

ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES (ECOWAS) AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN WEST AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined how globalization has impacted on the regional integration and developmental efforts of the ECOWAS. As a theoretical framework, the study utilized the Marxist political economy approach which emphasized the unfair nature of international exchanges and argues that international politics is configured in such a way that there are two camps, the exploited and exploiter. The study employed the historical method of data collection, and the content analysis method was utilized to analyze the data gotten. The study observed that globalization has an untoward effect on development in West Africa and tends to put knife in what holds the ECOWAS together. Also, the study revealed that ECOWAS is a development strategy potent enough to enhance development in West Africa in the face of globalization. Globalization does not give equal opportunities to all national economies even when it exposes the West African economies to a high level of competition in the world economic system. The research subsequently recommended, among other things, that there ought to be sincere efforts to increase and strengthen the voice of West African governments in international bodies such as the United Nations, Bretton Wood institutions such as International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB), World Trade Organization (WTO) that shape the posture of globalization. Hence, the study has contributed to the understanding that regional integration is not just a dimension of globalization as it often supposed.

Keywords: ECOWAS, regional integration, West Africa, globalization, IMF

1. INTRODUCTION

External and internal motivation has been the major factor in the evolution and development of regional bodies in developing countries, especially bodies that are devoted to regional integration (Emmanuel, 2020). After independence, African countries found the need (both political and economic) to associate with one another (Orji, 2019). This stemmed from the belief that for their economies to develop, certain obstacles had to be removed. Regional bodies were created to take advantage of economies of large scale in production, consumption which are the fruits of effective and efficient regional integrations (Ake, 2021).

On the external front, these countries believed that their coming together under a regional body would be an effective means of asserting their economic independence (Ake, 2021). On the other hand, economies of scale, poor resource endowment and under-development, just to mention a few, have been adduced as economic arguments for the establishment of regional bodies. It is believed that regional integration would obviate these difficulties, which are the bane of isolated and poor economies in Sub-Sahara African (SSA) countries and pave the way for sustainable growth and development (Dunning, 2019). Indeed, the treaty which was signed in Abuja in 1991, perceived existing regional communities in the continent as building blocks thereby presuming the existence of a solid foundation on which it could build. However, with over forty (40) regional bodies in the continent there is need for the evaluation of existing efforts at integration (John and Fredrick, 2020)

In West Africa, there are many regional bodies. Three of them can be identified as explicitly concerned with the promotion of intra-regional trade glows: The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Communauté Economique de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (CEAO) and Mano River Union (MARIU). During the last few decades, there has been a great deal of momentum towards regional integration, inspired by the increasing homogeneity in issues relating to fiscal, financial and technical barriers to trade. These as well as the rapid growth in scientific and technological innovations are all among factors that underlay the importance and need for the various regional cooperation schemes that have come into existence since World War II. A more recent type of such cooperation is that of the European Union's introduction of a single currency and establishment of the Union's integrated process to include East European countries (Angresano, 2019)).

Some of the other known examples of this trend include the emergence of initiatives such as the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) agreement between the United States, Japan, China, Canada, Mexico, Australia and a dozen other countries bordering the Pacific Ocean, the North American Free Trade Areas (NAFTA), Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), and Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM). All of these bodies shared a common desire to establish free trade areas, custom unions and perhaps common currencies, to better the lot of their regions.

Several reasons will push states to create economic integration among them. Indeed, reasons like economic weakness, dependence status, economies of scale and scope, political influence, security and stability may lead to it. For instance, in the West African Sub-region the principal reasons that pushed for economic integration include to encourage intra West African trade which was less than 4%, to strengthen their weak economies, improve the living standard of their people and be independent of extra African powers in the real politik game as a consequence of the Cold War (Clark, 1996)

The perceived benefits of regionalism on trade and economic development, especially the trade creating benefits and economies of scale through specialization has also raised the global upsurge in regional integration. Despite Africa's well-endowed natural resources, the continent is still suffering from continued dependence on the production and export of primary commodities (with direction of trade predominantly towards EU markets), weak industrial base, and dependence on foreign loans and capital. The challenge, therefore, is to reduce these dependences, which over the years have been aggravated by the rapid growth in regional integration among her major trading partners in Europe and elsewhere (Asante, 2016). Consequently, the share of Africa's products in the EU market decline from 6.3% in 1980 to 3.3% by 1992, a trend which is expected to continue in the wake of more stringent economic and other ties within the European Community. Regional integration undoubtedly has a potentially important contribution to make growth and development in African countries. However, in view of the blatant failures of African integration schemes in the past, it is important that useful lessons are drawn from earlier experiences to ensure success (Bamba, 2019).

