

# Nigeria and the achievements of ecowas politics essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The ECOWAS treaty of 1975 provides for the freedom of movement and residency. This means the abolition of visas and the right to reside anywhere in West Africa. The phase one of the protocol guaranteeing free entry of community citizens without visa for ninety days was ratified by member states in 1980 and became effective to usher in an era of free movement of ECOWAS citizens within member states. The right of entry, residence and establishment were to be progressively established within 15 years from the definitive date of entry into force of the protocol.[2]

The Nigerian investment in the ECOWAS as an organisation has been considerable. At the same time, it has been an investment from which Nigeria has gained much in return. The vast sums of money and resources given by Nigeria to ECOWAS and its member states has been based on what might be called a general policy of enlightened self interest. For example, Nigeria has realized that the promotion of regional free trade, which is one of the objectives of ECOWAS, is crucial if she is to enjoy the benefits of balanced future economic development.[3] However, in spite of the big brother role Nigeria plays in ECOWAS, the Buhari regime was unable to observe the protocol on free movement of individuals which is required by the article 3 of the ECOWAS treaty. The administration closed the Nigerian borders and expelled illegal aliens. The closure of the Nigerian borders affected Nigeria's neighbours to the extent that many West African leaders pleaded publicly that the borders be re-opened. The closure of the borders resulted in ECOWAS chairmanship being offered to Buhari at the ECOWAS summit of 1984. But he turned down the offer giving the excuse that the regime needed total commitment to the domestic issues in Nigeria.[4]

However, in August 1986, the Babangida regime came to power. This new regime having realized the dangers inherent in the continuous closure of the country's borders with her neighbours decided to re-open them to give a boost to their economies which had been strangled by Buhari's policy.

[5]This new position however, was not without conditions. In that same year, Nigeria adopted a new immigration policy. According to Mr Dahiru Mohammed, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, who was representing Colonel John Shagaya, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nigeria had ratified the protocol, and would allow citizens of ECOWAS member states live and work in Nigeria without visas and work permits.[6]However, only immigrants in six professional categories would be allowed. These include engineers, doctors and health personnels, teachers, architects, surveyors and bilingual secretaries. Other professionals such as journalists, lawyers, and accountants, as well as unskilled workers will be excluded[7]. According to him, the certificates of professionals in the approved six categories would be verified by government agencies, and such immigrants would be required to find employment within six months of arrival, failing which they would be expelled. It was this principle of admissible categories of expatriate professionals that Nigeria put forward to ECOWAS as a basis for the conferment of resident status on a community citizen. This was accepted at the Abuja summit in 1986.[8]

ECOWAS remains the only region in Africa where the citizens do not need a visa to visit one another.

### 3. 2TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT

As part of efforts towards the physical integration of the sub-region, ECOWAS has embarked on programmes to interconnect existing networks in areas of transport and communications. These are projects capable of promoting integration and constitute the major links in the development of the community. Transport, communications and energy services are a crucial element in improving economic competitiveness and strengthening regional integration. In particular, for export promotion and intra-regional trade, the improvement of road and telecommunications networks, and provision of energy at affordable cost should be treated as key priority areas as we strive to carve a place for ECOWAS countries within the world economy.[9]

According to analysts, the economic wealth and military power of a people or a nation have been closely tied to efficient methods of transportation. This provides access to natural resources and promotes trade, allowing a nation to accumulate wealth and power. Transportation also allows the movement of soldiers, equipment and supplies.[10]

Nigeria, on her part has realized that her national interests—the development and expansion of its economy, the raising of the standard of living of its population, and the future physical security of its territory—can only be effectively secured through joint programmes of balanced production, distribution and consumption of goods and services on a regional basis. In the long term, an industrialized Nigeria hopes to be able to export manufactured products freely to other West African states as well as to invest directly in the production of raw materials in ECOWAS nations, which would then be used to supplement local needs.[11]

To this end, Nigeria in the 1970s, undertook the construction of roads to link up two member states in order to facilitate trade and boost contact among states. For example, the Lagos-Cotonou highway was constructed at a highly subsidized rate by the Nigerian government.[12] On March 6, 2006, the Nigeria-Niger joint commission met in Abuja. At the meeting, the ministers of transport for Nigeria and Niger discussed the building of a rail link from Kaura Namoda through Sokoto to Birnin-n’Konni in Niger Republic.[13]

Over the years, Nigeria has emphasized and assisted in the creation of the community’s structures. She believes in the building of strong regional institution as a pre requisite for the establishment of a meaningful regional integration.[14] For example, Nigeria has made substantial contributions to the generation of hydro-electric power to Niger and also supplied gas to Benin, Togo, Ghana under a 5 million Naira inter ECOWAS pipeline gas project.[15] The Authority of Heads of State and Government, on the recommendation of the Council of Ministers, approved the Community telecommunications programme known as INTELCOM I at its May 1979 session held in Dakar. The objective of the programme was to improve and expand the sub-regional telecommunications network.

