

Economic Community of West African States (Ecowas): A Retrospective Analysis of the Roles and Contributions of Nigeria

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Abstract

Using the Realist and Liberal Theories of International Relations and Politics as the analytical framework, the researcher investigated Nigeria's responsibilities and contributions to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), 45 years after its formation. The paper highlighted Nigeria's significant roles and exceptional contributions to the establishment, development, and maintenance of ECOWAS. These contributions encompassed strong political leadership, regional security, peacekeeping operations, conflict resolution, restoration of democratic order in certain member states, substantial financial support as the largest contributor to ECOWAS, promotion of economic cooperation and regional integration, and various forms of assistance to member states. The paper's conclusion emphasises that in order for Nigeria to maintain its relevance, respect, and positive influence in ECOWAS and other regions, it is crucial for Nigeria to maintain its unwavering political determination and its leading role in the West African subregion. Additionally, Nigeria should prioritise sustainable economic development and further strengthen constitutional democracy and good governance within the country.

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Background to the Study

Regional integration and cooperation are critical enablers for the realisation of sustainable unity, peace, security, political stability, socio-economic growth and development. They specifically, among others, provide relevant platforms and institutional mechanisms for states to effectively mobilise and pool their resources together in order to create larger markets and promote trade; ensure seamless social mobility and transfer of capital for the mutual benefits of all the states.

Following the attainment of political independence by various states in the West African subregion, there became the necessity for the states to accelerate the process and pace of socio-economic and political development of their respective states and significantly improve the material existential conditions of living of their citizens. Unfortunately, most of the states did not have the capacity and resources to pursue their development agenda independently and individually. There was, therefore, the need to adopt a holistic and regional approach, resulting in the formation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), with Nigeria as a major player and leading figure. Thus, the fundamental question that arises at this point is: what were the roles and contributions of Nigeria in the formation, growth and sustenance of ECOWAS from 1975- 2020?

Nigeria, no doubt, occupies a strategic position in the West African sub-region. Its geographical location and size, relative political stability, democratic consolidation and military powers; population, socio-economic resources as well as the efficacy of its foreign policy and diplomacy, inter alia, are not only value additions, but very relevant in defining, measuring and assessing its national character, power and roles in West Africa, especially in the context of the inauguration and growth of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union and in the Contemporary Global Order (CGO). The active involvement of Nigeria in the three years of intensive and extensive diplomatic consultations, lobbies, negotiations and other activities, resulting in the formation of ECOWAS remains a bold and commendable effort at sustainable regional integration, cooperation and development in the West African sub-region. In the light of the foregoing, the principal objectives of this paper include to:

1. Identify, ascertain and examine the major roles and contributions of Nigeria in the formation, growth and sustenance of ECOWAS from 1975 – 2020; and,
2. Reach an informed conclusion and make appropriate recommendations to strengthen Nigeria's position, strong leadership roles, participation and stimulate more contributions towards the actualisation of the vision, aims and objectives of ECOWAS.

Theoretical Framework

Given the history, organization, aims and objectives and activities of ECOWAS, a combination of the Realist (Political Realism) and Liberal (Liberalism) theories of international relations and politics are adopted as the theoretical framework of analysis. The Realist Theory sees states as the major actors in international relations and politics (statism) (Ojo, Orwa & Utete, 1985). States rely on their capabilities or power to advance

their national interest, security and survival. The theory also stresses conflicts and competition among states. Some notable realists include Henrik Ibsen, Woodrow Wilson, Hans Morgenthau, Niccolo Machiavelli, Strausz-Hupe and Henry Kissinger.

On the other hand, the Liberal Theory looks at economic independence and domestic level factors in international relations and emphasizes mutual benefits and cooperation among states. Military power is not necessarily the only form of power, economic and social power are equally important; rules, law and organization help to foster trust, cooperation and facilitate economic development, progress and prosperity of the states and people. Non-state actors are equally important in international relations. Immanuel Kant, John Locke and Karl Deutsch, among others, are some of the prominent advocates of liberalism.

Nigeria: An Historical Excursion

Generally, the history of the present day or modern Nigeria is traceable to 1886, following the establishment of the Royal Niger Company (RNC) and the subsequent takeover of the area by Britain in 1900, heralding the formal establishment of the colonial state in Nigeria (Ekekwe, 1986:25). This was a direct consequence of the Berlin Conference of 1884-85 and the eventual partition of Africa by European powers; namely: Britain, France, Belgium, Spain, Portugal and Germany (Olaniyan, 1985:159).

Recall that in 1861, the Lagos colony was ceded to Britain by Colonial diktat and later incorporated into the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria in 1906 (Ikime, 1980:393). Thus, Ojiako (1981:1) has argued that “by 1906, the British military powers had been firmly planted in the territories now known as Nigeria” and “the first attempt to build a nation by our British Colonial masters started in 1906.” In 1914, the Colony and the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria and the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria were amalgamated by Sir Frederick Lugard for the administrative convenience of the British Colonial Administration to form the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria (Guest, 2004:122).

