

MEMBERSHIP IN THE MULTILATERAL ECONOMIC ORGANIZATIONS: AN EVALUATION OF NIGERIA'S PARTICIPATION IN ECOWAS (1985 – 2014)

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Abstract

Nigeria belongs to many international organizations like the United Nations (UN), Commonwealth of Nations, Organization of African Unity (OAU) later changed to African Union (AU), United Nations International Children's Education Fund (UNICEF), World Bank etc. Nigeria participates in all these organizations as a member country, but the activities of the Nigerian government in ECOWAS shows that Nigeria is bearing most of the burden of keeping the organization alive; in spite of the fact that the ECOWAS treaty provided for equal right, duties and benefits. The study was a documentary research work which involved secondary sources of data. The analyses of the data were carried out using content analysis. The work evaluated the Nigerian commitment to the organization, comparing it with the benefits to Nigeria from the organization and reached a conclusion that the country only gained "prestige" as the 'big brother' of African countries which has not produced any food on the table of the common man in Nigeria. Past governments in Nigeria, including the present, have been spending the country's resources to keep the organization alive to the detriment of the Nigerian people and her development. However, Nigeria benefited from ECOWAS in the area of trade as its trade liberalization policy helped to increase her volume of trade. As a result of Nigeria's military actions in the Sub-region, she commands respect (prestige) and is also referred to as the "big brother" by other ECOWAS States. The paper concludes that Nigeria should go ahead to support ECOWAS by encouraging other member states to be alive to their responsibility for the growth of ECOWAS.

Keywords: Nigeria, Membership, Multilateral, Economic Organizations, Evaluation, ECOWAS

Introduction

Nigeria, the largest black African country, is a member of many economic organizations that are multilateral in nature, such as the World Bank, Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), United Nations (UN), African Union (AU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) etc. Our discussion in this paper centres on the evaluation of Nigeria's membership and participation in ECOWAS.

The ECOWAS community consists of the Authority of Heads of State and Government, the Council of Ministers, the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, Peace and Security, the Community Tribunal, the ECOWAS Parliament, the Executive Secretariat and the six specialized Technical Commissions. The ECOWAS Treaty also makes provision for an Economic and Social Council (ECOSOS) with an advisory role to be composed of "economic and social activities". In 2007, the ECOWAS Commissions

were transformed, exported and reorganized under: (i) Vision (ii) Mission (iii) Objectives (iv) Institutional arrangement and (v) Directorates (ECOWAS Report 2007).

Since Nigeria's attainment of independence in 1960, successive governments have given international organizations a place of prominence in the country's diplomacy. Nigeria became a member of the United Nations Organization and the Commonwealth of Nations immediately after her independence. Later, she joined and participated in the founding of some other existing international organizations like OAU, (now AU), World Bank, UNESCO, OPEC, etc., and participated in creating some like ECOWAS. However, over the years the degree of importance attached to the different international organizations of which Nigeria is a member by the Nigerian government has varied and also her participation in them has changed. Understandably this is because, some of them have had tremendous positive impact on her survival and development, while others have, in the process of extending aid to her, compromised her independence. There are other organizations that have extracted more resources from her than they have given her, while pretending to assist her, and still others, which have made Nigerian government expend a lot of financial and human resources on causes which did not appear to be of any immediate material benefit to Nigerians (ECOWAS Report 2007).

In other words, some international organizations, of which Nigeria is a member, have conferred on her less benefit than cost. It is in the light of these facts that Nigeria's participation in, and commitment to, the ECOWAS cause since the Babangida administration in August 1985, raised some important questions. It will be recalled that whereas the Murtala/Obasanjo administration which succeeded that of General Gowon pleaded for the support of the ideals of ECOWAS, the regimes of President Shehu Shagari and General Buhari showed little commitment while subsequent governments, up to the present administration, have been playing the father of ECOWAS. So, what policy goals does Nigeria hope to achieve through ECOWAS for which the country is bearing most of the burden of keeping the organization alive? Nigeria has, without doubt, contributed immensely to the up keep of ECOWAS in the areas of trade.

Nigeria's participation in ECOWAS, is an area that has been given adequate attention by writers and as a result, a lot has been written on it. Most of the writings on the topic concentrated on the history of ECOWAS. Others tried to identify specific interest which Nigeria has pursued within its framework without indicating whether or not she has achieved them or on the verge of doing so. Few others appear to be concerned with whether or not Nigeria is playing a leading role in the West African Sub-region, without regard to the cost she incurs as part of her membership obligation, as in ECOWAS Committee Report (2005); Owunwa (1992) and Wright (1981). This study focused on the cost and benefits (evaluation) of the country's participation and leading role in ECOWAS. In view of the above statement, the following research questions have been structured to guide the study.