African countries have had a fairly long history of repeated attempts to link themselves together, both in various sub-groups and even continent-wide, through several broad types of regional integration and cooperation arrangements. In virtually all cases, these attempts have reflected the desire to deal, in one way or another, with the perceived growth-retarding problems thought to be associated with a number of key elements of the structure of African countries (Oyejide, 2020). According to Clark (1996), the main reasons for countries to form regionalism is for economic and security purposes and such nations need to push for integration for their domestic developmental interest.

Today, there is no region of the world that is not encompassed by one or more regional groupings. From its inception in 1945 the United Nations itself recognized the role of regional organizations, acknowledging them as efficient mechanisms of dealing with regional conflicts and the maintenance of international peace and security (UN Charter, Article 52). However, regional groupings were considered as auxiliary to the central role of the United Nations in this regard, which remains the premier institution of global governance (Sarbo, 2019). Africa has seen political and institutional changes over the last decade, yet in the 50th year of independence of numerous states, the profundity of change remains unclear. The prospect of successful continental integration has arguably suffered a loss of political drive with the absence of authoritative, clear minded political leadership.

The general consensus in Africa, as a matter of fact ever since decolonization, is that given the continent's economic and geo-political realities, regionalization is the sine qua non for meaningful progress. Unfortunately, this consensus was never followed by clear and decisive action and Africa's problems persisted. At this stage it is clear that the traditional paradigm of African integration, based on minimalist inter-governmentalism and holistic top-down regional engineering, is only part of the solution. Learning from past experiences, the evidence is that effective and sustainable regionalisation can only happen in an economic, political and social environment that can sustain the effort. This environment does not yet exist in most African states (Olivier, 2018).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of this study is to examine the role of ECOWAS in Regional integration in West Africa. The specific objectives are to

- Examine Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) developmental strategy in enhancing development in West Africa
- Examine the impact of globalization on Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) development strategies.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

When nations continued in union, their different visions begin to battle with the broader objective of ECOWAS. In 1988 the Secretary General of ECOWAS, Ikoayate was of the view that "the existence of too many inter-governmental organizations supported by the member States within the regional framework was one of the factors hampering collective activities" (Akindele and Afe, 2021). This limitation on the part of some member States makes it vital for other members to take it upon themselves to make the Organization work (Hunter, 2020). In the case of Nigeria, all these are lacking as she is not an industrialized nation but she portray her power in the sub-region by

making donations humanly and materially to display her strength in the region. These donations and sacrifices are given out at the expense of her citizens because of her afro-centric foreign policy. These resources she doled out could have been used to better the lives of Nigerians who wallow in abject poverty (Hunter, 2020).

Nigeria thus had to bear most of the burdens of the Organization by making large contributions financially and human to ECOWAS/ECOMOG peace keeping and other sub-regional activities to sustain the Organization. As Innocent (2019), rightly notes; Nigeria has assumed for herself in ensuring the complete emancipation of all Africans from colonialism observing and even going to the extent of over-seeing the achievement of independence by the countries concerned. It poses a fundamental question as to Nigeria's capacity in trying to police the whole of Africa and in particular the ECOWAS sub-region. One wonders whether she possesses such tremendous resources as military, economic and the technology to cope with such a task. Nigeria never made any pretension to leadership in the sub-region by making contributions financially and humanly to peacekeeping missions and assistance to states that are in need.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What role did Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) play in enhancing development in West Africa in the face of globalization?
- What are the effects of globalization on Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) development strategy?