The name Nigeria was first suggested by Flora Shaw, a British journalist, who later got married to Lugard (Crowder, 1966:21). It is generally believed that the name was derived from River Niger. To this end, it can be stressed that the history of the present-day Nigeria is a creation and reflection of British colonialism and imperialism (Okonkwo, 2023). Therefore, Nigeria can be said to be an artificial political entity, a contraption or as Chief Obafemi Awolowo put it “a mere geographical expression” (Ishowo, 2015; Awolowo, 1947). In terms of computation of time, from 1861 when Lagos was annexed to 1960; when Nigeria gained political independence, colonial administration in Nigeria would have lasted for 99 years (Utuk, 1975). Prior to the arrival of British colonial forces, the region had been populated for thousands of years by many groups of people who had distinct indigenous political entities, well-established identities, historical borders, and traditional systems of administration and governance. The notable entities included under this category are the esteemed Kingdoms of Kanem-Bornu, the Fulani Empire, the Kingdoms of Ife and Benin, the Yoruba Empire of Oyo, the city states of the Niger Delta,

and the politically decentralised but culturally homogeneous Ibo peoples of the Eastern area, together with several minor tribes residing on the Plateau. A larger percentage of the historical accounts of these populations is comprised of myth and folklore. (Crowder, 1966:27, Olaniyan, 1985:4).

Geography, Climate, Population and Economy

Geographically, the Federal Republic of Nigeria is one of the sixteen countries in West Africa; bordering the Gulf of Guinea (Atlantic Ocean) in the South, Niger in the North, Chad and Cameroon in the East and the Republic of Benin in the West. It covers a total area of 923,768 Sq Km (32nd largest country in the world); land area, 910,768 Sq Km; water, 13,000 Sq Km; and coastland, 853 Sq. Km. It lies between latitudes 4° and 14° N longitudes, 2° and 15° E and is divided into two broad geographical zones: the Open Savannah Zone to the North and the Southern Forest Zone (Olaniyan, 1985:10). Major natural resources available in the country include petroleum, tin, columbite and iron ore. Others are coal, natural gas, limestone, hydro power, arable land and zinc. In fact, Nigeria's agricultural products include cocoa, cotton, palm oil, rice corn, cassava, yams, maize, plantains, groundnuts, kolanuts, rubber, timber, fish, millet, cattle, sheep, goat and pig, etc. There are two basic seasons in the year in the country: Wet (rainy) season and the dry season (Ekundare, 1973:5).

The Wet Season commences from April to October, (although in some cases, there may be sporadic rainfall up to December) and the Dry Season which lasts from November to March. The Dry Season is usually accompanied by Harmattan often between November and December. Its topography consists of valley, plateau and hilly areas. The main rivers are the River Niger and River Benue. Nigeria's five major cities with high population concentration are Lagos, Kano, Ibadan, Benin and Port Harcourt.

According to the 2023 World Population Review, Nigeria's population was estimated at 223,804,632. It is the most populous country on the African continent and the seventh most populous country in the world. Nigeria is often referred to as the "Giant of Africa" because of its population and economy. It is classified as a mixed economy with both the attributes of capitalism and socialism; it is the sixth largest producer of oil in the world, traditionally ranked the largest producer in Africa (Angola was the largest producer in Africa in 2017) and the eight largest exporters of oil globally. Nigeria has a very large oil and gas reserves and produces about 2.5 million barrels per day which accounts for over 70% of government revenue.

In 2006, Nigeria became the first African state to fully repay its \$30 billion foreign debt to the Paris Club. Regrettably, based on the report from the Debt Management Office (DMO), Nigeria's foreign debt increased by 2.3% to \$81.27 billion (equivalent to N24.947 trillion) as of March 2019. In 2014, the United Nations designated Nigeria as the biggest economy in Africa. In 2015, it further advanced to become the 20th largest economy in the world. Nevertheless, in 2019, Nigeria was officially designated as the "Poverty Capital of the World." According to the World Poverty Clock, the number of Nigerians living in

severe poverty had reached 91,885,874, which accounts for around 46.5% of the country's population. This narrative is disappointing given Nigeria's potentials, enormous people and natural resources. Notwithstanding, Nigeria has been identified as an emerging market in the world and a regional power in Africa; its Human Development Index (HDI) is ranked 158 in the world, life expectancy for Nigeria in 2019 was 54 years and the national literacy rate is 69.1%, according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The 2019 Corruption Perception Index (CPI) by Transparency International rated Nigeria 146 out of 180 countries (Editorial, Thisday, Wednesday, January 29, 2020:15).

Sociological Information

Nigeria is a multinational state occupied by over two hundred and fifty ethnic groups. The big three (largest) ethno-linguistic groups being the Hausa/Fulani, the Yoruba and the Igbo who are found in the North, Southwest and Southeast of the country respectively (Campbell & Page 2018:9). These ethnic groups speak over five hundred distinct languages and have different cultures. The official language in Nigeria is English. There are about 1150 dialects from all the ethnic groups in the country.

