

The Benefits of International Economic Integration: a Perspective from Nigeria's Economic History

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Abstract

International economic integration may be viewed as the creation of most desirable structure of international economy, removing artificial hindrances to the optimum operations and introducing deliberately, all desirable elements of co-ordination or unifications. When artificial barriers are removed, there are obvious benefits. Economic integration of this nature exists in various parts/regions of the world. This study examined the history /evolution of such integrations globally; it traced the circumstances that led to the development of ECOWAS and the benefits that have been derived by countries of the region with particular focus on Nigeria. The theory of customs union is adopted as its theoretical framework while data was obtained from secondary materials like books, journals, periodicals, the internet, etc. The paper ran in sections beginning with the introduction, problem statement, objectives, research questions, literature review, theoretical framework, and the research gap, historical analysis of the contents of the materials sourced, findings, recommendations and conclusion. The results of the investigation revealed that West African countries like Nigeria, have benefited so much from the formation of ECOWAS.

Keywords: *International economic integration, Artificial barriers, Optimum operations, Desirable elements of coordination, Classical theory of international trade*

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Background to the Studies

The concept of international cooperation is linked almost automatically to the English Word "aids". This connection as well as its translation as "ayuda" into Spanish is no accident. Rather, it reflects a situation which existed five decades ago. At that time, the idea of cooperation began to develop on the global scene and was then understood as an aid or transfer of resources by way of grants from the more developed countries to other countries where, due to their level of income and precarious living standards, could be classified as underdeveloped. Presently, the concept of international cooperation has evolved to acquire a more general meaning. This is basically in reply to the increasing complexity of the issue which currently combines the concept of aid and solidarity with that of commercial promotion and political interests. Flowing from this perspective, one could this day, conceive international cooperation as a series of actions that attempt to coordinate policies or join efforts to achieve common objectives on the international sphere. The foregoing explanation which is apparently too general and vague presents an idea of the broad meaning has achieved today. In this sense, the concept economic cooperation is an answer to the emergence of new challenges in the process of globalization and commercial integration that call for the concept of cooperation as a relevant variable to be included. It goes beyond the terms of the political relations between states to include the economic relations established in the international context.

From a historical perspective, it may be reasoned that, in economic terms, states have always maintained relations of exchange and interdependence based on trade and investment. In addition, during the second half of the 20th century, foreign trade became increasingly important as a share of gross domestic product (GDP) and of the socioeconomic development of countries. Specifically, foreign trade has grown at a rate higher than GDP since the 1950s. Therefore, it may be stated that, presently, the existence of global markets is the result of an advanced stage of the process of internalization of the different economies, which began with the start of industrial capitalism in the 19th century. This notwithstanding, it needs be understood that, features of any phenomenon become more clearly defined as the process becomes more explicit in the everyday activities of societies. The same forces which have given rise to the processes of globalization of the world economies, have also triggered new realities which not only involve more advanced phase in the process of integration but also constitute a completely different state. This new qualitative status of the process of integration may be expressed by the differentiation made by ECLAC, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Carribean which distinguishes between the so called "superficial integration phase" and the "deep integration phase". Superficial integration is the phase in which trade mainly of goods, played the major role. Thus, the goals sought by the different countries were relatively independent from each other. The only other requirement on the international arena was that "the rules of the game" should lead to the gradual and progressive liberalization of trade in such a way as to prevent a subsequent invalidation through administrative measures. Once the rules of the game were established and guaranteed, the market was supposed to be operating as to maximize the benefits for the countries participating in the exchange.

The modern global economy as a special organic holistic system, began its evolution on the basis of the world market since the end of XIX---- beginning of XX century. It was formed with the evolution of the international division of labour, the process of internalization of economic life of the countries of the world community, the integration of groups of countries into regional economic complexes (unions) of interstate regulation of socio and economic processes, trans-nationalization of production, specialization of individual countries and shows the results in the interchange of specialized production in certain proportions. The international division of labor exists in two basic forms- the international specialization and international production cooperation.

