

**ECONOMIC INTEGRATION OF THE ECONOMIC
COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES: PROSPECTS
AND CHALLENGES**

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**THIS DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY
OF GHANA, LEGON, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF
THE MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of an original research conducted by me under the supervision of Dr. Juliana Appiah and that apart from other works, which are duly acknowledged, no part of it has been submitted anywhere else for any purpose.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to Allah Almighty and my family, especially my wife Amina .K Baah and my son Miqdad Wisidae for enduring all the very difficult financial bottlenecks during my study that ended with this work. My friends and colleagues whose support and efforts made this work a success and a reality also share in this.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the Almighty Allah whose grace and mercies protected me throughout my entire studies.

My supervisor Dr. Juliana Appiah deserves a huge place in this for her continuous diligence, critical scrutiny and purposeful guidance from start to finish.

I also appreciate the immense efforts, encouragement and support of the following people in contributing to the success of this study: Honourable Amidu Chinnia Issahaku, Mr. Alhassan Hadi and Mr. Alhassan Duani Amin

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACP	-	AFRICAN CARIBBEAN AND PACIFIC
ASEAN	-	ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH-EAST ASIAN NATIONS
CACM	-	CENTRAL AMERICAN COMMON MARKET
CAICOM	-	CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY
CCJ	-	COMMUNITY COURT OF JUSTICE
CM	-	COMMON MARKET
COMESA AFRICA	-	COMMON MARKET FOR EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA
CSOS	-	CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS
CU	-	CUSTOMS UNION
EBID	-	ECOWAS BANK FOR INVESTMENT AND DEVELOPMENT
ECCAS	-	ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF CENTRAL AFRICAN STATES
ECOBRI	-	ECOWAS STANDBY BRIGADE
ECOMOG	-	ECOWAS MONITORING GROUP
ECOWARM	-	ECOWAS EARLY WARNING MECHANISMS
ECOWAS	-	ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES
EPA	-	ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT
ETLS	-	ECOWAS TRADE LIBERALIZATION SCHEME
EU	-	EUROPEAN UNION
EU	-	ECONOMIC UNION
FDI	-	FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENTS
GDP	-	GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT
IGO	-	INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS
LAFTA	-	LATIN AMERICAN FREE TRADE AREA
MU	-	MONETARY UNION
NCBWA	-	NATIONAL CONGRESS OF BRITISH WEST AFRICA
NEPAD	-	NEW PARTNERSHIP FOR AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT
PTA	-	PREFERENTIAL TRADE AREA
PU	-	POLITICAL UNION

RTAS	-	REGIONAL TRADE AGREEMENTS
SADC	-	SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
SADCC	-	SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COORDINATING CONFERENCE
UMA	-	UNION MAGREB ARAB
USA	-	UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
DEDICATION.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
ABSTRACT.....	viii
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.0 Background to the statement of the Research Problem.....	1
1.1 Statement of the Research Problem	5
1.2 Research Questions.....	6
1.3 Objectives of the Study	6
1.4 Scope of the Study	7
1.5 Rationale of the Study	7
1.6 Hypothesis	7
1.7 Theoretical Framework.....	8
1.8 Literature Review	10
1.8.1 Introduction	10
1.8.2 Challenges of Regional Economic Integration in Africa:	10
1.8.3 Challenges of Economic Integration in ECOWAS	13
1.9 Research Methodology	17
1.9.1 Research Design.....	18
1.9.2 Sources of Data	18
1.9.3 Instruments of Data Collection	18
1.9.4 Data Analysis	19
1.10 Limitation of the Study	19
1.11 Arrangement of Chapters	19
Endnotes.....	21
CHAPTER TWO.....	23
HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF ECONOMIC INTEGRATION IN AFRICA.....	23
2.0 Introduction	23
2.1 History of Regional Economic Integration in Africa	23
2.2 Historical Evolution of The Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS) ...	27

2.3 Regional Groupings in the West African Sub-Region	33
2.3.3 The Senegambian Confederation.....	34
2.3.4 West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU Or UEMOA).....	34
2.4 Levels of Economic Integration.....	35
2.4.1 Free Movement of Persons	35
2.4.2 Regional Infrastructural Networks.....	35
2.4.3 Telecommunications	36
2.4.4 Promoting Regional Interactions	36
2.4.5 Promoting Cross Border Investment (CBI).....	36
2.4.6 Regional Peace and Security	37
2.5 Conclusion	37
ENDNOTES	39
CHAPTER THREE.....	42
THE RELEVANCE, MECHANISMS, CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF THE ECONOMIC INTEGRATION OF ECOWAS.....	42
3.0 Introduction.....	42
3.1 The Need for Economic Integration in ECOWAS.....	42
3.2 Policies and Mechanisms that should be Adopted by ECOWAS	45
3.3 Challenges Facing the Economic Integration of ECOWAS:.....	46
3.4 The Prospects of Economic Integration Among ECOWAS Member States	52
3.5 Overview of the Economic prospects for ECOWAS Member States	52
3.6 Prospects For Economic Integration in ECOWAS:	54
3.6.1 Exchange of Services Among Member States.....	56
3.6.2 Gradual Industrialisation Focus of Member States.....	57
3.6.3 The Establishment of the ECO.....	58
3.7 Conclusion	58
ENDNOTES.....	
4.0 CHAPTER FOUR.....	
4.1 Summary of Findings.....	62
4.2 Conclusion	66
4.3 Recommendations.....	68
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	70

ABSTRACT

Economic integration has been an important phenomenon and a major facet of growth in the world. Amongst many regional groups on the continent of Africa, the Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS) has over the years proven to be in good standing in an effort to integrate its member states for economic, social and political benefits. This study examined the economic integration of ECOWAS, specifically looking at the prospects and challenges in the area of trade as an effort to deepen its integration processes. The qualitative research design was adopted for the study. The secondary data obtained were subjected to critical review. The study found that ECOWAS is one of the most successful and important sub regional groups in Africa. Its successes could be realised in the area of maintaining peace and stability, promoting trade and economic growth for the mutual benefit of its member states and the larger world. In spite of these successes, it was revealed in the study that, trade liberalization is one of the main challenges facing the success of ECOWAS as this hinders its core principles of economic integration. It is also revealed that, trade integration has not been fully utilised among member states as most trade activities are undertaken with the outside world, precisely Europe. In order to promote economic unification and integration amongst ECOWAS countries, the study recommends the harmonization of laws and tariff reforms as well as building stronger institutions and commitment from member states. The study further recommends the deliberate, aggressive and systematic development of transport and communication infrastructure and the involvement of stakeholders beyond political leadership.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the statement of the Research Problem

The concept of integration denotes the joining together of two or more economies, polities or abstract entities for a common purpose. Economic integration is therefore the fusion together of two or more economies in order to achieve a common economic purpose. Approaching the concept of economic regional integration as a general term, Ernest Haas writing in 1971, sees it as a process of combining separate economies into larger political communities. To the extent that political and economic forces are inextricably intertwined, any discussion of integration must encompass both economic and political variables.¹ Ernest Haas went further to define the term integration as:

The process whereby political actors in several distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities toward a new center, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over preexisting national states. The end result of a process of political integration is a new political community, superimposed over the pre-existing ones².

Haas' position on the concept of regional integration has been supported by Karl Deutsch and other early theorists who noted unequivocally that authentic regional integration encompasses the whole "system".³ That means that the generic reference to regional integration should be used. Deutsch, has therefore seen the concept of regional integration, as "a process of peacefully creating a larger coherent political system out of previously separate units, each of which voluntarily cedes some part of its sovereignty to a central authority and renounces the use of force for resolving conflict between members".⁴

According to Salvatore, as cited by Mwashu, who wrote in 2009 on the "The Benefits of Regional Economic Integration for Developing Countries in Africa: A Case of East African

Community (EAC)”, the concept of economic integration can be regarded as the commercial policy of discriminatively reducing or eliminating trade barriers (technical and non-technical barriers) only between the states joining together.⁵ Also, Alemayehu Geda and Haile Kibret, observed that the impulse or the drift for regional integration derives its rationale from the standard trade theory, which states that “free trade is superior to all other trade policies”.⁶ As an extension of this basic principle, therefore, free trade among two or more countries will improve the welfare of the member countries as long as the arrangement leads to a net trade creation. Their argument reflects the fact that historically or originally, regional integration aims solely at trade and other economic benefits. More clearly put, the standard trade theory provides the impetus for the development of the concept of regional integration.

It is imperative to mention that, the coming together of separate economies to exchange ideas, best practices, products and skills would go a long way to greatly benefit in one way or the other all the parties involved in the merger. It is, therefore, in line with this reasoning that there is the need for regional economic integration in Africa. Since the 1960s, independent African states have attempted to create economic groupings ‘in order to improve their bargaining position and achieve "sustained" economic growth and development in a world structured by unequal and dependent relations by the international division of labour.’⁷ According to Yansane, “the purpose for which many African states formed economic integration groupings was to breakdown debilitating dependencies on the old metro poles without shattering the nation-state structures based on the old colonial boundaries”.⁸ Integration of the sub-region became inevitable in view of the “need to prepare the sub-region, as well as continental Africa, to curb neo-colonial challenges at the first instance, and on the long run square-up efforts to take a strong stand in the global capital-driven economy.”⁹

Many scholars over the years have been advocating for a strong integration of the African continent in various relevant areas such as economic, political, security and social and justice. Mwasha, for instance opined that the benefits of regional economic integration depend on the level of economic integration and the deeper the integration, the greater the benefits to the participating Partner States.¹⁰ Mwasha, added that the degree of integration depends upon the willingness and commitment of independent sovereign states to share their sovereignty.¹¹ Fernandez, also observed that regional economic integration can serve a useful economic purpose beyond the direct gains from trade liberalization, by reducing uncertainties and improving credibility and thus making it easier for the private sector to plan and invest.¹² Indeed, reducing uncertainty may be vital for realizing gains from liberalization.¹³ Whether economies benefit from a particular regional trade agreement depends on the scope and coverage of its provisions, the nature of the enforcement mechanism and the circumstances in which the agreement can be modified.¹⁴ Economic integration can also serve as incentives for investment and attraction of foreign direct investment (FDI). Park and Park, alluded to the fact that general reforms such as stabilization, market liberalization, and privatization adopted under regional economic arrangements can raise returns to all factors and are likely to be more than enough to increase private investment.¹⁵

Post-colonial African states have attempted to restructure this system directed toward self-sufficiency, integrated economies, economic decolonization and reduced dependence on state institutions handed over to them by the colonial powers. The desire to adopt economic integration was also as a result of the positive gains the European Union experienced from economic integration. These benefits influenced political leaders of African countries who also decided to “integrate their economies in order to overcome the challenges such as declining economies, mounting debts and the shortfalls in export receipts, the small size, low

per capita incomes, small populations, narrow resources bases they faced at the second decade of their independence.”¹⁶

It is, therefore, the above laid foundation in regional integration that gave birth to the idea of ECOWAS, which was conceived and initiated in 1975. That notwithstanding, several years after its existence, the West African regional body still cannot boast of many significant successes. Despite the few positive gains that have been cloaked by ECOWAS, such as the establishing of the ECOWAS parliament, the establishing of a financial Committee with the task of planning to develop a single currency for the West African body, her efforts at attaining peace and security, democratization of the sub-region and many others, the West African sub-regional body has had very difficult challenges in economically integrating its member states.

