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An Analysis of Ecowas in Conflict Resolution: The Nigeria Factor, 1975-1998

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Abstract

This research investigates the role of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in conflict resolution with a focus on the Nigeria factor. It addresses Nigeria's essential role in the formation of ECOWAS and its efforts in conflict settlement. The study also addresses several challenges faced by ECOWAS. The data for this research work were gathered from both primary and secondary sources. The major sources are oral interviews, with secondary sources including books, newspapers,

articles, journals, theses, and dissertations. It was also discovered that ECOWAS assisted member nations in resolving disputes to promote unity, peace, and security. According to the study, Nigeria takes the lead in settling disagreements or conflicts among ECOWAS member countries. The paper also discovered that Nigeria's reputation had improved significantly when General Yakubu Gowon introduced the idea that led to the formation of ECOWAS in 1975.

Keywords: Conflicts, Charter, Treaty, Resolution, Challenges

Introduction

The issue of conflict is a usual occurrence in all organizations, societies and nations, as conflicts are inherent in human relationships. Generally, conflicts entail struggle and rivalry for objects to which individuals and groups attach values. These objects can either be material or non-material, as this might include scarce resources like money, economic gain, employment and promotion in public services, among others. Non-materials can include; culture, language or religion (Osaghae, 2001) ^[20]. Duverger observes that in the political struggle when men and organizations conflict, they tend to employ different types of weapons (Duverger, 1980: 179) ^[7]. The kinds of weapons employed are influenced by the type of society, the type of government, the composition of groups in conflict as well as the period of history (Abdullahi, 2005:144) ^[1].

The Economic Community of West African States is an association of French and English-speaking countries in West Africa to foster greater economic, political and social cooperation. It is a sub-regional organization formed by West African countries to promote cooperation and development in all economic fields and of contributing to the progress and development of the African continent (Anyaele, 2003:226) ^[2]. It was founded in Lagos on 28th May 1975 after more than two years of Nigeria's initiative and spade-work (G.I.C. Eluwa, M.O. Ukagwu, J.U. N., Nwackhukwu and A.C.N. Nwaubani, 2005:290) ^[9].

According to Anyaele on the historic date of 28th May 1975, Heads of State and governments of 15 independent states of West Africa converged in Lagos where they signed the treaty: formally establishing ECOWAS (Anyaele, 2003:226) ^[2]. West Africa contains four former British colonies of Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Gambia Again, it has ten former French colonies of Benin, Republic, Cameroun, Chad, Cote d' Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea, Niger and Mali (Kolawole, 2003:92) ^[19].

Incidentally, the personal relationship between General Gowon and President Eyadema gave an impetus to a bilateral agreement between Nigeria and Togo which was to serve as a precursor for a functional West African Economic Community (Ibid, 93). General Gowon posits that the friendship between Togo and Nigeria prepared the ground for the two countries to form the nucleus of ECOWAS (Quoted in West Africa, May 24, 1982:1367) ^[27].

It was fifteen West African countries attended a ministerial meeting in Lome in the month of December 1973 that agreed to the formation of the Economic Community of West African States. In their communiqué, four processes were outlined for the evolution of the economic community namely, that a treaty should be prepared by the officials of Togo and Nigeria with the assistance of the ECAI that such treaty could be considered by representatives of the fifteen (15) states of West Africa not later than January 1974 in Accra that by March 1974, a meeting of the treaty and that a meeting of Heads of State and Governments should be held in Lagos to consider and sign the treaty (Nigeria: Bulletin on Foreign Affairs, 1973-227-228) ^[15].

This timetable epitomized the seriousness of the concerned states toward the full realization of the idea of ECOWAS. Consequently, on May 28, 1975, 15 West African States of Nigeria, Liberia, Togo, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Cote d' Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Gambia, Benin, Niger, Sierra Leone, Mali Mauritania and Senegal in Lagos signed the treaty of the ECOWAS (Kolawole, 2003: 93)^[19]. This event became a memorable epoch historic and watershed in the annals of economic development of West Africa. This is against the background that no nation is self-sufficient. Economic organizations are set up to promote international economic interdependence (NERC, 1978). One of the most important of these economic organizations to have risen in West Africa is the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) formed in May 1975. (Ibid,163).

The signatories to the ECOWAS treaty hope that ECOWAS will lead to a larger market whereby industries will be able to enjoy economies of scale by selling their respective surpluses at reduced costs to the West African members of ECOWAS, (Ibid, 163).

