

# THE ROLE OF NIGERIA IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: THE CASE OF ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES (ECOWAS)

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## *Abstract*

This study seeks to examine the role of Nigeria in international organizations with particular reference to Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Findings reveal that fifteen (15) countries in West Africa came together to form ECOWAS with the main objective of economic harmonization and free trade relations among member states that will bring progress and development in the entire continent. The study relies on secondary sources of data as veritable tools for its analysis. Objective of the study is to ensure progress, stability, and development in Africa. The gap of the study is that Africa should be self-reliant economically so as to stand tall among comity of nations. The theoretical framework for this study is the liberal institutionalism. Further findings reveal that ECOWAS was formed to achieve economic harmonization and free trade relations among member states, solidarity, self-reliance, coordination of national policies, non-aggression among member states, maintenance of regional peace and stability, promotion and recognition of human rights in accordance with the provision of the Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, transparency and accountability, good governance, trade liberalization, harmonization and cooperation of national policies and the promotion of programs, projects and activities particularly in food, agriculture, and natural resources. The study concludes that Africa is yet to attain full development through the instrumentality of ECOWAS. The study recommends that the overall objective for the formation of ECOWAS which is to develop the sub-region should be aggressively pursued and achieved by ECOWAS leaders in the interest of Africa and Africans.

## **Introduction**

The study of international organizations dates back to 1800 when Professor of Law named J. Lorimar at Edinburgh University coined the term "international organization" the study gained currency since then and other disciplines embraced it because of its importance and contribution to them. Economists, sociologists, anthropologists recognized the study of international relations and the close relationship between them is made known through the works of Clive Archer who gave particular considerations to the constitution of international organizations, their legal personalities and institutional problems. (Archer, 2001)

International organizations have specific objectives that they pursue and these objectives range from political interest to economic, social and even environmental interest. In Africa, international organizations most a times come up with their own agendas completely disregarding the needs of the people they try to represent. The post-cold war era witnessed high proliferations of international organizations making their entry into Africa because the continent is rich in raw materials and it's touted to be the fastest growing continent in the world both in population and wealth creation. An upsurge was also witnessed in the formation of regional organizations mostly seeking to consolidate their gains occasioned by the economies of scale in markets and expand their influence at the international forum. (Archer, 2001)

In May, 1975, fifteen (15) West African countries in Lagos, Nigeria signed a treaty that created the Economic Community of West African State (ECOWAS) and Nigeria played a key role in the intensive three-year diplomatic activities that culminated in ECOWAS. Since its creation, ECOWAS has faced a lot of political, economic and security challenges from the states that makeup this organisation. For instance, weak state structures, poverty, technological backwardness, low level of the development productive forces, her position in the international division of labour (globalization) (Lawrence, (2008)

ECOWAS was set to achieve economic harmonization, coordination of national policies, solidarity, self-reliance, non-aggression among member-states, maintenance of regional peace and stability, promotion and recognition of human rights in accordance with the provision of charter on Human and Peoples Rights. (Lawrence, 2008)

Statistics has shown that since 1999 Nigeria has been actively involved in the promotion of West African Sub-Region through the instrumentality of ECOWAS. The struggle over available scarce resources unending hostility in the international arena have forced many countries into multilateral relationships that will promote their interests and Nigeria's participation in the regional organization is a clear demonstration of this fact. The role Nigeria plays is basically to ensure the realization of the aims and objectives of ECOWAS in the shortest possible time and in the best interest of the people of the continent. To say the least, Nigeria intends that African should develop and be on the same page with other developed nations of the world such that her poverty and dependency status should become history (Duffield, 2007).

### Research Objectives

The study is predicated on the following research objectives:

- 1) Examine the role of international organizations with particular reference to ECOWAS.
- 2) Evaluate the role of ECOWAS in the realization of economic harmonization free trade relations and stability of the continent.
- 3) Identify efforts made by African leaders to develop the continent.

### Methodology

The study examine the role of Nigeria in international organizations with particular reference to ECOWAS. Data for the study were sourced mainly from magazines, journals, newspapers, periodicals, internet, encyclopedia, textbooks, published articles and seminar presentations, quoted speeches among others. The essence is to avail readers the opportunity of assessing the views of authorities cited in the literature review since methodology outlines the step-by-step details of the procedures followed in carrying out a research.

### Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used for this work is liberal institutionalism. This tool of analysis is quite relevant here because it focuses on specialized international agencies as main actors in international politics. Also, liberalism, a subset of international relations posits that morality, law and international organizations can indeed set the basis for relations between states. Goldstein and Pevehouse (2007) assert that cooperation among states is possible and there is a possibility of states acting as community rather than autonomous unit. Even through realism argues that international system is anarchical in nature and states pursue self-interests, but Neo-liberalism, a critique that emerged in the 1980s, debunked this view

held by the realists rather, it lays emphasis on international institutions as means of reducing conflicts. This school of thought believes that it is rational, better and there is complete correctness to seek mutual and long-term gains rather than maximizing short-term gains hence the term liberal institutionalism (Goldstein and Jon, 2007)

According to Sands and Klein (2009) formal institutions can ensure international cooperation and this is because they consist of rules, regulations, norms and procedures of decision-making where states with the objective of maximizing their interests would converge. One of the traditional tenets of neo-liberalism is to enhance economic and environmental cooperation, it equally have the objective of analysing the behavior of states and international system.

According to Griffin (2003) liberal institutionalism posits that an increase in economic contacts between the states have led to a dependence among them in order to achieve national objective of growth, full employment and price stability because it views states as equal partners with the objective of securing the well-being of their citizenry. It argues further that specialized agencies can enhance cooperation between states. Thus, ECOWAS from the neo-liberal perspective can act as a strong regional ally of states towards meeting their economic objectives within the region. The main goal of liberal institutionalism is the establishment of peace; this led to the creation of the League of Nations even though it did not produce the desired global peace it was established for. (Rocheater, 19886)

We have come to the realization that liberal institutionalism has the tendency to promote economic cooperation; encourage integration among states, remove trade barriers, reduce conflicts among member states and recognizes the existence of an international organization as main actor in international politics. ECOWAS properly fits in here because it encourages integration among member states. We learn from the theory that there can be increased relations in the international system it also shows the importance of international organizations in the world's politics. For example, because of the establishment of the United Nations as an international organization, a regional economic cooperation for the purpose of integration has gone a way in reducing conflicts among states as a result of trade relations with one another and members have achieved national objectives of growth, full employment and price stability. This is why ECOWAS is charged with the responsibility of ensuring free movement of people and goods, smooth trade relations as well as peace and security within the region. (ECOWAS)

### Conceptual Clarifications

**International Organization:** Merchi (1997) refers to an organization with international membership, scope and presence. They are of two types mainly (1) International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) that operate internationally. These include international-non-profit organizations and world-wide companies such as International Committee of Red Cross and Medicines and (2) International Governmental Organizations (IGO) that are made up primarily of sovereign States. Notable examples include the United Nations Organization (UN) International Labour Organization (ILO) International Police Organization (INTERPOL), Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) African Union (AU) European Union (EU) New Partnership for African's Development (NEPAD) (Buchanan and Koehane, 2006)

An international organization could also be defined as a forum of cooperation of sovereign states based on multilateral relations and comprising of a relatively stable range of participants, the fundamental feature of which is the permanent organs with definite competences and powers acting for the carrying out of common aims. (Marché, 1997) Hanriender (1998) defines international organization as an institution agreement between members of an international system in order to achieve objectives according to systematic conditions reflecting attributes, aspirations and concerns of its members. And what gives their basic rule is the sovereignty of the nation-state. (Baikin and Cronin, 2009)

International organization are important actors in the critical episodes of international politics with power in mediation, dispute resolution, peace keeping, application of sanctions and others. They also help in managing Key areas of international concerns from global health policy to monetary policies around the world. (Abbott and Snidal, 1998)

International Law Commission (ILC) of the UN defines international organization as an organization established by a treaty or other instruments governed by international law and possessing its own international personality. I.O may include members, states and other entities. Duffield (2007) posits that. International organizations are a relatively stable set of related constitutive, regulative and procedural norms that pertain to international system (including states and non-state actors) and their activities. (Duffield, 2007)

ECOWAS, this is an acronym for Economic Community of West African States. This concept does not lend itself to definitional parameter as such and so we will rather try to emphasize its aims and objectives. The primary objective of ECOWAS is the creation of economic and monetary union covering all West African States by integrating different levels of socio-economic, political and cultural activities. The main decision-making body of the community responsible for implementing the statutory objective of this organization is the authority of the Heads of State and Government which lays the direction of its development and the control of adopted provisions (Duffield, 2000)