The ECOWAS is bedeviled with a lot of challenges just like that of the African Union. Scholars have given several reasons for the struggling nature of the various integrative structures of developing countries. For instance, according to Okolo, the absence of favourable background conditions before the commencement of the integration process coupled with weak institutional structures and competing ideologies are to be blamed for the challenges of integration in developing countries.¹⁷ Ezi, on the other hand, disagrees and contends that “the problems of regional economic integration in Africa go beyond those of political instability, ideological diversity, and lack of infrastructure, low industrial development and divided loyalty of members. These tendencies that pose serious problems for economic integration of the sub-region still rear their ugly heads. Of crucial importance is the problem of foreign capital which is in alliance with the local dominant classes and the continued marginalization of these economies in the international division of labour.”¹⁸ All

these are indicative of the fact that there are debilitating challenges with regional integration in Africa, especially in economic integration of ECOWAS, which is examined in this study. It is therefore against this background that this research seeks to critically analyze the economic integration of ECOWAS with specific focus on the prospects and the way forward.

1.1 Statement of the Research Problem

To this day, Africa as a continent lacks a common market for her products, no common currency and no common trade platforms. This is as a result of the difficulties confronting regional economic integration in the region. These challenges have further worsened the divisive nature, the poor economic fortunes and the fragmented nature of the continent. It was a common phenomenon for African leaders to quickly blame the reasons for the inability of the African continent to have a strong regional integration on colonial domination especially in the early years of independence. However, after more than fifty years of freedom from colonial domination, the region of West Africa is yet to have a solid continental economic body. For instance, since its formation in 1975, the ECOWAS trade liberalization scheme (ETLS) which was supposed to facilitate trade among member states of ECOWAS has not achieved its intended goal despite taking cognizance of the glaring reality that the long term goal of economic integration and industrialization of the entirety of the African continent is hampered by the challenges that bedevil the integration of ECOWAS member states.¹⁹

Various scholars have suggested diverse reasons for such a phenomenon. Gabriel Akwen blames the difficulty in the economic integration of West African states on the diversity of economies between African countries as well as the fact that leaders of member states refuse to cede sovereignty to a supranational institution, in addition to ideological differences, are the problems of the economic conditions of African states and the abundance of nonfunctional

regional bodies.²⁰ Again, according to Patrick Kimunguyi, one of the notable challenges of regional economic integration in the West African region is the difficulty in promoting inter-and-intra regional trade.²¹ Kimunguyi further alluded to factors which have contributed to the poor inter and intra African trade performance by blaming it on the fact that many African countries in the region basically produce raw materials, which are less competitive in the international markets and sometimes there is virtually no demand for them elsewhere in Africa. Also, Geda and Kibret, writing in 2002, mentioned compensation issues and variation in initial condition as some of the challenges of Regional Economic Integration in Africa.²² It is clear therefore, that there is a fundamental problem with economic integration as well as the West African states are concerned. There is a profound body of literature on the challenges of regional economic integration for the ECOWAS. Thus, this research work, in the light of the challenges of regional economic integration, critically analyzed the mechanism, policies as well as prospects, challenges and the way forward for the integration process of ECOWAS.

1.2 Research Questions

- ❖ Why is there the need for economic integration for the ECOWAS member states?
- ❖ What are the mechanisms and policies of economic integration of ECOWAS?
- ❖ What are the prospect and challenges of economic integration of ECOWAS?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- ❖ Examine the need for economic integration of ECOWAS member states
- ❖ Identify the mechanisms and policies for the economic integration of ECOWAS.

- ❖ Examine the prospects and challenges for economic integration of ECOWAS member states.

1.4 Scope of the Study

Contextually, the study made an overview of economic integration of ECOWAS. It covered existing trade arrangements within ECOWAS with special interest on the prospects and the way forward. It also examined the need for economic integration in ECOWAS for its member states. Specifically, the study examined ECOWAS economic integration process since its inception in 1975 as well as looking at the challenges, prospects and the way forward to making it better.

1.5 Rationale of the Study

This study is adding to the existing body of knowledge on the economic integration of the West African states and would also be valuable to future research on the same topic. The study contributes to scholarly pursuit of knowledge in the field of regional economic integration and enhances the current debate on the integration of Africa. Findings from the study will serve as a useful reference of the difficulties that need to be overcome with regards to the economic integration of ECOWAS. The findings of this study may guide the reformation of the market approach to integration of ECOWAS

1.6 Hypothesis

The prospects of economic integration in West Africa are more than the challenges hindering it.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the neo-functionalist theoretical approach. Major proponents of this theory include Keohane, Nye, Haas and Lindberg. Neo-functionalism, was proposed to find a common ground between the Federalism and the Functionalism theories of integration. It is a hybrid of both the Federalist and the Functionalist approaches. It describes the Federalist approach as being a greedy approach by asking for too much too hurriedly and the Functionalist as appearing to be evasive and lackadaisical.²³ Hence, there was the need for the proposition of a common ground in the name of the neo-functionalism was born.

This study agrees largely with the position of neo-functionalism that the best way to achieve an effective regional integration is the formation of administrative institutions at the trans-national level, which are specialized and have the potential of demonstrating the significance and vitality of regional integration to member states.²⁴ This study is also in agreement with the key position of the neo-functionalist approach that, “no state is capable of maintaining its economic growth and its existing economic structures and be capable of satisfying the economic needs of its people, if it does not cooperate with other countries.”²⁵

The research acknowledges the imperfect nature of the neo-Functionalist approach to regional integration as there are many criticisms against it with one of them being its stress on the supranational aspects of regional integration. Moravesik suggests that much significance must be offered to the nation-state. He notes that, neo-functionalist theorist place too much emphasis on supranational officials at the expense of national leaders, arguing that the nation-state remains the core element in understanding international relations, including regional integration. Again, neo-functionalist’s assumption that the cooperation of political and administrative elites would lead to the cooperation of the population has been described by

critics as flawed by the experience of ‘no’ votes in the European Union treaties. This is a fundamental weakness of the neo-functionalist theory. For instance, although the Lisbon treaty was agreed upon by political and administrative elites, it did not mean that the ordinary voter endorsed/approved it. For this, it can be said that neo-functionalism as a theoretical tradition has a weakness in its lack of appreciation of the need to institute legitimacy among citizens.

However, despite the numerous criticisms of neo-functionalism, this study is very much convinced that, it still stands tall in the midst of the other approaches as far as the topic under study is concerned. Neo-functionalist approach perfectly suits the theoretical underpinning of this study, since this study recognizes the fact that, nations are not the only crucial players in international affairs, especially in trade, as the role of supranational institutions and non-state actors in international trade cannot be underestimated.²⁶ The research also adopts the neo-functionalist approach because of its relevance in providing a much clearer path where the integrated body would be more competent through the support of member states.²⁷ This appropriately explains why member states of ECOWAS cooperate with each other as well as with countries outside its catchment area for a profitable economic integration. Again, the neo-functionalist theory best suits this study because of its proposition for free trade barriers among integrated states. This theory is also suitable for this study, since it would ensure that ECOWAS member states operate borderless-trade system where there are no bottlenecks or obstacles in the way of member states in their bid to trade with one another. It is therefore clear that the neo-functionalist theory of integration is the most suitable theory in which this study is theoretically framed.

1.8 Literature Review

1.8.1 Introduction

This section of the study reviews some of the relevant literature on the topic under study. It compares and contrasts the various literature written on regional integration in Africa, challenges and prospects. The review covers themes such as the economic challenges of regional integration in Africa and Issues of regional economic integration in ECOWAS. The review covers these themes because of their significance to the topic under study and the fact that they represent a very convenient way of assisting the researcher to realize the research objectives. The important and interesting nature of the subject of Regional Integration in Africa has made it possible for many scholars to write extensively on it. There are quite a number of literatures on Regional integration in Africa. The simple criterion for choosing the literatures reviewed in this study is the fact that such literatures are directly relevant to the topic under study as well as having the potential of assisting the researcher to achieve the research objectives.

1.8.2 Challenges of Regional Economic Integration in Africa:

According to Kimunguyi one of the notable challenges of regional economic integration in the African continent is the difficulty in promoting inter-and-intra regional trade in Africa. In his paper, Kimunguyi observed that there are a lot of factors which have contributed to the poor inter/intra African trade performance. He lamented the fact that many African countries in the region basically produce raw materials, which are less competitive in the international markets and sometimes there is virtually no demand for them elsewhere in Africa.

Again citing the Angola and the Seychelles for example, where ninety per cent of Angola's export, to other African countries come from petroleum products and the fact that fresh fish constitutes nearly 98 per cent of such exports for the Seychelles, Kimunguyi contends that lack of diversity of African products is also a big challenge for the promotion of inter and intra trade in Africa. Moreover, pointing out the fact that though Senegal is the Gambia's close neighbour, trade between the two is negligible and that France is Senegal's biggest trading partner, while the Gambia trades largely with the United Kingdom (UK). Kimunguyi lamented another hindrance to the promotion of trade in Africa on the fact that, many African countries are still in tight trade partnerships with their former colonial master than with their fellow African countries. This is the only reason which explains why exports from Tunisia and Cameroon often find their way to French warehouses before being redirected to each other's market shelves. Thus Regional Economic Integration in Africa is challenged. It is therefore clear that Kimunguyi focused his attention on the economic challenges of regional integration in Africa proffering suggestions as to the way forward in addressing the challenges of Regional integration in Africa.

Again, Geda and Kibret mentioned compensation issues and variation in initial condition as one of the challenges of regional economic integration in Africa. The two scholars explained that this challenge relates directly to the issue of appropriate mechanism that ensures that those who gain are able to compensate losers in the medium term and losses are minimized in the long run. One of such losses is the tax revenue loss which is an immediate and a direct loss with the possibility of creating hesitation among member countries unless they foresee an immediate and greater benefit from the integration process. The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), for instance, identifies that the weakest members hold the suspicions that stronger countries will take advantage of them. Also, under

integration scheme where countries are at different levels of development and hence the gains from integration are disproportionate, the commitment to implement treaties that have been agreed upon could be adversely affected. The challenge has a further obstacle to tackle in the sub-regional efforts at integration since time, even if gainers agree to compensate losers in principle, the setting up of an agreeable mechanism and implementing it in a sustainable manner is seen as a very complex exercise. And because such issues, in many cases, have not been addressed adequately or proposed solutions not implemented properly, they have contributed to the greater challenges facing regional economic integration in Africa.

