

# **Integration and Development of West Africa: The Role of Nigeria in Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), 1975 to 2023**

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## **ABSTRACT**

**T**his study explores the pivotal role of Nigeria in the economic integration and development of West Africa from 1975 to 2023. As the most populous and economically significant nation in the region, Nigeria has been instrumental in shaping the economic landscape of West Africa through its policies, regional cooperation, and development initiatives. Nigeria is the arrowhead of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) which was formed in 1975, as a regional institution

consisting of fifteen nations. The research investigates Nigeria's involvement in regional economic integration efforts, such as trade agreements, infrastructural projects, and peacekeeping missions. It evaluates the impact of these contributions on West African economic development. The essence of the establishment of ECOWAS was to promote cooperation and integration in West Africa in order to raise the living standard of its people, to maintain and enhance economic stability, foster relations among members and contribute to the progress and development of the African continent. This paper argues that while its objectives were initially limited to economic cooperation, emerging political events led to the revision and expansion of ECOWAS'S scope of cooperation to include the maintenance of regional peace, stability and security through promoting and strengthening good neighbourliness. The paper employs power-based and rationalist functionalist approaches in order to elaborate on the big-brother and sub-regional leader role of Nigeria in the West African sub-region and concludes that, in West Africa, regional association has come to be expressed in the formation of ECOWAS in 1975 and the success of which is always hinged on the degree of the determination and commitment of the stronger and Nigeria is manifestly the strongest member.

**Key words:** *Integration, Development, Nigeria and ECOWAS*

## **Introduction**

The economic integration and development of West Africa have been significantly influenced by the actions and policies of Nigeria, the region's largest and most economically powerful nation. Since the mid-1970s, Nigeria has played a central role in shaping the economic landscape of West Africa through various regional initiatives, collaborations, and policy frameworks. This period marks a transformative era in the region's economic history, characterized by efforts to enhance

regional cooperation, trade, and development amidst political and economic challenges. In 1975, the establishment of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) marked a pivotal moment in the pursuit of regional integration. Nigeria, as a founding member and a leading economic force, has been deeply involved in ECOWAS's objectives, including the promotion of intra-regional trade, the establishment of a common market, and the coordination of development policies. Over the decades, Nigeria's engagement in regional affairs has encompassed a range of activities, from contributing to infrastructural projects and financial assistance to participating in peacekeeping missions and diplomatic negotiations.

This study seeks to provide a comprehensive historical analysis of Nigeria's contributions to the economic integration and development of West Africa from 1975 to 2023. It will explore the strategies and policies adopted by Nigeria, assess the effectiveness of its involvement in regional economic initiatives, and analyze the impact of its actions on West African economic development. By examining historical data, policy documents, and key events, this research aims to offer a detailed understanding of Nigeria's role in shaping the economic trajectory of West Africa. The significance of Nigeria's contribution lies not only in its economic might but also in its strategic position as a leader in regional diplomacy and development. Understanding this role provides valuable insights into the dynamics of regional integration and offers perspectives on the future of economic cooperation in West Africa.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

A conceptual clarification of the key concepts of economic integration, and economic development are important to this discourse in order to establish the necessary premises upon which this study shall critically examine the role of Nigeria in the economic integration of

Ukeyima Adugu Gbileve, Toryina Ayati Varvar & Saawua Gabriel Nyityo  
West Africa as well as lay the foundation for greater understanding of other issues which will be discussed.

**Economic Integration:** Economic integration which is also referred to as regional integration as it often occurs among neighboring nations is an arrangement among nations that typically includes the reduction or elimination of trade barriers and the coordination of monetary and fiscal policies with the aim to reduce costs for both consumers and producers and to increase trade between the countries involved in the agreement.<sup>49</sup> According to McCormick:

Economic integration is the process by which different countries agree to remove trade barriers between them. Trade barriers can be tariffs (taxes imposed on imports to a country), quotas (a limit to the amount of a product that can be imported) and border restrictions.<sup>50</sup>

When regional economies agree on integration, trade barriers fall and economic and political coordination increases. More specifically, economic integration typically leads to a reduction in the cost of trade, improved availability of goods and services and a wider selection of them, and gains in efficiency that lead to greater purchasing power. For example, the European Union, represents a complete economic integration.<sup>51</sup>