In economics, the word integration was first employed in industrial organization to refer to combinations of competitors, vertical integration, to combinations of suppliers with economic agreements, cartel, concerns, trusts, and merger - horizontal integration referring to combination of competitors, vertical integration of combination of suppliers with customers. In the current sense of combining separate economies into larger economic regions, "the use of the word integration to the 1930s and the 1940s"(Macblup, 1977). There are economic as well as political reasons why nations pursue economic integration. The economic rationale for the increase in trade between member states of economic unions is that it leads to higher productivity. This is one of the reasons for the global tendency towards the development of economic integration, a phenomenon now realized in continental economic blocs- like the European Union, the European Community, the comprehensive Economic Partnership for East Africa, the Transatlantic Free Trade Area, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), etc. It is therefore, necessary to identify some of the benefits ECOWAS to member-states since its inception.

Statement of the Problem

Africa is bedeviled by deep-seated poverty level, lowest share of world trade, slow pace of development in human and structural development. This has made regional economic integration pertinent issue. "Just as its importance in enhancing economic growth and development through trade need not to be overemphasized, it also goes with a lot of non-economic benefits such as the prevention and resolution of conflicts and the promotion of regional security" (Carbaugh, 2004). In ordinary parlance, the term 'integration' means to bring parts of an object into a complete whole, while in economic terms, it would imply, in its narrowest sense "the coordination of economic activities within a country for the purpose of enhancing the development of that particular country"(Mutharika, 1972). In the views of Biswaro (2003), "regional economic integration involves the process of trade, economic and financial convergence of integrating states".

Imbriani and Reganati (1994), observe that, "the theory of economic integration evolved from the traditional trade theory which assumes perfect competition and whose major concern is the location of production of different types of goods". Bhagwati in Jhingan (1986), defines 'free trade policy', as "absence of tariffs, quotas, exchange restrictions, taxes and subsidies on production and consumption" while Lipsey ()believes, a world of free trade would be one with no tariffs and restrictions of any kind on importing or exporting".

Economic integration introduces a degree of cooperation which ensures the benefits of free trade. The term is defined by Tinbergen (1965) as, "the creation of most desirable structures of international economy, removing artificial hindrances to the optimum operation and introducing deliberately, all desirable elements of coordination or unification." International economic integration, therefore, refers to a decision or process whereby two or more countries combine into a larger economic region by removing discontinuities and discriminations existing along national frontiers, and by establishing certain elements of cooperation and co-ordination between them. There are obvious benefits as outlined in economic history with reference to Nigeria. There is the need to examine them from the Nigerian standpoint.

Objectives of the Study

This paper has as its major objectives, to examine the economic and political benefits of the regional economic integration in respect of West Arica with a focus on Nigeria. Specifically, the paper will seek to:

- a. Ascertain the benefits of economic integration in Nigeria since the formation of ECOWAS.
- b. Identify the political benefits emanating to Nigeria via the activities of the Economic Community of West African States

Research Questions

Following the objectives above, answers will be provided to the two questions namely:

- a) What economic benefits have accrued to the Nigerian nation since the inception of ECOWAS?
- b) How has Nigeria benefited politically since the formation of ECOWAS?

Literature Review

Conceptual literature

International economic integration: prior to 1942, Machlup (1977), was unable to find a single instance of its use. By 1950, the term has been given a specific definition by economists who specialize in international trade to denote a state of affairs or a process which involves the amalgamation of separate economies into larger regions, and it is in this more limited sense that the term is used today. Hence, Tinbergen (1965), defines it as "the creation of the desirable structure of international economy, removing artificial hindrances to the optimum operation and introducing deliberately, all desirable elements of coordination or unification". For Salvatore, the term may be defined as the "commercial policy of discriminately reducing or eliminating trade barriers only among the nations joining together", while Balassa views the concept both "as a process and a state of affairs".

International Economic Cooperation

This is a term often used to underscore the heightened desire to coordinate economic policies with the major economic powers. There is also the fact that the world economy has become more interdependent. Again, international trade has increased relative to production or domestic markets and international capital markets have become larger and more active.

International Economic Relations

The world economy is today referred to as a global economic system which is based on international and world economic divisions of labour, internalization of integration of production and exchange, and operates on the principles of a market economy. A good understanding of international economic relations revolves around the international division of labour which constitutes the unifying element. This unifying element created the world economy as a set of interrelated international exchange of national economies projecting its subsystems.

International Trade

This is the exchange of capital, goods and services across international borders or territories. Jones (1961), views international trade as "the exchange of goods and services among nations of the world". Without international trade, nations would be limited to the goods and services produced within their own borders.