1. What called for the establishment or formation of ECOWAS?
2. What was Nigeria's interest in joining ECOWAS?
3. Is Nigeria achieving her trade, economic, security and military interest in ECOWAS?
4. What is the cost for these achievements?

Consequently, the general objective of the study is to evaluate Nigeria's membership and commitment to ECOWAS from 1985 – 2014. The specific objectives are: -

- i. To examine the reasons for the establishment of ECOWAS,
- ii. To examine the interest which Nigeria aspires to promote through the organization,

- iii. To determine whether Nigeria is achieving her economic, trade, security and military interest,
- iv. To determine the cost/benefits of her membership and make recommendations.

The significance of this study therefore borders on the need to redefine Nigeria's participation in ECOWAS. In addition, it will provide relevant knowledge on why the ECOWAS was established. It will also stress further the relevance of member countries participation in the achievement of the ideals of ECOWAS. Finally this research work provides relevant information on Nigeria's involvement in ECOWAS in terms of costs in achieving her economic, military and security interests.

The research study is on evaluation of Nigeria's membership and participation in ECOWAS from 1985 – 2014. This study covers wars in West African sub-region during the period under study. However, the research is limited by information from secondary sources. The rate at which information becomes obsolete on account of new technology in information management makes a study of this nature difficult. Thus because, at the period of this deductive assessment of the participation of Nigeria in ECOWAS in West African sub-region, many things were and are still rearing their ugly heads in which Nigeria participated.

ECOWAS which was conceived as a means towards economic integration and development eventually led to the establishment of an economic union in West Africa for enhancing economic stability and relations between member states. In actuality, ECOWAS was an attempt to overcome the isolation of most West African countries following the colonial period and the period of post-independence nationalism.

Less than a year after its founding, the Heads of State of Nigeria and Togo proposed a formal defence treaty that resulted in two years later in a non-aggression pact. This pact went into force in September 1986. In July 1991, members agreed to a declaration of political principles, committing them to uphold democracy and the rule of law. Earlier, ECOWAS leaders adopted two important defence protocols in 1978 and 1981. These protocols called for mutual respect and non-interference in the internal affairs of member countries and the establishment of a regional mechanism for mutual assistance in defence matters. Uniquely however, these protocols placed equal emphasis on threats from outside and within (domestic fissures and fission). It states in Article 4 that ECOWAS is compelled to intervene in "internal armed conflict within any member states engineered and supported actively from outside, likely to endanger the security and peace in the entire community". The protocol allows for legitimate intervention in the internal affairs of member states, unlike the non-intervention clauses in the UN and OAU (now AU) Charters. The provisions have facilitated regional conflict resolution efforts initiated by ECOWAS. The ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) was established initially on an ad hoc basis as a multinational peacekeeping/peace enforcement force, and was the first such group to be established by a regional body. For peace keeping/enforcement, ECOMOG was principally responsible for the restoration of peace in Liberia. In addition, ECOMOG forces were deployed to Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone as well to address conflicts in those states. These civil wars and other political unrests in some West African countries have forcefully revealed the need for social and political stability in the development process. Widespread political instability has also hindered progress in ECOWAS' primary mandate, which is to promote economic integration and regional co-operation. In December 1999, ECOWAS Heads of State signed protocols establishing a mechanism for conflict prevention, management, resolution, peacekeeping and security (ECOWAS Committee Report 2005).

Objectives of ECOWAS

The objectives of the community as summarized by Owunwa (1992) are as follows:

- a. to promote co-ordinated development of the economic resources of the West African sub-region and give it a considerably enhanced bargaining power vis-à-vis the industrialized countries of the world,
- b. to intensify intra-regional trade,
- c. to promote the free flow of intra-regional services and investment, and facilitate economic growth in the sub-region; and
- d. to improve the standard of living of the peoples of the sub-region as well as foster a more co-operative relationship among the governments and peoples of West Africa.

Simply put, ECOWAS is expected to provide the mechanism for developing the economies and tackling the problems of poverty and economic backwardness in the sub-region. States as actors in the international arena always pursue objectives that are in their respective “national interest”. Akinyemi (1985:573) looked at “national interest” from Eleazu’s point of view as welfare and wellbeing of the nationals of the actor. Such policies may call for protection of an existing set of arrangements – influencing the behaviour of others or other actors”. This explains the reason why Nigeria is an active participant in the multilateral economic organizations like: Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), African Union (AU), United Nations (UN), International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD or World Bank), to mention but a few.