Another serious challenge facing regional economic integration in Africa as espoused by scholars is the issue of the fear of loss of revenue. According to Geda and Kibret, the reduction of trade barriers in economies where tariff revenue is one of the most significant sources of government revenue complicates the inter-temporal trade-off between the apparent short-term loss of revenue and the expected long-term benefits emanating from regional integration. Citing Kenya, for instance, the two scholars indicated that government revenue from its imports from EU constitutes a reasonable percentage of its total revenue. The two scholars also pointed out for instance, that Ethiopia's revenue loss due to opening its market to COMESA is less than 1 per cent of total revenue since its trade with COMESA is negligible (although shifting from EU to COMESA could mean a lot of loss in tax revenue). With these analyses from COMESA, it is clear that many African countries are hesitant to ensuring a Regional integration because of the fear of the loss of revenue in the inter/intra state trade. This study therefore reviewed the challenges of regional integration in Africa by taking a critical look at the prospects and challenges of regional economic integration in ECOWAS.

1.8.3 Challenges of Economic Integration in ECOWAS

Multiplicities of challenges have had a significant role in the poor record of the ECOWAS integration process. The challenges run from the decision-making at the community level to the national level. According to some scholars, regional integration in Africa started during the era of Kwame Nkrumah. He argued in his book ‘Africa Must Unite’ of the need for the economic unification and integration of African states. However, the kind of African Unity Kwame Nkrumah envisioned for Africa never saw the light of day.²⁸ Asante views regional integration as “the only viable strategy for optimal development of all the peoples of Africa in the contemporary economic and political circumstances as well as in the world as a whole”.²⁹ He posits that “regional integration in Africa did not succeed because of factors such as lack of commitment by African ruling class”, absence of “viable national institutions for managing the regional cooperation process, deficiencies of the community institutions” to institute and implement policy making functions successfully, limited role of non-governmental organizations and interest group in the integration process among others.

According to Antwi-Danso, on the topic “Regionalism and Regional Integration: Prospects and Challenges (Making the Ordinary Ghanaian active in the Integrative Process)”, integration is crucial in stimulating development once it builds larger markets and facilitates economies of large scale production. Also, he noted that integration protects against the vagaries of globalization. However, he argues that integration in Africa failed as a result of feeble stability, weaknesses of the economic fundamentals of African states, low trading among African countries, emergence of many such integration bodies, elites non-complementarities and many bottlenecks to trade. Besides, integration in Africa, according to Antwi-Danso, also “failed because of lack of grassroots support.”³⁰

Greer also argues that the strain between Anglophone and Francophone countries is a basic challenge facing ECOWAS integration.³¹ The Francophone-Anglophone issue is owed to the differing colonial institutions, legal heritages and business practices as well as the influence of France, unlike Britain, on her colonies.³² Neo-colonialism, attributed to the French and British, has been more prevalent in West Africa than in most parts of the world. France opposed the creation of ECOWAS, because it reasoned that a large regional organization would allow its former colonies more political and economic independence.³³ Greer argues that the colonial masters still exert some form of influence on their colonies to the degree that they manipulate their decisions on integrating with the other countries in the sub-region. Initiatives like the creation of the single monetary union of the francophone countries, the CFA, remains one of the major challenges to the integration process as the sub-region hopes to achieve a monetary union.³⁴ The activities of the colonial masters cause divisions in the Community and make member states more aligned to them than to the sub-region. The result is that, decision making by the Community on integration is difficult. Greer perhaps describes the most obvious challenge to the integration process in the West African sub-region.³⁵ This is because colonial masters have affected decision making of the Community since the initiative towards integration in the 1970s.

Additionally, according to Mohammed Mubarik, there is also the challenge of political commitment among West African states.³⁶ Mubarik argues that, there appears to be a lack of special interest in support and lack of total commitment on the part of the ECOWAS members to the cherished goals of the Community.³⁷ He asserts that the level of involvement and participation of member states in the Community's activities leaves much to be desired.³⁸ Edward Amissah adds that, ECOWAS decisions and policies aimed at fostering integration, have mostly received little ratification by member states making implementation of the

Community policies difficult.³⁹ In most ECOWAS countries, policies and programmes aimed at strengthening integration are not accorded the same priority in the development objectives of member states as national issues. The result is that member countries develop their own strategies, plans and priorities, with regional cooperation hardly reflecting in them.

Okolo notes that economic integration in developing states has not led to development as a result of factors such as “differences in size and infrastructural development, levels of dependence on external actors, and the political will of member- states have militated against the success of free trade and a common external tariff as a vehicle for economic development.”⁴⁰ These factors have combined to work against the economic integration of ECOWAS. The lack of political will by member countries in the implementation of protocols has affected the successful achievement of the goals of the ECOWAS.

Sambo posits that the low literacy rate in the Community is another serious problem.⁴¹ This problem has adverse consequences on the relationship between the Community, corporate, and legal institutions, as well as traders in the sub-region.⁴² Sambo explains that the literacy level of the people in the Community is so low that they lack understanding of the integration process.⁴³ Asante also explains that the quality of staff in the ECOWAS institutions is generally low as they are mostly appointed on political basis rather than on the basis of their competence.⁴⁴ The question that emerges from Sambo’s assertion is that: how do you embark on a course that is not understood by the beneficiaries?

According to Ukaoha and Ukpe, some of the obstacles that prevented the ECOWAS to achieve a full Free Trade Area include “absence of a legal status; lack of adequate awareness and sensitization; issues of sovereignty.”⁴⁵ Similarly, Asante, in his work, “Economic

integration in West Africa: Some critical issues” argued that, the ECOWAS is likely to face some challenges among which are:

The problem of the community is initiating measures effective enough to combat attempts by extra-regional powers to take advantage of the newly created regional opportunities and thus derive more benefit from integration than would the intra-regional participants. Secondly, and closely related to this, is the problem of extricating the member states of ECOWAS from existing dependency relationships with the metropolitan powers and using national and regional institutions to bring about greater local control over resources.⁴⁶

Asante in his book *“ECOWAS institutions as facilitators of regional integration: Present role and achievements, strength and weakness and perspectives”* noted that, ECOWAS has a comprehensive agenda on all facet of communal life, thus, political, social, cultural, and economic. ECOWAS aims at the deepest form of integration through the formation of an economic and monetary union. Since the inception of ECOWAS, it has been able to institutionalise four main bodies to undertake its fundamental agenda respectively. Among these is the ECOWAS Parliament, which is a platform for negotiation, consultation and consensus and for the representation of people within member states. The ECOWAS Court of Justice is also entrusted with sustained economic integration and protect human right and rule of law within the West Africa sub-region, whiles the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID) with the public and private sector development partnership contribute to infrastructure and other development projects all geared towards the realization of integration within the sub region. The ECOWAS Commision is also a body in charge of issuing recommendation, initiating programmes and political cooperation such as migration and trade.⁴⁷

Furthermore, the institutions of ECOWAS also bring their own challenges to bear. For instance, Asante argues that ECOWAS has undertaken, in response to global and regional developments, far-reaching structural transformations, including the adoption of the Vision 2020 with a Strategic Action Plan to transform the Community from an “ECOWAS of States” into an “ECOWAS of People.”⁴⁸ Against this background, the current national units would appear too small in capacity to effectively meet the capacity challenges of deepening ECOWAS integration process at the national level.

From all the literature reviewed above, it is clear that many of the scholars are writing from diverse academic, ideological and intellectual backgrounds with various perspectives and purposes. All the literature has been directed at the various challenges facing Regional Integration in Africa. There is a dearth of literature that deals specifically with the challenges and prospects of economic integration of the ECOWAS. It is therefore this literature gap left unfilled that this study seeks to fill. This study would not only examine the mechanisms and policies adopted by the community for ensuring that there is economic integration in West Africa, but it would also examine the way forward for economic integration in the sub-region.

1.9 Research Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative approach. This helped in gathering detailed information on economic integration among ECOWAS member states and experiences from other parts of the world. Creswell posits that, in qualitative approach, the enquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on the multiple meanings of individual experiences, social and historical constructions with intentions of developing a theory or pattern or advocacy/participatory perspective.⁴⁹ The study, therefore, adopts interviews as an instrument of data collection, using an unstructured interview guide, as well as a desktop review

approach where some of the significant literature in relation to the study was reviewed and analyzed.

1.9.1 Research Design

The study adopts an explorative research design, which, according to scholars such as Saunders et al, denotes the study of a phenomenon by exploring its critical areas in order to discover the best approach to use. The research, therefore, adopts this research approach by perusing the available relevant literature on the subject of economic integration with the aim of discovering the appropriate approach to adopt in dealing with the issues in question.

1.9.2 Sources of Data

There were two sources of data for this study – the primary sources of data and the secondary sources of data. The primary data constitutes the first hand information which was received from the respondents. The two respondents from which the primary data was gathered are the people with expert knowledge on the subject matter. Samuel Dodoo of Advocacy on ECOWAS Protocols, organized sensitization workshop on ECOWAS Regional Integration and Emmanuel Bensah Junior of “Africa in Focus Show/ECOWAS Business News” were the two respondents. The secondary sources of data, on the other hand included libraries, internet search engines as well as published works and policy documents from relevant quarters.

1.9.3 Instruments of Data Collection

There are many instruments of data collection, such as questionnaires, survey, informal interactions, interviews, cross-sectional survey and others, but this study employs the use of interviews for the collection of data for this study. A number of unstructured interview

questions were drafted and administrated to the two respondents for the collection of their views on the subject matter.

1.9.4 Data Analysis

The qualitative data that was collected from this study was presented and analyzed. The data was edited to detect and correct possible errors and omissions that occurred, to ensure consistency across respondents. The information and the views from the respondents were presented in a narrative form followed by detailed and critical analysis. The researcher analyzed the data gathered using the required qualitative data analysis approach. The data was therefore presented, streamlined and critically analyzed. The findings of this study were therefore discussed.

1.10 Limitation of the Study

The researcher encountered a lot of limitations in the form of challenges in the conduct of this study. Apart from the fact that the literature on the subject matter is limited, the researcher also encountered challenges of time constraints as well as issues of resources. However, despite all these limitations, the researcher was able to overcome them, and successfully, obtain every vital information needed for this study; hence the study was completed successfully.

1.11 Arrangement of Chapters

The study comprises four chapters. Chapter one constitutes the introduction. Chapter two provides a historical overview of economic integration of the West Africa sub region. Chapter three examined the prospects and challenges for the economic integration of ECOWAS. The chapter also presents the views of the respondents collected through the

interview conducted for this study. Finally, chapter four summarizes the findings of the work, provides conclusions, and makes recommendations.

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CHAPTER TWO

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF ECONOMIC INTEGRATION IN AFRICA

2.0 Introduction

This chapter largely covers the historical evolution of regional integration in Africa as far as economic integration in the continent is concerned. The chapter begins by briefly tracing the history of regional economic integration in the continent. The chapter then focuses on the experience of ECOWAS by highlighting the historic evolution of ECOWAS' integration, which represents a very comprehensive example of regional economic cooperation in Africa. The chapter also takes a look at the various economic groups in West Africa, that gave the impetus to the formation of the ECOWAS. The chapter then concludes, by summarizing the historical attempts at integrating ECOWAS economically.