It will also lead to specialization among members to achieve a greater supply to all. For example, Nigeria might specialize in the oil and coal mining industries. This can be supplied to other West African countries. Ghana can become the bauxite and aluminium supplier to the region. Sierra Leone can specialize in Iron production.

Another reason for the creation of the ECOWAS is to create a united stand against the raw deal that developing countries get from the advanced countries in that the prices of their exported raw materials continued to fall while the prices of the manufactured goods imported continue to rise (Ibid, 162-163). To avoid this double loss, the way out is for the developing countries to come together to harness their raw materials for the common good of all. Ultimately ECOWAS members know that such economic interdependence will lead to the much-desired, but hitherto elusive economic development and advancement of their countries (Ibid).

ECOWAS has its headquarters in Lagos (now in Abuja) where the main administrative and executive functions of the community and other services are performed. The seat of operations of the fund for cooperation, compensation and development is in Lome, Togo. Cape Verde was included in the community later. (An Interview with Dr Duyile, 6-9-2022).

Aims and Objectives of ECOWAS

Article 2 of ECOWAS Treaty set out the aims and objectives as follows:

1. Promotion of co-operation and development
2. Elimination of customs Duties
3. Abolition of trade restrictions
4. Establishment of common tariff
5. Abolition of obstacles to free movement
6. Harmonization of Agricultural policies
7. Implementation of infrastructural schemes
8. Harmonization of Economic and industrial policies
9. Harmonization of monetary policies
10. Establishment of common fund for co-operation compensation and development (Article 2 of ECOWAS Treaty, 1975).

Agreeing with the above aims of ECOWAS, Kolawole states that the aim of the ECOWAS

is "to promote co-operation and development in all fields of economic activity" (Quoted from Kolawole, 2003; 93)^[19].

To achieve the aims as stated in the treaty establishing the community, the organs of ECOWAS were spelt out. The treaty establishing ECOWAS provided for the organs. First is the Authority of Heads of State and Government. This is composed of all the 16 leaders of the member states and this is the supreme authority. It is the highest organ of the community. Its decision is final and binding on all other organs of the community. The Authority meets at least once a year. The chairmanship of the Authority is held annually in rotation. (An interview with Roland Ukhurebor, 4-4-22).

Second is the Council of Ministers. This is made up of two ministers or representatives from each member state. It monitors the functioning and development of the community and the development of transport, communication, energy and other infrastructural facilities as well as the evolution of a common policy in these fields (Anyaele, 2003; 225-227)^[2].

Also, it makes recommendations to the authority and meets twice a year. The third is the Executive Secretariat. It performs the functions of administering the community. It is the principal organ responsible for the execution of the community's programmes and implements. The decision of the council of ministers and also of the conferences of Heads of State. Also, it must submit a report of its activities to all sessions of the council of ministers and also to all meetings of the Authority. The highest officer in the Executive secretariat is the Executive Secretary appointed by the Authority of the Heads of state, who is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the community and all its institutions. Next to the Executive secretary are two Deputy Executive Secretaries.

Another organ of the organization is the Tribunal of the community whose main functions are the interpretation of the treaty and ensuring the observance of Law and justice. Another organ is a group of technical and specialized commissions. The commissions are:

1. The trade, customs, immigration, monetary and payments commission
2. The industry, Agriculture and National Resources commissions
3. The transport, communication and energy commission
4. The social and cultural affairs commission
5. The Defence Commission (The treaty of ECOWAS, 1975)

ECOWAS in Conflict Resolution

Since the establishment of ECOWAS in 1975, the member-states have intended to maintain peace and attack the conditions that appeared to foster conflict: colonialism, poverty, inequality and ignorance. Peace and security represent the hallmark of the thinking and establishment of ECOWAS. The leaders of ECOWAS created this organization to maintain and keep peace across West Africa in particular and Africa in general.

Hence Article II stated clearly that one of the objectives is the promotion of cooperation and development among member states. (Article II, ECOWAS Treaty).

To reduce poverty among member states and promote development which enhances unity ECOWAS took a big stride forward by establishing the fund for cooperation and development intended to finance projects in member states particularly in the less developed ones (Eluwa, Ukagwu,

Nwachukwu and Nwaubahi, 2005:289)^[9]. It is a known fact that poverty and inequality can be a passport to conflict.

To avoid conflicts among member states an organ, the "Tribunal" was set up to interpret the treaty to ECOWAS and ensure the observance of Law and justice.