It is for the welfare and material well-being of Nigerians that Nigeria is a member of OPEC to enable her manage the country’s crude oil to the benefit of the masses; of the AU to position the country very well in the African political and economic affairs; of the UN to attract the political and economic benefits from the organization to Nigerians and in IBRD or World Bank to help move Nigeria forward in her development wheel, through the development loans etc. The \$18b debt cancellation for Nigeria by the World Bank in 2008 is a good example of Nigeria’s benefit for participating in these multilateral economic organizations (www.cgdev.org/initiative/nigerian-debt-relief).

The importance of internal security to Nigeria cannot be over emphasized. Like many other states in Africa, she emerged from colonial rule extremely vulnerable to internal disruption, heightened by corruption, tribalism and poor leadership. Although attempts have been made to remove the major sources of the political crises which have threatened her existence or stability, it is not reasonable to think that her problem of internal cohesion is over particularly because her internal security can be threatened by not only internal forces as seen in the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Boko Haram, etc.; but also external forces. For instance, the gendarmes of the Republic of Cameroon have persisted in their constant molestation of Nigerian citizens in Ikingi, Cross River State (Adamu, 1992). Cameroon may resort to subversive actions against Nigeria if she is frustrated in her attempts to take control over the Bakassi Peninsula. Moreover, it cannot be so easily forgotten that Ghana gave refuge to some of the plotters of the failed coup attempt against the government of Sir Balewa in the first republic (Adamu, 1992), which points to what an unfriendly neighbouring state can do. There could be another Nigerian neighbour like that. As Imobighe (1990) notes that even in regions where there is no open hostility and violence, the asymmetrical distribution of resources between the states as well as the ideological difference between the leaders often create petty jealousies and rivalry which, in turn, often mar the spirit of good neighbourhood.

Besides, the legacy of ill-defined borders bequeathed to African States (Nigeria inclusive) by their former colonial masters can be a source of security threat. Even though the Organization of African Union (OAU) now African Union (AU) in 1964 sanctioned the inviolability of post-colonial boundaries, border conflicts have not ceased to erupt, especially where some people in one state are cut off from their kith and kin in another (Committee Report 2005). Nigeria cannot be too complacent about this problem because the Yorubas are shared between her and the Republic of Benin; the Hausa-Fulani are also found in Niger and Chad. No one can say in what direction nationalism will channel the force of separatist or irredentist sentiments. What is more, the threat to Nigeria's security can come from neo-colonial interest in Africa which would like to perpetuate Africa's dependency.

According to Imobighe (1990), 'No sacrifice is too great or any weapon too mean for hastening the end of all oppression and injustice in South Africa'. The above statement proved the actions of Nigeria during the years of white minority rule in South Africa, considered as her internal affairs. It is not in the interest of neo-colonialist powers that ECOWAS should succeed in integrating the economies of the West African sub-region. Nigeria, as the prime mover of the community, stands the risk of being attacked by indirect and subtle means. With the end of white minority rule in South Africa, it is to be anticipated that radical white racists in South Africa may seize any opportunity to subvert Nigeria for her condemnation of apartheid in South Africa.

The border clashes with Benin and Cameroon, the mistakes and failures to act effectively in Chad and the refusal to intervene in Equatorial Guinea in the late 1970s, the infiltration of Nigeria by foreign Islamic militants in the name of Boko Haram group in the North today, etc all are issues which have troubled Nigeria and which have not received the appropriate response.

It is against the background that Nigerians have to understand the complementary role of the ECOWAS Protocol on non-aggression which was signed in Lagos on April 22, 1978 and later ratified by all the member states. The importance of the protocol on 'non-aggression' should not be underestimated. Although by African standard, Nigeria's military might is impressive, it does not mean that Nigeria has an assured continuous position of military superiority in the West African sub-region because she may not withstand the combined effort of the other states to suppress it.

Secondly, the signing of the protocol on mutual assistance in defence matters in Freetown on May 29, 1991 was a welcome collective security arrangement. According to Article 2 of the protocol, any armed threat or aggression directed against any member state of ECOWAS could be regarded as one directed against the entire community. In spite of the shortcomings of the defence pact, it is a means of enhancing Nigeria's security, even though Nigeria is the outstanding military power in the ECOWAS sub-region. It is when the security of the member states is maintained through their coming together thereby increasing their interdependence and reducing the conflict among them, that the Sub-region, through ECOWAS, will provide a peaceful environment for the free flow of trading and economic activities as well as the growth of the sub regional economies.