2.1 History of Regional Economic Integration in Africa

Regional economic ties in Africa have had a long history owing to the long distance trade which existed throughout Africa even before the advent of the Europeans. These trades, included, the trans-saharan trade and the caravan trade. However, with the coming of European colonialism, economic activities of many kinds including trade, finance, monetary affairs, administrative responsibilities, transport and communication network were organized on a regional basis during the colonial period, including the monetary unions between the francophone countries and France.¹ During this era (colonial period), each colonial authority used to bind occupied territories together under one central administration, merely for convenience. This resulted in the creation of common services and common money issuing boards. The adoption of common practices such as free movement of people also proved useful in this context.²

After independence, regional integration became a pillar of Africa's developmental strategy.³ Pan-Africanism, an ideology which emphasizes continental unity and strong identification with the then ongoing anti-colonial struggles, was the leitmotif of Africa's developmental framework.⁴ Qobo asserts that, from the beginning of the decolonization process in the 1960s, the establishment of sub-regional economic communities was a significant part of Africa's development strategy.⁵ Economic regionalism in Africa began during this period, spearheaded in large measure by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and Economic Commission on Africa (ECA). These were done for two main purposes – partly as a response to colonialism as well as to spur political and economic progress on the continent; and partly as a political instrument to deal with the power imbalances in the international system.⁶ It is worth pointing out that at independence, Africa lacked the human and physical capital that was required for industrialization; there was therefore the need for African countries to come together and strike an agreement that would ensure they benefit from one another, hence the idea of fostering Regional Economic Integration in the continent.⁷

According to kimunguyi, because Africa was benefiting from economic and financial assistance provided by the rivaling East and West blocs in their desire to extend their spheres of influence during the Second World War and the early days of the post Second World War, the continent did not take regional economic integration seriously.⁸ He further asserted that, the end of the East-West rivalry led to the so-called 'retreat from Africa' by these powers, which consequently resulted to an increase in economic crisis on the continent.⁹ Kimunguyi is of the opinion that it was at this juncture that the African policy makers even those who were not initially committed or active in the integration process, began to acknowledge the need for Africa to stand and act in agreement. This he said has the capacity to effect drastic

changes in their economic fortunes, lest poverty and poor growth will continue to be dominant in the continent.¹⁰

The UNEC for Africa's publication, titled, "Assessing Regional Integration in Africa IV: Enhancing Intra-African Trade" contends that, "the formation of the OAU, now the African Union (AU) was the first step towards promoting both continental unity in Africa and economic cooperation within the African continent".¹¹ It is very significant to historically trace the efforts that the leaders of the African continent expressed towards regional integration since decolonization period. The UNEC for Africa alluded to the efforts demonstrated by African leaders in their steps towards regional integration in the continent after recognizing the importance of regional integration to developing a strong, united and economically viable Africa. As a result, the continent's leaders had therefore established a number of initiatives and efforts all of which aimed at realizing an effective Regional Integration in Africa with multifaceted benefits.¹²

The most notable of the initiatives include the:

- The formation of OAU which was formally done in 1963 with only 32 participating African countries and was later transformed into the AU in 2002.
- The 1980 Lagos Plan of Action for the Economic Development of Africa;
- The African Charter on Human and People's Rights drafted in 1981;
- Priority Programme for Economic Recovery (APPER) in 1985, which was formed to address the emerging economic crisis of the 1980s;
- The Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community (EAC), known as the Abuja Treaty, in 1991;
- The Sirte Declaration of 1999;

- The 2000 Solemn Declaration on security, stability, development and economic cooperation of the African continent;
- The AU Programme, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) in 2000; and
- The AU Constitutive Act of 2001.¹³

MzukisiQobo opined that the first major blueprint for Africa's development and efforts especially towards an effective regional economic integration, was the Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos which was adopted some decades ago, and set out a vision of an integrated African market by the year 2000.¹⁴ This initiative was given further impetus by the Abuja Treaty which was approved in 1991 and came into force in 1994, with the terms of the treaty postulating that the African Economic Community (AEC) would be in place by 2028.¹⁵ According to MzukisiQobo, this was a comprehensive plan since it envisaged that some of its milestones would include “strengthening of existing regional economic communities and the formation of the new ones (between 1994 and 1999); stabilization of existing tariffs, and integration and harmonization of economic sectors (1999 to 2007); establishment of a free trade area and customs union (2007 to 2017); harmonization of tariff systems across various regional economic communities (RECs) (2017 to 2019); the creation of a common African market and harmonization of monetary, financial, and fiscal policies; and the establishment of a pan-African economic and monetary union (2023 to 2028).”¹⁶

It is also worth noting that the initial pan-Africanism spirit that aroused during the early years of independence inspired a lot of attempts also at the sub-regional levels.¹⁷ There have been very notable efforts shown at the sub-Regional levels in Africa, towards Regional corporations.¹⁸ Initiatives such as the Economic Community of West African States, the

Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) and the Preferential Trade Agreement for East and Southern Africa (later COMESA) were inspired by this pan- Africanist vision.¹⁹ There are other initiatives that evolved outside this framework, such as the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), the Southern African Development and Coordinating Conference (and later the Southern African Development Community) and the EAC.²⁰

Considering the history of regional integration in Africa and how far the continent has come in this regard, it is clear that despite such significant progress towards integrating the African continent economically, many challenges persist, including the matter of inadequate financial resources.²¹ Pan-African institutions such as the AU Commission and the Regional Economic Communities continue to depend heavily on contributions from their member States to implement integration activities and programmes.²² However, these resources have turned out to be insufficient.²³ It is therefore to pick one of the regional bodies which is devoted to ensuring that member states come together economically to enhance free trade, business transaction and other economic activities – the ECOWAS.

2.2 Historical Evolution of The Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS)

ECOWAS was officially established in 1975. A number of events preceded the signing of the ECOWAS treaty. It is believed within African circles that the Former Liberian President, William Tubman, was first to conceive the idea of a West African economic community, which stimulated the signing of an agreement between Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone on February 1965, though this did not go far.²⁴

However, two prominent Africans – General Gowon of Nigeria and General Eyadema of Togo reignited the idea in April 1972.²⁵ They travelled to 12 countries in West Africa to elicit support.²⁶ The generals drafted proposals for the treaty which were examined at a meeting of potential member states in Lomé, Togo, on December 1973; at a meeting of experts and jurists in Accra, Ghana, on January 1974; and at another meeting of ministers in Monrovia, Liberia, on January 1975.²⁷

Finally, on May 28, 1975, fifteen West African countries met in Lagos, Nigeria, to sign the ECOWAS Treaty, also known as the Treaty of Lagos. Since its formation, there has been a lot of critical questions with regards to the mandate of the regional body. Various scholars have taken turns to explore the mandate of ECOWAS.

According to Aderanti, due to the importance of inter-community collaboration in the world economic prosperity and development, the ECOWAS agreement was signed in Lagos, Nigeria on May 28, 1975 by leaders of West Africa to embrace various aspects of economic activity. One of the key objectives was to eliminate impediments blocking the free movement of the citizenry, commodities and income within the community. This called for the ECOWAS agreement on the freedom for people to move, the liberty to residence and free migration of workers.

The first part of that agreement guaranteed free entry to ECOWAS population without the requirement of a legal travelling documentation for three months. This became law in the various municipalities in 1980 and took effect forthwith to usher in a period of unrestricted migration of the Community citizens across its coverage area. However, community citizens were guaranteed rights to entry, residence and settlement under the revised 1992 Treaty of

ECOWAS; it further required her members to observe the said freedoms in the respective jurisdictions of each country. The agreement mandated members of the Community to ratify the undertaking such that it takes full effect and executed to its fullest in all member states.²⁸

According to Wulf et al, the ECOWAS was primarily assigned to promoting of economic cooperation; however, conflict resolution has become exceedingly important in recent years. Again, Zouhon-Bi and others in their paper *"ECOWAS fiscal revenue-Implications of the prospective economic partnership agreement with the EU"* argues that, not only was the ECOWAS Treaty signed to advance the West African political unity and economic convergence, but to also institute an economic union amongst member states.²⁹ Annan notes that, ECOWAS was formed to facilitate economic unity.

It is therefore very clear that the West African body – ECOWAS was created with the ultimate goal of integrating the economies of West African states. It represents a regional institutional framework for the coordination and promotion of economic cooperation in West Africa. Since its inception, the Community has recorded good performance, mostly in the enhancement of peace and stability across the region, trade and the free movement of people and goods in West Africa.

There is therefore absolutely no denying the fact that the West African Community was fundamentally formed to support cooperation and integration in order to set the stage for an economic and monetary union which would yield economic prosperity and general progress in the ECOWAS region. This is evident, in the since that the Lagos treaty was originally touted as an economic initiative; however political events of the time led to its revision and for that matter an increase in scope and powers in 1993.³⁰

Therefore, despite its original mandate of fostering regional economic cooperation among member states, the emerging challenges in member states have succeeded in compelling the regional economic body to expand its mandate to include other equally important aspects of the African development, such as conflict resolution, democratic consolidation, political stability and cultural integration.

In 1993, a reform of the body was observed against the background of a changed global environment and a change in political leadership of many member states. In the process, the aim of economic unity was maintained and the need to uphold democracy and democratic governance in the member states became part of the formal goal in the reform treaty of ECOWAS.

Fundamentally, the Abuja Treaty was adopted as a future development plan grounded in a cooperative self-fulfilling, bringing about non-dependent and self-improved growth. It was an all-encompassing plan that targeted economic and non-economic fields and to establish modern bodies in line with a self-reliant development trajectory, embrace majority rules and uphold modern cherished values. According to Rene, a greater percentage of ECOWAS population (some 115 million people) are living below the poverty line, thus, 1 US dollar daily and 12 from her 15 membership counted as part of the world's poorest countries.

