Regional Integration and Sustainable Development In Sub-Saharan Africa: The Ecowas Experience

By

Uchechukwu Ndubuisi
School of General Studies
Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State
u.ndubuisi@mouau.edu.ng
&
Jeffrey Mataram Ibeh
School of General Studies
Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State, Nigeria
Ibeh.jeffrey@mouau.edu.ng

Abstract

The study analysed regional integration and sustainable development in Sub-Saharan Africa with emphasis on ECOWAS. ECOWAS has remained the main regional body in West Africa with the goal of advancing the continental integration process. The regional integration presently comprise of 15 countries (Anglophone and Francophone) of the West Africa sub-region. ECOWAS has as its objective to promote economic, social and cultural cooperation and integration, with the ultimate aim of attaining economic and monetary union through the full economic integration of member states. Using the custom union theory the paper attempts to analyse the efforts and constraints of ECOWAS as a regional integration body towards sustainable development in Sub-Saharan Africa. The study adopted qualitative method of data collection and analysis to analyse the subject discoursed. Not considering the numerous constraints to the realization of ECOWAS objectives, regional integration has remained a strategy to ensure sustainable development in the developing states of the Sub-Saharan Africa region. However, the overall outcome of ECOWAS integration process has not been commendable. The paper concludes that notwithstanding the problems faced by the periphery countries of the Sub-Saharan region, regional integration remain a way out of the development dilemma faced by the region. The paper therefore recommends developmental regionalism and not just negative integration centred only on removal of tariffs. Thus this will entail the integration of production and suitable infrastructure towards attainment a complimentary economy driven economic integration.

Keywords: Regional Integration, Development, ECOWAS, Sub-Saharan Africa

Introduction

The scramble and balkanization of Africa by Europe did not only fragment the countries that emerged thereafter but also disarticulated her economy (Stiglitz, 1998). While the developed economies maximized the opportunities presented by globalization; the developing economies battled with problems of poverty, low standard of living, long period of dictatorship, political instability, conflicts, raw material based economy, lack of skilled labour, low industrial base, corruption and competitive economy rather than complimentary economy among others. It became necessary that African nations adopt economic integration as a prerequisite for their collective development (Siollun, 2021).

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was established on May 28, 1975 to facilitate a common socio-economic platform for West African countries and their yearning to close up the already existing socioeconomic development gap within the West Africa region. The ECOWAS is comprised of 15 member states – the Republic of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. On conception membership included 16 member states but Mauritania opted out in 1991 (Akopkari, 2003; Unya, 2016). ECOWAS has continuously been described as the main regional body in West Africa for advancing the continental integration process. Considering this, ECOWAS has as its objective to promote economic, social and cultural cooperation and integration, with the ultimate aim of attaining economic and monetary union through the full economic integration of member states. Thus all these will lead to enhanced living standards and greater economic stability among member states (Alli, 2009).

The West African countries share similar history of colonization by the European powers and aftermath grip of neo-colonialism, underdevelopment and the challenges of democratic governance, security and political instability. By the 1960's when most of these West African States gained their independence, the realities presented by the enormous distortions present in the colonial economy became evident and thus entrapped these countries (Siollun, 2021). These countries were left with highly fragile and structurally distorted economies, based on the export of one or two agricultural commodities with inherent price distortions in the international commodity market. Thus, the 1960's was characterised with concerted efforts by the newly independent states of Africa to restructure the colonial economic mode of production as most of these states on attainment of independence had high hopes of rapid and sustainable socio-economic development (Maduka, 2008).

Many protocols, conventions and resolutions of the ECOWAS have not really yielded expected result as the West African countries are becoming more underdeveloped each

day and this remain a deviation from the developing countries narrative for decades. Questions have been asked on various platforms and forums by development analysts about the possibility of many of these agreements and policies ratified and pursued by the ECOWAS to ensure the realisation of development processes and to what extent these policies or protocols have been implemented. One thing has remained in the minds of regional integration theorists, statesmen and policy makers; the present international system is structured in a way that regional integration remain the only way out to harness resources and strength to attain progress in so many areas the African continent has been found wanting.

Theoretical Framework of Analysis

The paper utilizes the functionalist theory towards understanding the efforts and constraints of ECOWAS as a regional integration body towards sustainable development in Sub-Saharan Africa. The paper adopts David Mitrany's functionalist approach in which he emphasizes that the roadmap to achieve social peace and prosperity is functionalism. Mitrany proposed a new international order based on trans-national cooperation with emphasis on the efficient administration of limited resources as an essential premise for durable cooperation and for creating of what he defined as being a working peace system. Mitrany foresaw the establishment of functional bodies with autonomous tasks and powers to ensure collective actualisation of objectives. This he explains will link authority to specific activity thus deviating from the traditional link between authority and a definite territory (Archer, 2008; Unya, 2016).