Nigeria's position in ECOWAS is a somewhat paradoxical one. The country is as rich as all the other states put together but does not have the corresponding political influence. Nigeria's strategy must be to gain influence through economic penetration, thus to promote subtle influence over its neighbours, rather than to pursue a 'big stick' policy.

Hopefully, Nigeria will achieve this objective and others through ECOWAS in two related ways. Firstly, the coming together of West African countries under ECOWAS is a very good strategy for increasing their interdependence, thereby suppressing or reducing conflicts among them. As Spanier (1983:101) noted, "the more links there are among states,

the more co-operation will be required and the greater the restraints on the states freedom of action". The logic behind this strategy in a reverse sense, informed by the political purpose of European economic integration in the sense that after failing to solve the problem of German threat to her through alliances, France in 1950 championed the cause of economic integration in Europe, so as to draw Germany into its arms. It makes sense to think that if the West African countries are friendly with Nigeria, they will not be easily persuaded by external powers or dissident groups to serve as bases for unleashing aggression against Nigeria. But what we see today, using the threatening of Boko Haram as an example, has proved the above statement wrong as our neighbours are almost sponsoring the dissidents by allowing them the use of their countries as hideouts. In the area of trade, Nigeria has improved tremendously in her trading activities with her membership of ECOWAS, thereby increasing not only her total output of goods and services but creating positive changes in the social, institutional and structural relationships.

National Interest and Economic Integration

National interest is referred to as a country's economic, cultural, military or political goals and ambitions. National interest is very important in the country's international relations. Economic integration is a process in which neighbouring states enter into an agreement in order to upgrade/improve their economy through common institutions and rules. The framework of this study is based on the theories of national interest and economic integration by Duroselle (1962) and Frankel (1970).

The determination of what can be termed 'Nigeria's national interest' needs the clarification of the concept of national interest. As a matter of fact, it is a very complex and elusive concept which, according to Duroselle (1962), is 'susceptible to various interpretations that are not always reconcilable'. Decision makers in the foreign policy sector see it as referring to what is best for their states as some ideal set of objectives which should be achieved for the good of their citizens. In other words, the idea of national interest serves as a guide to political action. Frankel (1970) agrees that it constitutes an element in the making of foreign policy to which, however it may be defined. This position does not detract from the fact that political analysts are not in agreement on the meaning and importance of the concept. While some see it as a constantly changing pluralistic set of objectives and preferences, others believe it has objectively definable yardsticks.

Incidentally, both perspectives can be admitted. By way of illustration, every state pursues interests which are variable (for example, maximization of power), and the interests are goals that are compatible with the concept of national interest.

The nebulous nature of the concept of national interest is the source of the weakness but the weakness manifests itself more at the level of policy analysis than at the level of political action. The reason is that the concept may not serve as a good analytical tool for explaining or assessing the adequacy or otherwise of a nation's foreign policy. It can very well serve as a means of justifying or denouncing a political action (Rosenau, 1969). In any case, it does appear that the major weakness of the concept of national interest lies in the ambiguity; it also stems from the difficulty in determining the components comprised in the term that are universally acceptable. In the first place, it is not clear to whose interest the adjective 'national interest' refers; is it the interest of a homogeneous social grouping or the interest of a state peopled by heterogeneous social units? One should not forget that from the technical point of view, the terms "nation" and "state" are not always identical or synonymous in meaning, the exception being when the psychological boundary of the nation coincides with that of the state. In the absence of the 'nation' being co-terminous with the "state" resulting in the phenomenon of nation-state, the concept of national interest cannot be

easily understood. For instance, Nigeria is a state in which various social groupings (nations) have divergent sub-group interests which are subsumed in what is the common interest of the wider social grouping. The various social groupings have competing interests that have to be aggregated at the federal level. What is 'national' interest at the federal level is, therefore, a sub-summation of the already aggregated competing sectional interests of the different social groups of which the Nigeria state is composed of. From the complexity of the process of aggregation, it is understandable that the national interest, as an expression and projection of the subsumed divergent interest of the overall population of a multi-nation state like Nigeria is very difficult to determine. It is necessarily what the policy maker says it is.