The principal objectives of the INTELCOM I programme were as follows: to open-up the Member States which did not have reliable links with the outside world; to complete the missing links in the PANAFTEL network in West Africa; to establish direct micro wave links between the capital cities of Member States; to increase telecommunications traffic within ECOWAS.

From 1983 to 1992, the Community, through the ECOWAS Fund, made significant efforts to finance the first programme which attained 95% of its initial objectives as confirmed by the evaluation undertaken by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). The Authority directed the Executive Secretariat to elaborate and implement a second telecommunications programme to be known as INTELCOM II.

The main objective of the INTELCOM II programme is to provide the Community with a regional telecommunications network that is modern, reliable, and capable of offering a wider variety of services, including multimedia and wide band services. This will reduce transits through countries outside Africa and improve direct links between Member States.

[16]

### 3. 3 PEACE WITHIN WEST AFRICA

#### NIGERIA AND ECOMOG

The years 1972-1975 have been said to be the most peaceful period in the history of the sub region. As from 1980, West Africa became a jungle of wars. Thus, ECOWAS deviated from its original vision of economic integration to a peace keeping organization.[17] Various Nigerian governments, military and civilian, have tried to maintain the big brother role played by Nigeria in the sub region. The economic focus of the Ibrahim Babangida regime led to the greater interest in ECOWAS as well as trade and security. Links with Nigeria's neighbours resulted in the regime's restoration of good neighbourliness in West Africa.[18] Unlike any other period in West Africa, the Babangida regime witnessed quite a number of conflicts. One of these was the border division <https://assignbuster.com/nigeria-and-the-achievements-of-ecowas-politics-essay/>

of the Ewes between Ghana and Togo which has often been criticized by the Ewes who have for long expressed desire to live in one country.

Unfortunately, the Ewe irredentism had become a ready tool in the hands of the Eyadema administration. Accusing fingers were often pointed in the direction of Ghana. This was demonstrated in 1989 when the call for multi-partism to replace the one party system was made. The Eyadema administration played up the Ewe irredentism to implicate Ghana, a country with a large concentration of Ewes. To allow the Ghana-Togo crisis go unchecked would have carried with it a high security risk for the sub region. The Babangida regime offered itself as an impartial arbiter on the issue.

[19]Article 52(1) and (2) of the revised ECOWAS Treaty (1993) provides not only for the prevention and resolution of conflicts, but also contains a clause on the establishment of a regional peacekeeping force for the prevention, containment, moderation and termination of hostilities between or within member states through the medium of a third party intervention and directed intentionally, using multi-national forces of soldiers and civilian personnel to maintain peace.[20]The idea of a peace keeping force hinged on the idea that development cannot be achieved without security and peace. The Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, Dr. Mohammed Ibn Chambas, once said this about insecurity in the sub region, “ it takes us away from our original mandate: economic cooperation, economic development and fighting poverty, stepping up trade, etc. political instability in any member state diverts our attention.”[21]In 1990, due to the Liberian crisis, there was a revision of ECOWAS goals. Events in Liberia, being a member of ECOWAS impacted directly on the fortunes of both the organization and all its constituent member states. Thousands of people died in conflict related

<https://assignbuster.com/nigeria-and-the-achievements-of-ecowas-politics-essay/>

situations, most of them civilians, and hundred thousands of others were turned into refugees as a result of the war. In addition, Liberian nationals, citizens of other ECOWAS states, diplomats and foreign citizens were increasingly exposed to the triple hazard of war, starvation and disease.

[22]The stage for Nigeria's involvement in the Liberian crisis was decided at the 13th session of the Authority of Heads of States and Government in Banjul, Gambia from May 28-30, 1990 under the chairmanship of Blaise Compaore of Burkina Faso. A committee was set up for the formation of ECOWAS Cease Fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG).[23]Despite the genuine fears of informed Nigerians about the capacity of the economy to accommodate the Liberian crisis, the Babangida regime saw the issue in a different light. As far as the administration was concerned, the outbreak of hostilities in Liberia called for practical demonstration of the country's age long good neighbourliness tradition. In addition to the security implications of the crisis, the regime foresaw the damage the carnage in Liberia would cause its leadership role in Africa.[24]Subsequently, ECOMOG was instituted for the Liberian crisis. Nigeria also led ECOMOG to dislodge the Johnny Koromah led military junta that ousted Teejan Kabbah in Sierra Leone in 1997 and restored peace in the country. Nigeria also closed down her embassy in Freetown with six other countries in compliance with the directives of the ECOWAS Council of Foreign Ministers.[25]