Mitrany envisaged a world in which the functions of everyday social life (transport, health care, communications, agriculture, education, industrial development and scientific development etc) will no longer be carried out within the confines of each sovereign state but are undertaken across frontiers on a regional, continental, or universal basis (Unya, 2016). These activities would be overseen by international organisations which would be more like board of management performing functions towards sustenance of the system.

Explaining further, Archer (2008) observes that functionalism attempts the alteration of the subjective conditions of mankind. Since war is caused by attitudes, habits of thought and feeling, and allegiances that are fostered by the state system, functional organizations through focusing attention on areas of common interest, encourage cooperation which will on the long run ensure a system of international relations in which the expectation of constructive collaboration will replace conflict as the dominant idea. Thus the major emphasis of functional integration is that man is gradually separated away from his loyalty to the state by the experience of a more serving and objective driven international

cooperation in technical and functional areas (Adetula, 2009). Hence with welfare becoming depoliticized through these functional technical organizations, a transfer of individual loyalties from national units to international organizations will occur.

Applying the functionalist theory of David Mitrany to the study, it is observable that an examination of ECOWAS as a regional integration strategy for socioeconomic development of Sub-Saharan Africa highlights both the objectives of the supranational body and constraints faced in its bid to ensure the sustainable socioeconomic development of West African States. ECOWAS as a regional integration arrangement has the aim to eliminate tariff and non tariff restrictions on intra-ECOWAS trade, establish a common external tariff and trade policy against non ECOWAS countries, remove all obstacles to the movement of all factors of production, and harmonize domestic policies across its member countries.

The ECOWAS was set up to promote cooperation and development in all fields of economic activity, encompassing the fields of industry, transport, telecommunication, 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 citizens of the supranational body, of increasing and maintaining economic stability, of fostering closer relations among its members and of contributing to the progress and development of the entire African continent. Unlike the European Union (EU) and other regional integrating bodies cooperation which remains the energy driving integrative system especially in the areas of social, technical and economic fields have not really yielded expected benefits to the region in the case of ECOWAS (Atuonwu et.al, 2021).

It is a fact that ECOWAS has not been able to achieve its set objectives as this is evidenced in ECOWAS low intra-regional trade, reliance on tariff as major source of revenue, low level of industrial and agricultural productivity, neo-colonial and dependent character, mutual suspicion and resultant fear, competitive rather than complimentary economy and the discouraging poor state of infrastructure within the West African countries. All these highlight the argument that ECOWAS as an integrating supranational body have failed to optimally realize the expected objectives which exist as function expected of the supranational body. It is argued that the performance of these functions will ultimately on the long run result to socioeconomic development of the West African sub region (Ibrahim, et.al, 2015; Atuonwu, et.al, 2021).

Conceptual Discourse

Regional Integration

Regionalism can be defined as belief in and commitment to common interest, values and identities by actors in a region for promoting common wellbeing. Thus regionalism is a process through regional goals can be achieved over time. Fjader (2017) explained integration as a process of extension of competences of community, consideration of a community by transfer of competences by the members in favour of the institutions of a community and territorial enlargement of a community. This is described to be the feelings of cultural, economic and political cohesion and a shared vision of the future for a defined group.

Regional integration is expected to reduce gradually the community's economic dependence on the outside world as relations existing between integrating states of will strengthen mutual goal and development (Nieuwkerk, 2008; Fjader, 2012). Thus the gradual limiting of entrenched dependence externally is seen as a requirement for achieving basic structural development objectives. Considering the developmental gap existing between the developed world and the third world, regional integration becomes an alternative strategy for the elimination of external dependence and exploitation that have been responsible for the distortion of development process of Africa and the third world.

The ECOWAS and the Challenge of Sub-Saharan Africa Development

Development is a dynamic process of innovation and advancement; a continuous process of positive change in the quality of life of an individual or a society, reduction of poverty, unemployment and inequality (Ebiziem et.al, 2019). Development entails a holistic and all embracing transformation of the society. It connotes the totality of societal improvement reflecting in the improvement in quality of life as well as satisfaction of psychological wants of members of any given rural area (Ndubuisi, 2012). This would translate to improvement in man's potentials and capabilities, eliminating or reducing poverty, inequality, unemployment and ultimately improvement in life sustenance, self esteem, freedom and value orientation.