Officially, Nigeria is a secular state. S.10 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) provides that “the Government of the Federation or of a state shall not adopt any religion as State Religion.” The three dominant religions in the country are Christianity, Islam and the traditional religion. Majority of Nigerians are either Christians or Muslims and religion permeates virtually all facets of public life. This is symbolically reflected by the existence of the National Mosque for the Muslims and the National Christian Centre which is also known as the National Ecumenical Centre for the Christians, all situated in Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. S.23 of the 1999 Constitution further specifies that “the national ethics shall be Discipline, Integrity, Dignity of labour, Social Justice, Religious Tolerance, Self-reliance and Patriotism.” Crime and crime, notably armed robbery; abduction, banditry and Boko Haram insurgency are key security risks to peace, unity and prosperity in the nation. The Niger Delta insurgency, religious intolerance, broad scale corruption, human rights violations, disdain of the rule of law and court rulings by the Federal government, nepotism and ethnicity are key challenges to political leadership and good administration in the nation. In 2019, the Global Terrorism Index Report by the Institute for Economics and Peace classified Nigeria as the third nation with the greatest degree of terrorism, behind Iraq and Afghanistan (2019 Global Terrorism Index (GTI) Report). The 2023 edition of the GTI Report rated the terrorist effect in Nigeria as “very high” and placed Nigeria 8th among the top ten (10) nations with the greatest degree of terrorism out of 163 countries reviewed (2023 Global terrorist Index (GTI) Report).

The Birth of ECOWAS

Historically, initial efforts at creating a regional integration in West Africa date back to 1945 and 1964 respectively. In 1945, the West African Francophone countries adopted a single currency under the auspices of Communauté financière de l'Afrique (Financial

Community of Africa) (FCA) which was also known as Communauté Financière Africaine (African Financial Community). In 1964, President William Vacanarat Shadrack Tubman of Liberia proposed an economic union for West Africa, following which four states of Coted'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone signed an agreement for economic cooperation. One major attempt at bringing West African states together was made by the first President of Independent Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah. His proposal for a Continental Union Government (United States of Africa) or what was seen as a political union of African States was, perhaps, borne out of Nkrumah's philosophical dictum: "Seek ye first the political kingdom and all things shall be added unto you" (Nkrumah, 1964).

In fact, Nkrumah (1970) in justifying his proposal asserted thus:

If we are to remain free, if we are to enjoy the full benefits of Africa's rich resources, we must unite to plan for our total defence and the full exploitation of our material and human means in the fullness of all our peoples. To go it alone will limit our horizons, curtail our expectations and threaten our liberty.

Nigeria was adamantly opposed to the notion of an African political unity championed by Nkrumah. This significantly contributed to its collapse. The belief of Nigeria was that economic cooperation and integration must precede political unity and that economic integration itself must begin at the sub-regional level (Ojo, 1980). The resistance by Nigeria was also spurred by the rising competition and fight between Nigeria and Ghana for political dominance both in the West African Sub-region and on the African continent. In 1962, a Conference of Independent African nations was convened in Lagos, Nigeria. The Conference was attended exclusively by the Monrovia Powers or Lagos Group, including all the West African Francophone nations (excluding Guinea and Mali), Nigeria, Zambia, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Libya, Liberia, Gambia, Ethiopia, Congo and Gabon. Other nations that attended the convention were Madagascar, Tanzania, Tunisia and Zaire. This group was opposed to the Casablanca Group headed by Ghana. The Conference provided the initial collective platform and stimulus to the emergence of the West African regional integration, having agreed on the need for an African common market sponsored by Nigeria. By 1965 and for regional integration purposes, Africa had already been divided into four sub-regions, with Nigeria playing hegemonic political leadership roles and making huge sacrifices in the Francophone-dominated Monrovia Group.

Aside from the fact that Nigeria was already playing active roles at the African continental and global levels, one primary consideration that encouraged Nigeria's drive for regional integration in West Africa was the fact that the First National Development Plan (1962-1968) under Tafawa Belewa as Nigeria's Prime Minister, laid the initial foundation and paved the way for subsequent nationalisation and Nigerianisation of hitherto foreign businesses and economic interests in the country, notwithstanding, that there were some visible domestic anti-integration elements and forces who were strongly

opposed to Nigeria's leading roles in the process and evolution of regional economic integration and cooperation in West Africa. There were other factors, endogenous and exogenous which equally triggered Nigeria's interests and leading roles, active participation in and gargantuan contributions in the formation of ECOWAS.

Endogenously, Nigeria intended to use ECOWAS as a platform to create and become the major industrial and commercial hub in West Africa; to enable member states harness their internal resources for their own benefits and to eliminate the vicious cycle of poverty and backwardness in the region and among the people. Similarly, it was also intended to stimulate cooperation among the states to facilitate their overall socio-economic and political development. Prominent among the exogenous factors was to substantially delink the West African economies from the economic control, domination and subjugation by imperialist powers (specially to reduce the influence of France in West Africa) after the attainment of "nominal" political independence by the West African states. In the light of the foregoing, Ojo, Orwa & Utete (1985) had argued that both internal and external variables combined to influence General Gowon's consideration and push for the formation of ECOWAS.