The advantages of economic integration fall into three categories: trade benefits, employment, and political cooperation. Economic integration can reduce the costs of trade, improve the availability of goods and services, and increase consumer purchasing power in member nations. Employment opportunities tend to improve because trade

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<sup>49</sup> [www.invetopedia.com](http://www.invetopedia.com)

<sup>50</sup> J. McCormick: *The European Union: Politics and policies*. (Boulder Colorado: Westview Press, 1999)

<sup>51</sup> J. McCormick: *The European Union...*

liberalization leads to market expansion, technology sharing, and cross-border investment. Political cooperation among countries also can improve because of stronger economic ties, which provide an incentive to resolve conflicts peacefully and lead to greater stability. As the economies of the co-operating countries become completely integrated into a single market, there appears a need for common policies in social policy (education, health care, unemployment benefits and pensions) and common political institutions. This is political integration and its culmination occurs when the co-operating countries are so integrated that they share the same foreign policies and merge their armies. In effect, they form a new country.

**Economic Development:** Economic development is much more than economic growth and is measured on a long term basis. R. Cameron offered a useful definition of economic development as a process as:

Economic growth accompanied by a substantial structural or organizational change in the economy, such as a shift from a local subsistence economy to markets and trade, or the growth of manufacturing and service outputs relative to agriculture.<sup>52</sup>

Cameron's idea of economic development seems to have a bearing with that of Panth who views economic development as:

The structural transformation of the economy by introducing more mechanized and updated technologies to increase labor productivity, employment, income, and standard of living of the population. Economic development should be

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<sup>52</sup> R. Cameron, *A Concise Economic History of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 9.

accompanied by improvement in infrastructure, as well as social, political and institutional factors to facilitate transformation of the economy.<sup>53</sup>

Economic development therefore, involves both quantitative increase in production and the quantitative impact of such increase on the society, particularly on the standard of living. Economic growth can occur without development unless it translates into quantitative improvement in the standard of living of a country's population. Rodney defines development as "a many side process. At the level of individuals, it implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self discipline, responsibility and material wellbeing."<sup>54</sup> This means that economic development involves the reorganization and orientation of the entire economic and social system. This also involves, in addition to improvement of income and output, radical changes in institutions, social and administrative structures as well as in popular attitudes, customs and beliefs. In view of this, Seers maintained that:

The questions to ask about a country's development are therefore, what has been happening to poverty? what has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have declined from high levels then beyond doubt this has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these problems have been growing worse, especially if all three have,

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<sup>53</sup> P, Panth, "Economic Development: Definition, Scope and Measurement," in *No Poverty: Encyclopedia of the UN Sustainable Development Goals*, (eds.) W. L. Filho, et al (Switzerland: Spriger Nature, 2020), 1.

<sup>54</sup> W. Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. (Pretoria: Panat Publishing Inc. 2005), 1.

it would be strange to call the result development even if per capital income doubled<sup>55</sup>

A critical examination of the definitions of “Economic development” by scholars quoted above implies that development must necessarily include the reduction or elimination of poverty, illiteracy, disease, malnutrition, unemployment and so on. It is a program which has the objective and strategy aimed at transforming the citizens in the rural areas from being the victims of poverty, ignorance and disease into contented human beings, able to earn an income capable of sustaining a reasonable standard of living for themselves and families. It also means the ability to provide the basic necessities of life such as food, jobs, affordable and accessible health care, good roads, water, electricity and education among many other things for the people.

