



## **ECOWAS and Sub-Regional Integration in West Africa: An Appraisal**

**Oluyemi Fayomi, Ph.D**

Department of Political Science and International Relations  
Covenant University, Ota, Ogun State  
E-Mail: nike.fayomi@covenantuniversity.edu.ng

**Gabriel Lanre Adeola, Ph.D**

Department of Political Science and International Relations  
Crawford University,  
Igbesa, Ogun State

**Abstract:** Regional integration is viewed as a veritable means of leveraging comparative advantage within a common market for the purpose of promoting trade growth and development. It is the recognition of the inevitable role of trade to stimulate rapid socio-economic cum political development that spurs countries within West African sub-region to establish the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). In the last four decades of its existence, the community has been able to achieve remarkable progress in some areas. ECOWAS has remained united, even though it has been reduced from sixteen to fifteen members with the exit of Mauritania. Nevertheless, the organization can pride itself as the largest regional grouping in Africa. It has also demonstrated a measure of effectiveness in matters of security and conflict resolution by the establishment of ECOMOG and only recently, ECOWAS leaders also called for synergized actions against Boko Haram by accepting the establishment of the Multinational Joint Task Force as well as the commitment demonstrated by Benin, Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria and Chad in the fight against the terrorist group. The methodology adopted for the study is qualitative. Therefore, the main thrust of the paper is to examine such areas that are beneficial to members of the community. Of particular importance are issues of trade, technology, investment, and free flow of ideas and movement of persons within the sub-Region that permit the congruence of a large single market which make possible comparative advantage and economics of scale. ECOWAS has not really progressed beyond resolution and treaties in these areas. As a result, the community has to battle with the exiguous internal market and the fact that all the countries of the community are almost producing the same product. The community's problems are worsened by globalization which it has to contend with and giving the fact that the economies of majority of members are fragile and incapable of competing with more sophisticated products brought in by the liberalization of the market, and so the paper further to assesses the benefits accruing to these countries from trade direction, and development-based infrastructures such as energy,

communication, industries among others in the face of their dependent posture in the globalized world.

**Keywords:** Regionalism, Integration, Common Market, Liberalization, Trade, Globalization

## **Introduction**

The African continent that emerged from colonial subjugation in the 1960s through the granting of political independence soon realized the need to pool their resources together so as to attain economic independence as well. The path to modern economic independence has been found in regional integration and all over the African continent, the idea moved from theory to pragmatism as the East African Community (EAC) led the trail in the establishment of regional group in Africa. In the West African sub-region, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) came into being through the endorsement of the treaty in Lagos on the 28<sup>th</sup> of May, 1975. Initially it was conceived as a sub-regional integration scheme to promote economic development, modernization and growth among other things in the sub-Region over the years has expanded its objectives and roles, authority and focus in order to accommodate new exigencies, changes and development. These include the unique manner ECOWAS was able to manage and promote a new security consciousness in conflicts prevention and management globally acclaimed as depicted by the ECOWAS/ECOMOG initiatives and performance (Adetula, 2009).

It is imperative to state that out of the close to 40 intergovernmental organizations that spread all over the sub-region, ECOWAS is the biggest and the most inclusive having among its members seven francophone countries belonging to Communauté Economique del' Afrique de l'Ouest (CEAO); three Mano River Union (MANU) and the rest made up of Anglophone and Luxophone countries totaling sixteen in number with the exception of Mauritania which withdrew its membership in the year 2000. Other countries are: Nigeria, Togo, Ghana, Benin Republic, Burkina Faso, Cote d' Ivoire, Senegal, Guinea, Gambia, Liberia, Niger, Mali, Sierra-Leone and Guinea Bissau. It has a population of roughly 300million and a GDP of US \$29.4billion (ECOWAS, 2007).