It places emphasis on peace, stability and security, the promotion of democratic principles, popular participation and good governance. Promotion and protection of human and people's rights and other relevant human rights instruments to establish necessary conditions that will enable the continent play its rightful in the global economy and international negotiations. It also aims to promote sustainable development at the economic, social and cultural levels as well as the integration of African economics. To promote cooperation in all fields of human activities and to raise the living standard of African people and to coordinate and harmonize policies between the existing and future regional Economic Communities for the gradual attainment of the objectives of the organization that will result in greater unity and solidarity between African countries and Africans.

## Review of Related Literature

### Reasons for States' Membership of International Organisations

States use international organizations as engines for cooperation. States have the capacity to limit or expand their autonomy, interfering in their activities, restructure or dissolve them, and sometimes they collide with the sovereignty of states when they create new structures for regulating cross-border relationships hence independence of these organizations depend on the states. (Hanrieder, 1966)

Another major reason why states want to be part of international organizations is the fact that they delegate authority in matters that require expertise, knowledge, information, time and resources that are not available all the time. (Hanrieder, 1966).

Another cogent reason for states membership of international organization is that they complement national prevailing paradigm being an expression of de-nationalization policies. It undermines national decisions using the principle of international cooperation. There is centralization of power and decision-making autonomy having political effects beyond the simple effectiveness of the already decisions taken. (Ostrom, 1990)

According to Ostrom (1990) international organizations carry out activities that enjoy a sort of legitimacy which affects states legitimacy as well. These organizations provide for a neutral, depoliticized and specific discussion in a more effective way than any other agreement. They outline specific terms of the on-going interactions between states and try to balance the relationship between the stronger and weaker states and between interests and knowledge (Ostrom, 1990)

The way international organizations are organized and structured influence the evolution of inter-state cooperation. Even though most organizations perform functions to support cooperation between conferences dealing with very important issues as well as implementing a set of regulations, however, to maintain international standards in international relations it is an exclusive preserve of the heads of state. (Dowling, 2000)

Posits that international organizations enjoy special legal status under international law illustrated by international personality they have so as to function effectively and independently from the member states involved in the organization. And for it to function freely in international arena on behalf of the states that created it on specific issues such as environment, peace and security or human rights, it should have legal standing; operate independently without direct influence of individual states. (Dowling, 2002)

### **Characteristics of International Organizations**

According to the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaty (1969) the establishment of an international organization by an international agreement is preferably the use of treaty. A treaty is an international agreement governed by international law and it provides the organization with basic and legal document governing its creation. There are four basic characteristics of an international organization:

1. From the creation
2. From the membership
3. The body of law governing the organization
4. Its basic structure. When the entity is established by a treaty, it qualifies it as a constituted document and the fact that such an organization should be created only by an international organization indicates that it is not possible for private parties to create it. (Amerasinghe, 2005)

Amerasinghe (2005) posits that there is a characteristic that deals with parties to the initial agreement and parties to the international organization itself. Here international agreement must be concluded between states and or other international organizations also, membership of entity must consist primarily of the states and international organization since such an organization is established by the will of the states. There are numerous entities created within the framework of an international organization for instance, those created by virtue of United Nations Security Council Resolution under Chapter VII. However, such entities do not constitute international organizations in strict legal sense.

Sands and Klobber (2009) argued that it is the membership of international legal persons that gives the international organization its legitimacy that is why the entity must have states or international organization as its members instead of national legal persons such as corporations or NGOs. This is the characteristic that deals with the form or nature of membership and the main reason behind this is that, an entity cannot create another entity with more powers than itself.

According to Klabber (2009) one basic characteristics of an international organization is that the entity must be governed by law and not by a specific national legal system and so if an international agreement provides for the creation of an entity, it is not an international organization unless it has international legal personality. The characteristics which deals with the structure of an international organization says that if an entity is separate and independent of its members, it might be assumed according to its separate status and independence that it possesses some degree of international legal personality separate from its members that qualifies it become an international organization. (Schemes and Blokker, 2003). International Labour Organization (ILO) (1959) posits that treaty making international organizations necessarily enjoy international legal personality but not all international organizations with international legal personality have treaty making powers.