The African countries stepping out of colonial bondage became entrapped with neo-colonialism, entrenched economic exploitation on multinational corporations, political instability, economic dependence, raw material driven economy, low industrial base and the menacing hold of corruption (Anikpo, 2017). Hence, regional integration became an escape route towards attempting to move away from the strong grasp of underdevelopment bedevilling the African nations. Regional integration has been

recognized as an inevitable requirement for the achievement of rapid socioeconomic development in the third world countries. This has been the basis for the establishment of ECOWAS as platform to achieve socioeconomic development of the countries within the West Africa sub region.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was formed on 28th May, 1975 as an economic integration scheme. Originally, ECOWAS comprised of sixteen West African countries including seven countries which belonged to the Communaute Economique de l'Afrique de l'Quest (CEAO), and three other countries which are members of the Mano River Union (MRU). By 1991, Mauritania withdrew its membership and ECOWAS membership reduced to fifteen states. It has been observed that ECOWAS membership mainly comprise of Anglophone, Lusophone and Francophone countries of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivore, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. The ECOWAS remain the biggest regional integration structure out of about forty single-purpose and multi-purpose inter-governmental organizations (IGOs) spread across West Africa (Adetula, 2009; Unya, 2016; Maduka, 2008).

Considering integration within the context of ECOWAS, Unya (2016) asserts that, in a comprehensive analysis that there have been two distinct but interrelated levels at which efforts of regional integration have been directed in West Africa, viz, the strictly functional and the rather emphatically political or constitutional types. The distinction between the two has remained analogous to the principles which led David Apter and James Coleman in a joint study to differentiate what they called interstate functional unifications designed to provide collaborations of several distinct sovereign states for common political, economic, social and cultural task on a side and on the other side the super state political unification. In the views of Unya (2016), ECOWAS belongs to the functional category and has as predecessors not only the post independence inter-state associations of the former French Tropical African possessions such as the Union Africaine et Malagach de Co-operation Economique (UAMCE), where the formation were facilitated by the fact of a centralized European colonial heritage.

ECOWAS was established to promote cooperation and development in all fields of economic activity particularly in the areas of industry, transport, telecommunication, energy, agriculture, natural resources, commerce, monetary and financial policies and in social-cultural matters. These objectives if actualised will ensure the raising of the standard of living of people within the sub-region, maintain economic stability, foster closer relations among members and ultimately contribute to the progress and development of

the African continent at large (Kimaryo, 2013). The essential programmes that ECOWAS Lagos Treaty of 1975 put in place to achieve political and economic integration covered by this paper include the following:

- Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Establishment
- Trade Liberalization (Intra-Regional Trade)
- Monetary Cooperation Programme
- Regional Infrastructural Development and Industrialization
- Conflict Management and good governance

Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Establishment

Also in the area of Protocol on free movement of persons, right of residence and establishment adopted by ECOWAS as contained in Article 2(2d) of the Treaty of ECOWAS, ECOWAS in principle recognizes the need to maintain and encourage intra-regional migration as a way of rationalizing and optimizing resources used at the regional level (Dokubo, 2009). It has been observed that in the early 1980's and late 1990's that the large economic gap between most members of the community have resulted uni-directional labour migration in West Africa. This has resulted to the burdening of the economies of these core countries existing as migration destination, especially when immigrants are unskilled and may not have appreciable impact on the economy (Adejumobi, 2009). Core states have reservations as regards to commitment made to ensure the free movement of persons, right of residence and establishment. Illegal migrants are expelled and borders closed, indigenisation policies introduced and thus placing unilateral conditions on the implementation of the policy on free movement of persons, right of residence and establishment.

In January 1983 and in May1985, the Nigerian government ordered the expulsion of around 2.7 million aliens unlawfully residing in Nigeria that have stayed beyond the 90 days visa limit (mostly Ghanaians). Some scholars have argued that Nigeria's expulsion of aliens unlawfully residing in Nigeria did not technically violate the ECOWAS protocol on free movement of persons since the first phase of the protocol only granted ECOWAS citizens the right of entry and residence for a maximum of 90 days and if need be for extension of stay can obtain permission from appropriate authorities (Dokubo, 2009). This really was a setback to the regional economic community initiative. Instances have been drawn to States that economic recession and assessment of the cost of opening up their borders have decided on putting up policies aimed at constraining the free movement of persons. The Ghanaian government deported 723 Nigerians living in Ghana citing criminal offenses like cybercrime, prostitution, and visa term violation as reasons (Abdullahi, 2019).

Though the free movement of persons has its gains for the community but its dangers and toll on the socioeconomic fabrics of members of the community is huge.

The free movement of persons without visa within the ECOWAS Community through the introduction of new passport (Single ECOWAS passport) with three categories for citizens of the sub region has been applauded as a laudable achievement of ECOWAS. The categories agreed in the May 12, 2000 ECOWAS Ministers Summit at Bamako includes: the red passport for the diplomatic, blue for the service and green for the ordinary group. This unique passport will not replace the ECOWAS Travel Certificate which is more cost effective and cheaper document for travel within the sub-region (Dokubo, 2009; Ali, 2013). The May 12, 2000 summit also emphasized the elimination of rigid border formalities, the numerous roadblocks and security checkpoints on international highways were to be removed to reduce reoccurring delays, contain complaints of harassment and extortion (Oche, 2009). Engaging of joint border patrols by neighbouring states of Nigeria, Niger, Benin, Togo, Ghana, Burkina Faso and Mali to monitor and police national borders; and modernization of border procedures through the engagement of information, communication and technology. Also it is pertinent to mention that the May 12, 2000 Summit presented the abolition of residence permit requirement for citizens within the community states in the spirit of equal treatment and took effect from April, 2000 (Adetula, 2009; Adejumobi, 2009; Atuonwu et.al, 2021).