All in all, Nigeria's interest in and active involvement in the formation of ECOWAS from the perspective of international relations and politics, taking into account its foreign policy disposition were largely guided by the principles of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other states, non-interference in the domestic affairs of other states, the advancement of functional cooperation among African states and a commitment to the elimination of the vestiges of colonialism and racism on the African continent (Tyoden, 1984). The breakout of a Civil War in Nigeria from 1967-1970 placed a hiatus in Nigeria's leading position in regional integration in West Africa. Thus, at the conclusion of the Civil War, the military junta under the command of General Yakubu Gowon (Rtd) continued the chase with fresh vigour, passion and purpose. It was under Gowon that the Afrocentric character (Africa as the centrepiece of Nigeria's foreign policy) was studied, empowered and pursued with strategic purpose and concinnity. In preparing the Second National Development Plan (1970-1974), the Federal Military Government took into account the factor of a West African common market and the benefits that would accrue to Nigeria, especially in terms of free flow of labour, goods and services, in addition to the goal to expand the frontiers of the indigenization policy of government. On the diplomatic front, Nigeria under General Yakubu Gowon embarked on rigorous leader-to-leader meetings, and far-reaching economic and diplomatic negotiations and strategies across the West African region. First, in 1972, Nigeria formed a coalition with President Gnassingbe Eyadema of Togo known as the "West African Economic Community" (WAEC). Its membership was made open to other willing and interested West African states. This was quickly followed in the same year in Lagos by a Joint Nigeria-Togo Commission, comprising experts from the two countries. The principal objective of the Commission was to work out details of the economic cooperation and make appropriate recommendations, including implementation strategies, to enable all West African countries to meet, formally adopt and inaugurate the West African

Economic Community (WAEC). The areas of cooperation agreed upon by the Commission included transport, monetary payments and movement of factors of production. Gowon extended his diplomatic moves to Benin and Guinea and convinced their leaders on the need to join the WAEC, although he did not succeed in convincing the Cameroon and Chad.

Unfortunately, rather than joining the WAEC, President Dior of Niger (despite entering an agreement with Nigeria to supply electricity to Niger from the Kainji Dam), disappointedly joined the Communauté Economique de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (CEAO), an economic community comprising seven Francophone states, excluding Guinea. The seven States included Benin, Niger, Mali, Senegal, Upper Volta (now Burkina-Faso), Ivory Coast (Coted'Ivoire) and Mauritania. Togo had an observer status. However, as a result of the overthrow of Dior in April 1974, the then Head of State, Lt. Col. Seyni Kountche, renounced Niger's identification with CEAO and embraced the WAEC, hoping to benefit from Nigeria's oil on favourable terms.

In 1973, a meeting was held in Lome, Togo, to study the draft treaty on the formation of ECOWAS, which was followed by another meeting in Accra, Ghana, in 1974. In January 1975, a third meeting was held in Monrovia, Liberia, all intended to put a final endorsement on the formation of ECOWAS. The final meeting preceding the birth of ECOWAS was held in Lagos, Nigeria, on 28th May 1975, at which fifteen (15) countries formally signed the treaty for an Economic Community of West African States. The protocols launching ECOWAS were signed in Lome, Togo, on 5th November 1976. The fifteen founding West African States which signed the treaty for the formation of ECOWAS were Nigeria, Benin, Coted'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, and Guinea. Others were Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo and Burkina-Faso.

To buttress Nigeria's inspiring and outstanding leadership roles and contributions in the formation of ECOWAS, Ojo (1980) with reference to Spring stated that:

...Nigeria who is in the forefront of indispensable oil producers, gave leadership at crucial times, lent leverage to the ACP side and contributed political and technical skills as well as impetus for action. The psychological attitudes, the air of compromises and the optimism and self-confidence which the negotiations produced were in large part due to Nigeria's important role.

Also, Ojo, Urwa & Utete (1985) further asserted thus:

... Its intensive and extensive diplomatic activities, its large share of financial contributions and voluntary expenditures; its investments in joint venture projects and its granting of many concessions towards the implementation of the terms of the treaty agreements all demonstrate Nigeria's commitment to the success of ECOWAS...its role to date can best be described as one of a catalyst.

Similarly, Nte (2016) confirmed the pioneering role of Nigeria in the establishment of ECOWAS by stressing that "...in the area of economic integration, the formation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is to the credit of Gowon" and that "the regime of Gowon displayed diplomatic ingenuity in the establishment of ECOWAS."

Aims and Objectives

Generally, the overriding purpose of ECOWAS is to foster peaceful co-existence, economic and political cooperation among the member states in order to facilitate sustainable growth and development of the states and their citizens in particular and Africa at large. Whereas the vision of ECOWAS is the creation of a borderless region where the population has access to its abundant resources and is able to exploit same through the creation of opportunities under a sustainable environment, Article 2 of the ECOWAS Treaty provides its aims and objectives to include:

1. Provision of Cooperation and Development
2. Elimination of Custom Duties
3. Abolition of Trade Restrictions
4. Establishment of Common Tariff
5. Abolition of Obstacles to Free Movement
6. Harmonization of Agricultural Policies
7. Implementation of Infrastructural Schemes
8. Harmonization of Economic and Industrial Policies
9. Harmonization of Monetary Policies
10. Establishment of Common Fund

Nigeria's Participation in ECOWAS (1975-2020)

ECOWAS has existed as a regional body primarily founded on the strength of economic integration and cooperation for over forty-five years now and still continuing. Within this period, Nigeria had played, is still playing and will likely continue to play prominent, defining, decisive and supportive roles in the continued existence, unity, peace, socio-economic and political development of the West African sub-region (Ojo,1980; Alli, 2012).