The statement that the national interest of a state is what the policy maker says it is poses a problem of ascertaining what the policy maker's own perception of the national interest is. There is no doubt that if he interprets the internalized value of the people as institutionalized by their various social groupings, correctly the people's values will penetrate his psychological environment and so influence his foreign policy making. But if he does not or chooses not to, there is the risk of the policy maker pretending to be promoting a popular motive in order to explain a decision which, in fact, aims at achieving personal or sectional interests. This is often the case in a dictatorship and Nigeria was under military dictatorship at the time of the creation of ECOWAS. It was possible for General Gowon, with the help of internal condition of public opinion and the absence of freedom of expression, to convince Nigerians, even if the contrary was the case, that it was in the national interest that Nigeria should play a prominent role in the creation of ECOWAS.

The confusion about the content of national interest is so great that some political writers deny its existence. An example is Aaron (cited in Frankel, 1970), who opines that the interests of each single state within each separate contest are bound to be individual, and moreover, that one cannot expect even within the state, any general agreement about their contents. Notwithstanding this confusion about the content of what is national interest, it is not advisable to dismiss the notion entirely. One should be content with describing it as comprising of those objectives of a state which are logical, necessary as well as those whose accomplishment is dependent on circumstances. In view of the foregoing, there is no denying the fact that the concept of national interest defies any clear definition even though its importance to the foreign policy maker is fundamental. I think it has to be understood according to Frankel (1985:19) as 'the most comprehensive description of the whole value complex of foreign policy', rather than in terms of 'a partial or a comprehensive inventory of national objectives' as suggested by Reynolds (1971:115). In fact, the concept sums up foreign policy objectives and the number of interest of any state is, therefore, what the policy maker officially says it is. All the same, insofar as the foreign objectives of the state centre around the imperatives of security, maximization of the economic and social wellbeing of the people, preservation of value and national prestige, it can be said in broad terms, that the national interest of all the states including Nigeria, is more or less the same. Nigeria must have championed the effort to create ECOWAS in view of achieving her national interest within it.

According to Galtung (1985), integration is the process whereby two or more actors form a new actor. It has to be a voluntary action taken by the states (actors). Lindbery (1963) sees integration as the process whereby two or more nations forgo the desire and ability to conduct foreign and key domestic policies independent of each other, economic integration, therefore entails bringing different economic units together, resulting in the policy makers shifting their expectations and loyalties from the level of their nation to that of a larger economic centre. In other words, in the event of economic integration, decision making, according to Holsti (1974), becomes a joint affair usually within the framework of a formal

institution established for that purpose. The aim will be as Green and Seidam (1968:265) said, 'to promote the co-ordinated development resources and make structural changes to eliminate lapses, thus ensuring development and changes which cannot be carried out by the present micro-economies.

In advanced countries, successful economic integration has, according to Okolo (1985), been seen as a direct result of, among other factors, maximization of their economic benefits for member states. In the case of developing countries, Axline (1977) has aptly argued that regional economic integration is primarily conceived as a strategy for economic development such that there is often quarrel among member-states over unequal sharing of economic gains. Along the same lines, Mytelka (1973) has argued that integrative ventures in those areas would fail unless there is a solution to the problem of unequal gains. Supporters of ECOWAS integrative and co-operative scheme argued that it would enable Nigeria achieve certain goals in her national interest, given the country's substantial productive capacity vis-à-vis her partners in the community. According to Dr. Mocintosh (2015) the Vice President of ECOWAS, on "ECOWAS leaders to redouble efforts to maintain gains", at the opening of the 17th meeting of the Administration and Finance Committee in Accra Ghana: "Efforts have also been made with support from partners outside the sub-region to intensify pressure on Boko Haram to curb their attack on innocent people in Nigeria". This fact cannot be denied. On the policy that provided for assistance to countries holding elections, which was also discussed at the meeting, Nigeria was among the countries that benefited. The community sent journalists/observers that helped to make the election free and fair.

The national interest and economic integration frameworks are two theories that deal with the set of objectives which should be achieved for the good of the citizens and integrative movements that have built-in expectation of gains and rewards. These gains and rewards from the set objectives and the integrative movements are in the form of maximization of the economic and social wellbeing of the people. Security, preservation of value and national prestige are also essential ingredients that helped us to process a comprehensive analysis of Nigeria's activities as a founding member of ECOWAS. From the analysis, the paper was able to evaluate Nigeria's membership in ECOWAS, taking into consideration Nigeria's goals and ambitions for Nigerians (national interest) as well as the agreement entered into with other ECOWAS member states to upgrade and improve her economy (economic integration).