The issue of labour and capital moving to the most developed country in the region due to reasons ranging thus: better economic infrastructure and the demand for labour in the industrial sector of the regional hegemony has been one of the problems frustrating the ECOWAS protocol on free movement, establishment and residence. Also the movement of unskilled labour from the weak states to the hegemony states within the community have been highlighted as burdening and draining the resources of the destination states. The unskilled migrating population overburden health, education and infrastructure of destination States and in most cases decreasing the employment opportunities available to citizens of destination countries (Akokpari, 2003; Adejumobi, 2009).

Exploitative employers would prefer employing these unskilled illegal aliens since they are willing to work longer hours with lesser remuneration and cannot engage in unionism due to their illegal status. In most cases also the continuous migration of these unskilled labours has resulted in cases of xenophobic attacks. Also on the side of the skilled labour and professionals it has been observed that the continuous migration to core states will eventually result to brain drain migration to the core states. The inefficiency of border police, Customs and Excise officials are also impediments; and also the lack of

computerised pool of data of citizens of the community have all portrayed the protocol as a theoretical objective with no practicable reality in view (Delvin & Estevadeordal, 2002; Kimaryo, 2013).

While the Visa and entry permit requirement may have been abolished by the ECOWAS protocol of free movement in all ECOWAS member states, there is still existing numerous check points in nearly all the States and thus subjecting the ECOWAS citizens to administrative harassment and extortion (Gowon, 1984; Adetula, 2009). Today there are three levels of restrictions against free movement in ECOWAS region. The first consist of restrictive measures by individual member states of ECOWAS to protect national interests which in most cases centre on the security, income and safety of their nationals and their property. This will comprise immigration laws, investment codes, indigenization policies and programmes.

Trade Liberalization (Intra-Regional Trade)

Trade liberalisation as one of the programmes of ECOWAS has been a continuing discourse in academic and policy platforms. The ECOWAS as a regional integration arrangement has outlined as its aim, the elimination of all tariff and non-tariff restrictions on intra-ECOWAS trade, establish a common external tariff and commercial policy against Non-ECOWAS countries, abolish all obstacles to the movement of all factors of production and harmonize domestic policies across its member countries (Adetula, 2009). This on the long run would entail an immediate and full liberalization of trade in unprocessed goods and traditional handicrafts; liberalisation of trade in industrial products and the gradual establishment of common tariff (Nwokoma, 2009). Examples of such Third World integration programmes include the Latin America Free Trade Association (LAFTA) formed in 1960 consisting of eleven Latin America countries; the Central African Customs and Economic Union (CACEU) in Africa formed 1964, comprising of Cameroun, Central African Republic, Congo and Gabon; and the Caribbean Free Trade Area (CARIFTA) formed 1968 consisting of twelve Caribbean nations.

The pursuit of liberalisation of trade emphasizing on increased intra-regional trade has witnessed slow progress with notable achievements and more to be achieved. Over the years the community has witnessed improvement in the operating environment in most of the countries in the sub-region. Thus with the advent of democracy and its progress; and entrenching of economic reforms in countries like Nigeria, Ghana among others have resulted to the gradual withdrawal of the state from the production sector and as such strengthening the role of the private sector (Frempong, 2009; Nwokoma, 2009). Also the establishment of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and engaging

economic policies by member countries of the community have resulted to a conducive socio-economic and political environment required for business operations and trade among member states (Ali, 2013).

The introduction of trade liberalisation scheme by the community in 1990 have witnessed countries like Nigeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo lifting tariff barriers on unprocessed products (Essien & Egbuna, 2002). This have also encouraged the development of infrastructure in the sub-region such as the construction of inter-member state roads, rail lines and the development of telecommunication links have all enhanced the level of actualisation of the protocol on trade liberalisation. Also the establishment of the West African Monetary Zone (WAMZ) for non WAEMU countries for the introduction a common currency Eco in line with creating a monetary union; the free movement of persons; and establishment of ECOWAS traveller's cheque and passport will all enhance the removal of trade barriers and enhance intra-regional trade (Nwokoma, 2009; Ali, 2013).

It has remained quite disappointing that despite the moves by ECOWAS to catch up with WAEMU (The West African Economic and Monetary Union) also known by its French acronym, UEMOA, not much has been achieved. This is so considering the unresolved issues centred on relationship between ECOWAS and WAEMU and how ECOWAS intends to relate its trade liberalisation programmes with that of WAEMU comprising of member states Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote D'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo. It has been observed that WAEMU member countries are working toward greater integration with unified tariffs (Itsede, 2002; Nnanna, 2009).