At the time of the establishment of ECOWAS in 1975, its main objective was the economic integration of its member states. To achieve this objective to a large extent hampered by political crises in the region and rivalries between heads of state for the leadership of the regional organization; there was the need to gradually attach greater importance to peace defence and security issues. (Gilles, 2010)^[13].

ECOWAS consequently played a key role in the arduous resolution of protracted and devastating civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone which sometimes spilt over into Guinea and threatened to cause unrest in the entire West African region (Ibid). ECOWAS then intervened on the diplomatic front through its mediation organs comprising Heads of State and Governments of Core member States and militarily by sounding thousands of soldiers of the ECOWAS Ceasefire

The Monitoring Group is drawn from the Nigerian federal Army and other member states of the organization (Ibid). It should be noted that the presence of ECOMOG in the two countries when there was no peace to be maintained, played a major role in the stabilization of the Mano River Basin (Ibid).

It is on record that ECOWAS played, a major role in resolving peacefully the Chadian crisis by sending peacekeeping missions to that country. On the strength of the above, one could establish that ECOWAS right from the onset realized the relevance of unity to the organization hence efforts have been on to promote it and to maintain peace and security tangible efforts have been made to resolve conflicts among member states to promote unity through collaborative efforts.

The Nigeria's Factor in Conflicting Resolution in Economic Community of West African States

Nigeria has been playing a leading role in promoting economic development in West Africa. The foreign policy drive was designed to win the cordiality, friendship and loyalty of its neighbours. (An Interview with Roland Ukhurebor, 4-4-2022). Nigeria after independence despite her advantage of being the most populous black nation in the world and having abundant human and natural resources made serious attempts to show to her neighbouring countries its readiness to uphold their territorial integrity, provide them with economic assistance and promote bilateral and sub-regional economic co-operation (Ediagbonya, Nwachukwu, Duyile and Buhari, 2020)^[8]. To maintain neighbourliness devoid of rancour and instability there must be mutual respect among neighbouring countries and such respect should be on an understanding of their peculiar nature (Kolawole, 2003-69-70)^[19]. Furthermore, there should be an avenue for constructive and productive cooperation in the areas of economy, technology and culture. Moreover, there is usually pressure for both conflict and cooperation in inter-state relations, especially among neighbours. There should be a mutually agreed built-in mechanism for conflict resolution. (Ibid; 70)

The Nigerian civil war aroused the country's consciousness of the need for good neighbourliness. In appreciation of the support rendered during the civil war and the realization of

the beneficial effects of good neighbourliness Nigeria's foreign policy shifted emphasis from the commonwealth of Nations to Africa with concern for the West Africa sub-region (Ibid, 73).

ECOWAS is Nigeria's remarkable contribution to the West African sub-region, to the African continent and the world community at large (Eluwa, Ukagwu, Nwachukwu and Nwaubani, 2005:29)^[9]. Nigeria has made some substantial grants to Togo, Benin and Niger to help reduce their dependence on France. She has also helped to establish on a joint ownership basis, factories, in Benin, Togo and Ivory Coast (Ibid, 290). She has also given relief to Niger, Chad, Burkina Faso and Mali in their difficult times. These have contributed to smothering Nigeria's leadership position in the community. It is not subject to debate that Nigeria's role in conflict resolution among member-states has been fantastic Nigeria's role in ECOWAS under the Gowon regime lies in its formation. Despite the hostile attitude of some France-phone West African States who seemed to prefer France's domination to suspected Nigerian domination, he succeeded in cultivating the friendship of General Eyadema of Franco-Phone Togo to achieve his aim of founding ECOWAS (Kolawole, 2003: 93-94)^[19]. General Gowon tried very hard to convince the Francophone states of his honest intentions. He noted: I do not think that I gave them any cause to think that one day I would wake up and use my size and economic power to sweep over the neighbouring countries. I think they did not see me or in the Nigerian leadership at the time any sign that would make them afraid (Quoted in West Africa, May 24, 1982: 1365)^[27].

It can be concluded that Gowon's role in the formation of ECOWAS strengthened Nigeria's relationship with the states of the sub-region and enhanced the nation's image. Chad has been a crisis-ridden country for quite some time and this has continuously hampered the pursuit of a well-thought-out policy between her and Nigeria (Kolawole, 2003)^[19]. Nigeria in pursuance of her foreign policy objective of good and peaceful neighbourliness has always shown interest in joining other countries in finding ways of resolving peacefully and permanently the Chadian crisis (Ibid, 79). Nigeria has always been supporting peace-keeping missions to Chad.