The challenges of economic isolation and few development chances have compelled a lot of states to initiate regional plans in an attempt to run away from local deficiencies such as small size, landlocked economies or lack of access to information and physical infrastructure connecting to the outside world. To suit the African regional integration continental plan,

ECOWAS was therefore basically a deliberate plan for social and economic improvement in West Africa not forgetting political unity and the realization of regional integration on the African region. The conceptual idea by her founding fathers to foster unity among the original 15 members of the Community to achieve the ultimate objective of economic unity is far from being realized. Notwithstanding the missed timelines and sometimes political inaction, the region has delved even deeply to achieving political and social cooperation via structures including the Community Court of Justice, the ECOWAS Legislature, and many agreements adopted to achieve Free Migration of People.³¹

As part of its expanded and revised mandate, ECOWAS over the years have advanced plans to overcome violent conflicts within its jurisdiction. For instance, through the timely intervention of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in the bloody ethnic wars which were fought in Liberia in 1989 and Sierra Leone in 1991, these conflicts were managed, albeit with difficulty by ECOMOG. Irrespective of the efforts and successes of ECOMOG in reducing conflict in ECOWAS member states, the hopes of peace and ultimate security in West Africa is still brittle and chances of these chronic confusion reoccurring is high.³²

ECOWAS is also set to achieve a peaceful, stable and secured West Africa via the promotion and fostering of good neighborliness. It is also tasked with issues of holding its governments/leadership accountable to the citizenry; obtain economic, social fairness and public involvement in development, facilitation and sustenance of democratic culture and rule of law in all her Member countries.³³

Over the years, ECOWAS States seem more enthused in sustaining her integration objectives as well as extending the duty and obligations of leadership at the regional level far above concerns of trade and economic Programme. That increased contribution is manifest, considering objective of West African political leadership in using the Community as a liaison and supervisory institution in charge of the NEPAD continental policies.

This system is mirrored across Africa in her various sub-continental bodies. May be, an outstanding fashionable and popular instance of a deeper collaboration at the political dimension of the Community, that notwithstanding, also included the functions of the Standing Mediation Committee and the Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), which was formed in 1990 purposely to prevent and manage conflicts.³⁴

According to Rene, the reformation of the 1993 ECOWAS treaty signifies a relevant milestone in her organizational steps and the identity of West African community. There has been a drift towards favourable “people-centred organization” veering away from “overly bureaucratic inter-governmental agency of the past.”³⁵ The revision was necessitated by the fact that the region has over the years been capable of delivering on its economic objectives.

The 1993 ECOWAS Treaty included the strengthening of relations and better sharing of an additional provision on the Community’s underlying rules which include an undertaking by Membership of the Community to observe, advance and provide for the liberties enshrined in the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights as well as an undertaking to social justice and public involvement in development.

The new Treaty gives a detail address of sub-regional labour and employment matters of which most analysts consider to be the social dimension of West African integration thus from human capital, to socio-cultural issues, women, population and also the media. Finally, the Revised Agreement stands for an expanded dream of the Community which travels far above economic collaboration to provide for social project inclusion.³⁶

It is also believed that via the revolution of 1980, the Lagos Plan of Action which gave birth to ECOWAS and the Abuja Treaty of 1991 offered a broader structure and guide directed at a continuous execution of economic integration in Africa which started at the sub-continental levels (Central, Eastern, North, Southern and West) and slowly metamorphosed into an African continental market.

2.3 Regional Groupings in the West African Sub-Region

Geo-politically, the West African sub-region consists of sixteen countries, including ten former French colonies, four British colonies, one Portuguese and one Spanish. Ahmad states that the former French colonies have been the most active group in the sub-region and in the continent as a whole, in terms of economic cooperation.³⁷

2.3.1 The West African Economic Community (CEAO)

Formed in 1972 the group comprises Benin, Burkina Faso, La Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. It aims to foster economic and social development of its member states.³⁸

2.3.2 The Mano River Union (MRU)

Established in 1973, the group consist of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone constitute the membership of the MRU. Its objectives are to expand reciprocal trade by eliminating existing barriers, to promote cooperation for the expansion of international trade, to create conditions favourable to expanding the production capacity of the area (including the progressive development of a common productive policy and cooperation in the creation of new productive capacity), and to ensure a fair distribution of the benefits of economic cooperation.³⁹

2.3.3 The Senegambian Confederation

The group existed from 1981-1989 and as the name indicates, Senegal and Gambia are the only members of this confederation. The Senegambia confederation agreement of December 1981 provides for, among other things, the development of an economic union that has a simple custom union and monetary union within member states.⁴⁰

2.3.4 West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU Or UEMOA)

In late 1993, France and the leaders of the seven West African states comprising the West African Monetary Union signed the treaty establishing UEMOA.⁴¹ This was a culmination of two separate arrangements, namely, the West African Monetary Union (UEMOA) and the Community of the West African States (CEAO) into a new treaty, the Economic and Monetary Union of West African States (UEMOA) that in turn will be anchored by France.⁴² The agreement brings within a single framework the West African Economic Community, which has attempted (ineffectually) to remove barriers to trade and the West African Monetary Union, which supports a common central bank and currency (CFA) linked to a fixed (and recently devalued) rate to the French franc.⁴³

2.4 Levels of Economic Integration

This refers to the different strategies adopted in pursuance of economic integration. For an economic bloc to attain a full-fledged integration it would have to go through five stages of economic cooperation from the least integrated to most integrated, they are a free trade area, a customs union, a common market, an economic union and finally a full political union.⁴⁴ Even though some practitioners see it as a progression from one level to another, a level is understood to mean a completely different stage of integration which could be identified and adopted without necessarily moving from the first to the end.⁴⁵ The levels of integration throw more light on the structure of the study and serve as a bridge for launching into the process of integration in West Africa.

2.4.1 Free Movement of Persons

For reasons of national security, public order and protection of the labour market, most West African countries had been operating expatriate quota schemes and imposing entry visa requirements. One of the first achievements of ECOWAS was to adopt a protocol that made possible the free movement of community citizens throughout the region.⁴⁶

2.4.2 Regional Infrastructural Networks

The free and smooth movement of persons, goods and services depends on effective physical cohesion. ECOWAS therefore made the development of regional infrastructural networks an early priority. On the pan-African highway plan, ECOWAS adopted a regional road programme – the Trans-West African: consisting of the Trans-coastal highway from Lagos to Nouakchou, and the Trans-Sahelian Highway from Dakar to N'Djamena.⁴⁷

2.4.3 Telecommunications

In the field of telecommunications, an African infrastructural plan (PANAFTEL) was adopted by ECOWAS to develop a regional telecommunications network (INTELCOM I) in West Africa, to establish a system of telephone, telex and telefax communications between all the fifteen capitals.⁴⁸ INTELCOM II is being planned to modernize and expand the existing network and ensure its interconnectivity with the fast evolving super telecommunications highways.

2.4.4 Promoting Regional Interactions

The colonial past, linguistic and cultural differences and past independence nationalism had all combined to make most West African countries live without the necessary regional interaction. If a viable and integrated West African community is to exist, such barriers must be broken. Conscious effort has been made to build the necessary social and economic bridges, particularly among the business community. The organised private sector of member states has been encouraged to interact across borders through the West African Enterprise Network (WAEN).⁴⁹

2.4.5 Promoting Cross Border Investment (CBI)

In order to promote CBI, ECOWAS has been encouraging the establishment of regional projects through the provisions of necessary political support and developing appropriate regional mechanisms to contribute to the share capital. In this regard, ECOWAS supported the efforts of the Federation of West African Chambers of Commerce to set up the first private sector regional bank, the ECOBANK Transnational Incorporated with its Headquarters in Lome, Togo and with branches in eleven countries.⁵⁰

2.4.6 Regional Peace and Security

There cannot be economic and social integration and development without political stability and peace. ECOWAS member countries have undertaken a number of initiatives to safeguard and consolidate relations conducive to the maintenance of peace, stability and security within the sub-region.

It is worth noting that the ECOWAS Treaty did not mention conflict management and prevention, among its aims and objectives. However efforts to ensure peace in the sub-region have given the sub-region, worldwide recognition. The formation of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) is one initiative that has drawn attention to the community.⁵¹ In 1999, ECOWAS also initiated the conflict prevention and management enterprise, the adoption of Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace Keeping and Security.⁵² The Community also adopted the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, in December 2001, as a veritable instrument for promoting peace and security in West Africa.⁵³

2.5 Conclusion

Integration in West Africa has a chequered history. Regional groupings within the sub-region floundered, mainly because they lacked the institutional props and political commitment needed to nurture them. The first most serious attempt made by countries of the sub-region towards integrating their economies was in 1975 when ECOWAS was born.

The various methods adopted by ECOWAS since its inception, bear eloquent testimony to the will of member countries to succeed in their integration drive. With the success of some of these methods, the prospects of integration in West Africa are good. The examination of the

prospects therefore need not be overemphasised. This equally calls for an analysis of the existing problems and a diversion of attention on the emerging problems.

However, to guarantee successful economic atmosphere in her jurisdiction, the ECOWAS body over the years have sort to promote a peaceful and secured West Africa, trade and free flow of people, services and goods. Within the continent of Africa, there are several integrated communities which were all created on the basis of promoting economic benefits among its member states. ECOWAS and SADC are said to be the most vibrant sub regional organizations in Sub Sahara Africa (SSA).

That notwithstanding, there is no disputing the fact that the West African body is confronted with some difficulties which have the tendency of blocking the successful execution of her core duties and the realization of her goal. Following the increasing relevance of regional integration in the globe, it is crucial, to identify and resolve these stumbling blocks in order to achieve the prospects of the economic integration of ECOWAS and that is what the next chapter of this study looks at. The next chapter presents the views and opinions of respondents on some of the policies and mechanisms that should be adopted by ECOWAS in ensuring that there is economic integration in the ECOWAS sub-region. The next chapter also discusses the prospects and the way forward for economic integration in West Africa.

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CHAPTER THREE

THE RELEVANCE, MECHANISMS, CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF THE ECONOMIC INTEGRATION OF ECOWAS

3.0 Introduction

This chapter addressed the research objectives and answered the research questions set out in this study. The main objective of this study as set out in the first chapter of the study, is not only to examine why there is the need for economic integration in ECOWAS for member states, but to also identify the prospects and challenges of economic integration among ECOWAS member states, as well as some of the policies and mechanisms that should be adopted towards economic integration.

3.1 The Need for Economic Integration in ECOWAS

An efficiently economically integrated West Africa would definately bring about enormous benefits and gains to member states. These benefits and gains which consititute some of the reasons why there is the need for regional economic integration in West Africa, would be felt in diverse areas such as, the economy, political arena, socio-cultural as well as others. In fact, currently, there is a general consensus that regional and sub-regional collaborative economic development agenda provide a clue to overcoming the political, economic and social difficulties confronting states in Africa in the wake of the modern era of globalization.

On a larger stage of economic collaboration in Africa, establishing ECOWAS is viewed as a primary necessity for prosperity in that region, in view of the fact that it was partitioned into a lot of small states causing market sizes to be small.¹ All states that make up West Africa are said to have strong affinities in both historical and cultural circles.² There is therefore a strong

need for integration since it is clear that West African states stand to benefit a lot when integrated economically under ECOWAS. In an interview with Emmanuel Benson, on the need for economic integration in West Africa, he posited that, it was already obvious from the very establishment of ECOWAS, that, there is a compelling need for economic integration in West Africa. According to him:

The very establishment of ECOWAS as an economic community already suggests that the imperative of economic integration is clear. Unity is strength, and this applies even more so for economies of developing countries who may consider integration as an important bulwark against excesses of globalization.