### **Nigeria and the Formation of ECOWAS**

ECOWAS is made up of fifteen member countries located in West African region namely; Cape Verde, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Togo, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Gambia, Nigeria and Benin. Nigerian's Active involvement in the formation of ECOWAS is motivated by certain imperatives that govern the conceptualization and conduct of the country's foreign policy towards her regional neighbours such as defense and protection of Nigeria's territorial integrity and sovereignty from both internal and external aggression, peaceful co-existence, friendship with countries it shares contiguous boundaries (be it land or water), and her concern about stability and economic integration in the West African sub-region. These interlocking and continuous elements coupled with

the ever growing population of the country defined the behaviour and realistic analysis of Nigeria's role in the sub-regional integration process. (Bassy and Nyonge, 2012)

Another reason for Nigeria's vested interest in the formation of ECOWAS is her quest for a sub-regional security. What happens during the Nigeria's civil war became an eye opener to her leaders concerning her security, for instance, the vulnerability of Nigeria to her neighbouring countries, especially the Francophone countries aided by French government worth mentioning. During the war, Cote d' Ivoire, a Francophone country, recognized the state of Biafra while Benin and Chad under the influence of France, gave secret support to the secessionist Biafran state. Soon after the war Gowon administration aware of the security leak and threat Nigeria's close neighbours posed to her existence, initiated a platform that would unite Nigeria and other countries in the sub-region and negotiations thereafter culminated in the formation of ECOWAS in 1975 (Asiwaju, 1984)

To protect Nigeria from external aggression is another reason. This necessitated her mobilizing ECOWAS member states to invoke the 1981 Protocol on Mutual Assistance in Defense to deal with external threats and aggressions in the light of cold war realities to intervene in the Liberian Civil War and other subsequent interventions in Sierra Leone and Cote d' Ivoire. (Asiwaju, 1984)

Economic reason is another very important one. With her huge population and resources, Nigeria's domestic market makes it a regional economic power. Benevolently and graciously enough, Nigeria made the sale of oil at concessionary prices to poor ECOWAS member states to cushion the effect of the hardship precipitated by the global economic crisis of the early 1970s, thus, enhancing the country's position and influence in its efforts towards achieving sub-regional integration. (Nwoke, 2005).

FIGURE1: Showing Organizational Structure of ECOWAS

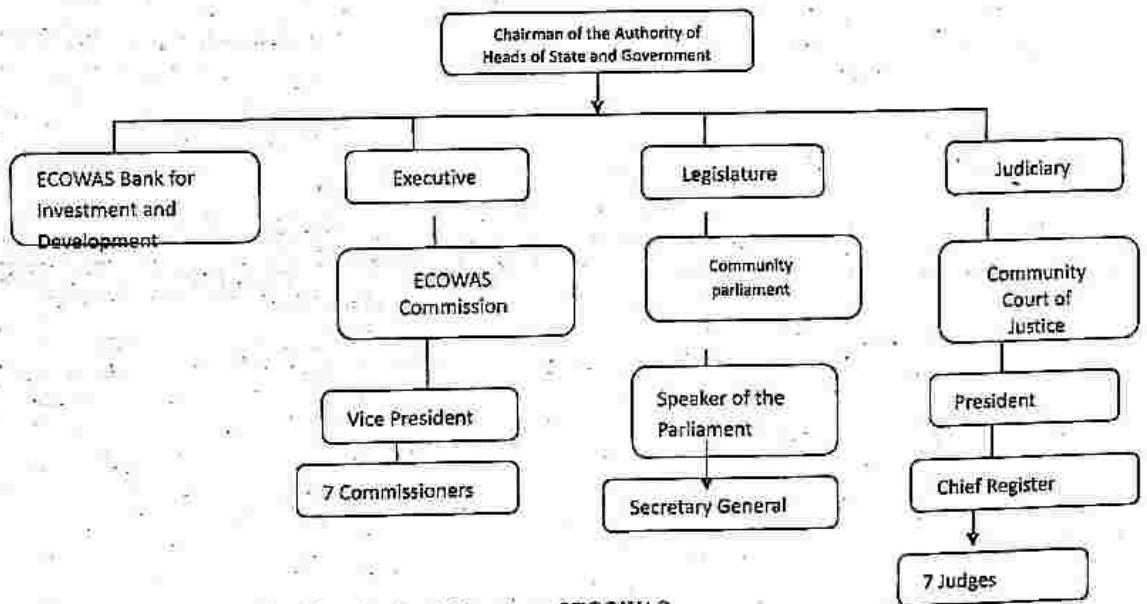


FIGURE1: Showing Organizational Structure of ECOWAS

Source: [www.ecowas.int/org-structure](http://www.ecowas.int/org-structure)