Whereas, the community has made some marks in certain sectors in particular in the area of security, conflicts resolution and peace and to a lesser extent in the promotion of democracy and good governance (Adetula, 2009), but globalization which penetrated the region through Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in the 80s adversely impacted on the socio-economic dynamism and performance of the region, thereby, slowing down the timely realization of objectives and programmes that would have

advanced better the living conditions of the people and development. The scathing effect of SAP has brought about remedial policies which their implementation has reached different levels of achievement. Among such programme was the New Partnership for Development (NEPAD) which took off in 2008 and was to be executed in stages till 2015.

Consequently, this paper critically examines the ECOWAS conception of development which is poised at accelerating the development of member states and the entire sub-region. In particular, evaluating progress made in trade, commerce and other areas of cooperation; key developments such as energy and electricity; oil and gas.

### **Conceptual Issues**

Conceptually, three types of regionalism have been identified; these are open, protected and micro, according to Aja (2002). Micro, otherwise called rural regional integration is the fusion of different ethnic groups into one or common central unit primarily for the purpose of fostering culture, political and socio-economic growth. The three major ethnic groups in Nigeria (Hausa – Arewa, Yoruba – Oduduwa and Igbo – Ndi-Igbo) are typical examples of rural blocks with the states that make up each unit. In this relationship, there exist mutual understandings which may or may not be backed by a legal framework. Groupings are example of micro-regionalism. The Communauté Economique de l' Afrique de l'

Ouest (CEAO) is an example in West African Sub-region.

Macro regional integration is the fusion of different nation-states with common interest into a formidable entity in stages; first to promote economic growth and later, political and socio-cultural rapport. This type of regionalism must be backed up with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and a legal framework. Examples are the African Union (AU), European Union (EU) and ECOWAS, etc.

The ECOWAS sub-regional integration which is over 50 years old is a necessity for a grand continental integration. It is one of the African Sub-regional Economic Community (RECs) to be established through a gradual process. The RECs are to metamorphose into African Economic Community (AEC). Others are: The Arab / Maghreb Union (AMU); Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS); Common Market of Eastern and Southern African (COMESA) and Southern African Development Community (SADC).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Historically, two theories have shaped the West African regional integration initiative. Apter and Coleman (1961), Levina (1964), Asiwaju (1984) have distinguished between two sub-interrelated levels of regional integration in West Africa. These are the functionalism/reo-functionalism and the political or constitutional type otherwise referred to as Federation.

These theories have been found to be inadequate in the theoretical positioning of ECOWAS (Adetula, 2009).

The same argument holds for all the countries in the South – the Less Developed Countries (LDCs). According to Adetula (2009), regional integration in the South is conditioned by different socio-economic and political dynamics from that of the developed north. Therefore, regional integration in Africa must recognize the processes of economic integration, political integration and social integration and also provide for the political weapon for implementing the programmes and policies. This becomes more plausible in view of the emerging international economic and political order such as globalization which makes the application of domestic politics to the enhancement of regional integration a desideratum.

This perspective of analysis has continued to influence scholars who have begun to shift focus from the classical perspective of creating grand theories of regional integration; the focus then shifted to particular aspects of the integration process. They began by examining how the tools of political analysis developed in the national context to analyze domestic political processes could be applied to regional level. This approach was developed by Wallace and Webb (1977) and Bulmer (1983) cited in Cram et al (1999) who emphasized the important influence that domestic

politics among the various member states continued to exert on decision making processes and decisional outcomes. An aspect of such a domestic politico-economic aspect is smuggling; of course, the issue may not be new but it is taking a sophisticated dimension which has adversely affected and continued to affect the economy of some countries in the West African Sub-region, such as Nigeria in particular (Adeola and Fayomi, 2012). It has become a serious national issue between Nigeria and Benin Republic in which various inter-state joint actions have been taken to combat the menace.