### **Theoretical Perspectives on Integration**

An accurate analysis cannot be possible without the examination of some theories underpinning this discourse. Scholars have emerged with different theories and explanations that endeavor explain the concept of integration. For the purpose of this study, the following perspectives on integration or regionalism will be considered:

Power-based approaches such as neorealist assume that in the absence of a central enforcement power (anarchy), cooperation is risky for states which are concerned about the equal distribution of power among

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<sup>55</sup> S. Dudley, “The Meaning of Development” Cited by J.E Agaba and M.G Genyi “Chinese Development State Model: Alternative Strategy for Africa’s Development”, in *American Research Institute for Policy Development, Journal of International Relations and Foreign Policy* 1(1), June, 2013, 46-47

Ukeyima Adugu Gbileve, Toryina Ayati Varvar & Saawua Gabriel Nyityo them.<sup>56</sup> To explain regional cooperation, hegemonic stability theory points to powerful states within the region or outside, which are willing to and capable of acting as “regional paymaster, easing distributional tensions and thus smoothing the path of integration”.<sup>57</sup> The US played a key role as external hegemony in the creation and prevalence of the European Community by mitigating the security dilemma in the region. Conversely, the ineffectiveness of regionalism in the Middle East or Asia is often blamed on the absence of a regional or external hegemony.<sup>58</sup> Powerful states facilitate the emergence of regionalism in pursuit of economic or geopolitical interests. The US, China, Russia, South Africa or Nigeria supported and engaged in region-building in order to strengthen military alliances, promote stability in neighboring countries, or secure access to new markets, cheap labor, water and energy resources.<sup>59</sup> Yet, while hegemonic leadership may help initiate and promote regionalism, powerful states are not always willing to act as hegemonies. Brazil has been ambivalent towards pushing regional institution building in Latin America.<sup>60</sup> Forming regional alliances to balance powerful states posing a threat in and outside the region, rather than bandwagon with them, is another explanation for regional

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<sup>56</sup>D.A. Baldwin, 'Power and International Relations', in W. Carlsnaes, T. Risse and B. A. Simmons (eds), *Handbook of International Relations*, (London: Sage, 2013), 273-297.

<sup>57</sup> R. Gilpin, *The Political Economy of International Relations*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 87-90

<sup>58</sup>L. Fawcett and H. J. Gandois, “Regionalism in Africa and the Middle East: Implications for EU Studies”, *Journal of European Integration* 32, 6 (2010), 617-636.

<sup>59</sup>J. Gowa, *Allies, Adversaries, and International Trade*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994)

<sup>60</sup>M. Spektor, 'Brazil: The underlying ideas of regional policies', in D. Flemes (ed.), *Regional Leadership in the Global System: Ideas, Interests and Strategies of Regional Powers*, (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 191-204.



cooperation under anarchy.<sup>61</sup> One of NATO's main missions has been to keep Germany down and Russia out by keeping the US in Europe. A similar competition between two states for containing external powers through promoting (different forms of) regionalism can be observed between Iraq and Egypt in the League of Arab States.<sup>62</sup>

Neoliberal institutionalism and rationalist functionalism are as rationalist and state-centered as power-based approaches. They also assume international anarchy but emphasize complex interdependence among states and their shared interest in dealing with the problems that arise from it by setting up international institutions, which intensify at the regional level. Globalization is a major external driver for regionalism.<sup>63</sup> Global markets entail increased trans-border mobility and economic linkages and trade issues are less cumbersome to deal with at the regional than at the multilateral level. Coping with negative externalities, such as diversions of trade and investment, provides another rationale to engage in regional institution-building. States may either seek membership in regional institutions generating the external effects as many European countries have done in the case of the EU and some of the South American or they create their own regional group. Globalization, hence, is a common stimulus generating a demand for regional institutional-building, to which states have responded independently and often times differently around the globe. While advanced industrialized countries have mostly sought to shape globalization and manage its

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<sup>61</sup> S. Walt, *Origins of Alliances*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987).

<sup>62</sup>M. Khadduri, M. "Towards an Arab Union: The League of Arab States", *American Political Science Review* 40, 1(1946), 90-100.

<sup>63</sup>R. O. Keohane, *After Hegemony. Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

externalities by setting up regional institutions, developing countries had initially engaged in protective regionalism reducing their dependency on the global markets and former colonial powers.<sup>64</sup> Increasingly, regional cooperation and integration has become more developmental not only by providing access to global markets and attracting foreign direct investments but also by fostering economic and industrial development as well as social protection in the region.