Discussion

From available statistics, Nigeria emerged as the leader in intra-ECOWAS exports between 1976 and 2014. It must be cautioned, however, that this cannot be attributed to Nigeria's level of industrialization and the demand for the country's industrial products. In fact, it is the sub-regional demand for Nigeria's oil that explains the country's leading share of inter-regional exports (Trade Year Book, 1997). What is evident is that Nigeria officially occupies a dominant position in intra-ECOWAS exports, and in this regard, the country may be said to have benefited from its participation in the community, although, it can be argued that Nigeria could still have exported her oil to her West African neighbours in the absence of ECOWAS.

To illustrate the above, see below Nigerias' Intra-ECOWAS (Exports and Imports) trading activities with Cote D'Ivoire and Senegal in 1997.

Nigeria's 1997 Trading activities with Cote D'Ivoire and Senegal

Nigeria	Cote D'Ivoire	Senegal
Import	\$47m	\$33m
Export	\$217m	\$119m

(Data obtained from Directory of Trade Statistics Year Book 1997)

Nigeria is endowed with a lot of mineral resources which include tin, iron ore, columbite, zinc, lead, etc. It is the reserve of crude oil that had considerably enhanced her economic power. Nigeria as one of the world's largest exporters of crude oil has a reserve capacity that will last for three decades or more. Many states in the West African sub-region depend on Nigeria for their supply of crude oil, which is why Nigeria appears to be enjoying a favourable balance of trade in the region. However, Nigeria at the time of the formation of ECOWAS was described in African report of 1977 as "Black African's richest nation with a gross national product of \$276 million. According to Wayas (1979), Nigeria's GNP was greater than that of all the other Black African States put together. It is no longer the same in the 1990s and the 21st century. Greater part of the wealth Nigeria realized from the crude oil was mismanaged by the governments in power within the period. Instead of investing that in the expansion of the productive capacity of the economy, what was left was drained by the Shagari and Abacha regimes.

As regards peace, national security and prestige, we cannot state categorically that Nigeria's strategy of cultivating friendly relations with her neighbours has proved to be deterrent to external attacks taking into consideration the Boko Haram insurgency, where their members are harboured by Cameroon and villages at the border from where they train and prepare for attacks in the North-East. One can still say that the strategy is irreproachable even though it is not certain that the rest of the ECOWAS sub-region can raise a formidable intervention force to come to the aid of Nigeria should she fall victim of foreign aggression. With regard to the objective of national prestige, it is indisputable that the sub-region acknowledges the leadership role being played by Nigeria through her flagrant display of wealth and military power despite her depressed economy. With regard to the effort to restore peace for the war-ravaged Liberia and other troubled West African states, Nigeria's participation brought its own burden on Nigerians. ECOMOG received much material, personnel and financial assistance from Nigeria, although ECOWAS member-states in general were to bear the cost of ECOWAS operations (ECOWAS Report, 2005). The military and strategic nature of the operations caused their real cost to be kept away from the Nigerian public. A controversial article by the Lagos correspondent, Adeoye (1991) titled "Correspondence from ECOMOG" in the Financial Time of London of June 29, 1991, estimated that Nigeria has spent between \$250 to \$500 million then, on the operations. The Federal Government of Nigeria flatly denied the report in a press statement, but put the cost to Nigeria's participation in the peace operations at 10 percent of the estimated figure of the journalist. The federal government's 10 percent gives about \$25 million which is on the lower side. According to Kohou (2000), the ECOMOG troops for peacekeeping or cease fire monitoring group in the two wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia in 1991 and 1989 respectively, started with 3,000 troops and expanded to reach 17,500 troops with 75% from Nigeria while the rest of the other member countries produced the remaining 25%. The maintenance of such number of troops was not an easy task for either ECOWAS as a whole or Nigeria whose development programmes were hindered by financial constraints (ECOWAS, 2005). Intangibly, Nigeria enjoys enormous prestige in the ECOWAS sub-region because of her leadership role. Critics of the commitment of the country's resources to ECOWAS when they

could be used for the development of the home front, are not ignorant of this fact, but in their consideration, prestige does not put bread and butter into the mouths of the Nigerian masses.

Today, the economy is in a terrible state of rehabilitation as one can see in the huge amount Nigeria owes as external debt as well as our unemployment rate. The large sum of money spent on external debt servicing has worsened the country's economic situation. That is the reason why the eighteen billion (₦18b) naira debt relief to Nigeria was welcomed by well-meaning Nigerians. What is more, the persistent loss of value of the Naira in relation to convertible currencies has serious implications on trade and investment in the West African Sub-region. Nigeria's natural and mineral resources may be in good supply but the country's deficiency in industrial establishments, and her inability to use the resources to foster rapid economic recovery, do not augur well with the economy. Nigeria's position as the economic power in the sub-region is likely to be challenged sooner or later by the other countries that are not comfortable with Nigeria's hegemony.

