

***NIGERIAN JOURNAL OF***  
**PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND**  
**LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

**VOLUME XIV, NOS 1 & 2 SEPTEMBER 2009**

**ISSN 0189 - 8094**

**Published by the Department of Public Administration  
and Local Government, University of Nigeria, Nsukka**

**NIGERIAN JOURNAL OF PUBLIC  
ADMINISTRATION AND LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT**

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VOL. XIV, NOS 1 & 2      September, 2009

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**ISSN 0189 – 8094**

Published by the  
Department of Public Administration and Local Government,  
University of Nigeria, Nsukka



**Chuka Educational Publishers,  
Nsukka + Enugu + Lagos**

**070-34176054**

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**DEMOCRATIC STABILITY AND REGIONAL ECONOMIC  
INTEGRATION: THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN  
STATES (ECOWAS) EXPERIENCE**

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**Abstract**

*The focus of this study is to identify the link between democratic stability and regional economic integration with special emphasis on the realisation of Customs Union and Monetary Union as essential planks upon which economic integration rests in West Africa. Data for the study were gathered through secondary sources. The findings show that democracy in the ECOWAS sub-region can be described as generally unstable. The prevalence of electoral malpractice and intractable civil strife within member states underscore this point. Democratic instability within the sub-region therefore impacts negatively on the ECOWAS objectives that could lead to a borderless West Africa within record time. To this effect, the article recommends deliberate and conscious efforts by political leaders in the sub-region to cultivate and sustain democratic norms as well as show more commitment to the process. There is also the need for member states to be more committed to the process of economic integration.*

**Introduction**

An important feature of contemporary international relations is the increasing tendency of nation- states that are geographically contiguous to embark on one form of economic cooperation or the other along regional lines. This type of arrangement, when it follows the categorization of Balassa (1961) in the sequence of creating a free trade area; customs union; common market, economic union and total integration is referred to as regional economic integration. (Asante, 1997:18).

Earlier attempts among the Francophone Countries leading to the establishment of the West African Customs Union in June 1959 and the Customs Union of the West African States in June 1966 failed (Asante, 1997:35). However, other attempts in Africa with varying results include the following: Central African Customs and Economic Union founded in 1964 (revised in 1975); East African Economic Community in June 1967; Southern African Customs

Union in 1969; Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) founded in 1975; Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries in 1976; West African Economic Community in 1973 ( but traceable to the earlier failed attempt of 1959 and 1966 as cited above); Eastern and Southern African Preferential Trade Area in 1981; Economic Community of Central African States in 1983; Maghreb Permanent Consultation Committee in 1964 (Asante,1997:35-44).

The objective or purpose of economic integration in developed economies is different from those of the developing economies. Whereas in the former, it serves to maintain and enhance an already existing sustained economic growth through trade expansion and increased competition, in the latter, it is seen primarily as a means of contributing to economic development. Regionalism therefore, offers itself as a development approach to the small economies, and not necessarily to facilitate greater efficiency (Asante, 1997:25).

In order to achieve the above objective, Narang (2002:378) argues that "...it is in the interest of ...the developing countries that efforts are accelerated to strengthen a meaningful democracy in its wider perception..." This averment by Narang underscores the role of democratic stability in achieving economic integration in ECOWAS. This is against the backdrop that the developed countries are fairly stable democratically - a situation that has facilitated their economic integration schemes.

At the instance of ECA, a number of meetings with representatives of West African Countries were held. Akinyemi, Falegan and Aluko (1984: 607) affirmed that several of such meetings and research based studies were conducted between November 1963 and April 1972 preparatory to the formation of the Economic Community of West African states (ECOWAS). The formal treaty was signed in Lagos on 28 May 1975 by the following countries: Benin; Gambia; Ghana; Guinea- Bissau; Guinea-Conakry; Ivory Coast; Liberia; Mali; Mauritania; Niger; Nigeria; Senegal; Sierra- Leone, Togo and Upper Volta which later became Burkina – Faso. Cape Verde however joined the organization in 1977, while Mauritania withdrew its membership in 2000.