This position resonates very well with scholars such as DeRosa (1998), who argues strongly that when there is economic integration, member states “whose pre-union economies were quite competitive” are very much likely to gain from such economic integration, due to the availability of a very big opportunity for specialization.³ Also, Tovias (1992), indicate the fact that economic integration would introduce a lot of benefits to member states in the sense that countries that were already in trading terms before the integration would now have the chance to expand their trade with very large trade stakes which have the potential of drawing to them very high profit margins when the economic integration happen.⁴

Again, in an interview with Samuel Dodoo, from the Advocacy on ECOWAS Protocols and Organized sensitizations workshops on ECOWAS regional Integration, on the need for economic integration in West Africa, he explained how economic integration would improve the lives of citizens. According to him, economic integration is needed in West Africa “*basically to improve the economic livelihood of citizens of the sub region. Also, it will ensure the security of the sub-region and promote inter regional co-operation and offer good governance*”

Again, a chance for the enlargement of markets is one of the relevance of economic integration in the region. When there is an economic integration, ECOWAS member states would be provided with an opportunity that allows them to fully explore and exploit economies of scale to their advantage by enlarging their markets. According to Regina Madyo:

There is a trade-off between economies of scale and competition, which is ‘if companies are larger there are fewer of them, and the market is less competitive’. Enlarging the market shifts this trade-off, as it becomes possible to have both larger companies and more competition.⁵

Again, regional economic integration has the potential of influencing companies of member states to “produces different variety of products” since there are going to be different categories of consumers with diverse tastes in the enlarged market.⁶ Regional economic integration would also bring about a possible reduction in internal inefficiencies that member countries do face since there would be competition, which would definitely encourage countries to go all out in the achievement of their set targets.⁷ This means that once an economic integration has the ability to instigate and expand competition among member countries in the ECOWAS, it can as well cause international firms in the region to reduce ‘internal inefficiencies’ as member countries would take advantage of it.

3.2 Policies and Mechanisms that should be Adopted by ECOWAS

ECOWAS, since its establishment has adopted various policies and mechanisms in order to keep it running. In an interview with Samuel Doodoo, on the mechanisms and policies that ECOWAS should put in place to ensure economic integration, he listed a number of measures that he thinks should be adopted. According to him, the following measures should be adopted:

ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Schemes

Common External Tariffs

Custom Union

Joint Border Post

Harmonization of Educational Systems

Promotion of Cultural Exchanges

*Common Currency.*⁸

It was his contention that, if all the above mentioned mechanisms are adopted by ECOWAS and properly implemented it will go a long way to push the economic integration agenda of ECOWAS. In an interview with Mr. Emmanuel Bensah, on the question of what mechanisms ECOWAS should adopt in order to facilitate economic integration in West Africa, he observed how confusing that question is, considering the fact that, ECOWAS has already adopted certain measures in that direction. However, posited that ECOWAS would have to strengthen its existing mechanism. When asked what mechanisms ECOWAS should take in order to ensure rapid economic integration in West Africa, he responded that:

This is a confusing question as it presupposes ECOWAS already has mechanisms for economic integration, and that it has not adopted them. Fact of the matter is that ECOWAS spent the better part of its existence (1989-97) firefighting in the region and spending an inordinate amount of time on peace and security for West Africa. While this is good, it was at the expense of its efforts on economic integration, which it began to embark upon after 1993, when the ECOWAS treaty was revised to make ECOWAS a more supranational organization. This was coupled

with institutional reform in 2007 to transform ECOWAS Secretariat into an ECOWAS Commission, made up of Commissioners. This said, ECOWAS is already a free trade area; already has adopted the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS), and has, since 2005, been working vigorously on getting the common currency, ECO, into fruition.⁹

According to him, these, among other things if properly implemented would go a long way to ensure that economic integration in West Africa happens.

3.3 Challenges Facing the Economic Integration of ECOWAS:

The regional integration efforts of ECOWAS has not been able to achieve concrete success in relation to other regional bodies in Africa. There are many arguments in the literature, on ECOWAS integration, that have been advanced to explain this phenomenon. Asante, for instance, argues that none of the economic groupings established in the 1970s and 1980s has made any appreciable inroads towards the all-engaging objective of creating a sub-regional economic market, let alone an economic community, despite the human and financial resources deployed.¹⁰

Arguing in the same line as Asante, Okolo notes that, the absence of suitable “background conditions” for integration is to be blamed for the challenges of regional integration in ECOWAS. He adds that, the weak institutional structures, which results from limited authority contributes to the challenges facing the ECOWAS integration strategy. The ECOWAS national level institutions, otherwise known as the focal point, is responsible for administering ECOWAS resolutions in member states, to promote cooperation and sustainable development. Unfortunately, the fragility of most member states coupled with endemic poverty perpetuated by decades of political misrule seems to have hampered the realizations of key objectives of the community.

In recent times, issues of national level institutions has become of utmost concern so far as the objectives of the community are concerned. S.K.B Asante also writes that, member states have been faced with the problem of managing ECOWAS activities at the national level.¹¹ The assertion by Asante is as relevant today as it was since the birth of the ECOWAS treaty in 1975. The different opinions and views offered by the various scholars from diverse backgrounds and perspectives are therefore discussed below.

3.3.0 The Challenge of Practical Commitment

Lanre Olu-Adeyemi and Bonnie Ayodele, opined that the fear of the Loss of Sovereignty, coupled with the Lack of practical Political Commitment on the part of member states in the Economic Community of West African States constitutes one of the greatest challenges confronting economic and any form of integration within ECOWAS.¹² Touching on the issue, the two scholars observed that regional integration experience in Africa indicates that countries are hesitant to create supra-national bodies and transfer power to them as a sanctioning authority because of the fear that they will lose their sovereignty as an independent nation and therefore show less or poor commitment towards integration processes.¹³ According to them, commendable regional bodies such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), for instance, actually lacked very strong collective legal backing that can compel member states to fulfill their obligations among which include the reduction of tariff rates and other trade barriers in accordance to their economic commitments integrating economically in the region.¹⁴ When such barriers are largely eliminated owing to liberalization, there is absolutely no denying the fact that regional economic integration within West Africa would be very successful.¹⁵ African scholars have bemoaned the fact that the commitment level of West African countries towards an economic integration is a mere

rhetoric, since very practical commitment is seriously lacking.¹⁶ It is observed by speculators that, in a very serious regional corporation in the caliber of ECOWAS, countries are rather seriously committed to other multilateral and bilateral commitments outside and within the region than to regional agreements as contained in ECOWAS.¹⁷ This is partly explained by aid-dependence and hence conditionality attached to structural adjustment programmes (SAPs), of member countries.

Closely linked to the above point is the observation made by Abraham, which seek to indicate that the unnecessary dominance of the elites in the implementation process of integration in the region withdrew grassroot support.¹⁸ He also argued that African leaders have also failed to explain fully to the people the reasons for their participating in integration arrangements and the advantages, which accrue to the citizens.¹⁹ According to Abraham, there is serious challenge of integration that is caused by the “un-equal effect of primary proponents of integration” that now pursues a less grandiose and more practical approach.²⁰ The thrust of current efforts appears not simply to enhance the region’s and by extension, the continent’s weight in global affairs, but also to meet the very real needs of its people.²¹ Amoako, former Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), stated that “*I want to see intra-African integration, not because we will garner some utopian share of world commerce, but first and foremost because it will improve our lives*”.²²

3.3.1 The challenge of ‘Strong Ties’ with Former Colonial Masters

One major challenge associated with regional economic integration in West Africa, especially among the ECOWAS member countries, is the issue of strong ties with former colonial masters. According to Adeniran, ECOWAS has not been able to realise a common external tariff regime as a result of colonial undercurrents which is threatening to split the region into two blocs – Anglophone and Francophone.²³ He argues that, at present there are eight

monetary zones which affect trade and economic interactions in the region. For instance, ECOWAS and the UEMOA have each taken roles that are contradictory in nature and this has further deepened the Anglophone, Francophone friction. According to Asante, the external dependence of ECOWAS states on the old metropolises constitutes a major “obstacle to the creation of a West African regional economy.”²⁴

In an interview with Emmanuel Bensah on the challenges facing ECOWAS in terms of economic integration, he mentioned the issue of external interferences such as the EU and other former colonial powers. He stated that:

Challenges facing ECOWAS’ economic integration include interference by external factors, such as the EU, who have been pushing for the Economic Partnership agreements (EPAs). Ghana and Cote d’Ivoire signed an interim EPA in 2007, but it would be Nigeria that has been a significant thorn in the flesh of the EU on its categorical refusal to sign the EPAs. At an AU Ministers of Trade meeting held in Accra in 2011, the-then AU Deputy Chairperson Erastus Mwencha explained how EPAs are “not a priority” for Africa as it has embarked on its Boosting Intra-African Trade/CFTa agenda.²⁵

This position is very true, considering the fact that developing countries are highly dependent upon industrialized states for development capital, markets for raw materials, and technology and this is largely done along colonial lines. This asymmetrical interdependence with the rest of the world renders Third World countries particularly vulnerable to external economic influences that may impede regional cooperation.²⁶ The trade pattern of ECOWAS states reveals a high vertical relationship with external countries, particularly the industrialised countries and a low horizontal relationship among its member states.²⁷

The vast majority of ECOWAS member states import factory-made commodities, such as machinery, electrical appliances, cars and trucks. Most of these manufactured goods are imported from the EU. With the exception of Guinea-Bissau, the share of manufactures in

total imports from the EU in West African countries is even higher than the same figure for total imports from all countries, indicating that these countries predominately import manufactured goods from the EU. Apart from Guinea and Ghana, West African countries apply lower tariff rates on raw materials than on agricultural or manufactured goods. For instance, in 2000, Ghana had very high tariffs for petroleum products of up to 89 per cent in place. The EU, conversely, imports predominately agricultural products and raw materials from ECOWAS countries. The trade structure between the EU and West Africa is, thus, fairly typical for developed and developing countries. Imports from France and the United Kingdom, “the former colonial powers in West Africa, dominate total imports from the EU. Other important trading partners are Germany, Italy, and the Benelux countries.”²⁸

According to Adepaju, different colonial lines thus Francophone, Anglophone and Lusophone have hindered free movement of labour in the region which subsequently affects trading activities. The wavering political support, political instability, and inter-state border disputes and wars have retarded progress in ratification and implementation of protocols designed to facilitate migration, settlement, and establishment of Community citizens in Member States. The persistent economic downturn has crippled the ability of States to pursue consistent macroeconomic policies and resulted, in part, in poor funding of cooperation unions. It is therefore very clear that Africans’ continues show of loyalty and strong ties with their former colonial masters coupled with their failure to properly educate their citizens about the importance of economic integration represent a serious challenge to regional integration in Africa as a continent.

3.3.2 The Infrastructural Challenge

Another outstanding challenge that is very crucial in the economic integration process of West African countries, which is worth mentioning, is the issue of insufficient infrastructure.