What is essential as observed by Bulmer (1983) is the need to shift focus from supranationalism versus inter-governmentalism debate and to the linkages between the domestic and regional levels. By and large, new researchers in Multi-level Governance (MLG) as applied (experimented) in European Union is now used in the study of regionalism. This concept was originally introduced by Mark (1992) as quoted by Cram et al (2007) in his study of the structural policy of whether the role of national government was included in the theorization of MLG. While research continues at that level, Aja (2002) remarks that in modern integration schemes, states are not taking their differences for granted as nothing is to be left to time function for the sake of mutual trust and confidence. Integrating states now favour

institutional mechanism in form of parliaments, inter-ministerial committees or regional forum for harmonizing perceptions, intentions, interests, values and strategies for achieving set goals. It is to this end that the ECOWAS established the ECOWAS Parliament, ECOWAS Court of justice, ECOWAS Commission (EC) and ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID) with specialized agencies like West Africa Health Organization (WAHO). The EBID and EC more often called the Fund are ECOWAS two main institutions designed to implement policies, pursue a number of programmes and carry out development projects in member states. Such progress includes intra-community road construction and telecommunications, agricultural, energy and water resources development (ECOWAS, 2007).

Consequent to prevailing international exigencies, the ECOWAS Treaty was in 1996 revised to enable the organization address new realities such as the world demand for democratization, good governance and human rights (Adetula, 2009). The Community was also able to provide a collective response to the escalation of conflicts, illegal cross-border activities among other achievements. In effect, how has this translated into the areas of cooperation and development?

### **ECOWAS areas of Cooperation and Development**

The ECOWAS mission is to promote economic integration in all fields of economic activities particularly the industry, transport, telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, commerce, monetary and financial questions, social and cultural matters. By 1983, the organization had floated industrial cooperation policy with the object to adopt a sub-regional approach to economic development which would include market integration (liberalization and promotion of intra-community trade) and physical integration (in the areas of production, Infrastructure, transport, communication, natural resources and energy). On the physical integration, cooperation has advanced in certain sectors such as oil and gas. The total African Natural Gas production in 1977 was 3.6 trillion cubic feet (tcf). Major Natural Gas producers in Africa in 1977 were Egypt 13 % and with Algeria 36 % and Nigeria 34% contain the majority of Africa's proven gas reserves. It should be emphasized that Nigeria is the industrial hub of Gas in West Africa. The increases in regional trade coupled with growing energy demands and the necessity for regional oil producers to utilize natural gas resources have resulted in the development of cross-border pipelines in Africa.. Therefore, the discovery of offshore hydrocarbon reserves, many of which cross

maritime borders has led to possible joint efforts in the exploration of these resources which eventually had resulted in the energy infrastructure becoming increasingly interconnected over the coming decades. An example includes Cote d' Ivoire and Ghana that decided to come to an agreement for a feasible study on the construction of a Natural Gas Pipeline to supply Ivorian Gas to Ghana for power generation. Negotiations and steps were taken between Cote d' Ivoire and Ghana to adopt a memorandum of understanding (MOU). Cote d' Ivoire planned to supply gas from the Kudu, Ibex and Eland fields to Ghana. Furthermore, the Ghanaian mining corporation, the Ashanti Gold-Fields also expressed interest in purchasing Gas from Cote d' Ivoire.

In 1995, Senegal and Guinea-Bissau established the Management and Cooperation Agency (MCA) for the joint development of Maritime resources located in their border areas. The countries will share any proceed earned from oil in the area with Senegal receiving 85% of the profits and Guinea-Bissau 15%. In May 1998, Benton Oil and Gas of the United States of America (USA) signed an oil exploration/production agreement with the MCA to drill on the Dome Flora Field in the water offshore of the coastal boundary.

Furtherance to infrastructural development in the sub-region, thermal plants to be fired by gas piped from Nigeria were to be built

in Ghana and Cote d' Ivoire while the thermal plants in Nigeria were to be refurbished and expanded with an estimated investment cost of about US 6.4 billion dollars. This will raise the capacity to about 9,000 mw (ECOWAS, 2005).