In terms of peace and security, Nigeria had participated in peacekeeping operations in Liberia (1990-1997, 1999-2003), Sierra Leone (1997), Cote d'Ivoire (2002-2007), Guinea (2007-2010) and Guinea Bissau (1998-1999), etc. However, our attention and analyses will be restricted to the Liberian and Sierra Leonean experiences given Nigeria's active military presence and dominant roles in the peacekeeping operations in the two countries. In the other cases, Nigeria basically contributed troops and other logistics without committing huge financial and other resources and assuming leadership responsibilities like in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Nigeria largely played political and diplomatic roles as mediator and negotiator. Attempts will also be made to capture other areas of contribution by Nigeria to the growth, sustenance and realization of the aims and objectives of ECOWAS in the last forty-five years.

Regional Security, Peace-keeping Operations and Conflict Resolutions

The import and purport of peace in any society cannot be negated. Peace and peaceful co-existence are indeed sine qua nons if economic integration, cooperation and development are to be achieved and sustained in West African region. Conflict as a dynamic fact of life is inherent in every organisation or society. Haralambos & Holborn (2008) are of the view that "conflict is a common and persistent feature of society." For Mayer (2000), conflict can be seen from three dimensions namely: "conflict as perception" "conflict as feeling" and "conflict as action." It can be expressed by way of fear, anger, being too cold or withdrawn, bitterness or sadness. Very often, it arises in pursuit of divergent or incompatible interests, values, goals and aspirations by individuals, groups, organizations or states. Otite & Albert (ed) (1999), citing Coser have stated that conflict is a "struggle over values or claims to status, power and scarce resources." Fisher (1990) sees conflict as "an incompatibility of goals or values between two or more parties in a relationship, combined with attempts to control each other and antagonistic feelings towards each other." Thus, the ultimate aim of parties in a conflict is to obtain and maximise the values and at the same time neutralise, injure and eliminate the rivals. Conflict, among others, can be personal, group, socio-cultural, economic or political, and it can be addressed by avoidance, confrontation or problem-solving in which case, consensus and peace building become very relevant.

Although, there had been various conflicts between and among traditional African societies in the pre-colonial era, the roots of conflict in Africa, particularly in its socio-economic and political character are arguably traceable to the imposition of colonialism on Africa by the western powers, the scramble for and Africa's eventual integration into the whirlpool of western capitalism and imperialism. Some West African countries have over the past four decades been involved, at one time or another, in one form of intra-state or internal conflict or the other, bordering on multi-causal elements such as political differences and disagreements: ethnic marginalization, poverty, human rights violations, bad governance and small/light weapons proliferation, etc.

Liberia

Nigeria for the first time contributed to peacekeeping operations as an active participant in the United Nations Peacekeeping Missions in Congo from 1960-1964, under the leadership of General Aguiyi Ironsi. Nigeria had also participated in other peacekeeping operations namely: United Nations India-Pakistan Mission (1965), Lebanon (1978), United Nations India-Pakistan Observer Mission (UNIPOM) and United Nations Iraq Military-Observer Group (UNIMOG). It was equally involved in similar operations at various periods in Namibia, Somalia, Chad, Tanzania, Mozambique and Rwanda, etc.

In consonance with its leadership roles since independence, Nigeria has been in the vanguard of the campaigns and struggles for regional, continental and international peace, security and political stability. This in particular found expression in its pivotal role in West Africa in the formation, sustenance and operations of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) as the military arm or multilateral

armed force of ECOWAS. ECOMOG was formed by Anglophone ECOWAS members led by Nigeria in Banjul, Gambia on 7th August 1990, to intervene and restore peace in the Civil War in Liberia. This, in the opinion of Adebayo (2002) was “on shaky legal foundation.” The then Head of State of Nigeria, General Ibrahim Babangida played a leading role in that direction. It should be noted that Nigeria and other Anglophone states took the bold and strategic security and peacekeeping initiative because most Francophone countries were not in support of the deployment of troops to Liberia. Some even supported Charles Taylor in his attempt to depose President Samuel Doe. Nigeria's leadership role in the formation, funding and operations of ECOMOG was equally motivated by its viable and strong economy compared to other ECOWAS member States. It can also be argued that Nigeria's involvement was in its national interests, including its growing economic and investment interest and those of its citizens in Liberia.