Table 1: Showing Members States and Parliamentary Seats

Benin	5
Burkina Faso	6
Cape Verde	5
Cote d' Ivoire	7
Gambia	5
Ghana	8
Guinea	5
Guinea-Bissau	5
Liberia	5
Mali	6
Niger	6
Nigeria	35
Senegal	6
Sierra Leone	5
Togo	5

Source: International Democracy Watch.Org/Index.

Table 1: Showing Members States and Parliamentary Seats

The parliament has 115 seats and each of the 15 member states has at least 5 seats, the rest is shared according to population.

#### Nigeria's Commitment to ECOWAS Objectives

Nigerian leaders at different times have shown commitment to ECOWAS objectives at varying degrees. For example, the administration of General Gowon recommended long-term goal which involved per man sacrifice without any benefit in return but Obasanjo whose tenure as military head of state spanned between 1976 and 1979, with pronounced nationalistic fervor pushed away the long-term goals and spirit of permanent sacrifice of Gowon administration and began to press for immediate benefits that will accrue to Nigeria in the integration process first Obasanjo raised an objection to a situation where by Nigeria was contributing over 35% of the organization annual budget and it was immediately reduced to 25% Obasanjo also emphasized the need for a benefit that is commensurate with the burden borne by Nigeria towards the realization of ECOWAS objectives. This made him to suggest that ECOWAS headquarters be built in Nigeria despite earlier agreement by Gen. Gowon and president Eyadema that it should be located in Togo new

Obasanjo argued that whatever policy Nigeria is pursuing in ECOWAS and in the sub-region must benefit the country and its people. This conclusion also made him to formulate more stringent criteria for providing aid to West African countries these new criteria were as follows: Promotion of National interest 45%, taking into account high and middle level manpower in Nigeria 20%, contributing to national economy and creating productive capacity for Nigeria 25%. Providing relief during disasters and national emergencies in the recipient country 10%. In sum, the spirit of sacrifices and selflessness which characterized Gowon's administration for ECOWAS project was completely absent in Obasanjo's military regime. (Bolaniwa, 2005)

The different posture from Obasanjo's regime continued with Shagari and Buhari governments. President Shagari for instance embarked on mass expulsion of large number of West Africans described as "illegal aliens" in response to the fundamental structural crisis in which Nigeria was enmeshed in 1983. The anti-regionalism stance was given a military flavour in April, 1984; Buhari closed all Nigeria's land borders.

The border remained closed for two years and the measure was justified in terms of the exercise of changing the currency which was an anti-smuggling policy and a response to other criminal practices that were sabotaging Nigeria economy. (Dauda, 2013)

According to Dauda (2013) the same Buhari administration banned food export to ECOWAS member states and halted trade relations with her Western neighbours such as Benin, Togo and Ghana which has serious impact on them. This situation was further aggravated when in May 1985, the Buhari administration embarked on mass expulsion of about one million illegal aliens mostly of Ghanaian origin. The action of Shagari and Buhari were revisited by the Babangida regime on August 26<sup>th</sup> 1986 in the interest of these neighbours this time around.

In the final analysis therefore, despite the ambivalence of some Nigerian leaders towards ECOWAS some years back, ECOWAS provides Nigerian government the platform that promotes her socio-cultural, political and economic interests. Equally true is the sub-region has enabled ECOWAS to effectively respond to inter-state conflicts in West Africa. The formation of ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) through the initiative of the Nigeria's Head of State Gen. Babangida in 1980, was instrumental for curbing conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. This conflict mediating strategy contained under Abacha and Abdulsalami administration respectively. (Dauda, 2013)