It is common knowledge that transport facilities, whether it is road, rail, sea or air is grossly inadequate in ECOWAS member states. This has posed serious challenges to increased intra-regional trade among member states. According to the African Development Bank, in its 2011 report, one of the most pressing challenge to integration in ECOWAS member states is insufficient modern cross border infrastructure. The region has inadequate transport infrastructure, and of energy and ICT, constituting a major hindrance to regional integration and economic growth. Moreover, there exist many checkpoints and barriers at highways, which inhibit free flow of goods and services. In the area of energy, about “90% of the electricity generation is by expensive diesel or heavy fuel, thus steadily increasing and fluctuating oil prices have a big impact on electricity costs.”²⁹

According to Adeniran, migrating citizens within ECOWAS are continually harassed and intimidated each time they try crossing a common border and these borders are so many in the region.³⁰ This situation puts a strain on the relationship of member states. Adeniran succinctly puts it that:

Between Badagry (the exit point from Nigeria to Benin) and Noe (the entry point from Ghana to Cote d'Ivoire), there are an estimated 120 border posts and security check points, forcing individuals crossing these borders to switch intermittently from one official language to the other and exchange currencies several times across borders.³¹

Okolo also notes that, there are only two major ‘tran-West African roads.’ The first “one runs from Dakar in Senegal through Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger and continues through Njamena in Chad to Algeria.” The second one, he notes, is a coastal highway, which starts from “Nouakchott to Lagos, passing through Senegal, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, and Benin - a total of 4,663 kilometres.”³²

Clearly, it can be observed that full integration cannot be achieved with minimal road networks. Moreover, many of the roads can be very dusty and bumpy during the dry season and muddy, slippery, and even unmotorable during the rainy season. Such dangerous and risky conditions are very unfavourable for the movement of perishable food items, which constitute such a large part of the subregion's trade commodities. Faced with such risks, West African business entrepreneurs may not be willing to take a chance on shipping their products very far afield.

3.4 The Prospects of Economic Integration Among ECOWAS Member States

There are undoubtedly a lot of prospects for economic integration in the West African region. Looking at the geography of the region, the economies of the region the efforts as well as the agreements demonstrated and reached respectively by member countries, it is very obvious that there are quite a lot of prospects for region economic integration in West Africa. Below is a discussion on the prospects of economic integration in West Africa which starts by considering an overview of the economic prospects of the region.

3.5 Overview of the Economic prospects for ECOWAS Member States

Geographically, the sub-region of West Africa stretches from the southern fringes of the Sahara Desert to the Atlantic Ocean, along the Gulf of Guinea to Biafra, and continuous to the eastern shores of the Atlantic from Senegal to Lake Chad. The area is characterized by geographic conditions of heavy rains in some parts and longer period of drought in others. As a result, the vegetation varies; vegetative covers ranges from equatorial rain forests in countries like Nigeria, Togo, Cameroon, Ghana and Ivory Coast and to a hot desert belt other parts including Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso.

Considering population, the known populous constituent is Nigeria in this community, which contributes 54 per cent of its total population followed by Ghana and Ivory Coast representing 8 per cent and 7 per cent accordingly. The remaining states contribute less than 6 per cent population figures of the total and this reveals how small the economies in ECOWAS coverage area are- implying small market sizes too.

The backbone of its economies is dominated by agriculture produce which is mostly rain fed, and this straight away explains why vulnerabilities are suffered each time the rain patterns are poor. Petroleum deposit is found in commercial quantities in Nigeria and also some other countries like Ghana. Bauxite, diamonds, gold and profitable minerals are mined in other member states including Ghana, Guinea Sierra Leone, Mali and Burkina Faso.

Despite this, the majority of the agricultural products are exported mostly to Europe in their raw state to earn the needed foreign exchange. The mineral as well mostly get exported in their crude forms. These raw material production and sale/exportation still define the local and international trade of ECOWAS States. The ECOWAS countries predominantly export raw materials to the industrialized economies out of the continent in exchange of a greater amount of its requirements for finished products, machinery and raw materials required for its local industries.

This creates a balance of payment deficit and thus raising inflation and cost of doing business in ECOWAS countries.³³

For the community to undertake its mandates effectively, its conceptual Treaty, thus, the 1975 Treaty of the Organization clearly spelt out the establishment of ‘the Tribunal of the

Community.’ In 1991, the ECOWAS Authority provided for the structure, competence and statutes of an organ called a Community Court of Justice (CCJ). The ECOWAS CCJ at its inception was essentially to make sure the obedience of the rules of equity in the appreciation and observance of the ECOWAS Treaty. The 2005 Supplementary Agreement gives the ECOWAS CCJ competence to ascertain cases of breaches of human rights that happen in all member countries. It is on this basis that the ECOWAS CCJ exercises jurisdiction in human rights cases across its region.³⁴

3.6 Prospects For Economic Integration in ECOWAS

There is a growing interest in West African countries to increase economic activities and grow their economies. This desire has the potential of forging integration and increasing the chances for economic unification. For instance, as a result of this desire to increase trade among its neighbours, Ghana has created the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration. The high degree of political will is also reflected in the creation and adoption of common passports among some states in West Africa, enabling the free movement of citizens across national borders. There exist several prospects for the economic integration of ECOWAS which are concisely discussed below.

3.6.1 Improved Transport Connectivity

To start with, there is no denying the point that a well-improved transport infrastructure such as a railway system connecting ECOWAS member states together, would greatly enhance the economic integration efforts in the region. Modern infrastructural developments in some West African countries have the potential of easing and fast-tracking the economic integration process of the subregion. The sub-region stands to gain immensely in its integration agenda with the improved high way running between Abidjan through Ghana to Abuja as well as

efforts to link Burkina Faso, Ghana, Benin, Togo and Ivory Coast by rail and the proposed face lift of the water transport. According to a Press release on the review of progress by ECOWAS:

Concrete steps are currently being taken by the ECOWAS to ensure free movement of persons and goods within the sub-region. As an initial measure, common borders among West African countries are being unified as a single entity. Most of the unification projects are expected to be completed by mid-2012. The next step will be an outright obliteration of unified border posts. At such stage, a true “ECOWAS of People” would become attainable.³⁵

ECOWAS regional integration over the years has also enjoyed regional infrastructure development through transport and telecommunication to boost trade and other integration benefits. With the completion of the proposed rail link along the coastal stretch from Lagos to Cotonou, Lome, Accra and the Sahelian region of Niamey and Ouagadougou will significantly boost trade activities in the sub region.³⁶

One of the ECOWAS main achievement is the facilitation of free movement of persons without visas in the West African sub region of which Ghana and Nigeria have taken the lead in implementing this scheme. An ECOWAS protocol on free movements of persons, the right of residence and establishment was agreed as early as in 1979. However this has been very limited in practice.³⁷ Related to this development is the progress made in the area of monetary policy, communication, trade, and related matters. These include the introduction of ECOWAS travellers’ cheques to harmonize trade, the proposed adoption of a common currency to facilitate cross-border trade transactions and the introduction of the Brown Card travel certificates to be used as ECOWAS passports.³⁸

3.6.1 Exchange of Services Among Member States

Again, it is undebatable that the ECOWAS trade liberalisation scheme (ETLS) has the potential of increasing intra-ECOWAS trade. The ETLS is the main ECOWAS operational tool for promoting the West African region as a Free Trade Area and the Commission's first step towards the realization of the objective of the community which is the establishment of a common market through "the liberalization of trade by the abolition, among Member States, of customs duties levied on imports and exports, and the abolition among Member States, of non-tariff barriers" (Article 3 of ECOWAS Treaty).

Establishment of a free trade area in goods among ECOWAS countries has been pursued within the framework of the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS). The ETLS breaks trade in goods into unprocessed goods, traditional handicraft products, and industrial goods. It is still important to note that intra-ECOWAS trade in goods is still subject to many tariff and non-tariff restrictions.³⁹

For instance, Nigeria in 2005 liberalized its import regimes. With this first major tariff reform in a decade, the level and dispersion of import tariff protection has fallen significantly. The new tariff schedule is broadly in line with ECOWAS' proposed common external tariff in that it clusters most tariffs in four bands of 0, 5, 10, and 20 percent with raw materials and intermediate products attracting lower tariffs and consumer goods attracting higher tariffs. An additional 50 percent tariff band has been introduced in order to provide selected items with additional protection for a transitional period. Products in the 50 percent band include rice, vegetable oils, sugar, tobacco, various plastics and steel products, vehicles, and selected electrical appliances. Agricultural tariffs have been lowered significantly more than other tariffs, but agriculture remains the most sheltered sector with average tariff protection in

agriculture about 50 percent higher than that of industry. This could be experience in Guinea's adoption of the WAEMU tariff schedule.⁴⁰

Member states in the recent years have traversed the community with the exchange of banking, sanitation, real estate, entertainment and beautician services. For example, many Nigerian headquartered banks and financial institutions have been providing financial and insurance services across the region in Ghana, Togo, Benin, Burkina Faso and Niger. Regimanuel Gray Estates Limited and Zoom Lion of Ghana Limited are Ghanaian companies that provide real estate and sanitation services respectively to Sierra Leone, Liberia and Togo. Also, natural hair products produced in Ghana are sold and consumed across the sub-region.

Trade within ECOWAS member states often involves locally produced agricultural commodities such as grains, oils and cola from the forested areas to the Sahel countries.⁴¹ Livestock also form one of the common and highest valued agricultural commodity in trade from the Sahel regions to the middle and coastal belts. This obviously holds prospects for increased intra trade among ECOWAS member states.⁴²

3.6.2 Gradual Industrialisation Focus of Member States

The exigencies of the times have awakened African leaders to industrialize their economies and eat what they grow. For example, the Nigerian government during the tenure of President Goodluck Jonathan banned the importation of rice and this policy has been continued by the government of President Buhari. This gives market to rice produced both in Nigeria and the rest of the sub-region because of the population size. Ghana and Cote D'Ivoire show huge signs of industrialization from the one district, one factory policy of the President Akufo

Addo and the revitalized industrialization in Cote D'Ivoire under President Alassane Quatterra respectively. In this way, great potential is created for the integration drive of ECOWAS.

3.6.3 The Establishment of the ECO

In the past, many countries came close to meeting the convergence criteria to establishing the ECOWAS currency. The economies in Ghana, Ivory Coast, Togo, and Benin show good promises with lower interest rates, inflation, growth rate and lower budget deficits from the restricted and disciplined economic policies being implemented. The achievement of the ECO would aid in the integration of the economies of the sub-region because goods and services would be sold and bought so early without the long wining of exchange rate difficulties.