The pioneer Force Commander of ECOMOG, Lt. General Arnold Quainoo of Ghana was nominated as a compromise to retain the neutrality of Nigeria to quell worries in the Taylor's camp that ECOMOG's mission in Liberia was a ruse by Nigeria to defend the Presidency of Samuel Doe. His appointment lasted for three months (July 1990-September 1990) during which Sergeant Samuel Doe was arrested at the ECOMOG Headquarters by rebel forces loyal to Prince Johnson and finally executed. Quainoo was succeeded by an unbroken record of Nigerian officers, namely: Major General Joshua Dogonyaro, Major General Rufus Kupolati, Major General Ishaya Bakut, Major General Tunji Olorin, Major General John Shagaya and Major General John Mark Inienger. Others were Major General Victor Malu, Major General Timothy Shelpidi and Major General Felix Mujakperuo (Berman & Sams, 2000:95). Some of the principal roles and achievements of Nigeria through ECOMOG include peacekeeping operations and restoration of peace to Liberia (1990-1996). Nigeria had so much money as a result of the oil windfall from the Gulf War and invested substantial human and material resources in the peace mission. During the high points of the peacekeeping activities in Liberia, 75%-80% of the 16000 troops in Liberia were drawn from Nigeria. Infact, it was estimated that Nigeria expended about 8 billion dollars (Osime, Akinwumi Adetoye & Adetula, 2015:6) and lost about 500 soldiers during the period. Two Nigerian Journalists, Krees Imodibe of the Guardian Newspaper and Tayo Awotosin of the Champion Newspaper were slain in Liberia in the course of investigation and reporting on the Liberian Civil War. Nigeria also received, accommodated and took care of 6,000 Liberian refugees, despite the concomitant socio-economic and political consequences on both the host community of Oru-Ijebu near Ijebu-Ode in Ijebu-North Local Government of Ogun State and Nigeria at large.

All in all, it is to the credit of Nigeria that ECOMOG succeeded in restoration of peace in the two civil wars in Liberia (1989-1997 and 1999-2003). Whereas Nigeria through ECOMOG was very strong in bringing about the return of normalcy in the first civil war, ECOMOG Forces operated under the Economic Community of West African States Mission in Liberia (ECOMIL) under the aegis of the United Nations, until the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) took over peacekeeping operations in Liberia and brought the second civil war to an end in 2003.

Sierra Leone

The Liberian Civil War greatly influenced the conflict and civil war in Sierra Leone. With respect to Sierra Leone, Nigeria led the confrontation and defeat of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), a rebel group headed by Major Johnny Paul Koromah which was said to be mostly funded by the then President Charles Taylor of Liberia that ousted the government of President Tejan Kabbah of Sierra Leone. Unlike in the case of Liberia, ECOMOG's mandate in Sierra Leone was to reverse the military coup, restore Kabbah to power and return the country to the path of peace and security. It is estimated that Nigeria shouldered 70% of the cost of the ECOMOG operations in the Sierra Leone and spent about 8 billion Dollars (Osakwe, 2017). Aside from providing for its troops, Nigeria was also paying the salaries and allowances of troops from Niger and Sierra Leone. About 80% of the 13,000 troops in the five brigade formations were contributed by Nigeria (Osakwe, 2017). About 700 Nigerian soldiers were reported to have lost their lives during the war.

Under its Head of State, General Sanni Abacha as the then Chairman of ECOWAS and claiming to act in that regard, upon the invitation of President Kabbah unilaterally stepped in to restore peace and democracy in Sierra Leone in 1997 (although the conflict started in 1991), despite that the Federal Government of Nigeria under Abacha was unlawful and undemocratic in every respect and Nigeria at the time, was treated as a pariah State by the international community. This was the biggest criticism against Nigeria's involvement in Sierra Leone. Initially, the peacekeeping mission was not formally authorized by ECOWAS (although Ghana and Guinea later sent minor soldiers to ECOMOG, thereby backing it), but Nigeria considered its intervention as a moral obligation being a hegemonic political power in the region and in Africa.

This was equally strengthened by the bilateral defence agreement between Nigeria and Sierra Leone, the perceived political consequences of the success of the ousting of a democratically elected government for other West African States and Abacha's search for international legitimacy for his government. Nigeria preferred full scale military operations, but this was not favourable to most member states given the ugly experiences in Liberia. The rebels continued to make concerted efforts and launched several attacks on ECOMOG camps, personnel and the civilian population all in a bid to take over the government of Sierra Leone, but to no avail. The attacks were resisted by ECOMOG and other forces until in 2002, when the war effectively ended. Some Nigerian officers who served as ECOMOG Commanders in Sierra Leone included General Maxwell Khobe, Major-General Felix Mujakperuo, Brigadier General Abdul One Mohammed and Major General Timothy Shelpidi. Following the lack of support by the United Nations to the leading interventionist role of Nigeria in Sierra Leone and the dwindling economic fortunes of Nigerian due largely to several economic sanctions on the country, among other domestic challenges, Nigeria could no longer adequately fund the peacekeeping operations in Sierra Leone. This led to the killing of many Nigerian soldiers by rebel forces loyal to Koromah. At the death of Sani Abacha in 1998, General Abdulsalam Abubakar took over as Head of State and later handed over to President Olusegun Obasanjo as the democratically elected President in 1999. At this point, Nigeria was

constrained to review its involvement in Sierra Leone. The review was also heightened by the inability of Koromah to honour “the Lome Agreement”, i.e., peace agreement signed between the Sierra Leonean Government and his Revolutionary United Front on cessation of hostilities.