#### **Continuity and Change in Nigeria-ECOWAS Relations since 1999:**

There is no falsehood asserting that in international politics foreign policy is an extension of domestic politics. This is particularly true because the impact of domestic politics after 1999 had tremendous impact on the way and manner Nigeria conducted her external affairs with ECOWAS. Unlike the military juntas of Babangida, Buhari and Abdulsalami when Nigeria bore ECOWAS's burden with military interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone, the country's approach towards similar developments from 1999 has been markedly different under President Obasanjo, Yar'Adua and Jonathan. The reason behind this is that democratic and civilian regimes are more vulnerable to pressures from public opinion, parliament and the press than from military regime. (ECOWAS, 1999)

In the three successive administrations of Obasanjo, Yar'Adua and Jonathan, Nigeria played a major role in solving the crisis in Cote d'Ivoire when the incumbent leader Laurent Gbagbo refused to hand over power to Alassane Ouattara after the latter's electoral victory in November, 2011. President Obasanjo collaborated with his Ghanaian counterpart President John Kuffor to resolve the conflict, ensured that Nigeria's should only be diplomatic in nature. As a result, when the sub-regional organization decided to send one hundred and fifty (150) strong forces to join French peace-keepers in Cote d'Ivoire in January, 2003, Nigeria declined to participate in the operation consequently, ECOWAS troops came only from Benin, Gambia, Niger, Ghana and Togo. In a related development Nigeria refused to feed her forces in ECOWAS led military operation in Guinea-Bissau but resorted to diplomatic approach. The absence of a regional hegemon (Nigeria) from ECOMOG was responsible for the premature termination of the operation just after a period of four (4) months (Osunkotun, 2015).

Many reasons could be advanced for the differences in approach to ECOWAS' matters under Obasanjo, Yar'Adua and Jonathan, firstly, at this time Nigeria already had many internal problems, prominent among them was the Boko Haram insurgency. Secondly, both President Yar'Adua and Jonathan experienced diverse problems in securing their mandates and so they were preoccupied with establishing their legitimacy and promoting national peace and stability. Under these circumstances therefore, the logical option was only to be diplomatically involved in resolving conflicts in the sub-region (Aworawo, 2011)

Apart from her non-military involvement, diplomatically the country dropped her leadership role. For instance, it was France that helped to negotiate the Linas Marcoussis Accord in January, 2003. Ghana also participated in the negotiations that led to the signing of the Accra III Agreement in 2003. Also as Ivorian crisis lingered, South African President Thabo Mbeki took the lead in organizing an AU-sponsored peace



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In the final analysis therefore, despite the ambivalence of some Nigerian leaders towards ECOWAS some years back, ECOWAS provides Nigerian government the platform that promotes her socio-cultural, political and economic interests. Equally true is the sub-region has enabled ECOWAS to effectively respond to inter-state conflicts in West Africa. The formation of ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) through the initiative of the Nigeria's Head of State Gen. Babangida in 1980, was instrumental for curbing conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. This conflict mediating strategy contained under Abacha and Abdulsalami administration respectively. (Dauda, 2013)

#### **Continuity and Change in Nigeria-ECOWAS Relations since 1999:**

There is no falsehood asserting that in international politics foreign policy is an extension of domestic politics. This is particularly true because the impact of domestic politics after 1999 had tremendous impact on the way and manner Nigeria conducted her external affairs with ECOWAS. Unlike the military juntas of Babangida, Buhari and Abdulsalami when Nigeria bore ECOWAS's burden with military interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone, the country's approach towards similar developments from 1999 has been markedly different under President Obasanjo, Yar'Adua and Jonathan. The reason behind this is that democratic and civilian regimes are more vulnerable to pressures from public opinion, parliament and the press than from military regime. (ECOWAS, 1999)

In the three successive administrations of Obasanjo, Yar'Adua and Jonathan, Nigeria played a major role in solving the crisis in Cote d'Ivoire when the incumbent leader Laurent Gbagbo refused to hand over power to Alassane Ouattara after the latter's electoral victory in November, 2011. President Obasanjo collaborated with his Ghanaian counterpart President John Kuffor to resolve the conflict, ensured that Nigeria's should only be diplomatic in nature. As a result, when the sub-regional organization decided to send one hundred and fifty (150) strong forces to join French peace-keepers in Cote d'Ivoire in January, 2003, Nigeria declined to participate in the operation consequently, ECOWAS troops came only from Benin, Gambia, Niger, Ghana and Togo. In a related development Nigeria refused to feed her forces in ECOWAS led military operation in Guinea-Bissau but resorted to diplomatic approach. The absence of a regional hegemon (Nigeria) from ECOMOG was responsible for the premature termination of the operation just after a period of four (4) months (Osunkotun, 2015).