ECOWAS was founded to achieve regional self-sufficiency through the integration of the countries of West Africa into an economic bloc and to establish competitive status in world trade. The primary aims and objectives of the organization are as follows:

- To promote economic, social and political cooperation among member states.
- To intervene in order to avert or resolve regional disputes.
- To sustain economic stability and integrate the national economies of member states in an economic and monetary union.
- To raise the living standards of their peoples

- To contribute to the development of the continent (Axon,2005:162).

The attainment of the above goals is contingent upon a stable democratic order, and as Echezona (1998:42) argued "...regional integration is a framework for establishing 'peace in parts' and since...peace and security might be difficult to establish in a continent which is incredibly diverse and exceptionally large, 'peace in parts' becomes a very viable option".

The author's averment above which underscore the link between democratic stability and regional economic integration was made in direct reference to regional economic groupings in Africa which include Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Union Maghreb (Arab UMA) and Preferential Trade Area (PTA) to mention but a few.

In an attempt to overcome economic regression and also foster closer political ties as reflected in ECOWAS aims and objectives, regional economic integration was identified as a viable alternative by the founding fathers. However, the extent to which the prevailing political situation over the years has fostered regional economic integration among ECOWAS member states is the issue which this paper attempts to unravel.

### **The Problem**

ECOWAS had lofty objectives at inception in eliminating customs duties, trade restrictions, attaining unified customs tariff and coordinating economic and monetary policies. There were plans also, for free movement of production factors within the community. The attainment of these objectives was supposed to facilitate economic integration.

However, ECOWAS has been plagued by divisions based on political history. The divisions along Francophone and Anglophone lines occasioned by cultural heritage, demographic and monetary/fiscal orientation has had a destabilizing influence on ECOWAS. To illustrate this graphically, the Francophone countries constitute a unified monetary zone, using the Paris-backed CFA Franc (issued by a common central bank (BCEAO) as their single currency which is linked by common parity to the Euro (ECOWAS, 2006:4).

It is important to note that the monetary unification of Francophone countries based on the policy of assimilation notwithstanding, the zone is currently bedeviled by political instability, exemplified by violent change of democratic regimes in Conakry-Guinea and Guinea-Bissau (Iusophone country) in March 2009.

Conversely, the English speaking countries dominated by Nigeria –whose economy accounts for 54% (African Development Report (ADR, 2003:126) of the sub-region's is characterized by very loose integration efforts as reflected in

separate currencies, divergent tariff structure, unstable fiscal policies and lacking in macro-economic convergence – all required for the realization of economic integration. The low level of commitment and lack of political will resulting from unstable democratic environment account for this state of affairs.

As part of the hangover from colonial economy based on the production and export of Primary commodities, ECOWAS, tend to be characterized by low intra-regional trade because their economies do not complement one another. Intra-regional trade in ECOWAS, estimated at 15.6% of total exports in 2003 is lower than inter-regional trade (ADR, 2003:141).

There are persistent tariffs which are proving difficult to remove. This and other factors explain the delays in the adoption of ECOWAS Common External Tariff (CET). These constitute very serious impediment to the actualization of a customs union which is an essential plank on which economic integration rests. Intractable civil strife within ECOWAS and susceptibility of regimes to undemocratic change jointly affect intra-regional trade and integration efforts in general.

It is also pertinent to note that ECOWAS is faced with military issues and antidemocratic leaders. Democratic instability in the sub-region is becoming almost a permanent feature of political life as observed in recent times and also corroborated by African Development Report (ADR) 2001:103 which alluded to the recurrence of border conflicts and political instability as having tremendous effect on economic activities and integration efforts in the West African sub region.

Based on the foregoing, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

- How does democratic stability affect economic integration in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)?
- To what extent can democratic stability facilitate the attainment of Customs Union and Monetary Union among ECOWAS?
- Are there other remedial measures that can hasten the process of economic integration in ECOWAS ?