Upon the reinstatement of Kabbah, Nigeria, Guinea and Ghana decided to withdraw and actually withdrew their troops from the ECOMOG contingents in Sierra Leone. The withdrawal especially by Nigeria rendered ECOMOG impotent. Thus, the United Nations Security Council authorized the establishment of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) on 22 October 1999, to assist in the implementation of “the Lome Agreement.” Nigeria also participated in UNAMSIL until peace and security were fully restored to Sierra Leone on 18 January 2002.

To confirm Nigeria's overwhelming influence on and contributions to the restoration of constitutional order, peace and security to Sierra Leone, the former President of Sierra Leone, Kabbah (2010:45) stated thus:

I have often expressed my government's gratitude to ECOMOG and to Nigeria in particular for the sacrifices they made in rescuing our democracy and the Sierra Leone from total destruction by rebels of the RUF and their cohorts. Without their timely and sustained engagement, the country would probably have been reduced to rubble.

Unassailably, Nigeria's participation in peacekeeping operations in Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea Bissau, among others, under the auspices of ECOMOG significantly contributed to the restoration of peace relative political stability, good governance and development in the affected countries; attracted respect for Nigeria from the international community and acted as a boost to its leadership credentials and profile as a dominant regional military force and a key player in peacekeeping, conflict management and resolution in Africa. The case of Guinea Bissau deserves special reference because its political crisis has lingered for many years defying various conflict resolution strategies and mechanisms, resulting in constant alignment and realignment of political actors and disagreements between the executive and the parliament. This presents Guinea Bissau to be highly and politically volatile, fragile and unstable. Jose Mario Vaz who became President in 2014 is the only President of the country who had completed his tenure without being removed from office or assassinated. With the election of a new President, Umaro Cissoko Embaló, opposition Party leader, former army general and Prime Minister in a keenly contested presidential run-off with another former Prime Minister, Simeos Pereira of the ruling Party on 28th December 2019; it is hoped that political stability will finally return to Guinea Bissau.

In spite of the successes of ECOMOG, it was accused of corruption, non-compliance with the tenets of neutrality in Liberia, violation of medical neutrality; rape, sexual abuse and harassment; human rights violations and violations as well as systematic plundering by

some of its soldiers. Specifically on the part of Nigeria, its poor human rights records and militarism which had drawn strong global condemnation and sanctions were not helpful to its leadership role and recruitment of international financial assistance to ECOMOG.

Nigerian troops were faced with challenges such as manpower deficiencies, poor training and lack of a suitable doctrine for peacekeeping. Others were logistic problems to wit: poor and insufficient communication gadgets, inadequate medical facilities, poor services and operational vehicles; poor funding, especially during the early stages in Liberia (Azagaku, 2015:90-91). All in all, Nigeria's peacekeeping efforts and contributions in Liberia and Sierra Leone had been generally adjudged as historic, commendable, unique and successful, although at a huge cost and burden on Nigeria. No wonder the United Nations classified Nigeria as "the fourth contributor to world peace" (Azagaku, 2015:91), having been involved in and substantially contributed to over forty missions at the regional, continental and global levels.

Other Contributions

First, Nigeria has continued to provide purposeful and robust political leadership and direction for ECOWAS. Virtually all the Heads of State of Nigeria at one point or the other had been the Chairman of ECOWAS. They include General Yakubu Gowon who was a founding father of the Community (28th May, 1975-29th July, 1975; Olusegun Obasanjo (13th September 1977-30th September, 1979), Muhammadu Buhari (27th August, 1985), Ibrahim Babangida, 27th August, 1985-1989), Sani Abacha (27th July, 1996-June, 1998), Abdusalami Abubakar (9th June, 1998-1999), Umaru Musa Yaradua (19th December, 2008-18th February, 2010), Dr. Goodluck Jonathan (18th February 2010-17th February, 2012) and Muhammadu Buhari (31st July, 2018-29th June, 2019.) President Bola Ahmed Tinubu was also elected as the current Chairman of ECOWAS on 9th July, 2023.

Financially, it was reported by the News Agency of Nigeria that Nigeria had contributed \$710 million to ECOWAS in the last twelve years (2003-2015) as payment of the community levies. The said amount is said to be more than the contributions of thirteen other member states within the period under review. Nigeria's contributions represent 40.9% of the total amount of \$1.736 billion paid by all the member States within the period. This, no doubt, makes Nigeria the single highest financial contributor to ECOWAS. It can, therefore, be contended that without Nigeria's considerable financial contributions and involvement, ECOWAS would not have been able to achieve most of its aims and objectives. Nigeria has supported ECOWAS more than any other member state by way of statutory financial obligations, voluntary contributions and voluntary assistance provided to individual member states (ECOWAS Report, 2005).