Additionally, in the ECOWAS agenda was the construction of the West African Gas Pipeline with a total pipeline length of 781km and a total construction cost of US693, 189,000 dollars to be realized with private sector partnership. The pipeline will carry gas from Warri in Nigeria to Benin, Togo, Ghana and Cote d' Ivoire. The four countries are the sponsors of the project which will enable them utilize natural gas from Nigeria for the generation of energy. (ECOWAS: 2005). Above all, was the plan to establish ECOWAS power pool, which would facilitate the inter-linkages of national electricity grids with close to 5,600km of electricity lines to be erected? The project will consume an estimated 11.8billion US dollars for connecting the lines and electricity generation, taking cognizance of contingencies over a period of nineteen year period. This provision would give ECOWAS sub-region an installed capacity of 10,000MW sufficient to meet the estimated regional energy requirement by 2015 (ECOWAS: 2005). Already, there are bilateral cooperation in the area of energy supply as demonstrated between Nigeria and Ghana which signed bilateral agreement, the former supplies electricity to the

latter in order to boost its internal needs.

**Oil in Africa**

Oil has been a major source of revenue for Africa in international trade and a necessary leverage in global trade. The continent produced an average 8.8 million barrels of crude oil per day in 2011. This is a little above 10 per cent of the global output. The top oil producers in Africa in 2011 were (in descending order of magnitude): Nigeria, Libya, Algeria, Egypt and Angola. These big five account for 85 per cent of Africa’s production. (Davies, 2013) All regions of Africa are net crude oil exporters with the exception of East Africa; West Africa is the continent’s second largest oil

producing region and the third largest in terms of oil consumption. Nigeria which contains 99.4% of West Africa’s proven oil reserves is Africa’s largest oil producer. Excluding Nigeria, West Africa is a net oil importer. Benin Republic which produces a small amount of crude oil from its offshore Seme field hopes to expand offshore and onshore exploration. Neighbouring Togo has announced the opening of all offshore areas for oil and gas exploration. Togo’s offshore area is divided into 15 blocks totaling 2,600 sq. miles (4,100sq.km). The Gambia, Ghana and Senegal have granted offshore exploration to member States of ECOWAS.

**Table 1: ECOWAS Visible Trade Statistics (US\$’ Billion)**

<b>YEARS</b>	<b>EXPORTS</b>	<b>IMPORTS</b>	<b>TOTAL TRADE</b>
<b>1996</b>	3667.01	1629.68	5296.69
<b>1997</b>	3863.52	1766.87	5630.38
<b>1998</b>	3165.36	2639.65	5805.01
<b>1999</b>	2584.06	1684.02	4268.08
<b>2000</b>	2788.28	2324.41	5112.69
<b>2001</b>	2306.19	2631.93	4938.12
<b>2002</b>	3148.21	2415.76	5563.97
<b>2003</b>	3037.8	3458.73	6496.52
<b>2004</b>	3986.13	4327.85	8313.97

<b>2005</b>	5389.90	5361.39	10751.29
<b>2006</b>	5928.89	5897.53	11826.42
<b>2007</b>	<b>8893.33</b>	<b>8846.30</b>	<b>17739.63</b>

**Source:** Englama and Sanni (2008)

**Trade and Ecological Friendly Environment in the ECOWAS Sub-Region**

The critical role of trade in engineering development remains an unassailable reason for countries to integrate. ECOWAS, like most developing countries have not benefitted from the gains accruing from economic union due to a member of reasons but most pronounced is the fragility of these economies to complete in a globalised world. Put bluntly, the non-competitiveness of exportable occasioned by low, sub-standard products posted to the international market. Even at that, available statistics still point to the fact that ECOWAS members trade more with developed countries non-members than with members. Figures posted for 1998 - 2002 indicated imports and exports between the sub-region and European Union averaged US\$260million dollars and US\$800million dollars, compared to trade within the region exports and imports during the same period averaged US\$125million dollars and US\$12million dollars. This is despite the operationalism of the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS) Adams and Sanni (2010). And so,