Even before the formation of ECOWAS, Nigeria has been at the forefront of settling disputes among its close neighbours. There were border clashes between Nigeria and the Republic of Benin as far back as 1969. In the spirit of oneness, the Nigerian government did not hide its indignation when Benin's government allowed the international committee of the Red Cross to use Cotonou against the Nigerian blockage during the period of the civil war. Despite this ugly development, the Nigerian government mended fences with the Republic of Benin immediately after the civil war. The leading role of Nigeria did not stop with the coup detat of 1975 which removed General Gowon. The emergence of General Olusegun Obasanjo as the Head of State of Nigeria after the assassination of General Ramat Muhammed on Feb. 13th, 1976 was a step in the right direction.

In his national broadcast to mark the 16th anniversary of Nigeria's independence, General Obasanjo reiterated the nation's deep commitment to and belief in ECOWAS. "Nigeria is fully committed to the objectives of ECOWAS. For we believe that only through such regional co-operative

endeavours aimed at economic independence can we consolidate our political freedom” (Nigeria bulletin on foreign affairs, September, 1976:109-110)^[16].

Realizing that finance is the lifeblood of any organization with ECOWAS inclusive, Nigeria under Obasanjo gave financial assistance to the community to ensure its viability. In October 1977, Nigeria promised to contribute N11,319,366 to the ECOWAS secretariat and the organization for cooperation and Development (Daily Star, October 8, 1977)^[6]. The highest responsibility for financial contribution fell on Nigeria making her contribute about one-third of all the finances needed by the 16-member organization (Kolawole, 2003: 138-139)^[19].

The relevance of finances to ECOWAS cannot be over-emphasized. This is anchored on the fact that conflict resolution through sending peace-mission and deployment of soldiers to affected states depend on the availability of adequate funds. Hence Anyaele posits that the resources-both financial and human contributed by the member-states have always fallen short of the requirement of the community. (Anyaele, 2003: 227-228)^[2]. According to Dr Duyile, the era of General Ibrahim Babangida was particularly outstanding in conflict resolution in ECOWAS (An Interview with Dr Duyile, 17-2-22).

It was in pursuit of the objective of making the West African sub-region safe for Nigeria that the country got involved in mediating the border war between Mali and Burkina Faso in 1986 (Fawole, 2003)^[11] the skirmishes had flared up into a shooting war and Nigeria got involved to ensure that, it would not escalate into a major conflict capable of threatening, peace and stability in West Africa. The Nigerian Foreign Affairs Minister Prof. Bolaji Akinyemi embarked on shuttle diplomacy, visiting the warring states and some neighbouring countries such as Libya and Senegal to drum up support for a ceasefire and negotiations (Newswatch, August 29, 1988)^[17]. Having arranged the ceasefire, the matter was then referred to the O. A.O. for a final resolution (ibid, p. 25).

Such involvement confirmed Nigeria’s claim to leadership in the sub-region (An interview with Madam Eghaghe Ifueko, 10-9-22). The closure of the borders and the sudden currency change by Buhari’s regime succeeded in virtually wrecking the economics of some of the West African States like Chad; the Niger Republic and the Republic of Benin which was dependent on Nigeria for survival (Newswatch, March 4, 1985)^[18].

To prevent conflicts between these countries and Nigeria. Babangida moved in quickly by re-opening the borders and offering assistance. It was not a surprise that the leaders of ECOWAS demonstrated this goodwill of General Ibrahim Babangida by electing him as ECOWAS, chairman in 1985, 1986 and 1987. It is not an exaggeration to say that the image of Nigeria was promoted not just among the member states of ECOWAS but in the community of Nations Worldwide.

Again Nigeria intervened adequately in the Liberian crisis in 1990. The country became actively involved in the Liberian crisis when it spearheaded an ECOWAS military intervention ostensibly carried out to help resolve the crisis (Fawole, 2003: 155)^[11]. The conflict started in 1989 when Charles Taylor organized a group of radical insurgents to invade Liberia and an attempt was made to remove President Samuel Doe from power and subsequently terminate the regime. What began as an insurrection by a

small band of guerrillas had by mid-1990 escalated into a full-blown civil war threatening the stability and survival of the Liberian state and posing dangers to the rest of the sub-region by way of refugee influx into the neighbouring states (Ibid).