Types/Stages of Economic Integration

There are five types of arrangements for economic integration among nations. They include:

Preferential Trading System: This was the earliest form of economic integration among 48 Commonwealth countries of the British Empire established in 1932. It aimed at giving preferential treatment to the member nations by reducing tariffs on imports from each other but retaining higher tariffs on imports from outside the commonwealth preference system. It was a loose form of economic integration.

Free Trade Area: Another loose form of economic integration. Members remove tariffs and other trade barriers among themselves, but each member retains its own tariff, trade restrictions and commercial policies with non-members. Measures are however, taken to prevent imports from outside the area via the country with the lowest external tariff. Examples include- the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and the Latin American Free Trade Association.

Customs Union: In a customs union, the participating countries adopt a common external tariff and commercial policy on imports from the outside world, and abolish all tariffs and trade barriers among themselves. Thus, in a customs union, all members act as a unit in their trade relations with non-member countries. The EU is an example of a customs union.

Common Market: This is a unified single market area among nations in which there is free movement of goods, services and factors of production.

In a common market, products and factor markets are integrated. As a matter of fact, the common market carries further, the principles of customs union by allowing free movements of labour and capital along with goods among member countries. The EC is also a common market.

Economic Union: This is the highest form of economic integration among countries. Apart from the integration of product and factor markets as in the common market, it involves harmonization of monetary, fiscal and other policies such as exchange rate, transportation, industrial, social policies, etc. The EC aims at attaining the status of an economic union.

Theoretical Framework

The theory of Customs Union: First developed by Jacob Viner (1950), the theory was systematically improved from contributions of Meade, Lipsey, Johnson, Cooper and Massel. The theory adopts both the partial and general equilibrium approach. Lipsey explains the theory of customs union as that branch of tariff theory which is concerned only with the welfare effects of discriminatory tariffs and not with the effects of geographical discriminatory tariffs.

The partial equilibrium approach to the theory of customs union was developed by Viner in terms of trade creation and trade diversion. Viner studied only their production effects while Lipsey and Meade emphasized their consumption effects. However, it was Johnson who combined the two effects systematically in partial equilibrium analysis. Viner's trade creation and trade diversion effects relate to inter country substitution.

The partial equilibrium analysis of the customs union theory is based on a number of assumptions some of which include:

1. There are two countries usually referred to as the home country (H) and the partner country (P), which form the customs union.
2. There is another country called the rest of the world (W).
3. The customs union imposes a common external tariff.
4. There is no other type of trade restriction.
5. Only a specific tariff is levied by the customs union.
6. Only one commodity X is produced by all the three countries.
7. Prices are determined by cost.
8. W is the lowest cost country of this good and H, the highest cost country.
9. There are no transport costs
10. Total resources of these countries are fixed
11. There is full employment of resources
12. Technology is given and fixed

Benefits of International Economic Integration

Regional economic integration offers many benefits to the participating member countries. However, these benefits depend among other things, on the internal design of the integration including the degree of political commitments by the member states. East African countries (East African Community, EFAC) offers the best example of such benefits. "The community is the regional inter-governmental organization of the Republics of Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi, with its headquarters located in Arusha Tanzania" (Baldwin, 2004). [The regional co-operation and integration envisaged in the EFAC is broad-based, covering trade, investments and industrial

development; monetary and fiscal affairs; infrastructure and services; human resources, science and technology, agriculture and food security; environment and natural resources management; tourism and wildlife management; health, social and cultural activities].

(EAC Establishment Treaty, 2002). In the words of Iyoha (2005), “an important feature of the higher levels of economic integration is free trade among members which is likely to lead to rapid economic growth”. Salvatore (2004), posits that “due to increased investment, economic integration is likely to encourage multinational corporations to avoid trade restrictions imposed on non-member states”.

In Africa, several attempts of regional economic integration have been put in place over time but Yang and Gupta (2005), believe “they have been ineffective in promoting trade and attracting foreign Direct Investment (FDI), recently. However, Schiff and Winters (2002), clearly expressed that “there has been an increasing trend towards regionalism and it has made regional economic integration a part and parcel of the present global economic order”. Thus, while benefits accrue from regional economic integration, there also some challenges.