### **Theoretical Framework of Analysis**

This study has its theoretical base laid in the Integration theory. There are five variations of this theory namely: Functionalism; Federalism, Transactionalism; Neo-functionalism and Intergovernmentalism. However, the Transactional analysis or Transactionalism seems to explain this study better than others in view of its emphasis on economy, socio- culture and political identity. Other variants emphasize more on politics and political institutional integration.



The most important theorist in Transactional analysis is Karl W. Deutsch (1957). Donald Puchala (1971) and Echezona (1998) also contributed significantly to this school of thought. The Tenets of Transactionalism are as follows:

- It conceives or emphasizes integration at the level of economy, socio-culture and political identity.
- Through the measurement (based on massive collection of data of transactions in different economic and cultural regions - trade, travel, communication etc - the transactionalists are interested in describing patterns of integration and to investigate conditions under which a sense of community were formed.
- Deutsch (1957:5) introduced the concept of “ Security communities” into this theory, which he explained as “ a group of people which have become so “integrated” that they have attained within a territory, a sense of community and institutions and practices strong enough...” He expatiated that “A Security Community therefore is one in which there is real assurance that members of the community will not fight each other physically but will settle their disputes in some other way.”

Deutsch dichotomized Security Communities into “amalgamated” (understood as forming a large unit with governmental functions) and “ Pluralistic” types which could imply “ amalgamation without integration” and ... “integration without amalgamation” Deutsch, 1957:6).

Echezona (1998:46-47) reinforced the transactional theory of integration thus: “Transactions approach stresses that along the continuous of responding satisfactorily to the demands contained in transactions between nations, the population of the region attain a sense of community in which they have agreed that common problems can be resolved...” He corroborated that “Infact, Deutsch distinguishes between an “amalgamated...community”...and a “pluralistic...community”.

He averred further citing ECOWAS integration efforts as an example that “Karl Deutsch’s postulations are a necessity...and...equally require widespread practices and institutions which would yield a security community”. His allusion to “the intractable civil strife within member states of the ECOWAS” and the fragility of nation-states underscore this theory.

The relevance of this theory to a study on regional economic integration with ECOWAS as a case study can best be appreciated by its focus or emphasis on integration from an economic and socio – cultural point of view. The aims and objectives of ECOWAS are predominantly economic, namely “abolition of tariff and non- tariff barriers to trade; the elimination of all restrictions on factor movement; the harmonization of national, social and economic policies and the

unification of monetary, fiscal and counter- cyclical policies” (Akinyemi and Aluko, 1984:23).

In addition to the above, most of (the sixty- five point) ECOWAS treaty and supplementary protocol deal with one economic issue or the other ranging from trade liberalization; customs; production factor; cooperation in monetary and fiscal matters, transportation, and harmonization of policies/ institutions. Asante (1986: 210-234) corroborate this assertion.

Article 49 of the ECOWAS treaty dealing with socio-cultural matters emphasizes cooperation in social and cultural matters through exchange of social and cultural activities in the sub region. The Social and Cultural Affairs Commission has the responsibility for this. Transactionalism emphasizes economic integration through economic and social integration between members of the economic community, and these, the ECOWAS treaty, protocols, and activities reflect as the foregoing discussion show.

Asiwaju (1984:34) posited that economic and cultural interaction within the sub region predates ECOWAS while alluding that this “can be easily perceived from the history of Trans-Saharan trade which also covered both the savannah and the forest belts”. He averred further that “indeed as reflected in the records of early European explorers, trade was the main medium of contact among the West African peoples and the principal instrument of cultural homogenization in the sub-region”. The formation of ECOWAS is therefore an improvement on the pre-partition era economic arrangement in the sub- region.

Transactional analysis emphasizes measurement/data collection in transactions (in economic and cultural regions), this is also the pivot of the five-point convergence criteria (earlier highlighted as parameters for economic integration).

The revised treaty of ECOWAS dated 24 July 1993 and the Foreign Ministers’ decision of 3rd March, 1998 to make ECOMOG formally responsible for regional peace keeping (Axon, 2005:162) attest to the resolve of ECOWAS to maintain a security community as a tenet of Transactionalism.