Neofunctionalism emphasizes the role of interest groups, professional associations, producer groups and labor unions, which do not equally benefit from regionalism. Those, who do, form transnational coalitions with like-minded groups from other member states and ally with regional actors. This is where they differ from liberal inter-governmentalism. Domestic interests can bypass their governments with their demands for (more) regionalism. Regional actors respond to this demand and push state governments into supplying (more) effective regional institutions to foster trade liberalization by compromising their sovereignty.<sup>65</sup> Thus, European companies effectively joined forces with the European Commission to propel the Single European Market and the European Currency.

Rationalist society-centered theories, which focus on preferences in domestic and transnational society, explicitly or implicitly, presuppose liberal democracy and advanced market economy as context conditions for regionalism to unfold. Societal interests are unlikely to

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<sup>64</sup>P. S. Mistry, "New Regionalism and Economic Development", in F. Söderbaum and T. M. Shaw (eds.), *Theories of New Regionalism. A Palgrave Reader*, (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 117-139.

<sup>65</sup>A. S. Sweet, and J. A. Caporaso, "From Free Trade to Supranational Polity: The European Court and Integration", in A. Stone Sweet and W. Sandholtz (eds), *European Integration and Supranational Governance*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 92-133

form and mobilize in favour of regionalism in authoritarian or semi-authoritarian countries with low levels of socio-economic development and/or low levels of economic and social transactions.<sup>66</sup> This 'liberal' bias limits the applicability of society-centered theories to the OECD world of industrialized liberal democracies. They have a harder time to explain the emergence of regionalism in other parts of the world. Solingen has shown, however, that domestic coalitions develop different strategies regarding regional cooperation or conflict, which are not determined by liberal domestic structures.<sup>67</sup> Alan Milward, whose historical research on European integration greatly provides another explanation for why regionalisms may emerge in the absence of economic interdependence and liberal argues that national governments seek to isolate political decisions with re-distributional consequences from particularistic domestic interests by transferring them to the EU level<sup>68</sup>. Such a political rationale may also apply in regions that lack economic interdependence as a major driver for regionalism. African, Latin American, Arab and Asian leaders, democratic or not, have supported regional cooperation and integration as a way to control, manage and prevent regional conflict, deal with nontraditional security threats or as a source of domestic power and consolidation of national sovereignty. Weak states, in particular, should be more inclined to engage in such "regime-boosting regionalism" because they are more dependent on economic growth to forge domestic stability,

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<sup>66</sup>E. B. Haas, *Beyond the Nation-State. Functionalism and International Organization*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964).

<sup>67</sup> E. Solingen, *Regional Order at Century's Dawn. Global and Domestic Influences and Grand Strategy*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).

<sup>68</sup>A. S Milward, *The European Rescue of the Nation-State*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

tackle societal problems, and strengthen their international standing in terms of bargaining power and legitimacy. Moreover, non-state actors can more easily circumvent their governments in seeking transnational exchange. The same ambivalence can be found for neo-patrimonialism. While regional organizations provide governments with additional perks for buying-off the loyalty of their clients, regionalism can also curb resources, e.g. by decreasing tariff revenues.<sup>69</sup> Finally, regionalism has served as a tool for settling conflicts and securing peace among (former) rival nations and more recently, for consolidating and promoting democracy in member states. What national governments lose in authority to regional institutions, they gain in legitimacy and problem-solving capacity, particularly since many societal problems and non-traditional security threats, such as environmental pollution, pandemics, drug trafficking or migration, are no longer confined to the boundaries of the nation-state.

Extrapolating from the above, power-based and rationalist functionalism approaches in particular offer strong arguments on why states engage in regional institution-building in the first place. Globalization, economic and (non-traditional) security interdependence among neighboring countries and securing regime survival create powerful demands for regionalism that are not peculiar to specific regions. The demands for dismantling barriers to free trade, on the one hand, and providing common goods, on the other, are best met at the regional level, given the limited governance capacities of both states and multilateral organizations. They have, however, translated into very different outcomes, which theories focusing on emergence have a hard time to account for.

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<sup>69</sup> F. Söderbaum, "Formal and Informal Regionalism", in T. M. Shaw, J. A. Grant and S. Cornelissen (eds), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Regionalisms* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012). 51-67.