According to Asante, increased trade in the neighbouring countries will envisage in high accelerated development within the sub region. Opportunity for trade liberalization will create free trade areas with a common tariff in West Africa which has the potential of opening common market of over 200 million consumers. This also has the chance of strengthening political, social and economic relations and fostering a regional self-reliant development process that would improve the livelihoods of it citizen. The Ghana trade policy launched in December 2004 sought to integrate trade within ECOWAS into full customs union to provide access to a larger market and promoting investment and industrialization.⁴³

3.7 Conclusion

It is clear, that the relevance of economic integration in Africa is enormous and cannot be overlooked. This notwithstanding, the path to economic integration of the ECOWAS is

bumpy and difficult as is been hugely challenged with frustrating factors; most of them internal but others external. Regardless of these bottlenecks to a fully integrated West Africa, some efforts have been put in towards achieving this. It is however looks promising for the sub-region to attaining an integrated economy for its member states since some of the members exhibit some degree of prospects. The protocol on free movement, right to residence and establishment as well as the intention to establish the ECO will spare the ECOWAS to achieving this long sought for goal of economic integration in the region. It is therefore worth concluding that, despite all the challenges confronted by ECOWAS, the prospects of having a very solid economically integrated body in West Africa in the near future is bright.

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²⁴ Asante, S.K.B. p.7.

²⁵ An Interview with Emmanuel Bensah

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Hanink, Dean M., and J. Henry Owusu. "Has ECOWAS promoted trade among its members?" *Journal of African Economies* 7, no. 3 (1998): 363-383.

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³⁰ Adeniran, Adebuseyi. "Regional Integration in the Ecowas Region: Challenges and Opportunities." (2012).p .

³¹ 2

³¹ Ibid.

³² Okolo, Julius Emeka. p.25.

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³⁴ Ebobrah, Solomon T. "Litigating human rights before sub-regional courts in Africa: prospects and challenges." *African Journal of International and Comparative Law* 17, no. 1 (2009): 79-101.

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³⁷ Zouhon-Bi, Simplicé G., and Lynge Nielsen. "ECOWAS—Fiscal revenue implications of the prospective Economic partnership agreement with the EU." *World Bank Africa Region Working Paper Series* 103 (2007).

³⁸ Adepoju, Aderanti., op. cit.

³⁹ Zouhon-Bi, Simplicé G., and Lynge Nielsen. op. cit.

⁴⁰ Zouhon-Bi, Simplicé G., and Lynge Nielsen., op. cit.

⁴¹ ibid

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CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the key findings of the study. The chapter does this in respect to the research objectives and questions set out in this study. The chapter does not only demonstrate how these research objectives and questions are met, but it also indicates clearly whether they are even met in the first place or not. This chapter also concludes on the study by drawing very objective deductions and inferences from the study. Having perused a lot of literature on the subject under study and having conducted the research with regards to the very key and salient issues on this research, this chapter then proposes well-informed recommendations on the subject matter.

4.1 Summary of Findings

Apart from the general objective of this study which was to examine the economic integration of the ECOWAS by taking a critical look at the need for integration, challenges and prospects of economic integration, the study specifically aimed at achieving three main objectives which included:

- To assess the significance of Economic Integration in ECOWAS for member states
- To take a closer look at challenges and prospects of the economic integration of ECOWAS
- To identify policies and mechanisms that ECOWAS should adopt towards economic integration among ECOWAS member states. As a result, the findings of the study were obtained in respect to each objective.

With respect to the first objective, which was to examine the need for economic integration of the economic community of West African States (ECOWAS), the study found that, regional economic integration in West Africa would be much needed as it would provide many benefits to its member states. The study established that the need for regional economic integration in the West African region include benefits in diverse areas such as the opportunity to possess a strong bargaining power on international platforms; possessing a viable market size that attracts foreign direct investment to their countries; having an improved scope for diversification and its benefit of lower risks for their firms. Having an enhanced healthy competition, which would lead to increased efficiency; exerting a downward pressure on costs and prices due to an increase in diversification of the economies of scales. All these, among others, such as the expansion of the economies of member states due to the gains that would be gotten from the free trade and reduced tariffs were revealed by the study as the reasons why there is the need for economic integration in the ECOWAS region.

With respect to the second objective of this study which was to examine some of the policies and mechanism that, ECOWAS should adopt to ensure rapid economic integration, the study revealed that, ECOWAS has already adopted and implemented some policies and mechanism to that effect. Nevertheless, the study established that, ECOWAS would have to strengthen its existing policies and as well adopt new mechanism to facilitate its ambition of realizing an economically integrated region. The study also found that, the following policies and mechanisms are very crucial to the success or otherwise of the economic integration dream in west Africa: ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Schemes, Common External Tariffs, Custom Union, Joint Border Post, Harmonization of Educational Systems, Promotion of Cultural

Exchanges and the Common Currency policy. These policies if adopted and properly implemented would go a long way to aid the process of economic integration in West Africa.

Again, with respect to the third objective, which was to critically examine the major challenges confronting regional economic integration within the ECOWAS region, as well as the prospects, the study found that, the challenges facing regional economic integration in West Africa are many and diverse ranging from economic, to socio-cultural and political dimensions. The study established that, many member states in the ECOWAS region do not demonstrate strong practical commitment towards the desire to have a regional economic body. The study also established that, coupled with this lack of practical commitment is the failure of the leaders of member states to adequately educate their citizens on the relevance of such integration as well as what citizens stands to benefit from such integration.

The study also revealed that, member states still have very strong ties and relationship with their former colonial masters than their fellow regional member states. This has caused a division of the processes of integration into the Anglophone bloc and the francophone bloc and this has impeded the integration process over the years. The study also established the fact that, infrastructure deficit in many West African countries poses a serious challenge to the integration efforts. The study realized that many African countries have very poor transport facility with a lot of borders and full of restriction including trade restrictions and this constitutes a big obstacle to the integration efforts in the ECOWAS region. These among other serious issues such as the geographical makeup of the region, the multiple language issue and external influences from

interested foreign powers constituted the key challenges facing regional economic integration in the West Africa region.

With respect to the prospects of economic integration among ECOWAS member states, the study came to the realization that, there are a lot of prospects for regional economic integration in the West African region. The study found that the geographical background of the region makes it very fertile and economically viable. The study also established that the region is endowed with of natural minerals such as gold, bauxite, manganese, diamond and other minerals such as oil, salt and others in very large quantities. The study established that the presence of these minerals coupled with the fertile lands that make it possible for the cultivation of cash crops such as cocoa, palm oil, cassava, cashew and the rest; actually makes it very capable and therefore demonstrate the prospects for economic integration in the region. The study realized that, the establishment or introduction of a common currency within the ECOWAS region which was proposed to be the ECO, is a serious and commendable prospects for regional economic integration in the ECOWAS region since it has the potential to properly coordinate and enhance as well as facilitate trading activities among member states.

The study also realized that the improvement of the infrastructure state of the West African countries can present a very strong prospect of regional economic integration in the region. The study established that the construction of ultra-modern rail way systems that can link many West African countries together would not only facility easy mobility and enhance trading activities in the region but has also demonstrated the prospects of regional integration in the region. Again, the study established that implementing trade liberalization policies such as the ETLS, would

increase the prospects of regional economic integration in the region since it has the potential of enhancing trading activities in the region. The study also found out that, one of the prospects of regional economic integration in the ECOWAS region is the gradual industrialization in member states. Economic integration would mean that the economies of member countries produce the needed goods and services that would be demanded by the larger consumer population. Industrialization is therefore a way of producing these goods in large quantities that would need a large consumer population such as an integrated economic community in order to make profit. It is therefore clear that the prospects of regional economic integration in the ECOWAS region are many and diverse.

It is clear that the research objectives and research questions set out in the first chapter of this study have been achieved. The study has achieved the objective of examining the need for economic integration in the ECOWAS region. The research has also to a large extent achieved the objective of critically examining the main challenges confronting regional economic integration in the West African region. The study has also achieved its objective of identifying the prospects of regional integration in the ECOWAS region. In short, the main objective of this study which is to objectively examine the challenges and prospects of regional integration in (ECOWAS) has largely been achieved.

4.2 Conclusion

It can be deduced from the study that despite the fact that there are a lot of benefits to be gained by member states, the evidence of convergence across ECOWAS countries is an interesting finding as it explains that the cross-country income inequality is getting under control over time.

Also, trade liberalization itself has still not been fully implemented in West Africa and one wonders if similar obstacles will hinder the development of stronger social dimensions. As discussed, it is acknowledged that there is still much work to be done by ECOWAS after the coming into force of its revised treaty. It could be concluded from the findings that, trade liberalization within the West African countries have not fully realized its potential as substantive amount of trade and importation of products are engaged outside the sub region, specifically Europe. From the results obtained, we can infer that more proactive economic policy coordination will be beneficial to the region and should be encouraged for more active policy coordination in the sub region. It also emphasized the need to strengthening ECOWAS trade activities, security and building stronger institutions within the sub region to ensure and promote economic growth of member states. Against this back drop, it could therefore be concluded that ECOWAS has not fully achieved its economic potential for economic unification and integration. There is the need to focus more on strengthening its institutions and ensure the full commitment of her member states.

In nutshell, though the efforts towards regional economic integration in the ECOWAS region has been very slow as it has been bedeviled with a lot of monumental challenges, there are a lot of prospects for an economic integration in the region as very clear and commendable strides have been made in very critical areas such as trade, transport, communications, energy, knowledge sharing, free movement of people, and peace and security. From the analyses made in this research, the challenges of economic integration in West Africa significantly outweigh its prospects for which ECOWAS was established for 1975 .This moves a long way to reach the conclusion that there is significant progress in the efforts towards regional economic integration

in West Africa, despite the fact that there are challenges facing the process which of course are not insurmountable.

4.3 Recommendations

From all the research conducted, the literature perused and analyzed, the following are recommendations on the way forward to having a strong regional economic integration in the ECOWAS region:

- ❖ The ECOWAS central and coordinating body should be backed by legal or legislative instrument. That would be respected by all member countries with the power to sanction recalcitrant members as well as given the recognition through adoption of formal national measure and given appropriate backing to its establishment and the right to operate and access public assets or resources. This will force members to comply and participate fully in the integration process.
- ❖ Member states should properly educate their citizens with regards to benefits of economic integration in the region so as to garner public support for the integration process, as well as public approval for member states to invest in the integration process so as to ensure that there is an economic integration in the ECOWAS region.
- ❖ Member states should demonstrate high sense of patriotism and loyalty towards ECOWAS instead of their former colonial masters so as to have a firm resolution to collectively join efforts towards ensuring that there is an economic integration in the West African region. West African countries should rather trade among themselves, instead of running to their

former colonial masters first before running to their fellow Africans as well as avoid divisions along colonial lines.

- ❖ Member countries should embark on massive infrastructural investment along the national borders, especially the constructions of long distance intra and inter trade routes with the aim of connecting one country to another in order to effectively facilitate trading activities among themselves.

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E. Interview

An Interview with Mr. Emmanuel Bensah

APPENDIX

Interview Guide

1. Why is there the need for economic Integration in ECOWAS sub-region?

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2. What are some of the mechanisms of economic integration that ECOWAS should adopt?

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3. What do you think are some of the major challenges facing economic integration in the ECOWAS sub-region?

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4. What in your view are the prospects of economic integration in the ECOWAS sub-region?

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5. What do you think is the way forward for economic integration in the ECOWAS sub-region?

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