Generally, the signs are that the present characteristic economic features of ECOWAS will remain essentially the same for quite some time. This is because the bulk of her activities will continue to be states dominated and run by dependent actors in the international capitalist states. In other words, as long as member-states of ECOWAS are still dependent on international capitalism, Nigeria's economic problems will not deter it from playing a leadership role in the sub-region.

In spite of the fact that Nigeria played a leading role in the creation of ECOWAS, there are many Nigerians who see the community as an unnecessary liability to the country. General Buhari and his short-lived military administration (1985) must have shared this view, hence his refusal to host the 1985 ECOWAS summit of the Authority of Heads of State and Government. On the contrary, Generals Babangida and Abacha declared their commitment to the ECOWAS cause during their respective administrations as heads of state.

The evaluation of the rationality of Nigeria's participation in ECOWAS must take into consideration the concept of rationality which, like that of national interest, is variously misconstrued. We shall then focus our attention on Nigeria's goals and consider as rational any action which pursues those goals that are attainable, using the means which, among others, are the most appropriate and economical. In this perspective, it is clear that the "aim" of Nigeria's participation in ECOWAS has to do with the achievement of her national interest as earlier identified in this work. But ECOWAS itself must survive for that to be possible. For this reason, the survival of ECOWAS is an aim that is inseparably interwoven in the achievement of the goals contained in Nigeria's national interest. It becomes necessary to make a cost/benefit analysis of Nigeria's participation in ECOWAS.

Nigeria has sustained ECOWAS financially more than any other member of the organization (ECOWAS Report 2005). Her financial contributions can be classified into three types: statutory financial contributions, voluntary contributions and voluntary assistance to individual member-states of ECOWAS. Statutory financial contributions are obligatory contributions which Nigeria must make as a member of ECOWAS. ECOWAS was established as an organization of legally equal member-states, which principally implies the enjoyment by members of equal rights and presumably equal duties. However, whereas member-states enjoy equal rights, including voting rights, their duties cannot actually be said to be exactly equal with regard to their obligations of membership with specific reference to the sharing of the burdens of the community's budget. Article 5 of the protocol relating to the fund for co-operation, compensation and development annexed to ECOWAS treaty, states that, contribution of member-states is assessed on the "basis of a coefficient which takes into account the gross domestic product and per capita income of all member-states". Thus member-states are required to contribute to the budget in accordance with their national

income and not on the basis of equality. It is on the basis of this formula for budgetary apportionment that members are required to make the following percentage contributions.

Contribution of Member-States of ECOWAS

S/NO	MEMBER COUNTRY	FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS FOR ECOWAS SUSTENANCE
1	Benin	3.9%
2	BirkinaFasso	2.6%
3	Cape Verde	1.5%
4	Cote D'Ivoire	13%
5	The Gambia	6%
6	Ghana	12.9%
7	Guinea Bissau	1.5%
8	Liberia	6.7%
9	Mali	1.9%
10	Mauritania	2.6%
11	Niger	2.1%
12	Nigeria	32.8%
13	Senegal	5.4%
14	Sierra Leone	4.4%
15	Togo	3.6%

Source: ECOWAS Secretariat, Lagos (Library document on member's contributions, 2013)

The scale of assessment obviously takes into consideration the inequality of the national incomes of the member states, hence Nigeria, the most economically advanced member contributes approximately one third of the cost of maintaining the community. How much Nigeria has actually spent on ECOWAS is not readily available. In 1977, alone, Nigeria contributed \$2,346,000 to the ECOWAS budget and \$14,137,000 to ECOWAS fund. That was a total of \$16,483,000 out of \$50,203,000 for the entire community (Onwuka, 1982). According to Owunwa, (1982) Nigeria paid \$16,399,542 representing 32.8 per cent of ECOWAS funds called-up capital. As of 1990 only, some 60 per cent of the designated contributions by ECOWAS members-states to the fund and to the operating budget have been collected.