Nigeria's efforts at finding peaceful means to end the wars in the sub region could be seen in her contributions of man power, technical assistance and aid via ECOWAS. Nigeria alone has committed eight field commanders to ECOMOG and contributed about 70% of the troops in the peacekeeping



operations in Liberia.[26]According to President Olusegun Obasanjo, Nigeria spent eight billion Dollars and lost about five hundred men in the Liberia and Sierra Leone crisis.[27]On the platform of ECOWAS vis-à-vis the ECOMOG, Nigeria intervened in Liberia and Sierra Leone revolutionary conflict over the control of government structures, which were rooted in political and ideological differences lasting till the late 1990s. Not wanting a re-occurrence of the situation and aftermath of the Liberian and Sierra Leone civil war, ECOWAS working in collaboration with Nigeria, did not allow the Ivorian civil war linger for a long time before prompt intervention providing solutions to the conflict.

Thus, Nigeria in West Africa has successfully led the way in resolving the crisis situation in Liberia and Sierra Leone through the instrumentality of the sub regional peacekeeping mechanism, ECOMOG. The establishment of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) despite its handicaps, has proved to be one of the most durable and outstanding achievements of ECOWAS. It has not only provided a novel method for the maintenance of peace and security, which is now widely acknowledged, it has more importantly saved West African states and their nationals from mindless brutality, if not extinction.

[28]

#### ENDNOTES

Dr S. K. B Asante “ ECOWAS and Freedom of Movement”

West Africa (London) 3 July 1978. p. 1285

Richard Alkali, “ West Africa: ECOWAS-Its Formation and Achievements.”

<http://allAfrica.com>

Anyanwu et al, History of Nigeria: Nigeria in the Twentieth Century.

(Nigeria: Longman, 1991) p. 213

Bunmi Odenubi, “ Nigeria’s Foreign Relations in the New Millennium”

Nigerian Forum. Vol 22, No 7-8. July-Aug 2001. p. 157

Hassan A. Saliu, “ The Foreign Policy Legacies of Ibrahim Babangida’s

Regime in Nigeria.” Nigerian Forum. Vol 22, No7-8, March-April 1995. p. 50

Edem Kodjo, “ ECOWAS: Braving Troubled Waters” West Africa (London) 30

June 1986. pp. 1363-1364

Ibid

R. Omotayo Laniyan, “ Nigeria and the ECOWAS: A Role and Problem

Analysis”, in G. O Olusanya and R. A Akindele (eds), Nigeria’s External

Relations: The First Twenty Five Years. (Ibadan: University Press Ltd, 1986) p.

127

“ Achievements of ECOWAS” [http://www.ECOWAS Official Site.org](http://www.ECOWASOfficialSite.org)

Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia.

Anyanwu et al, History of Nigeria,... p. 214

Ibid. p. 213

<https://assignbuster.com/nigeria-and-the-achievements-of-ecowas-politics-essay/>

Bulletin on Foreign Affairs. Vol 21. March 2006.

R. O Olaniyan, “ Nigeria and the ECOWAS”... p. 132

“ Achievements of ECOWAS” [http://www. ECOWAS Official Site. org](http://www.ECOWAS Official Site.org)

Ibid

Information from Professor Adebayo Adedeji, aged about 80 years, ACDESS, Ijebu Ode, 11 Feb, 2009

Nigerian Forum. Vol 22, No 5-6. May-June 2001. p. 133

Hassan A. Saliu, “ The Foreign Policy Legacies of Ibrahim Babangida’s Regime in Nigeria.” Nigerian Forum, Vol 22, No 7-8, March-April 1995. p. 51

Dele Ogunmola, “ ECOWAS and Conflict Management in Cote d’Ivoire: Appraisal and Prognosis” Nigerian Forum. Vol 26. No 5-6. 2005. p. 152

Daily Trust online editon, May 25, 2005

Odeyemi Oluwafunmilayo, “ Economic Cooperation in West Africa: A Look at the Achievements of ECOWAS 1991-2005”. (A B. A Long Essay submitted to Babcock University Ogun State.)April 2007. p. 45

Bunmi Odenubi, “ Nigeria’s Foreign Relations in the New Millenium.” Nigerian Forum. Vol 22, No7-8. July-August 2001. pp. 158-159

Hassan A Saliu, “ The Foreign Policy Legacies of Ibrahim Babangida’s Regime in Nigeria.” Nigerian Forum. Vol 22, No7-8, March-April 1995. pp. 51-52.

<https://assignbuster.com/nigeria-and-the-achievements-of-ecowas-politics-essay/>

<http://www.news.bbc.co.uk>

Ibid

<http://www.google.com>

<http://www.Africa-week-magazine.com>