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical framework is basically a model of explanation which a researcher adopts in the course of his study. One advantage of using a theoretical framework is that, as a tool of analysis, it offers insight on the understanding of a particular social phenomenon (Anikpo, 2015). Ihonvbere (2015) has argued that the purpose of the theoretical framework is not to impose an explanatory model for one's preferred viewpoint, but essentially to make it more useful in specific analysis; what it does is to make the analysis to be done within a certain predetermined criteria. There are different theoretical frameworks that could have been utilized in this study. The realist theory, the functionalist theory, the biological theory, structural conflict theory, system theory and Marxist political economy theory are all frameworks within which the analysis of the issues with which this study is concerned can be made.

However, this study shall adopt the Marxist political economy approach as the theoretical framework which was propounded by Karl Marx in 19th century. The reason for its adoption is anchored on two facts. First, as Ake (2021) and Khor (2012) have rightly argued, globalization is a first and foremost an economic phenomenon, and therefore to properly understand it is to look at it from an economic perspective. ECOWAS is also an institution whose primary goal is to help the economic development of West African countries. Second, globalization seems to have divided the world into two economic groups. These two groups are not only different in terms of income and their relation to the international means of production and distribution, but also their interests are represented by their individual classes. And all these fall within the realm of the Marxist brand of political economy. To be sure, Marxist political economy originated from moral philosophy in the 18th century as the study of the economies of states and politics, particularly as relating to morality, ethics, and equity. But today, where it is not used as a synonym for economics, Marxist political economy broadly refers to an interdisciplinary approach that applies economic methods to the analyses of how political outcomes and institutions affect economic policies and human being.

An important contribution of Marx in the dominant social discourses is his focus on the importance of ideology to analysis of human history and contemporary development studies. In the Marxian perspective, ideology is a system of thought; the mental structure, and patterns of rationalization that shapes conduct and how people approach issues. An economic ideology, particularly, defines how a society confront the fundamental economic problems of how to produce, what to produce, for whom to produce, and how to achieve economic development, reduce unemployment and poverty. In this context, Marxism distinguishes itself from economic theory in being both logical and normative rather than merely attempting to explain reality. Two broad ideological directions – capitalism and communism are distinguishable. Capitalism promotes *lassie faire* or individualism and private enterprise, while communism promotes collectivism and centralized planning. In between these two extremes are combinations of both (Marcus, 2018).

It goes beyond balanced maximization by individuals which is expressed in supply and demand to include such analytical concepts its institutions, political ideology, cooperation, economic power, human psychology and culture which also affect the production and distribution of goods and services in a society. It also helps in explaining and solving such serious economic and social problems as worker estrangement, environmental degradation, race and gender discrimination, poverty and urban ghettos, and stagnation, which economics cannot explain or solve (James,

2015). This means that political economy as an appliance of analysis takes into consideration intervening variables in its analysis. In other words it goes beyond mere economic analysis which is mostly at the level of concept without reflecting the reality. To add to this, Gilpin (2018) said: "Thus, the distribution of wealth, the scourge of unemployment and rampant inflation are now viewed as the results of human actions rather than as the consequences of some immutable economic laws. This has meant the inevitable politicization of economic affairs." Gilpin (2018) also went further to say that the parallel existence and mutual interaction of 'state' and market in the modern world create 'political economy'. This means that politics and economics interact in order to determine some fundamental issues in society.

Marxist political economy approach as a method and theory of economic science are very helpful, they are as yet inadequate to provide an all-inclusive and satisfactory basis for scholarly inquiry. Concepts, variables, and causal relations have not yet been systematically developed, political and other non-economic factors are frequently quoted (Gilpin, 2018). Although, these three philosophies have their limitations, the totality of their understanding and application in solving basic issues as they affect human effort, give a better understanding, of political economy.