However, Nigeria has been one of the three states that have made regular contributions and have no records of accumulated arrears (others are Cote D'Ivoire and Togo). In addition she made huge donations from time to time to the community and hosted the summit of the authority of ECOWAS ten (10) times from 1977 – 2013 (ECOWAS Report, 2013)

Nigeria voluntarily assisted individual member states of ECOWAS to demonstrate and confirm her leadership position and show that she can be her brother's keeper in spite of her own economic difficulties. According to Adamu, (1992) Nigeria, between 1977 and 1987 donated two buses to Benin Republic to enable her host ECOWAS games, financed road projects in Benin and Niger, trained Benin military personnel, sent Nigerian judges to offer legal assistance to Gambia and offered scholarships and technical assistance to Gambia, Guinea and Liberia. Nigeria sent food worth millions of dollars to Ghana, Guinea and Cape Verde, etc.

Nigeria has been hosting not only the organization (ECOWAS), but the Commissions of ECOWAS. As reported by Uzondu, (2008). One of such hosting took place in Abuja in

June 2008 to mark the overdue 30th anniversary of the sub-regional body. Again the July 16, 2014 39th anniversary of ECOWAS was also hosted by Nigeria in Abuja.

Findings

The study findings reveal the following:

- (a) That in the ECOWAS member states' trading activities with Nigeria, nearly all the countries individually imported more from Nigeria. In other words, total ECOWAS States' Imports from Nigeria were by far higher than their exports to her each year.
- (b) That Nigeria's national interests pursued within the context of ECOWAS are peace, national security and prestige.
- (c) That the Nigerian economy/people suffer as a result of the country's huge spending for the sustenance of ECOWAS.
- (d) That Nigeria's contributions to ECOWAS outweigh the contributions of other member states put together.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

Summary

In summary, this paper has demonstrated that the cost to Nigeria of sustaining ECOWAS is greater than the benefits she derives from the community. Nigeria must remember that the Treaty provisions that established ECOWAS provided for (legal) equal membership, which means that members have equal voting right and presumably equal duties/benefits. What this means is that, her extravagant spending for the sustenance of ECOWAS will not buy more than one voting right for her. Nigeria should continue to make her statutory contributions to the ECOWAS cause and do more to encourage other member states especially those who do not make their own contributions to fulfil their statutory duty, than carrying the load of ECOWAS on their behalf, when her own people are bearing the consequences. It is pertinent to mention here that apart from prestige which removes instead of putting food on the table for Nigerians, all other Nigerian interests in joining ECOWAS have not been fully realized, including the economic interest, in spite of the increased trading activities between Nigeria and other member states. However, on a rational level of analysis, it could be argued that no amount of cost borne by Nigeria to sustain ECOWAS outweighs the "future" benefits.

Conclusion

Nigeria's benefits from participation in ECOWAS since 1985 have not been as significant as the cost. Tangible economic benefits arising from her participation are likely to remain low for the foreseeable future, while the cost may continue to be on the high side. There is hope however of beneficial developments in the years ahead, such as possible increase in intra-ECOWAS trade. This is as a result of the application of the trade liberalization policy and the removal of obstacles to trade, such as, limited transport and communications facilities in member-states, currency problems, competition from other sub-regional economic unions, etc.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings and discussion above, the paper recommends as follows: -

- Nigeria should continue to sustain ECOWAS and thereby help to make the sub-region competitive in international economic relations. This could be done by encouraging other member states to work hard so that together, member states can improve the sub-regions' international economic relations. The implementation of the ECOWAS

liberalization policies on free transport, communication, trade, etc. among ECOWAS member states should be given priority attention.

- The most welcome ECOWAS Certificate for movement to and from the ECOWAS member states should be endorsed, encouraged and used by every member state of ECOWAS. This will facilitate free movement as well as communication within the Sub-region.
- Politics of prestige should not take priority over the welfare of the Nigerian people or risk the peace and security of the country. Nigeria could do well by reducing the rate at which she plays “father Xmas” or “big brother” to other ECOWAS member states to the detriment of her citizens. Nigeria should encourage other member states to not only discourage, but help to wage war against any obstacle to free movement of goods and persons, dumping, “organized smuggling” and other unilateral actions that tend to violate ECOWAS protocols. She could still make her statutory contributions to the organization, and not signing blank cheques like General Gowon did for the programmes of the organization.
- Nigeria should stop imposing military solutions to internal affairs of other member-states of ECOWAS, as it increases the fear of Nigerian hegemony in the sub-region. Rather, diplomacy as a foreign policy strategy could be used to help other ECOWAS member states in their internal affairs or problems and not the imposition of military force. For example, Nigeria could encourage member states to use dialogue to settle disagreement instead of violence. Chambers (2008) has this to say, “Continued dialogue between ruling and opposition parties remains an inevitable factor which must not be overlooked for peace to be maintained in the Sub-region”. The dialogue, he said, must be strengthened by political and economic accountability.

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