Not considering the effort made towards engaging proactive policies aimed at enhancing the level of intra-regional trade existing within the West African sub-region, a lot of constraining factors have been faced by the community. The duplication and multiplication of regional integration schemes in the West Africa sub-region have always created the problem of multiple loyalties. The laws and policies of the smaller groupings such as UEMOA within a larger one like ECOWAS have the tendency of creating problems except the policies and programmes of the two bodies are harmonized. All ECOWAS members operate a mono-cultural structured economy, which ultimately depend on trade in a narrow list of commodities (Dokubo, 2009; Nwokoma, 2009). It has been argued that for ECOWAS to make any progress, a great deal of attention should be channelled towards sub-regional trade. The unimpressive low rate of intra-ECOWAS trade cannot provide required large market needed for modern industrial growth. Also the development of the local industry in West Africa to produce manufactured goods as components of intra-

ECOWAS trade has implications on the trade liberalization moves of ECOWAS (Onuba & Ndubuisi, 2019).

Monetary Cooperation Programme

One of the visions of the founding fathers of ECOWAS was to promote economic and monetary integration of member states, hence the mandate to create a common economic platform and a monetary union with a single currency (Nnanna, 2009). The ECOWAS Monetary Cooperation Programme (EMCP) initiated in 1987 has continuously suffered implementation set back due to the inability of the Anglo-phone member countries of the community to achieve the quantitative convergence criteria. The primary convergence criteria have been outlined as the following:

a. Single digit inflation maintenance
b. Attainment of fiscal deficit/GDP ratio excluding grants ≤ 4%
c. Central Bank financing of fiscal deficit as percent of previous year tax revenue ≤ 10%
d. Ensuring Gross External Reserves highlighting monthly imports ≥ 3% (Nnanna, 2002; Nnanna, 2009).

While the Francophone member countries have established the CFA Franc Zone, the West African Monetary Zone (WAMZ) comprising Nigeria, Ghana, the Gambia, Guinea and Sierra Leone has failed in its implementation. Even with launching of a fast track approach to monetary integration in ECOWAS in Lome in 1999 and the Accra Declaration in 2000 the West African Monetary Zone (WAMZ) has remained a failed initiative (Olu-Adeyemi & Ayodele, 2007). Though the fast track approach had stipulated the possibility of take-off if a minimum of two countries in the WAMZ have satisfied the primary convergence criteria, the WAMZ countries have really been on and off in the realization of this narrative. The single currency pursued by ECOWAS is expected to greatly advance the aspiration for sub-regional development. In 1987, the ECOWAS embarked on a monetary cooperation programme with the objective of creating a West African Monetary Zone and a single currency by 2000; forty two years after (2021), ECOWAS is yet to actualise the single currency. Progress towards actualising the single currency have been slow, as at 2001 it was observed that only Nigeria and Gambia have met some of the criteria for single currency within the sub-region (Osegbue, 2008; Ali, 2013). Thus ECOWAS programme of monetary cooperation was launched to harness the possibilities of achieving a single currency for the sub-region. This has been narrowed to the reality facing the sub-region where members are at different levels of development and as such a single currency programme will require a relevant degree of commitment towards social and political

cohesion and integration by member states of the ECOWAS (Osegbue, 2008; Nnanna, 2009).

Furthermore, it has been argued as regards to the monetary union and single currency project of ECOWAS that one of the major challenges confronting the ECOWAS engagement towards actualising development through integration was how to harmonize the financial systems in the sub-region considering the diversity in monetary systems. This also has been identified as a constraint towards achieving a sub-regional market and successful liberalization of trade (Nnanna, 2009). Also the fiscal pressures, increasing external debt burden, lack of political will, inability to ensure the proactive involvement of key stakeholders and the inability of member countries to foster institutional capacity are factors that have continuously constrained the achieving of the primary convergence criteria for an operational monetary union by the WAMZ countries.

Regional Infrastructural Development and Industrialization

It has been argued that no society can actualise development that will turn around positively the socio-economic fortunes of its population in isolation of infrastructure development. Thus the integration of physical infrastructural development was a key in the ECOWAS initiative for development. The existing infrastructure of the ECOWAS sub-region has remained in a deplorable condition that it cannot support agricultural development or industrial development and as not even possible to actualise good standard of living (Alli, 2009; Unya, 2016). Hence, it is worth mentioning that the existing huge infrastructural gap both within and between African countries remains one of the greatest constraint to the integration initiative in the continent and most especially within the West Africa sub-region.