In the views of Crane and Amawi (2016): "Political economy suggest a focus on marvels that lie at the cross roads of the fields of politics and economics. It seeks to explain how political power forms economic outcomes and how economic forces influence political actions". They also added that a theory of political economy should be adjudicated precisely by how well it captures the interaction of politics and economics. While political economy is essentially about the influence of politics and economics on each other to determine basic social issues, it goes beyond economic laws to also take into deliberation intervening variables. This makes political economy to be holistic in its approach as a way of avoiding mere abstraction in its analysis. It is this holistic perspective that forms the fulcrum around which our study revolves in a bid to understand the subtleties of interaction and interdependence in the global economy, especially as it affects development in Africa in the face of the globalization process (Keneth, 2014).

Another viewpoint of Marxist political economy which is also a very key point of our study is Dialectics. Dialectics is an approach to the world that focuses on interaction and change. It is opposed to reductionism (i.e. reducing all explanations to one factor such as psychology or economics, with all other factors being derivative), and encourages an all-inclusive or relational approach as one of its most basic aspects. According to O'Hara, the holistic approach means that one treats society as a unified organism consisting of a set of relationship within which everything is knotted to everything else. In such a conception we do not begin our investigations with separate things, but with relations. For example, one cannot understand a slave as an isolated human being with certain physical and psychological characteristics rather this person must be measured as part of the relation of EXPLOITATION between the slave and slave owner. The individual life of a slave or a slave-owner must be understood within this setting. Thus, the definitions such as that of "slave" are based not on the external relations of an individual to some other individuals, but on the internal relationship of the slave to the slave owner (Varousfakis, 2012).

5. REVIEW OF REATED ITERATURE

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) developmental strategy in enhancing development in West Africa

Development was one of the basic reasons for the establishment of ECOWAS. Therefore, one of the simplest way to know whether it has been able to live up to the requirement of the mandate is to check its relation to the development strives in the region. To be sure, development expresses the totality of processes by which a people improves its economic, technological, scientific, cultural and political conditions (Acha. 2012). The vision of ECOWAS was built on the belief that trade has the ability to engineer development, which is if trade is encouraged among the countries of West Africa, development will be feasible in the region. There are many commodities in the region ranging from livestock to precious metals that can be exchanged profitably.

However, the history of West Africa has also contributed in sharpening the nature and trade commodities of the region. Through colonization and globalization, West African Nations were designed and subjugated to produce basically primary exports which in all honesty cannot enhance competitive economic development when compared with the industrialized nations. The study emphasized the level of suppression, exploitation, and the dominate nature of globalization on the ECOWAS states and indeed the EDC's. A majority of the ECOWAS nations' economics and monoculture. This makes the economic to be susceptible to the manipulation and fluctuation in the international market. If the individual ECOWAS nation's economic are differentiated, it will not only cushion the economic from the vacillation in the international market but it will also improve the gross domestic product thereby earning more foreign exchange reserve for the country. The hidden effect of this is that it will help in reducing the wide economic differential among ECOWAS society and will eventually promote regional integration in West Africa.

Several developmental strategies such as Economic Integration through sub-regional cooperation which strengthened the economics of the West Africa countries promote and accelerate self-reliant and self-sustaining development of member states, co-operate among these state and their integration in the economic, social and cultural fields etc. (Samimi and Huang. 2011). ECOWAS is still faced with challenges due to the strategic activities of globalization. These challenges are discussed under theme and elaborated herein below

- Trade, infrastructural and Regulatory Challenges
- The Trade Factor and the Economy of member states

Economic challenges are ever evolving in the integration bid of the ECOWAS posing one of the greatest challenges on the way of the establishment of an integrated market, with common external tariff (CET). The economics of the community has passed serious challenges to the fulfillment of its purpose. Table 4.4 shows the population of people living below poverty line from member countries are ranked within the bracket of highly indebted nations, poorest country by wealth estimate and or within the parameters of any other measurement indicators commensurable with underdevelopment, rural economy or otherwise. Trade is the center of successful integration and as such an effective indicator for the measurement of performance. However, the ECOWAS has fared well in intra-regional trade (Gbadebo 2004). Trade within the community is yet to be de-monopolized; imports are not streamlined and custom procedures are not transparent. There is only a slight increase in the performance of export revenue usually from a few primary commodities from a single product mineral commodity (Imohe 2007)