The pursuit of regional economic integration in ECOWAS is an Ongoing process, in view of the fact that there are still obstacles or hurdles to surmount (as highlighted in the literature review), therefore ECOWAS at the moment may typify a “ pluralistic community” of “amalgamation without integration” in the words of Deutsch (1957:6).

The numerous civil strife, military intervention in politics by violent means, antidemocratic issues and “sit-tight” leaders in the subregion, starting from the Liberian crises in the 1980s to the recent unconstitutional change of government in Conakry-Guinea and Guinea Bissau in March 2009 illuminates

Echezona's reference to "intractable civil strife within ECOWAS" and "fragility of nation-states" in the sub-region.

### **Democratic Stability and Economic Integration in ECOWAS**

A very important finding of this paper is that the West African sub region cannot be said to be democratically stable. Although at the inception of ECOWAS in 1975, Nine out of the initial fifteen member states were under one form of democratic governance or the other (See Asante, 1986:209-210), the nature of governance hardly qualify for democracy. African Development Report (ADR) 2001:110-115 corroborates this finding by classifying political regime types into eleven. Out of these, five are strikingly distinct, namely: dominant party rule; presidential parliamentary; presidential – legislative democracy; military-backed dictatorship and "civilian- military" system.

The political history of the sub region reveal that some of the regimes/government that later paraded themselves as democratic were transmogrified from military rule to pseudo democracy with the same military leader sitting tight. As a matter of fact, from the late 1980s through the 1990s, the Sub region had the dubious distinction of gerontocracy (government by the old people) with the appropriate philosophy of "sit-tightism". The late Gnassingbe Eyadema of Togo and Felix Houphouet Boigny of Ivory Coast exemplify this.

It is also observable that change of government by violence and undemocratic means became predominant in the sub-region as coups and coup d' etat became a relay race with batons exchanged sometimes between army sergeants and captains. Burkina Faso, Benin, Liberia, Sierra Leone typify this. The brutal killing and removal from office of the Burkinabe leader - Thomas Sankara and sergeant Doe of Liberia, are typical examples.

Liberia under Charles Taylor became a sore thumb in the sub region, offering herself as one of the earliest few examples of intervention by ECOMOG- the sub regional force for peace keeping due to ethnic clashes and internecine wars fuelled by the avarice and rapacious tendencies of a self styled leader whose interest in the country's diamond mining superseded governance and the welfare of the people. Still on account of this, exported political instability to the neighbouring Sierra Leone, which also warranted ECOMOG intervention (for details, see Semenitari, 2006:22-24). Also see Axon, 2005:162 for details of political instability and sub regional intervention through ECOMOG.

Another political factor hindering the speedy realization of ECOWAS integration is the "fear of domination by Nigeria" due to its economic might. Abbas Bundu- a former Executive Secretary of ECOWAS alluded to this (Akinbobola, 1999:358). Infact , so palpable is this fear that leaders of the Francophone countries at several ECOWAS fora could not hide their feelings.

This fear is unfounded and baseless, Nigeria accounts for over 30% of ECOWAS budget and spearheaded the building of the \$27 million secretariat at Abuja in addition to other contributions and activities in ECOWAS (Nigeria, 2005:17, ECOWAS, 1992:9), but Nigeria is not detracting from the true spirit of brotherliness and team spirit of ECOWAS.

The stance by the francophone countries is a reflection of inherited colonial thinking and unwillingness to sacrifice for the collective benefit of the sub region. Unless and until this is done, such that the leading economies in ECOWAS like those of Nigeria, Ivory Coast and perhaps Guinea play the roles similar to the Indonesia - Malaysia – Singapore Growth Triangle (IMS-GT) and growth poles for the economic take – off of the Asian region (Sakbani, 1998: 19), regional integration would belong to the realms of fiction.

It is generally recognized that Socio- economic development cannot take place without stable political/ civil conditions and institutions, and this constitute the cornerstone of ECOWAS integration effort. However, as dismal as the picture painted in the foregoing discourse appear, African Development Report. (2001:112) posited that the scope of good economic governance in the sub region is widening. Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal were listed as examples of this good picture, perhaps due to the commitment and / or perceived transparency of Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo, John Kuffour and Abdulaye Wade in the respective countries.