Many reasons could be advanced for the differences in approach to ECOWAS' matters under Obasanjo, Yar'Adua and Jonathan, firstly, at this time Nigeria already had many internal problems, prominent among them was the Boko Haram insurgency. Secondly, both President Yar'Adua and Jonathan experienced diverse problems in securing their mandates and so they were preoccupied with establishing their legitimacy and promoting national peace and stability. Under these circumstances therefore, the logical option was only to be diplomatically involved in resolving conflicts in the sub-region (Aworawo, 2011)

Apart from her non-military involvement, diplomatically the country dropped her leadership role. For instance, it was France that helped to negotiate the Linas Marcoussis Accord in January, 2003. Ghana also participated in the negotiations that led to the signing of the Accra III Agreement in 2003. Also as Ivorian crisis lingered, South African President Tabo Mbeki took the lead in organizing an AU-sponsored peace

talk among Ivorian leaders, leading to the signing of the Pretoria Agreement in April, 2005. Even much less powerful African state like Burkina Faso's President Blaise Campaore organized negotiations leading to the conclusion of Ougadougou Agreement in March, 2007. Just as the Togolese leader President Gnassingbe Eyadema did in 2001. None of these negotiations was organized by Nigerian leaders except under the auspices of ECOWAS or the African Union (AU). This has led to the conclusion by analysts and scholars that Nigerian behaviour towards ECOWAS changed drastically during Obasanjo's administration (Aworawo, 2011)

Despite the country's diplomatic stance, Nigeria took a position that demonstrated commitment by insisting that Ivorians should have a democratically elected government that should be committed to the rule of law and condemned Guei's military coup of 1999 which was an attempt to truncate democratic process in 2000. Nigeria also asked Laurent Gbagbo to respect Ivorian opinion by handing over power to Alassane Ouattara, winner of the 2010 presidential election. (Aworawo, 2011)

In the area of trade, Nigeria has the largest trade volume within the sub-region and has equally promoted intra-regional trade with ECOWAS member states since the beginning of the Forth Republic. Nigeria's major trading commodities in the international market is the crude oil and ECOWAS member states consume less than 10% of the product this has accounted for low trading between Nigeria and ECOWAS since 1999. Nigerian's export to ECOWAS region which averaged about 7% of its total export between 2001 and 2006 plummeted to 2.3% in 2010. The share of other ECOWAS countries in Nigeria's imports also dropped from 4.4% in 2009 and plummeted to less than 0.5% in 2010. Thus, only 2% of Nigeria's total imports are within the region making it difficult for Nigeria to use ECOWAS markets as catalyst for her economic development. (Nwokoma, 2009)

In the area of telecommunication, Nigeria has since the dawn of the new millennium benefited from investments across the sub-region. For example, the Globacom owned by Nigeria not only provided telecommunication services to Nigeria but also to some West African countries such as Ghana and Benin Republic. Thus economic advantages of ECOWAS for Nigeria could have been many if properly harnessed, but it's unfortunate that Nigerian leaders are not showing enough commitment to actualize it by using ECOWAS to develop her economy. Also the idea of focusing mainly on crude oil as her economic mainstay without proper diversification, and the absence of stable power supply are strong reasons why Nigeria is struggling economically to assert herself in the sub-region. But Nigerian state, her citizenry and business organizations will only benefit maximally from the region when ECOWAS is fully explored as a springboard for economic development. (Mohammed, 2006)

#### **ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS)**

According to ECOWAS Reviewed Treaty (ERT) the aims and objectives of ECOWAS are the promotion, cooperation and integration leading to the establishment of an Economic Union in West Africa in order to raise the living standard of its people and contribute to the progress and development of the entire continent. To realize these objectives, ECOWAS should ensure the harmonization and cooperation of national policies and the promotion of integration programs, projects and activities particularly in food, agriculture and national resources, industry, transportation, communications, energy, trade, money and finance, taxation, economic reform policies, education, information, culture, science, technology, health, tourism and legal matters. The establishment of common market is one of the steps taken by Nigeria and some West African countries in achieving the objectives. This treaty recommends abolition of custom duties levied on imports and exports and approves non-tariff barriers in order to establish a free trade area in the sub-region (ECOWAS, 1991). The second strategy is the adoption of external tariff and common trade policy with other third world countries. The third strategy is the removal of obstacles to ensure free movement of persons, goods, services, capital as well as right of resident and establishment. (ECOWAS, 2000)