Empirical Literature

A number of studies are known to have been carried out on the benefits of international economic integration to countries in Africa. Manone (2008), studied the importance of regional economic integration in Africa. The dissertation analyzed the progress, pace, approach, sequence of REI in Africa by examining different variables. Africa's regional integration blueprint and institutional framework were compared to EU's, but selected areas were identified as essential for Africa. The study revealed that progress on REI is found to be slow. It concluded that REI should be viewed as an aspect of the strategy towards Africa's growth and development. However, the study contends that the benefits of REI make it imperative for it to remain the central pillar of Africa's development Agenda.

Geda and Kibert (2002), examined the problems for prospects of regional economic integration with the case study of COMESA. The implementation issues cover both political, economic and institutional constraints which suffer at the implementation stage of economic integration. The major conclusions of the study are that, first, bilateral trade flows among the regional groupings could be explained by standard variables as demonstrational gravity model, while regional groupings have had significant effect on the flow of bilateral trade. Secondly, the review of the issues indicates that the performance of regional blocs is mainly constrained by problems of variation in initial condition, compensation issues, real political commitment, overlapping membership, policy harmonization and poor private sector participation.

Douglas (1994), conducted a case study of the political and social dynamics of ECOWAS. It looked at the interaction between economics, politics and society in the context of integration and asks if the predominantly economic and mainly a priori advantages

postulated by integration theory are feasible in West Africa. The thesis is both descriptive and analytical. A heuristic paradigm, originally proposed by Leon Lindberg, is used to measure and explain the level of integration achieved so far. Field research of a preliminary kind was also used to examine the impact of society on national politics and intra- regional relations, and hence on regional co- operation and integration. The study revealed that, despite the need for higher levels of economic interaction among developing countries, there is no reason, from the study, to believe that such relations will be different from those that obtain in international relations generally.

There are a number of recent empirical studies which deal with the determinants of growth for developing countries. Rodrick (1999), for instance, tests the link between trade policy and economic growth for a group of countries in sub- Saharan Africa over the 1965-1990 period. The study finds that, the fundamentals for long-term growth in sub- Saharan Africa are human resources, physical infrastructure, macro- economic stability and the rule of law. The effects of trade policy on economic growth appear to be indirect and modest.

Jonsson and Subramaninan (2000), examined whether enhanced trade volume in recent years improved efficiency in the South African economy. They find a significant positive relationship between trade and total factor productivity growth over time and across sectors. Dollar and Kray (2001), also tested the link between trade policy changes and economic growth. The authors concluded that changes in growth are highly correlated with changes in trade volumes.

Some other studies have linked economic growth to RTAs. For instance, by using EC time-series data, Italianer (1994), relates the rate of economic growth to intra- EC trade as a share of total EC trade. He finds that the RTA proxy is positively and significantly related to the growth rate, suggesting that the RTA had a positive impact on economic growth. However, by contrast, De Melo (1992), finds that most RTAs have little or no growth effects. Only the South African customs union (SACU) has a positive effect on economic growth for its members. Vamvakidis (1998) also finds that RTAs do not affect growth significantly.

The review reveals that studies on the effect of regional economic integration involving Nigeria is yet to be given serious attention by researchers. Hence, studies in this direction have caught the fancy of researchers from this part of the globe.

Methodology

Our methodology which follows the approach of content analysis addresses the research questions as follows:

Research Question One (1): What economic benefits have accrued to Nigeria as a consequence of the regional economic integration (ECOWAS) since 1975?

Some major achievements have been recorded through the regional economic integration. These have helped the economies of the various member states tremendously. They include;

Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Establishment

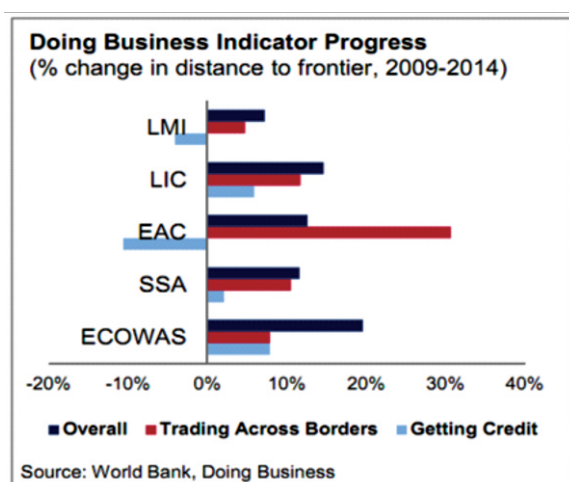
Article 2 of ECOWAS protocol states that the community's citizens have the right to enter, reside and establish in the territory of member states. The protocol gave a maximum transitional period of fifteen years to abolish all obstacles to free movement of persons and the right of residence and establishment. Three phases of the programme were outlined:

- a) Phase I: Right of entry and Abolition of Visa
- b) Phase II: Right of residence
- c) Phase III: Right of establishment (ECOWAS, 2003)

Records, ECOWAS silver Jubilee Anniversary Achievements and Prospects (1975-2000), indicate that only 47% of member states have introduced ECOWAS Travel Certificate while only 66.7% have harmonized immigration/ emigration forms, 86% have introduced the ECOWAS Brown Card which facilitates movement of vehicles of ECOWAS citizens across borders. Despite the slow pace of implementation of policies and agreements, “a lot of improvements and benefits have been achieved in the areas of transportation (railways, maritime transport, air transport, telecommunications modernization and development programme with the establishment of INTELCOM” (ECOWAS, 2003). These have been introduced to usher in free trade. This is inspite of the fact that as stated by McCalla (2001), “freer trade and globalization are not in poor countries' interest and that it will cost already poor people dearly”. Against such backdrop, as the push for freer trade at the multilateral level has become more and more contentious, governments tend to focus on negotiating regional pacts as a means of enhancing policy credibility and accelerating trade and investment liberalization in the hopes of spurring production and export growth. The ultimate capacities and infrastructure facilities; the eradication of poverty and ignorance; the building of genuine African- Centered institutions; and the establishment of new relationships between Africa and the rest of the world (African Development Report, 2000).

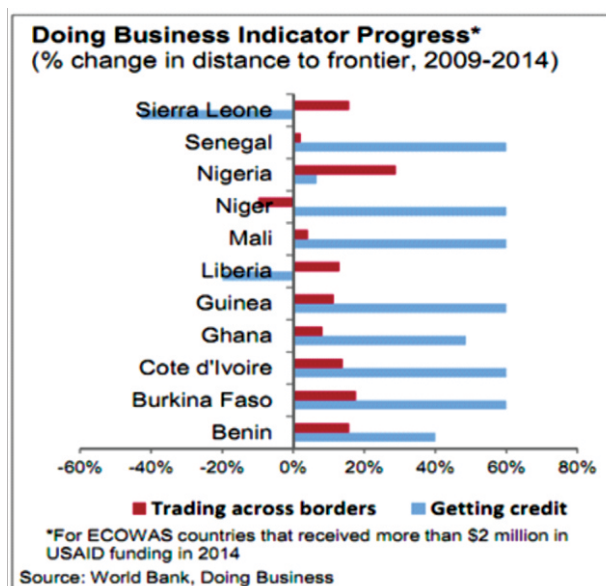
The economic benefits which accrue to Nigeria and other member-states through regional economic integration (ECOWAS) become clear from increased trade volume represented in the figure below.

Fig 1.



ECOWAS as a whole is making impressive progress across the Doing Business indicators. In comparison to the averages for lower- middle income (LMI) and low- income countries, as classified by the World Bank, the East African Community (EAC) and sub- Saharan Africa (SSA) as a whole, ECOWAS countries have made the greatest improvement in their distance to the overall Doing Business Frontier between 2009 and 2014, with countries averaging 20% closer to the frontier. In spite of negative progress recorded in Sierra Leone and Liberia, ECOWAS countries moved closer to the frontier than their peer groups on Getting Credit as well. While the member states also made positive progress towards the frontier on Trading Across Borders in the past five years, all of its peer groups except LMI countries made greater progress.

Fig2



The Logistics Performance Index (LPI), compiled by the World Bank, provides information about ECOWAS progress in transportation. It also examines the average score of ECOWAS economies from 2006- 2016 on three transport- related indicators- timeliness, infrastructure, and ease of shipment. These three areas have recorded an average improvement.

All progress in the sector above enhance growth as revealed by some empirical studies: for instance, Italianer (1994), relates the rate of economic growth to intra- EC trade as a share of total EC trade.

Research Question Two (2). How has regional integration benefited Nigeria politically?