It is pertinent to note the recent events in Guinea-Conakry and Guinea-Bissau as highlighting democratic instability in the Subregion. The illegal filling of a vacuum in leadership resulting from the death of President Lansana Conte in Conakry-Guinea by the military in that country has generate a lot of debates. A school of thought believes that there was no coup going by the etymological definition of the word “coup” which means “Shock as a result of collision of two bodies” or “outcome of any violent attack” (Akinterinwa, 2009), and that the military in Conakry-Guinea were simply rising to a patriotic duty of holding the country together after the demise of President Conte. The other school of thought posits that there was no violence, but there was shock which is change in elected government by unconstitutional means, and this makes it quite illegal. This tally with the position of ECOWAS and African Union Authorities.

In the Lusophone country of Guinea-Bissau, the death of the Chief of Defence Staff – General Tagwe na Waie through a bomb which detonated on the stair case to his office marked the height of animosity between the late CDS and President Vieira. Consequently, President Vieira was assassinated in the most dehumanizing form ever witnessed, it was alleged that he was not only decapitated, but had his private parts severed from his body in the process of assassination. ECOWAS authorities responded by suspending these countries

and refused to recognise the illegitimate regimes in Guinea-Conakry and Guinea-Bissau. These have been the experience of ECOWAS right from the Liberian crises in the 1980s through 1990s to date. ECOWAS integration efforts have been slowed down or bogged down more by military intervention and conflict management.

### **Democratic Stability and ECOWAS Customs Union**

The long – term goal of ECOWAS is to achieve complete market integration and a single customs union for the region within fifteen years. Member states are pursuing this lofty goal through some steps, strategies and institutions. For instance, in December 1999, member states approved the creation of a Common External Tariff (CET), although this is yet to be implemented. Another important long- term goal is, creating a single regional currency and harmonizing the economic and financial policies of member states, thus paving way for the creation of a unified monetary zone (see ADR, 2001:101 for details).

With respect to creating a single customs union, Nigeria which is undoubtedly the leading economy in the sub region operates one of the most complex external tariff structure with over fifteen tariff bands and custom duties varying from 0% to 100%. Trade liberalization is uncertain and inequitable, and frequent ad-hoc changes are made to the tariff and non- tariff nomenclatures (ADR, 2003:142). This, no doubt constitute serious obstacle to trade and the realization of a customs union which form an integral process of regional economic integration. It should be noted that a customs union is a free trade area with a CET. The participating countries set up CET policy in order to facilitate the realization of a custom union which has the objective of increasing economic efficiency, closer political and cultural ties between member States. Customs Union is usually established through trade pact which is still low in ECOWAS (ECOWAS,2005:68), as a result of unstable democratic environment and practice by many of the ECOWAS sit-tight leaders (living or dead) as reflected in Section 3:1 of this paper.

As a step towards regional integration, Nigeria; Benin; Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast; Ghana; Mali and Niger formed a Free Trade Area (FTA) in 2001 (the main ECOWAS FTA having been formed in January2000), not all member state have commenced implementation (ECOWAS, 2005:66).

The ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS) which came into effect in January 1990 is one major step towards actualizing a customs union. It has the objective of eliminating customs duties and levies of equivalent effect; removal of tariff and non tariff barriers to trade and establishment of a Common External Tariff (CET) to protect goods produced in member states to the extent that local industries can compete favorably with cheap imported products in order

to check dumping of goods in member states. It also has the potential of encouraging entrepreneurial development.

However, as beneficial as the above scheme could have been, it has obvious challenges which a 2002 West African Monetary Institute's (WAMI) Annual Report/Statement of Accounts also corroborates. The challenges are: Lack of Legal status hence full duties are charged by customs authorities, barriers to movement of goods due to road blocks at borders; lack of adequate awareness and sensitization of the scheme; hence the inability of companies to tap fully its opportunities; and rejection of some products by member states from total tariff exemption even after admission of companies to the scheme (for details, see WAMI, 2002:35).