the objective of the ETLS remains hampered in the region by illegal barriers, harassment, multiple road blocks, smuggling and extortions by national border officials. Despite these visible obstacles, there are pointers to potential trade bases. For instance the Nigerian Banking Industry can be seen all over the place as well as the communication sub-sector outwitting the multinational companies. Nigeria also supplies crude oil to the sub-region while Ghana, Senegal and Cote d’Ivoire export refined petroleum products to the sub-region (Burfisher and Missiaen, 1990).

Of great importance is livestock trading which constitutes the highest valued agricultural commodity in the sub-region; demonstrating element of complementarity in production and consumption between the coastal states and drought-proned countries to the North. Within ECOWAS as indicated in Table 2. Nigeria tops the table in the inter-trade accounting for 70.5 per cent between 2003 and 2008, while Cote d’Ivoire with average 10.55 per cent came second and Ghana recorded 6.1 per cent in the sub-Region. At the level of global trade, Africa performed poorly compared with other parts of

the world. Whereas Asia recorded 30.4 per cent, America 5.7 per cent, developed countries 60.4 per cent, Africa's share was 3.3 per cent. Within Africa, Northern Africa recorded the highest accounting for 38.2 per cent; South Africa 20.6 per cent and West Africa 18.0 per cent

(Adam and Sanni, 2010). The sluggish performance of West African Sub-region in the global trade has been largely due to dependence on export of traditional agricultural products which hinders the region's ability to extract from accruing benefits of world trade.

**Table 2: Percentage (%) Share of ECOWAS Countries in Intra Trade 2003 – 2008**

Countries	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Benin	1.68	1.33	1.15	1.35	2.01	1.99
Burkina Faso	0.80	0.95	0.91	0.95	0.74	0.74
Cape Verde	0.82	0.83	0.75	0.69	0.95	0.94
Cote d' Voire	12.76	12.44	11.45	11.18	7.75	7.74
Gambia	0.24	0.28	0.24	0.20	0.26	0.25
Ghana	7.40	6.60	6.39	6.41	5.22	5.21
Guinea	2.08	1.16	0.96	0.80	0.82	0.81
Guinea Bissau	0.18	0.29	0.12	0.10	0.11	0.11
Liberia	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mali	2.86	1.98	1.56	1.71	1.54	1.53
Niger	0.80	1.15	0.80	0.73	0.79	0.79
Nigeria	64.23	67.43	70.57	71.28	74.69	74.81
Senegal	4.68	4.50	4.14	3.68	4.14	4.11
S/Leone	0.28	0.16	0.18	0.19	0.16	0.15
Togo	1.19	0.94	0.77	0.73	0.82	0.82

**Source:** Abwaku and Sanni, (2007)

## **Conclusion**

There is no doubt that regional integration remains the most potent economic mechanism to foster development in counteracting the negative effect of globalization. It is also consistent with the views of World Trade Organization (WTO) and International Financial Institutions (IFIs) for contiguous countries but this has not been the case for them to reap the benefits of the world trade. And so for ECOWAS, trade liberalization is seen as the appropriate policy to engineer higher inflows of foreign investment, capital and new technologies that will end up transforming the economy of the sub-region. (Adams and Sanni, 2010).

Pragmatically, the prospect for integration would be highly beneficial where countries have widely varying comparative advantage as this will lead to trade creation. But currently, in the West African Sub-region, the economies are competitive rather than complementary in which case, countries have similar comparative advantages and so countries simply trade among themselves rather than

with one another and so the economic union have not been able to stimulate trade creation that would be profitable for regional integration (Adetula, 2009).