Over the years the reality of the situation have confronted the ECOWAS, the capacity to have the sub-region better connected in the areas of transport (road, air, rail and sea), energy (electricity) and information and communication technology is to a great extent dependent on finance available (Economic Commission for Africa, 2011). Over the years, financing infrastructure development has been done by the public sector which recently is lacking financial capacity of engagement due to reduction of revenue from exports (agricultural and mineral exports) and fluctuating market prices of these exports. Lack of commitment by the indigenous private sector towards developing infrastructure in these West African countries has also limited the development of good infrastructure. It is observable that even when these indigenous private sector actors are involved it is only on maintenance of infrastructure capacity. On the part of the international private sector, the

low returns on investment have remained a discouragement towards embarking on infrastructure development within the sub-region (Omoweh, 2009).

Thus it is expected that the construction of West African High Way networks would enhance level of integration and at the same time ensure possibilities of development through industrialisation. This will also encourage transportation and movement of goods and people within the sub-region. If this will work there must be strengthened policy to ensure the removal of all forms of barriers, including bureaucratic ones, no road blocks and possibilities of smooth processing of documents at the borders (Alli, 2009; Dokubu, 2009). The ECOWAS showcasing its commitment to development of regional infrastructural network adopted a regional road programme – the Trans West African Road Network, consisting of the Trans-Coastal highway from Lagos to Nouakchou, and the Trans-Sahelian highway from Dakar to N'Djamena (Economic Commisssion for Africa, 2011; Atuonwu et.al, 2021). The energy sector is yet another challenge faced by the community because of the low capita generation and consumption level of power (Omoweh, 2009). No industrialization and productivity is possible outside a reliable power sector. There are Hydro-electric dam power projects across the sub-region and it is believed that a harmonization of energy project would be of great help to many West African states where there is inadequate energy for domestic and industrial use.

Conflict Management and Good Governance

Conflict has remained an intrinsic aspect of human existence and as such due to the change anticipated as an outcome in every conflict situation every society has its fair share of conflicts. The major focus in every society is the management of conflict and its containment towards preventing an upsurge of violence. Hence conflict management explains the limitation, mitigation and containment of violence conflicts. Again, many writers have argued that no meaningful cooperation towards development could take place within the sub-region without peace and security. Inter-state and Intra-state wars have remained a clog in the wheel of development of the ECOWAS sub-region (Frempong, 2009). Though the Treaty of Lagos was silent on conflict management and prevention as well as good governance, the Protocol on Non-Aggression (1978) and the Protocol relating to Mutual Assistance on Defence (1981) were incorporated into the ECOWAS Treaty to address this concern. Through the ECOWAS Cease-Fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), the ECOWAS have been able initiate peace in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Subsequently ECOWAS engagement in conflict prevention and management in other parts of West Africa came with lessons on the need to improve on structure and engagement process in times of conflict within the sub-region.

Hence by December, 1991 the ECOWAS Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace Keeping and Security was adopted thus providing the foundation for ECOWAS collective security system. In 17, October 2002 West African troops were deployed to Cote d' Ivoire as ECOWAS Mission in Cote d' Ivoire (ECOMICI). Recently the sub-region was reported as experiencing an improvement in its security situation (Adetula, 2009; Golwa, 2009). This inarguably van be traced to commitment to the principles of democracy and good governance as expressed in democratic elections in Burkina Faso, Liberia and in the successful transition that occurred in Guinea Bissau and Togo.

Despite the proposed engagements and successes, the conflict management mechanism of ECOWAS is still emerging and still underdeveloped as it generally lack established institutions and structures. The cases of military coups, human rights abuse, suppression of opposition, infringements on press freedom speaks volume on the state of West Africa's democratic institution and outlook towards good governance (Koukoudakis, 2012). It is also worth mentioning that considering the prevalence of conflicts in the sub-region, the ECOWAS and its member states should channel more energy towards economic development and good governance since poverty, crime and bad governance have remained major causes of conflict in the sub-region.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The journey to economic cooperation and regional integration has been a long and strenuous one. ECOWAS has remained the main regional body in West Africa for advancing the continental integration process though in an environment where smaller integration bodies within the sub-region seem to exist. ECOWAS as a regional integration was established with the objective of helping these West African countries that have experienced setbacks socio-economically due to the above listed factors to be able to gain development strides in the present globalised world. However, it has been argued that except in area of regional security, promotion of democracy and good governance in West Africa; the ECOWAS has not really performed. Many protocols, conventions and resolutions of the ECOWAS have not really yielded expected result as the West African countries are becoming more underdeveloped each day and this remain a deviation from the developing countries narrative for decades (Adetula, 2009).

With particular reference to Africa generally and West Africa sub-region in particular, scholars have argued that the problem impeding regional integration has been political instability, fear of big member states, lack of financial commitment, the Anglophone-Francophone dichotomy among others. In his work Ong'ayo (2008) blames political

instability and other related problems on political leadership, though some references are made to external factors such as the geopolitical and economic interest of the international community.