Nigeria remains an advocate of abolition of trade restrictions and promoter of free trade. Unfortunately, there have been two instances where Nigeria violated the protocol on free trade and movement of persons from ECOWAS member states to Nigeria. As a military Head of State in 1994, General Muhammadu Buhari, closed Nigeria's borders and expelled illegal aliens from the country. This action adversely affected Nigeria's

neighbours and caused leaders of ECOWAS member states to public appeal to the Nigerian government to rescind its decision. But the government rebuffed the appeal and even rejected the ECOWAS Chairmanship offered to General Buhari as a way of appeasing Nigeria. However, when General Buhari was overthrown by General Babangida in 1986, the Federal Government reopened the borders. The government adopted a new immigration policy which allowed only citizens of ECOWAS member states in certain professions to live and work in Nigeria without Visas and work permit. Such professionals included engineers, medical doctors and other health workers, bilingual secretaries, teachers, surveyors and architects. Mohammadu Buhari was elected and subsequently sworn in as President of Nigeria on 29th May 2015, re-elected and took oath of office and allegiance as President for second tenure on 29th May, 2019. In October of the same year, he closed Nigeria's borders again and this has continued till January 2020 and may last for a long time. This is unhelpful to free trade among West African States.

With respect to transport and communication development, Nigeria has equally made some remarkable contributions to ECOWAS. For example, in 1970, it constructed the Lagos-Cotonou highway to link up two member states with a view to facilitating the movement of persons, goods and services between the two countries. Nigeria has also contributed hydro-electric power to Niger and gas to Benin, Togo and Ghana under ECOWAS pipeline gas project. In addition, Nigeria donated two buses to the Republic of Benin between 1977 and 1987 to enable it host ECOWAS games, trained military personnel and financed road projects in Benin, offered scholarships and technical assistance to citizens of the Gambia, Guinea and Liberia and provided legal assistance to some West African countries, etc. For instance, Emmanuel Ayoola served as a Justice of the Court of Appeal of the Gambia (1980-1983) and was subsequently appointed the Chief Justice of the Gambia (1983-1992). Although a non-ECOWAS member state, another Nigerian, Akinola Aguda, a cerebral jurist and lawyer had also served as the first indigenous African to hold the position of the Chief Justice of Botswana in 1972.

ECOWAS Parliament

The ECOWAS Parliament which is also referred to as the “Community Parliament” was established in 1993 with headquarters in Abuja, Nigeria. The protocol in respect of the Parliament was signed in Abuja in 1994. It started functioning with the commencement of the First legislature in 2001. Its objective is to create a forum for debate, consultation and agreement for representatives of the people of West Africa with the aim of fostering integration.

It focuses primarily on fundamental rights protection, communication systems, and development and harmonization of educational and public health policies, etc. As a consultative body, its decisions are not binding. Out of the 115 seats, Nigeria has 35 seats which is the highest number of seats held by a member state based on its population. Nigeria is closely followed by Ghana with eight seats. Whereas the Secretary-General of the Parliament who was in charge of overseeing the administrative wing of the

Parliament was Dr Nelson Magbabela from Nigeria. He died on the 8th of January 2021. The current Speaker of ECOWAS Parliament is Sidie Mohamed Tunis who took over from His Excellency, Moustapha Cisse Lo in March 2020. Senator Ike Ekweremadu of Nigeria was elected First Deputy Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament and ultimately became the Speaker of the Regional Parliament of the Third Legislature. He served for four years. It is on record that the most noteworthy achievement by the Ekweremadu-led Third Legislature of the ECOWAS Parliament was the adoption of the Supplementary Act on the Enhancement of the Powers of the ECOWAS Parliament by the Community's decision-making bodies. The Act was ratified by the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government at its 46th Ordinary Session held in Abuja in December 2014. The Act, among others, authorises the ECOWAS Parliament to be involved in financial processes and monitor the operations and programmes of ECOWAS institutions.

Other accomplishments include the bequeathing of an exquisite Parliamentary Complex and provision of a grant of N1billion Naira for the constructing of an office complex for the ECOWAS Parliament; occupation of the 115 seats for the first time, following the readmission of Guinea and membership of Côte d'Ivoire enhanced and elaborate capacity building for members of the Parliament and revitalization of the Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of Parliaments of West Africa and creation of active partnership and collaboration with other regional and international legislative bodies. Considering the fact that ascension to the post of the Speaker of ECOWAS Parliament is on rotational basis among member states; it is predicted that it will take Nigeria approximately sixty years to occupy the position again after Ekweremadu.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the foregoing, Nigeria remains the mainstay and single largest contributor to the Economic Community of West African States. (ECOWAS). It has provided and continues to provide technical, material and other sundry supports and assistance to member states. Its role in the development, peacekeeping operations, restoration of peace, democracy and stability of member states, prominently, in Liberia and Sierra Leone under the aegis of ECOMOG would remain historic and enduring as a major regional power. It has equally continued to play active, pivotal and strong leadership roles politically, socio-economically and otherwise, both in Africa and globally. However, much as Nigeria's roles and contributions to the formation, sustenance and growth of ECOWAS have attracted respect from member states, ensured good relations with its neighbours, enhanced its image in the sub-region, continentally and globally, it is very doubtful, viewed from the standpoint of cost-benefit analysis, that Nigeria has significantly benefited from its huge investments in ECOWAS. Notwithstanding, for Nigeria to remain relevant, make positive impacts and be respected by member states, it must not only continue to provide the needed political leadership both in the sub-region and in Africa in general, including maintaining the lead as Africa's most active voice on the global stage; ensure sustainable economic development, good governance, democratic consolidation and political stability, thereby serving as an exemplar for member and other African states to emulate.

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