## **Historical Origin of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)**

It is a fact of history that Nigeria played a prominent role in the formation of the Economic community of West African States (ECOWAS). Balewa government had talked of formation of an Economic Community of West Africa in 1964. Nigeria actively involved itself in the series of conferences sponsored by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) between 1966 and 1968 for economic cooperation in Africa. Nigeria and Guinea were chosen by the Monrovia summit of 1968 for economic co-operation in Africa and to study on priority areas for cooperation between the members. Their report which was submitted in 1969 was not considered partly because of the weak leadership of Pan West Africa of that time. Soon after the civil war, Nigeria rekindled the enthusiasm for a West African Economic Community. First, Gowon administration wrote letters to the other West African governments seeking for their co-operation to form the Economic Community and to start with a consideration of Nigeria-Guinea Report of 1969. With little result even with Gowon's personal diplomatic follow-up, Nigeria and Togo settled for a modest and realistic approach in a treaty in 1972 establishing what president Eyadema called "Embryo of West African Economic Community". Second, Nigerian government began checking out areas of cooperative development while not abandoning an earlier interest in the abolition of tariff barriers between states. Third a ministerial level meeting was to convene in Lome in November 1973 to discuss these areas of co-operation but it was aborted following president Pompidou of France's meeting with Francophone West African leaders. Nigeria's fourth strategy was increased bilateral- trade pacts with many West African States. To these, a fifth may be added. Nigeria employed unofficial tactics in the formation of an Economic Community when Gowon government, encouraged the Nigerian Chamber of Commerce and

Industry. The federation's meeting in Accra in October, 1972 passed a resolution on the creation of Economic Community.<sup>70</sup> Although the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was not officially established until 1975, there were several events which preceded the signing and led to what is now known as ECOWAS. Former Liberian President William Tubman is credited with developing the idea of creating a West African Economic Community. His idea spurred the signing of an agreement between Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone in February 1965; however, the agreement was more of a formality than an actual call to action. General Gowon of Nigeria and General Eyadema of Togo reintroduced the idea in April 1972. These generals drafted proposals for a new community and then spent July and August of 1973 traveling to 12 countries in West Africa to assess interest and to elicit support. The establishment of a draft treaty in 1973 occurred after repeated meetings of West African states, whereby jurists and experts examined the treaty in which 15 states of West Africa, namely, Nigeria, Ghana, Benin, Gambia, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Niger, Liberia, Mauretania, Sierra Leone, Togo, and Senegal, finally signed the "Lagos treaty" on May 28, 1975, for the Economic Community of West African States.<sup>71</sup>

The aim of ECOWAS is to promote cooperation and integration. It aims to establish an economic union in West Africa in order to raise the living standards of its peoples, and to maintain and enhance economic stability, foster relations among member states, and contribute to the progress and development of the African continent. While its objectives were initially limited to economic

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<sup>70</sup> [www.investopedia.com](http://www.investopedia.com) Accessed 16th/02/2022

<sup>71</sup>N, Fischtschenko, "Nigeria as a member of ECOWAS – Does ECOWAS have an influence on Nigeria's trading policies?" *London. Asian People Journal*, 2020, VOL 3(2), (2012) 86-95.

cooperation, emerging political events led to the revision and expansion of the AU's scope of cooperation to include the maintenance of regional peace, stability, and security through promoting and strengthening good neighborliness. The ECOWAS Secretariat and the Fund for Cooperation, Compensation and Development are its two main institutions to implement ECOWAS policies. The ECOWAS Fund was transformed into the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development in 2001.

### **The Role of Nigeria in ECOWAS and the Economic Integration of West Africa**

Nigeria's involvement in West African economic integration began with the formation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975. As one of the founding members, Nigeria's role has been shaped by its economic size, political influence, and strategic interests in promoting regional stability and economic growth. The period from 1975 to 2023 has seen Nigeria's engagement evolve through various phases, each influenced by domestic and regional dynamics. Among the vital essence for the establishment of ECOWAS is to ensure the implementation of a single currency in the region as a fundamental integrating element, simplifying people's free movement and equal trade. Unfortunately, the ECOWAS member states were unable to meet-up with the requirement and reached consensus for this objective due to lack of political-will and security threat, fear of power from the stronger nations over weaker country's as well as fear of the loss of revenue through the establishment of the common currency among the ECOWAS countries.<sup>72</sup> According to Ronnback, since independence, the states of West Africa were devastated with dominance and escalation of interest from their former colonial powers

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<sup>72</sup>N. Fischtschenko, "Nigeria as a member of ECOWAS – Does ECOWAS have an influence on Nigeria's trading policies?" *Asian People Journal*, 2020, VOL 3(2), (2012), 86-95.

