to move the region forward, especially, since they still hold too firmly to the sovereignties of their individual States.

It is clear, therefore, that as long as the material, human and institutional infrastructure remain underdeveloped, the full benefits of any bilateral or multilateral economic relations among West African countries will be slow to fruition. Enthusiasm is one thing while the existing realities regarding the balance of principles and pragmatism, are something else. Yet, the benefits of increased trade and growth would be more than sufficient to offset the sacrifices Nigeria hopes to make in an eventually blossomed ECOWAS. One country or more within any integrating region must be ready to supply the political will needed to survive the pains of integration in order to reap the benefits, and this is what Nigeria is doing (Omenuwa, 2000: 5-6).

Since her political independence in 1960, Nigeria has striven to continue policies of economic development beginning from where the colonial masters left off. Thus, programmes, such as the First, Second, Third and Fourth National Development Plans, the Indigenization Decree, the River Basin Development Authorities, the Structural Adjustment Programme, among several others, have been embarked upon. A common feature among these is that they have all been underpinned by agrarian-based policies. This stems from the fact that Nigerian leaders believe that any true and meaningful development of the economy would come from the grassroots. In spite of all the policies already undertaken, the much-desired economic development is, yet, to take place in Nigeria.

The overall objective of the ECOWAS is to promote co-operation (which existed from pre-coloniality) and integration in order to create an economic and monetary union for sustainable economic development and growth in West Africa which commenced in 1975. This explains the reasons for its several organs and institutions, the highest of which is the Authority of Heads of State and Government. Nigeria is the biggest and, unarguably, the most economically viable member of the ECOWAS. This has been made possible by her vast territory, relatively high economic and industrial advantage, and an extremely large population. She demonstrates her economic position by taking benevolent dispositions in the ECOWAS. She donates generously to the Community's budgets and Funds, and to the funding of several of the Community's projects and programmes. At some point, she wrote off the debts owed by some member states through their inability to contribute to the budget of the Community; and trail-blazed in matters of security and peacekeeping in the sub-region.

Yet, a careful look at Nigeria's economy and her level of economic development reveals striking features of backwardness in comparison to what constitutes a developed economy in other parts of the world, particularly, in North America and Western Europe. This stems from the fact that there have been no plans for the management and coordination of the wealth derived from the country's rich hydrocarbon oil wells. There have been high level corruptive activities by Nigeria's political leaders; and an obvious ineptitude among the managers of the economy. As a result, her economy has continued to retrogress rather than progress. Presently (2023), Nigeria is heavily indebted to international financial institutions, notably, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank; and her poor economic standing is, therefore, an antithesis or seemingly deceptive vis-à-vis the benevolent role it plays in the ECOWAS.

Ironically, Nigeria has continued to play an amazingly benevolent role in the ECOWAS. This has generated a lot of criticisms from both citizens of Nigeria and observers of the events in the West African sub-region. The bone of contention here is that one cannot explain the expenditure Nigeria makes in the ECOWAS, in both human and material terms, when she can hardly feed her population. Undergraduate students from member-States in her tertiary institutions are on Nigerian scholarship. Also, some ECOWAS countries themselves have begun to view Nigeria with serious caution and suspicion given the fear of possible hegemonic domination what with the 2023 ECOEXITS of the Republics of Niger, Guinea, Mali and Burkina Faso (Reuters, 2023). The cost of Nigeria's involvement in the ECOWAS, most especially in the ECOMOG, is outrageous; and, unarguably, depleted the resources that would have grown her national army which could not withstand the Boko Haram terrorist onslaught. The country has sacrificed national development objectives to the promotion of an ECOWAS member-States common good; and this has not always been acceptable to some of her citizens. The benefits derivable from membership of the ECOWAS union are far outweighed by the cost incurred. In fact, the benefits are, for the most part, in the future or in the long run.

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