Protocol on Conflict Prevention and Management

The objectives of the protocol on conflict prevention among others include prevention, management and resolution of intra and inter- state conflicts and implementation of relevant provisions of the protocols on non- aggression and Manual Assistance in Defence (PMAD) (Ajomale, 2000).

Under this protocol, the implementation of the programmes has brought more credibility to ECOWAS more than any other. A good example is the deployment of a vanguard force of two Nigerian battalions and two multinational battalions to Liberia in the wake of the outbreak of fresh fighting in Monrovia in 2003. This move facilitated the exit of Mr. Charles Taylor and restored peace in Liberia. Earlier in 1947, the Peace Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), ended the civil war and conducted democratic elections in Liberia (ECOWAS, 2003). It also helped in restoring peace in Guinea Bissau. Nigeria has been on the forefront of the implementation of the protocol programme in the sub- region in which the country committed billions of naira in ensuring political stability in the sub- region. The nation has also benefited politically as the implementation of the declaration on exploration and manufacture of light weapons in West Africa has “led to the destruction of some weapons in Liberia, Sierra-Leone, Mali, Niger and Nigeria” (ECOWAS, 2003). The community (ECOWAS) has taken a giant step in peacekeeping by setting up a standby Force Unit which is readily deployed on the advice of the defense Council.

In furtherance of the implementation of the above protocol, ECOWAS has often directed her energy and resources to solving political crises within the sub- region. Thus, Chilleh (2013), observed that “Boko Haram insurgency and ethnic conflicts in Nigeria and Malian conflict have assumed frightful magnitude within the sub- region” .

Political Affairs

The revision of the ECOWAS treaty in 1993 saw the expansion in scope and power of the Directorate of Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPs). This became necessary following the political reality and the challenge by the tendency of eruption of conflict in the sub- region. Thus, the realization by ECOWAS for the need to maintain political and social stability in the region are two crucial ingredients of building sustainable growth and development is the primary reason for the establishment of PAPS. ECOWAS is convinced that regional economic integration will remain elusive in the absence of peace, security and political stability which could only be realized through conflict prevention and management, peace- building, democracy and good governance. In accordance with its statutory responsibility, PAPS facilitates electoral assistance to member-states through capacity building for electoral management bodies (EMB), observation and monitoring of elections. In this vein, Nigeria has been a beneficiary. It is a known fact that as ECOWAS attains forty (40), the sub-regional body has been undertaking proactive measures through pre-election Fact-Finding Missions and Early Warning in aid of elections slated for 2015 in countries like Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Nigeria and Togo, among other pro- stability activities.

Boko-Haram Insurgence and ECOWAS Response

Little or no involvement in the military response to Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria has been recorded by ECOWAS as Nigeria has made no formal requests. However, the sub-regional outfit has developed a counter- terrorism strategy which focuses not only on a military response, but also on preventive measures seeking to counter radicalization such as good governance, unemployment, social and/or ethnic discrimination. Nigeria is a beneficiary of such measures.

ECOWAS and the Ebola Challenge in Nigeria

Kadre Desire Ouedraogo, the president of the ECOWAS commission is known to have solicited the support of the international economy in an effort to rise to the challenge posed by the Ebola disease. The disease is known to have claimed some 5000 lives from more than 10000 cases reported mainly in West Africa. In a remark that echoed during separate ceremonies, the ECOWAS chief informed envoys that the West African Health Organization (WAHO), the ECOWAS specialized health agency, had deployed staff to the affected countries while efforts were being made to have more workers on ground.

In an effort to provide answers to research question two(2), it is revealed that Nigeria has benefited like every other member state, from ECOWAS programmes with regard to political stability. It is however, necessary to mention that economic reforms rarely yield quick results. Even in middle-income countries with established business communities and substantial infrastructure, governments may have to sustain politically thankless austerity policies for several years before investors respond to the new policies and growth resumes. "In low-income countries where fewer of the prerequisites for rapid growth exist, this wait may stretch out even longer, as is suggested by the recent experience in Africa" (Aron, 1995; Gyima and Wallle, 1996). There is a plethora of empirical studies which reveal the relationship between economic integration and political stability. The Economist (1995), pointed to the fact that "the Wilson government in Great Britain was able to stave off devaluation of sterling for three years in the 1960s with judicious intervention of the Bank of England". Powerful OECD economies like France and Gt. Britain, nonetheless, retain more leverage than smaller economies of the developing world. For many observers, the Mexican Bond Crisis of 1994 and the Tequila Effect provide a good example of the capricious power of international finance visa-a- vis developing country governments. Alesina, et.al in a study on the relationship between political instability and economic growth reveals that "in countries and time periods with high propensity of government collapses, growth is significantly lower than otherwise". Alesina and Rodrik (1991) and Persson and Tabellini (1990), have found a negative relationship between income inequality and growth, particularly in democracies. It goes to reason that political unrest may also be influenced by inequality while economic development is bound to affect income distribution. The essence of international economic integration is to enhance economic growth and development. The nexus is obvious between democracy and good governance, income distribution and standard of living, economic integration, economic growth and development.