Trading in the sub-region has not brought much of encouragement as there is no convertible currency; the situation where there are competing currencies brings frustration. Then of course is the issue of lack of supportive infrastructure; roads are poorly connected: so also, is communication network, has not been harmonized. Noteworthy, is the attitude of state officials who constitute unnecessary bureaucratic bottlenecks at border posts coupled with intimidating road blocks, extortions and unfriendly behaviours. Above all, at the level of respective member

States, there is craving need to engage political will in carrying out policies, programmes of the community, the deliberate effort to encourage specialization in production activities so as to promote comparative advantage and actual industrialization that will lead to development and progress can take place.

## **References**

Adam, J.A and Sanni G.K (2010). *The Role of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Promoting Borderless Trade in West Africa*. Bullion. Vol. 34, No. 4, Oct/Dec .P.12

Adeola, G. L. and Fayomi, O. (2012). *Cross-Border Migration between Nigeria and her Neighbours: the Political and Social Implications*, International Journal of Social Science Tomorrow, (IJSST) Vol. 1, No. 3.

- Adetula, V. A. (2009) *ECOWAS and the Challenges of Integration in Africa* in Ogwu, U.J & Alli, W.O (eds) *Milestones in Regional Integration*. Lagos: NIIA
- Aja, A.A. (2002). *Selected Themes in International Economic Relations*. Ogui-Enugu: Rhycee Kertex
- Aja, A.A. (2001). *The Politics of Regional Integration and Development in Africa* in Obioma I. (ed.), *Contending Issues in African Development*. Westport, Connecticut, London: Greenwood
- Alana, O.O. (2005). *Rural Sociology: An Introduction*. Published by Joyce Graphics Co., SS4 Nasarawa Road, Kaduna
- Alli, W.O. (2009). *ECOWAS and Development Challenges* in Ogwu, U.J. and Alli, W.O. (eds), *ECOWAS; Milestones in Regional Integration*, Lagos: NIIA.
- Asiwaju, A.I (1983). *Socio-Economic Integration of the West African Sub-region in Historical Context: Focus on the European Colonial Period* in Akinyemi, A.B; Falegan, S.B; and
- Aluko, I.A.(Eds) (1983). *Readings and Documents on ECOWAS*, Lagos: NIIA.
- Burgess, M. (2007) *Federalism and Federation*, in Cini, M. (ed.) *European Union Politics*, Oxford: Oxford Press. 6 -
- Cram, L. Dinan, D., Nugget, N. (1999). *Reconciling Theory and Practice* in Cram. L. Desmond, D., Nugget, N. (eds)in *Developments in European Union*, New York: St Martins Press. P. 13-19.
- ECOWAS (2014). *ECOWAS*. Accessed from <http://www.ecowas.org> retrieved on 14/10/2009. .
- Davies, S. (2013). *African oil production, west to east*. Business Monitor International – The Oil and Gas Service3
- Development Monitor Magazine (2009). *ECOWAS Parliament*. Vol. 4, No.20 July –Sept,2009 edition. MIDEV Publishers, Standard Plaza, Kutsi Close, off Aminu Kano Crescent, Wuse II, Abuja.
- Englama, O. and Sanni, G.K (2007). *The Role of Central Bank of Nigeria in Economic and Financial Integration in the West African Sub-region* Bullion, Vol. 31 No.4 P. 10 Oct/Dec.
- McCornnick, J. (1999). *Understanding the European Union*, London:Mac
- Nwokoma, N.I. (2009). *ECOWAS and Intra Regional Trade: 1975 – 2005* in Ogwu, U.J.and Alli, W.O. (eds). *ECOWAS; Milestones in Regional Integration*. Lagos: NIIA. P. 10
- Rosamond, B.(2007). *New Theories of European Integration* in Cini

M.(ed). *European Union Politics*.  
Oxford: Oxford University Press.

M (ed) *European Union Politics*,  
Oxford: Oxford University.

Rosamond, B. (2007). *New Theories  
of European Integration* in Cini,