It was a sequel to this and to curb this crisis General Babangida got the Economic Community of West African States to consider deploying a sub-regional peacekeeping force into Liberia in August 1980. This very intention of General Badamosi Babangida deploying ECOMOG (ECOWAS ceasefire monitoring Group) into Liberia in 1990 has been subjected to debates and various factors advanced. First was the need for Babangida to assist Samuel Doe with this unmitigated disaster. There was a personal relationship between Samuel DOE and Babangida. The relationship was very cordial (An interview with Osayi Vincent, 7-4-2022). There were many assurances from Babangida to assist Samuel Doe militarily to prosecute the war against the rebel leader, Charles Taylor. Admiration for General Babangida by Samuel Doe could be seen demonstrated when Samuel Doe named a school called ‘Babangida postgraduate school of International Relations in Monrovia for which he donated millions of dollars of Nigerian money (Ibid, 156). It was therefore not a surprise that this personal relationship between both leaders catalyzes for Babangida to rescue a good friend in this difficult moment.

Secondly, there was another dimension to the situation. It was argued that the assistance by Babangida to Liberia was to protect his business interests. Stephen argues that Babangida had joint business in offshore banking and other investments that were likely to come into jeopardy should Samuel Doe be overthrown by the rebels (Stephen, 1999: 159-161)^[24] it was also asserted that the then ECOWAS chairman, Dauda Jawara, the president of Gambia also had the business interest to protect in Liberia. (Ibid).

According to Fawole, if these claims were true, then it is understandable why General Babangida would suggest first the establishment of the ECOWAS standing mediation committee to deal with intra-sub-regional conflicts and the same ESMC would only a few months afterwards organize and dispatch peacekeeping force into Liberia in gross violation of the stipulated procedure for such actions (Fawole, 2001).

Also very important was the strong opinion that events, as they were unfolding in Liberia, had the potential to jeopardize sub-regional peace and security but more importantly affect Nigeria's national interest as the most prominent state in the community (Fawole, 2003: 159)^[11] This might not have been unconnected with the Libyan involvement in the crisis in Liberia. It was well established that the Liberian Warlord, Charles Taylor, received military training and considerable military financial and logistical assistance from Colonel Muammar Gadaffi to launch his offensive against the Samuel Doe government in December 1989 (Ibid). Babangida reacting to this sad development posts:

The whole ideology rests on the fact that if we allowed a force from outside to come in and cause instability in Liberia, chances are that such instability would spread into other neighbouring countries in the West Africa region..... (Transcript of interview in West Africa, 22-28 February 1993, p. 282). Hence the special concern and interest of General Babangida in the Liberian crisis. By

1990 August, there was the deployment of a detachment of Nigerian troops under the auspices of the ECOWAS-authorized intervention force called ECOMOG (Fawole, 2003) ^[11]. Nigeria actively took charge not only was the entire idea of the Liberian peace process Nigeria's suggestion but also the bulk of the troops and equipment deployed for the operation were Nigeria's (Cyril, 1993: 216-243) ^[5]. However, it was shortly after the operation began that the embattled Liberia President Samuel Doe was assassinated at the ECOMOG headquarters in Monrovia (Ibid.) Then at this point, Nigeria took over full control of the operation as the Ghanaian commander of the peacekeeping force Lt. General Arnold Ouaindo was replaced by General Joshua Dogonyaro a combatant Nigerian soldier. Suffice it to say that from that moment on the ECOMOG field commanders were Nigerian officers. This action of Babangida promoted the image of Nigeria in the comity of Nations.

General Babangida step aside from power as the Nigerian Head of State in August 1993 due to the national protests and agitations that greeted his annulment of the Presidential election of June 12, 1993, won by M.K.O Abiola. However, during this period the Liberian operation was still on. It would be recalled that Samuel Doe, whom Babangida wanted to protect was killed by Yormie Johnson, a rebel leader. It is important to note that Charles Taylor a factional leader still had control over a portion of Liberia. The virtual military stalemate created the conditions that led to a series of negotiations and accords signed by the ECOWAS and Charles Taylor many of which were never implemented (Fawole, 2003:163) ^[11].

The ECOMOG adventure did not achieve the actual objective of restoring peace but it can still be regarded as a success of sorts (Ibid). It is clear evidence of the capacity, capability and ability of Nigeria to rise to challenges when the situation demands. Another Nigerian Head of State General Sani Abacha inherited the operation and saw its logical conclusion as demonstrated in the conduct of a supervised general election in 1997 in Liberia. In line with the direction of General Ibrahim Babangida, Abacha also focused his attention towards West Africa. He inherited Nigeria's participation in the ECOMOG military operations in Liberia which began in August 1990 (Fawole, 1999:31) ^[12].