Ukeyima Adugu Gbileve, Toryina Ayati Varvar & Saawua Gabriel Nyityo due to their natural resources and raw materials.<sup>73</sup> He also emphasized that the province was becoming strategically fascinating for numerous external actors, especially the province's regional leader, which is Nigeria because it is the biggest oil-producing country in Africa and among the top ten globally. Nigeria is the arrowhead of the Economic Community of West African State ECOWAS, and contributed enormously to the organization's development. In 12 years (2003-2015), Nigeria injected \$710,497,352, which is equal to 480,355,205 Unit account (AU) of West Africa, and more than the contribution of 13-member-states put-together. The Unit Account (AU) of West Africa is the official nominal monetary unit to measure the currency used to reflect the real value. Also, in 2018, Nigeria was at the peak, followed by Ghana and Senegal, as the primary contributors for the sustainability of the organization.<sup>74</sup>

Nigeria, as the most powerful state in the region, with a track record in peace operations across the globe, promoted itself as the region's policeman and advocated a regional effort to restore stability. Côte d'Ivoire, another Liberian border state and safe haven for refugees, asserted that ECOWAS had gone beyond its mandate and argued that intervention would contravene the OAU charter. Senegal did not have a refugee problem but shared Côte d'Ivoire's views on adhering to the ECOWAS Treaty and the OAU Charter. Togo and Mali were not directly affected by the crisis, but remained wary of entering the fray and declined to participate in the proposed peacekeeping mission. Burkina Faso, which provided assistance to NPFL rebels and whose president had a close relationship with

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<sup>73</sup>A. S. Rönnbäck, "ECOWAS and West Africa's Future-Problems or Possibilities?" In *Working Paper*. (2008), 1 Retrieved from [http://www.pol.umu.se/digitalAssets/35/35089\\_issn1654-238x\\_no3\\_ronnback.pdf](http://www.pol.umu.se/digitalAssets/35/35089_issn1654-238x_no3_ronnback.pdf) 16th/02/2022

<sup>74</sup> A. S. Rönnbäck, "ECOWAS and West Africa's Future-Problems or Possibilities?"...



Taylor, vehemently decried the decision to intervene as well. While most of West Africa debated the relevance of a regional peacekeeping force in Liberia, Nigeria was ready and eager to deploy. Nigeria provided the bulk of the funding, forces, military and political leadership, and material without which ECOMOG would not have been possible. As the self-appointed policeman of the region, Nigeria subscribed to ending the war and restoring stability. The contributing nations and troop strengths varied, but included at one time or another Nigeria, which provided the bulk of the forces, Ghana, Guinea, Senegal, Gambia, Mali, Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Uganda, Tanzania, Niger, Burkino Faso and Sierra Leone. In February 1995, for example, the force consisted of 8,430 troops organized into ten battalions; of these troops 4,908 were Nigerian, 1,028 were from Ghana, 609 from Guinea, 747 from Tanzania, 760 from Uganda, 359 from Sierra Leone, and ten each were provided by Gambia and Mali. The force peaked at a strength of around 16,000 in 1993 and by early 1997 consisted of around 11,000 troops.<sup>75</sup>

In 2000, five ECOWAS members formed the West African Monetary Zone (WAMZ) aiming to establish a strong stable currency, "eco", to rival the CFA franc, whose exchange rate is tied to that of the euro and is guaranteed by the French Treasury.<sup>76</sup> Nigeria was instrumental in the formation of the WAMZ, aimed at creating a single currency for West Africa. The launch of the new currency was prepared by the West African Monetary Institute based in Accra, Ghana. However, several of the WAMZ's countries suffer from weak currencies and chronic budget deficits which results to printing of more and more notes by their central banks, decreasing real value. Although the initiative faced several challenges, Nigeria's leadership in

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<sup>75</sup>S. Adeyemi, "Nigerian Monitoring Troops Leave Liberia." *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 27 January, (1999), 19.