Findings

Against the background of our analysis, the following revelations are obvious from both the economic and political perspectives: Regional economic integration has culminated in the realization that for the economic policies to be effective, political institutions across the sub-region have to learn to exhibit a good measure of cooperation. Thus, the federal government of Nigeria has benefited from cooperation by other governments in the sub-region.

Nigeria also benefited from the perspective of political stability as the influence of ECOWAS elections monitoring groups, facilitated peaceful conducts of elections (2015 General elections).

The ECOWAS secretariat in Abuja is known to offer employment to many Nigerians. This is helping the employment situation in the country. In the Area of economic infrastructures, the integration (ECOWAS) has introduced policies which have enhanced Air, Sea, Road and Rail transportation to the benefit of many countries in the sub region, Nigeria inclusive.

It is also revealed that trading between member-states has not shown any significant improvement, however, evidence before the study also shows tremendous progress as volume of trade between Nigeria and the rest of the world has shown a sustainable upward surge.

Nigeria also benefited from the benevolence and programmes of ECOWAS during the Ebola outbreak. Health workers from outside the country were drawn to offer assistance under the auspices of ECOWAS.

An important finding of the study is that the benefits of international economic integration depend on the level/ stage of such arrangement. As a region tends closer towards economic union, the more benefits she enjoys. The study also finds that there is a positive relationship between economic integration and political stability.

Conclusion

Generally speaking, following the regional economic integration that gave birth to the sub-regional body-- ECOWAS, recent trade data for products of the sub- region reveals interesting trends in West African trade. The countries have recorded improvements in recent years on trade- related indicator, particularly infrastructure and ease of shipments as identified by the LPI, and in their overall Distance to the Doing Business Frontier, This notwithstanding, it is sad to note that some countries in the region, still have burdensome documentation requirements, particularly for imports, and difficulty in getting credit is still an obvious constraint. Despite such constraints, a lot of benefits still abound from economic integration as shown in this study. However, it must be underscored that such benefits depend on the level/ stage of the economic integration which also is related to the level of economic development. For instance, this investigation has shown that Nigeria, like other West African States in the integration package, enjoys numerous benefits.

The process of integration requires the creation of suitable institutions to realize the objective of rising to the challenges associated with linking the political and economic benefits of several countries. The realization of this fact has led to the development of adequate instrumental machinery for the successful co-ordination of ECOWAS development policies. Such programmes range from- free movement of persons, right of residence and establishment, transportation and telecommunication. Others include- Trade liberalization, Monetary cooperation, Conflict resolution, Energy and Power as well

as the ECOWAS Court of Justice. The implementation of these policies have led to benefits which are now being enjoyed by Nigeria and other member states. Beyond the economic benefits, this paper also reveals the pre-ponderance of political benefits.

Recommendations

1. Based on our analysis and findings, this study makes the following recommendations:
Member states of ECOWAS should intensify efforts to beef up their level of economic integration. This is the only way to attain greater benefits from the global trade.
2. ECOWAS must ensure the strict compliance of member-states to the guidelines on programme implementation to achieve effectiveness.
3. Hindrances to trade within the sub- region should be removed through genuine efforts by members. An example is the repeal of the ban on land border automobile importation by Nigeria.
4. The ECOWAS health package must be sustained and improved upon.
Also to be sustained is the positive relationship between economic integration and political stability.
5. Radicalism and insurgency must be nipped in the bud by reinforcing the present security outfit (ECOMOG).
6. Transport- Air, Land, Sea, Road and Railway networks must be improved upon.

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