Regional integration is a lasting solution to ECOWAS nations development needs if it is sincerely and purposefully executed. It is a fact that ECOWAS countries are generally poor and underdeveloped. This condition of poverty and underdevelopment has made them to be susceptible to the manipulation and exploitation by the countries of the north which further reinforces poverty, underdevelopment and dependency in the entire Africa. Thus, it becomes very difficult for a single Africa country to wriggle out of the mess of poverty, underdevelopment and dependency. There is therefore the need for West Africa countries to look inwards and pull resources together in order to satisfy their development needs. This concerted effort finds expression in regional integration which must be implemented with commitment, dedication and sincerity of purpose.

Globalization is a means of cultured imperialism in West Africa. It has been argued vehemently that culture is an essential ingredient of development. This means that for any society to develop, the culture of the people must be taken into consideration. In other words, their development strategies must reflect their culture. However, globalization ensures the free movement of capital. This free movement of capital is being facilitated by the advancement in the form of TV, computers, cell-phones, internet etc. to be consumed in Africa. These western goods are loaded with western values and their consumption in Africa makes it possible for Africans to imbibe western values which overtime regulates the culture of Africa to the background and this of course affects development strategies in Africa.

A well implemented regional integration can checkmate the adverse effect of globalization ECOWAS nations and Africa. Globalization places much premium on the integration and liberation national economics through the mechanization of the market. The globalization therefore, sees market as the best option for the development of members the 'Global Village' and is therefore exploitative. In order to avoid the exploitative tendencies of globalization, there is the need for a well-integrated regional integration particularly as it concerns the adoption of selective policy measure and strategy integration.

Some identified problems and challenges have embedded the smooth operation of regional integration in West Africa. Given West Africa's colonial experiences and poverty in the region, regional integration is plagued with some problems and challenges. Such problems and challenges include poor industrial base which also leads to the inability to create trade among members, colonial heritage, political instability, poor domestic economy and corruption.

The Impacts of globalization on Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) development strategy

In spite of the existence of ECOWAS, the West African regional integration effort have had limited impact so far. This is because the reality on ground does not match ideas in agreements protocols and MOUs. The degree of integration remains highly superficial. This has been due largely to the powers of globalization and other variables within the region. From the globalization perception, the study reveals that globalization leads to trade liberalization as a policy advice for global institutions like IMF, World Bank and even WTO, affect West Africa regional integration, liberalization, according to these institutions, will bring in its benefits. Much argument has been drawn on cross-country returns showing the game of trade "openness". The success of developing market has been attributed to higher ratio of "Openness" (Adedeji, 2020).

The sub-Saharan Africa comprising the region under study, liberalized their economics as they are counseled to open up in order to become viable. However, the findings of this study shows that conflicting to the promise held out by the neo classical case for free trade, the region's trade liberalization has not emerged into development, and in fact, has led to balance of payment problems, increased obligation and deindustrialization (Tukumbi, 2019). This is definitive case of confusing correlation with casualty. Accordingly, trade balance is dwindling due to lack of organic connection rooted in technological driven market amongst the structure of production and the structure of consumption. The region is currently in real danger of being by-passed by technological driven world market. After more than four decades of independence, the mono-cultural economy has remained intact, nearly all West Africa countries are still heavily dependent on the export of a narrow range of primary commodities whose market are limited.

Thus, disparity in external debt trade earnings makes the region economy vulnerable today, the ECOWAS internal debt stock input at 70 billion US dollars with Nigeria and cote d' Ivoire accounting for over 70%. Other countries in the region with highest external debts in relation to their GDP are Guinea Bissau (35%), Sierra Leone (14%). According to Adedeji (2020), debt servicing is anticipated to gulp average of 80% of the region's export earnings. This invariably, means that more resources are allocated to debt servicing than to regional integrative structures. With the heavy debt burden of virtually all West Africa countries, there is not much room for the regional integration.