The neo-colonial and dependent character of the sub-regional integration body is still an argument raised by the dependency theorists as an impediment towards realisation of ECOWAS objectives. It emphasize that dependent peripheral capitalism cannot enhance development in the developing countries of the world. Thus, the European imperialism suffered by the African continent coupled with the burden of unequal exchange and the expropriation of surplus from the economies of African states is all problems faced by the ECOWAS in its development drive.

Many writers on regional integration especially as it concerns the ECOWAS has observed that members of the integrating body (ECOWAS) are still unwilling to concede power to the supra-nationality of ECOWAS due to fear of over bearing control by the "Big Partners" as such there is increasing dominance of nation states market interests as against the interest of that of the supra-nationality. Also the national interest of members of the community seem to reflect more in their commitment to engagements as provided in the Protocols of the sub-regional body. Members seem to once in a while come up with protectionist policies that endanger the true spirit of the integration. The West African economy is largely competitive rather than complimentary. Member countries are primary producers of similar primary produce, in most cases agricultural products and as such are all competitors with each other on the international markets in Europe, America and most especially Asia (Osegbue, 2008; Alli, 2009).

Thus if the ECOWAS must record sustainable development through its integration mechanism in the West Africa sub region the dichotomy between the Anglophone and Francophone members of the community should be addressed towards finding common objectives and long run engagements that can foster understanding and required development. West African governments should prioritize the development of infrastructure to create free movement of people, goods and services and must mobilize resources towards ensuring that these are attainable within record time. The West African member states should foster cross-fertilization among think-tanks, institutes of higher education and policy makers and use their own centres of knowledge to promote development and implementation in support of the sub-regions integration efforts.

The ECOWAS and its member states must raise awareness of the organizations role among West African publics to enhance popular ownership of its programmes. Thus, this will also

entail seeking broader participation from the private sector and civil society to enhance accountability of national governments. West Africa policy makers need to redefine mechanism of engagement and adopt new approaches that address the root causes of conflicts on the West African sub-region. However a greater effort is needed to show the relevance of ECOWAS as regional integration body that can ensure sustainable development within the West Africa sub-region, thus ensuring a level of commitment towards goals of the sub regional integration and not just mere paper works and rhetoric that do not amount to action.

References

Abdullahi, T. (2019, March 6). *Ghana's deportation of Nigerians is a new chapter in a very ugly history that must end. African Liberty*. Retrieved from http://www.africanliberty.org/2019/03/06/ghanas-deportation-of-nigerians-is-a-chapter-in-a-very-ugly-history-that-must-end/

Adejumobi, S. (2009). Popular participation and Africa's development agenda: Projecting a citizen-based United States of Africa. *Politikon: South African Journal of Political Studies. 36* (3), 403-422.

Adetula, V.A. (2009). ECOWAS and the challenges of integration in West Africa. In J.U Ogwu and W.O Alli (Eds.) *ECOWAS milestones in regional integration*. Lagos: NIIA.

Akopkari, J. (2003). *The OAU, AU, NEPAD and the promotion of good governance in Africa*. Occasional Paper 14 Electoral Institute of South Africa.

Ali, W.B. (2013). Impact of ECOWAS Protocols on political and economic integration of the West African sub-region. *International Journal of Physical and Human Geography. 1*(2), 47-58

Alli, W.O. (2009). ECOWAS and Development challenges in West Africa. In J.U Ogwu and W.O Alli (Eds.) *ECOWAS milestones in regional integration*. Lagos: NIIA.

Anikpo, M. (2017). *Poverty in Africa: An introduction to the sociology of underdevelopment*. Enugu: Abic books.

Archer, C. (2008). *International Organizations*. London: George Allen and Urwin publishers.

Atuonwu, C.I; Omeje, I.O & Amena, B.T (2021). Challenges and prospects of regional integration in Africa: A study of New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). *South-South Journal of Humanities and International Studies. 4* (3), 219-237.

Delvin, R. & Estevadeordal, A. (2002, November 11-12). *Trade and cooperation: A regional public goods approach.* Paper presented at the PECC Trade Forum on Developing Patterns of Regional Trading Arrangements in the Asia-Pacific Region: Issues and Implications. Vancouver, Canada.

Dokubo, C. (2009). The ECOWAS Protocol on free movement of persons, right of residence and establishment: The challenge of implementation. In J.U Ogwu and W.O Alli (Eds.) *ECOWAS milestones in regional integration*. Lagos: NIIA.

Ebiziem, E.J, Ezenwoko, O.F and Ogbodo, B. (2019). Security Challenges in Nigeria and Implication for Sustainable Development (2012-2018). *International Journal of Politics & Administration. 1*(1), 170-185.

Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), (2011). *Capturing the 21st century: African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)-Best Practices and Lessons learned*. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: ECA.