General Abacha intensified its involvement in the operations to garner some recognition or relevance as a regional peacemaker and making peace in Liberia, therefore, became an ego-trip for the regime, since it could continue to lay claims to international relevance by this sub-regional troubleshooting (Ibid). Again, the military operation of Nigeria in Sierra Leone during the regime of Sanni Abacha was highly commendable. This fortuitous sub-regional military operation was expanded when the regime swiftly dispatched Nigerian troops under the aegis of ECOMOG to flush out the military junta that had on May 25, 1997, overthrew the civilian government of Ahmed Tewan Kabbah in Sierra-Leone (Ibid). This historic military adventure by Sanni Abacha was able to remove major Johnny Pau Koromah's military junta in March 1988. This was the aftermath of a bloody military clash between Nigerian forces and rebel soldiers of the Sierra-Leonean junta. General Abacha succeeded in restoring civilian government in Sierra Leone. Also, the Sierra-Leone government was protected by Nigerian soldiers for some

time before their final departure from that country.

Challenges of ECOWAS in conflict-Resolution

The resolution of conflicts among member states has been cumbersome because of the following challenges. Abuse of article 27 of the ECOWAS Treaty by some member states. Article 27 of the ECOWAS Treaty which granted "Community Citizens" freedom of movement and residence within the community has been a source of conflict and escalated the problems of illegal aliens or immigrants (Article 27 of the ECOWAS Treaty, 1975). It brings about an increase in social vices with the presence of community citizens in some member states. (Anyaele, 2003:226) ^[2]. Nigeria, for instance, has witnessed a wave of armed robbery, religious bigotry, arson, and murder. This problem caused by immigrants is a constant source of conflict (An interview with Nwanchukwu, 6-5-2022).

The second challenge is the multiplicity of Associations. Many member states belong to many associations where they pay more loyalty and allegiance to them than they do to ECOWAS. The worst offenders of this are the francophone countries that are yet to cut the economic chains binding them to France and they display more allegiance to these former colonial masters than to ECOWAS (Ibid). So, members already belong to other economic organizations whose goals may clash with those of ECOWAS (NERC, 1978: 162-163). This is an obstacle to conflict management among member states.

Third, there is the issue of ideological differences. This has been a serious challenge in conflict resolution. This has helped to polarize member states of ECOWAS, especially into two major ideological camps. Capitalism and socialism (Ibid). If the community, therefore, takes any decision that is capitalist in nature, those member-states that stick to socialism will not agree to carry it out and vice versa. Another challenge to conflict resolution is the abuse of the provisions of the ECOWAS treaty by some member-states and national (Eluwa, Ukagwu, Nwachukwu, and Nwaubani, 2005:291) ^[9].

Again, inadequate transport facilities could hamper the transportation of peacekeepers to the areas of conflict. Also important is the argument by Anyaele who posits that inadequate contributions of resources are a serious challenge (Anyaele, 2003: 227-228) ^[2]. The resources both financial and human, contributed by the member-states have always fallen short of the requirement of the community (Ibid). This is a serious challenge to the peace-keeping operations of ECOWAS. Despite the zeal of ECOWAS to settle conflicts among member states, its full realization has not been possible because of some challenges.

Conclusion

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a regional group founded in Lagos on 28th May 1975. Members of the ECOWAS include Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. The major purpose of ECOWAS is to foster economic cooperation among member nations to increase living standards and promote economic growth. ECOWAS has also sought to resolve several security issues by establishing a regional peacekeeping force.

ECOWAS created its free trade zone in 1990 and implemented a common external tariff in January 2015. The aims and objectives are stated in Article 2 of the ECOWAS Treaty. Since its inception in 1975, ECOWAS has been extensively involved in promoting peace and security by resolving problems among its members. The group has been active in combating the factors that appeared to stimulate conflict: colonialism, poverty, inequality, and ignorance. As a result, Article II stated unequivocally that one of the purposes is to promote cooperation and development among member nations.

ECOWAS is Nigeria's remarkable contribution to the West African sub-region, the African continent, and the world. Under the umbrella of ECOWAS, Nigeria has played an important role in settling disagreements among member-states. The importance of Nigeria in conflict resolution in the West African sub-region cannot be overstated. However, ECOWAS' entire commitment to settling conflicts among member nations has been impeded by a variety of challenges.

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