The point being made here is that West Africa trade pattern has made little progress due to liberalization (Globalization). The connections among the numerous economic sectors are still feeble to the degree that many West Africa economies do not enjoy the mutually supportive sectorial interactions that are essential for building dynamic self-reliant and self-sustaining economies. There still exist relatively large subsistence or near subsistence sector side by side with relatively small and disjointed monetized reserves dominated by foreign extractive industry. This lack of integrated self-sustaining national economies, largely accounts for the ineffectiveness of regional integration. It also account for the lack of capacity to generate nationally either the necessary impetus for sustained development or the capacity to withstand peripheral shocks. This in turn, exacerbates the external dependence of the west Africa economies with more than a corresponding negative effect on the promotion of regional integration (Martin, 2016)

The implication here is that most state could not device the harmonization provisions, especially the elimination of tariff barriers that is effective in building common market mechanism. As disputed in our theoretical framework, the region continue to experience discriminatory tariffs, in order to address the heavy debt burden. Despite the priority attention given to the promotion and development of regional integration, debt burden has made many of the countries reluctant to implement provisions relating to the elimination to the tariff and non-tariff barriers that could have heightened common market integration. This is echoed in the difficulties of standardizing and harmonizing custom documents. Undeniably, as long as West Africa trade pattern does not change its form, content and direction, the impetus to alter such regional infrastructural system will remain timid. (Alapiki, 2015).

The obstinate crisis in some member states considerably decelerates the pace of integration. In any event of destabilization, the very first victim is regionalism. As noted by Adedeji (2020). West Africa sub-regional integration cannot properly succeed in the absence of a sense of belonging and identity of the general population with the proposed community of countries. The dividing and divisions of the region into nations by the imperialists, without regard for history, culture and respect for the integrity of different nationalities and ethnic groups has not exceeded ethnic ties. In the region, ethnic ties supersede national allegiance. This leads to sociological dualism, perennial political instability with national solidarity and cohesiveness under threat.

The West Africa regional integration efforts have also been flawed by the French factor. The desire of successive governments in Paris to support their formed colonies in the region created lack of self-assurance by individual counties in the region created lack of self-assurance by individual countries in the capacity of regional institutions to protect their interest (Bendu, 2016). In a sense, this created parallel allegiance to sub-regional integration initiative. The problem with this is that some West Africa countries belong to several formal arrangements and they often forced to deal with contradictory objectives, as happens with ECOWAS and UEMOA. The later, has a far more cohesive nature that tends to underline the existence of the former. On the other hand, the peripherals are diplomatically stormy and economically motionless and subsequently, they must organize in order to capture the process of marginalization. Their regional arrangements are at the same time, delicate and ineffective. Their overall situation makes "security regional" and developmental regionalism more important than the creation of free trade regime. They are necessarily more withdrawn. The whole idea of classification is to strengthen the specificity of regions and regional arrangement by their goals.

According to Heine and Thakur (2014) in extension of the problem working against regionalism in SSA. It is understood that Africa started integration at a low level of intra-regional trade and very high dependence on similar

export crops, market differences in income and industrialization levels prevented intra-industry specialization, the lack of political amiability in foreign affairs meant that neighboring countries were often on conflicting side of the cold war divide, and fiscal weakness reduced the capability and willingness to provide compensation payments. Other problems include; small market and its growing marginalization in a world dominated by powerful trading blocs but there is a concurrent fear of the cost of the unilateral liberalization, particularly when the large world players are most protective of sectors where West Africa countries might feasibly compete. Regional integration is therefore, regularly seen as a substitute to unilateral trade liberalization and a compliment to a more general liberalization.

In this view, Faezch (2017) spotted out that sub-Saharan African countries are small in economic terms. According to him, in 1989, the Gross National Product (GNP) of all SSA countries put together are roughly equal to that of Belgium. They are also among the poorest in the world with low per capital". He therefore affirmed that for countries that have such characteristics, common sense dictates that such countries will be economically defensible if they integrate their markets. Regional integration is therefore, the process of increasing the economic abilities of countries by permitting not only the free flow of goods and services but also ideas, capitals and labour.