The ETLS dates back to June, 1989 when in Ouagadougou, the West African Heads of State and Government under the Nigeria's initiative that places topmost priority on the development of intra-community trade came together to establish it. As part of implementing strategy, member states were grouped into three(3) based on their level of industrialization. And in order to eliminate tariff barriers, goods have been classified into 3 board groups namely; handicraft products, unprocessed goods and industrial products. The numbers of industrial goods approved to benefit from the ETLS were increased from 25 in 1990 to 142 in 1994. By December 2000, the ECOWAS Council of Ministers approved about 200 additional enterprises and products to benefit from the ETLS and some of Nigeria's approved products included: fatty acids, soaps, hair dressing products, skin care products, perfumes, electrical materials, plastic materials, tiling materials, palm oil, table and kitchen wares, others were foot wears, aluminum-zinc alloys, cement, bear and beverages, orange and pineapple juice, plywood, medicament, disinfectants, air conditioning machines, synthetic fibers, folding cartons and boxes. Palm kernel, crude oil, sheet of asbestos, cement, reservoir tanks, corrugated paper and sacks (ECOWAS, 2000). Member states are compensated through ECOWAS funds for loss of customs revenue because of the ETLS intra-community trade in industrial products and Nigeria makes the highest contribution to this budget since she also drives huge revenue accruing from export duties, all things equal. (ECOWAS, 1990)

Before the formation of ECOWAS in 1975, the freedom of movement, residence and establishment had no legal backing but the Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS approved this protocol (ECOWAS protocol in 1999) for these freedoms in Dakar Senegal on May 20<sup>th</sup> 1979, recognizing the fact that freedom of movement is one of the inalienable fundamental rights that could enhance development in the sub-region. The protocol provides that the right of entry, residence and establishment shall be accepted in three phases namely;

Phase 1: Right of Entry and Abolition of Visa

Phase 2: Right of Residence

Phase 3: Right of Establishment

Abolition of Visa and entry permits by member states were introduced in 1980. Citizens can now go on short term visit to member states and stay up to 90 days without visa or any entry permit. The right of residence which is the second phase came into force in 1989. But contrary to the spirit of this integration, Nigeria expelled about 3 million illegal aliens mostly community citizens from 1983-1985. Despite the fact that Article 14 of September Protocol A/SPI/7/8/86 provides that any form of expulsion must be according to the law, Nigeria claimed that it was based on economic and security reasons. (ECOWAS, 1990)

Monetary cooperation programme is another vital area of economic cooperation and sustainable development which Nigeria is seriously tackling. This refers to the harmonization of national monetary systems common management institution, facilitating regional trade transactions by improving and strengthening multilateral regional payments and clearing system of West African Clearing House, achieve regional currency convertibility and to establish a single monetary zone in place of 10 currency zones. This was adopted in Abuja Nigeria, in 1987 by the authority of the Heads of State and Government. (ECOWAS, 1994)

### Conclusion

The main objective of the study has been to identify efforts made by African leader to bring about development in the continent. Consequent upon the findings of the study, the following conclusions have been drawn.

The main objective of economic harmonization and free trade relations among member states for which ECOWAS was formed are yet to be realized. Africa is yet to witness complete peace through the instrumentality of ECOWAS. We discovered that the rate at which African leaders seeks foreign loans, aid

and grants are on the increase and this not good for the continent because they are capable of sinking the continent into greater dependency. Political and economic problems faced by ECOWAS are yet to be completely resolved for development to take place in the continent.

#### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the discussions involved and the conclusions thereafter drawn, the following recommendations are proposed: African leaders should strive to achieve objectives identified by ECOWAS Review Treaty so that they do not just become mere declarations of intentions. The objective of economic harmonization and free trade relations among ECOWAS member states should be achieved by African leaders. As good as it is to develop the sub-region national objectives should be promoted over and above regional objectives. The overall aim for the formation of ECOWAS by the states that came together to form it which is the development of the sub-region, should be pursued with utmost sincerity. African countries should embark on educational system that emphasizes science and technology that will ensure high level of the development of productive forces, only then can we compete favorably in the global market.

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