<sup>76</sup> ECOWAS [www.internationaldemocracywatch.org](http://www.internationaldemocracywatch.org)....

Ukeyima Adugu Gbileve, Toryina Ayati Varvar & Saawua Gabriel Nyityo  
this process highlighted its commitment to regional economic stability and integration.

Nigeria is said to have spent in excess of 12bn USD on peace operations since the first ECOMOG operation in Liberia in 1990. In 2001, Olusegun Obasanjo said Nigeria had spent \$13bn on peacekeeping operations over 12 years.<sup>77</sup> Hundreds of Nigerian soldiers were thought to have been killed in operations in Liberia and more than 800 soldiers have been killed and at least 1000 wounded in Sierra Leone, which exposed the country to her “biggest financial burden”.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, when the UN offered to expand the ECOMOG troops to include soldiers from other African countries, Nigeria had to appeal for a refund of some of its costs in Liberia by the UN.<sup>79</sup>

Nigeria, ECOWAS's largest donor, contributed more than \$1,177 billion to ECOWAS as its Community Levy contribution in the last 16 years, amounting to 853,310,564 UA (West Africa Unit of Account) for the period under review. The West African Unit of Account (WAUA) is the authorized currency used in ECOWAS. Nigeria's payment represents 40.42 per cent of the total payment of \$2,913,088,908 payment made by all the 15 member states, and is higher than the payments made by 12 other countries put together, except Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire.<sup>80</sup>

Despite Nigeria's contributions, regional integration has faced several challenges, including political

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<sup>77</sup> F. Olonisakin, “UN Cooperation with Regional Organisations in Peacekeeping: The Experiences of ECOMOG and UNOMIL in Liberia”, *International Peacekeeping*, Vol.3, No.3 (Autumn 1996) pp.33-51.

<sup>78</sup> F. Olonisakin, “UN Cooperation with Regional Organisations in Peacekeeping”...

<sup>79</sup> F. Olonisakin, “UN Cooperation with Regional Organisations in Peacekeeping”...

<sup>80</sup> Premium Times [www.premiumtimes.com](http://www.premiumtimes.com) Accessed 18<sup>th</sup>/02/2022

instability, economic imbalances, and infrastructural deficits. Nigeria's ability to navigate these challenges while maintaining its leadership role has been a critical factor in shaping regional outcomes. Nigeria's contributions have had a mixed impact on regional development. While significant progress has been made in terms of regional integration and infrastructure, disparities in economic development and challenges in policy implementation persist. Assessing the overall impact requires a good understanding of both the successes and limitations of Nigeria's involvement.

## **Conclusion**

The paper is an attempt to discuss the role of Nigeria in the integration and development of West Africa through her active role in the formation of ECOWAS and conflict resolution in Liberia and Sierra Leone under the auspices of the ECOMOG, an ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group. While most of West Africa debated the relevance of a regional peacekeeping force in Liberia, Nigeria was ready and eager to deploy her troops. Nigeria provided the bulk of the funding, forces, military and political leadership, and materials without which ECOMOG would not have been possible. As the self-appointed policeman of the region, Nigeria subscribed to ending the war and restoring stability and these she pushed through against all odds. Nigeria has made the highest contribution to ECOWAS since the first ECOMOG operation in Liberia in 1990 in terms of finance and human resources and is the highest ECOWAS Community Levy donor.

Nigeria's role in the economic integration and development of West Africa from 1975 to 2023 reflects its strategic importance and leadership in the region. Through its participation in regional organizations, financial contributions, and development initiatives, Nigeria has played a crucial role in advancing regional economic integration. However, the complexities of regional dynamics and persistent challenges highlight the

Ukeyima Adugu Gbileve, Toryina Ayati Varvar & Saawua Gabriel Nyityo  
need for continued efforts to enhance cooperation and  
address developmental disparities. Understanding  
Nigeria's historical contributions provides valuable  
insights into the broader process of regional integration  
and offers lessons for future economic collaboration in  
West Africa.

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