For James (2015) "a majority of developing countries are excluded from the process, or are participating in it in marginal ways that often detrimental to their interest; for example, import liberalization may harm their domestic products and financial liberation may course instability". On trade liberalization, Martin argues that "countries that are not ready or able to cope or face conditions that are unfavorable should not embark on trade liberalization (globalization) because it can contribute to a vicious cycle of trade and balance of payment shortfalls, financial instability, debt and recessions". It demonstrated that the UNCTAD reports result correspond with some recent studies that shows there is no involuntary correlation between trade liberation and growth. Countries that speedily liberalized their import did not essentially grow faster than those that liberalized more gradually or in more strategic ways. In agreement with views of Martins, the Harvard University Economist, Rodrik (2014) argued that "developing nations must participate in the world economy on their own terms, dedicated by global market and multilateral institutions".

A Regional integration can cover the full range of public sector activity, including not only the coordination of economic policies, but also regional security, human rights, education, health, research and technology, and natural resource management. "Regional" in this sense is here understood as 'macro-regional' that is at the supranational level as opposed to micro-regional that is at sub-national level. Attempts to compile inventories or matrices of the successful indicators of regional integration, particularly in a comparative context (Hurrell, 1995), may refer to a grouping of nation-states in a defined geographic region, culturally similar countries, and shared objectives; often supported by binding agreements, an institutionalized system, a form of 'acquis communautaire' and some sectoral integration.

A major benefit of a region's economic integration is an increase in intra-regional trade. Other benefits may include intra-regional distribution of resources and a single regional market for goods, services, labour and/or capital. This is rendered more achievable if there is not a considerable disparity among member states, and if a commitment is manifest to decrease regional and social disparities and to compensate for market and structural inequalities (Philomena, 2008) Thus, regional integration refers to the emergence of a governance level between the national and global levels within the system of world governance based on cooperative behavior and the designs of common policies and institutions by actors that traditionally belong(ed) to the national governance level. The dimension of economic integration can be oriented in 5 different ways namely (1) preferential trade agreement (2) free trade area (3) custom union (4) common markets and (5) Economic unions.

6. CONCUSION

From the data gathered, this study concludes that regional integration is a kind of reservation magic. Cannonball to the development of West Africa when it is committed and honestly employed by the leaders of ECOWAS nations. However, there are some challenges which regional integration in West Africa must as a matter of inevitability surmount if it must achieve its aims and objectives. Such challenges embrace the industrialization of West Africa economics. It should be recalled that lack of complimentary of goods among ECOWAS nations is a bane of regional integration. The implication of this is that instead of creating trade, it will divert trade. And if trade is diversified, it means that there will not be leakages to other countries who are not members of the region. ECOWAS countries must therefore, be dedicated in the direction of industrialization. This will advance the manufacturing sector and improve the complimentary of goods in West Africa in other to create trade. They can do this by re-strategizing there educational policies, programs and curriculum to enhance measurable and qualitative education with specific reference on science and technology.

Another task of regional integration is for individual member countries to be sincerely committed to the course of regional integration in West Africa. It is one thing to embark on regional integration; it is another thing to be honestly committed towards the realization and sustenance of the aims and objectives of regional integration. From the analysis of the development strategies, it became palpable that some members simply pay lip service to the agreement of the regional bloc. This condenses the regional bloc as a toothless bulldog. The treatise and spirit of the regional bloc must be respected by all the members.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusion drawn, the following recommendations were made:

- The economy of ECOWAS should be sufficiently diversified to produce a wide variety of intermediate and finished products. Industrialization must be the premium of West Africa. The region should make industrialization the medium of development of regional integration. This would no doubt broaden the region's production base, and make for the maximum impact of the benefit of integration.
- Globalization has come to stay. Instead of resisting it, there is need for ECOWAS to start adjusting itself to the effect and dynamics of globalization.
- There ought to be sincere efforts to increase and strengthen the voice of West Africa government in international bodies (such as the United Nation) to offset the weakness created by the pressure of global actors at the local level.
- There is the need to empower institutions that implement and monitor regional integration programs both at the regional and country levels.
- There should be the establishment of cushion mechanisms that would consciously and carefully deals with changes in country that may militate against implementation of integrative programs.

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