Essien, E.A & Egbuna, E.N (2002). Regional integration, spill over effects, and market size: Implication for growth in the ECOWAS sub-region. *West African Journal of Monetary and Economic Integration. 2*(2), 29-46.

Fjader, C. (2012). Regionalism in Asia and Europe in a theoretical perspective: Rationalist and ideational approaches. *Asian-Pacific Journal of EU Studies. 3*(1), 35-53.

Frempong, A. (2009). Monitoring democratic governance within ECOWAS: The theory and practice. In J.U Ogwu and W.O Alli (Eds.) *ECOWAS milestones in regional integration*. Lagos: NIIA.

Golwa, J. (2009). ECOWAS and conflict resolution in West Africa. In J.U Ogwu and W.O Alli (Eds.) *ECOWAS milestones in regional integration*. Lagos: NIIA.

Gowon, Y. (1984). The Economic Community of West African States: A study in Political and Economic Integration. PhD Thesis University of Warwick.

Ibrahim, S.G; Ogbeidi, D and Adams, J.W. (2015). An intergovernmental approach to regional integration in Africa: The efficacy of the African Union. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Modern Education. 1*(1), 461-479.

Itsede, C.O. (2002). The challenges of monetary union: Gains and opportunities. *Central Bank of Nigeria Economic and Financial Review. 40*(4), 49-65.

Javed, M. (1999). *International political economy and globalization*. Singapore: World Scientific Publishers.

Kaplan, M.A. (1977). *Systems and process in International Politics*. New York: John Wiley Inc.

Kimaryo, L. (2013, May 24). *Africa's rocky road to continental unity*. Paper presented at a Workshop to commemorate 50 years of OAU/AU. Moshi University College of Cooperative and Business Studies (MUCCBS).

Koukoudakis, G. (2012). European integration and the reconceptualisation of state sovereignty. *Spectrum: Journal of Global Studies. 4*(1), 91-105.

Maduka, A.C. (2008). Regionalism and economic integration. In C. Osegbue and E.A Obi (eds). *Issues in international economic relations*. Onitsha: Bookpoint Education Ltd.

Ndubuisi, U. (2012). Prospects of local government finance and rural development: A case of Umuahia North L.G.A of Abia State. B.Sc Project, Department of Political Science and Public Administration Abia State University Uturu

Nieuwkerk, V.A (2008). *Regionalism into globalism: War into peace*. Retrieved from www.weltpolitik.net

Nnanna, J.O. (2002). The West African Monetary Zone (WAMZ): Convergence or Divergence- Which way forward? *Economic and Financial Review (CBN). 40*, 107-131.

Nnanna, J.O. (2009). Monetary integration in ECOWAS: The case of the West Africa Monetary Zone (WAMZ). In J.U Ogwu and W.O Alli (Eds.) *ECOWAS milestones in regional integration.* Lagos: NIIA.

Nwokoma, N.I. (2009). ECOWAS and intra-regional trade 1975-2005. In J.U Ogwu and W.O Alli (Eds.) *ECOWAS milestones in regional integration*. Lagos: NIIA.

Omoweh, D. (2009). ECOWAS infrastructure development and NEPAD initiative. In J.U Ogwu and W.O Alli (Eds.) *ECOWAS milestones in regional integration*. Lagos: NIIA.

Oche, O. (2009). ECOWAS and the challenge of trans-border crimes. In J.U Ogwu and W.O Alli (Eds.) *ECOWAS milestones in regional integration*. Lagos: NIIA.

Olu-Adeyemi, L. & Ayodele, B. (2007). The challenges of regional integration for development in Africa: Problems and prospects. *Journal of Social Sciences. 15*(3), 213-218.

Ong'ayo, A.O (2008). *Political instability in Africa Where the problem lies and alternative perspectives*. Amsterdam: The African Diaspora policy Centre.

Onuba, C. O. and Ndubuisi, Uchechukwu (2019). An analysis of the structure and character of Nigeria-China oil bilateral relations, 2008-2018. *Renaissance University Journal of Management and Social Sciences (RUJMASS).* 5(1), 110-118.

Osegbue, C. (2008). Regional integration initiatives: Selected cases. In C. Osegbue and E.A Obi (eds). *Issues in International economic relations*. Onitsha: Bookpoint Education Ltd.

Siollun, M. (2021). *A short history of conquest and rule: What Britain did to Nigeria*. London: Hurst and Company.

Stiglitz, J.E. (1998). An agenda for development in twenty first century. In B. Pleskovic and J.E, Stiglitz (Eds). *Annual World Bank Conference on Development Economics*. Washington D.C World Bank.

Unya, I.U. (2016). African Union and the constraints of African integration: An examination and assessment of Africa Unions mechanisms for continental integration. Doctoral Dissertation, Department of Political Science/ Public Administration Faculty of Social Science University of Uyo, Nigeria.