Inadequate sensitization and inability to make political and economic sacrifices which are traceable to lack of enduring/stable democratic culture and practice account for this state of affairs among ECOWAS.

The harmonization and simplification of Customs procedures and clearance as well as adoption/implementation of the harmonized text by member states is an important ingredient in facilitating intra- community trade. Member states are still grappling with the procedure/study for drawing terms of reference for the adoption of a customs code and an ECOWAS Customs Value (ECOWAS, 2005:67).The foregoing calls for more commitment and political will on the part of ECOWAS leaders, national coordinating units and agencies charged with various functions in the integration programme. Unstable democratic environment in the sub region have dampened the commitment and necessary political will on the part of vital stakeholders in the realization of a customs union.

### **Democratic Stability And ECOWAS Monetary Union**

The creation of a single regional currency is another issue that is important for the realization of economic integration. It is pertinent to note that the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) comprising all the Francophone countries (except Guinea) "is by far the most integrated economic grouping in Africa" (ADR, 2003:141). Besides having a common currency (CFA Franc), the eight member states have a common central bank (BCEAO) and virtually uniform policies. This is explicable in the light of colonial policy of assimilation and not necessarily through democratic stability. Instability of regimes in recent times as captured in Section 3.1 is becoming a recurring decimal in the Francophone countries.

Considerable progress has been made in harmonizing fiscal, economic, business and legal procedures. The impact of colonialism and associated cleavages is noteworthy here. These explain the sharp dichotomy between the Francophone

and Anglophone with respect to efforts at monetary union. By 2005 for instance, the UEMOA countries have met the convergence criteria as the table below shows.

*Table 1: Total Number of Convergence Criteria Met*

	Country	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	
							June	Dec/1
1.	Benin	5	6	7	6	6	6	6
2.	Burkina Faso	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
3.	Cape Verde	3	4	3	3	3	4	5
4.	Cote D'ivoire	5	5	5	5	5	6	6
5.	The Gambia	8	2	0	1	5	4	5
6.	Ghana	2	1	0	1	2	2	4
7.	Guinea	1	4	3	2	1	3	3
8.	Guinea Bissau	3	5	5	4	6	6	6
9.	Liberia	7	4	4	5	2	3	3
10.	Mali	6	5	6	6	6	6	6
11.	Niger	4	5	5	4	5	5	6
12.	Nigeria	5	4	3	4	4	4	5
13.	Senegal	6	8	8	7	6	6	6
14.	Sierra Leone	3	4	4	0	1	2	2
15.	Togo	4	5	6	6	5	4	5

*Source: ECOWAS Annual Report, 2005:55*

To reiterate, the convergence criteria include: restriction of budget deficit/GDP ratio of 4% ; maximum of 5% inflation rate; 6 months import cover; central bank's financing of budget deficit limited to 10% of previous year's fiscal revenues and harmonization of fiscal, economic and legal policies (ADR, 2003:138).

From the table above, it can be observed that the UEMOA countries have been consistent in their performance on the convergence criteria over a period of six years as presented, due largely to the policy of assimilation than to democratic stability. Siddiqi (2003:3) attempted an explanation of this state of affairs thus:

“The franc zone countries are more ‘fiscally prudent’, have lower fiscal deficits, higher state revenues and subdued inflation compared with the region’s Anglophone countries”. He elaborated that “Senegal’s inflation in 2002 averaged just 2.2% , substantially below Ghana’s 14.5% or Nigeria’s 13%”. Siddiqi (2003) predicated his work on an IMF paper with a conclusive caution to the Francophone countries restraining them from joining “the enlarged monetary zone because of economic risks”. The paper affirmed that “the effect of belonging to a single central bank committed to maintaining conservative monetary policies will be beneficial to ‘profligate’ big spenders like Nigeria and Ghana, but will work to the disadvantage of the more conservative, better-managed states”.

Although the above conclusion sounds rather imperial and suspect, it remarked with seeming altruism that “lack of fiscal convergence ... is the primary obstacle to the creation of a well-functioning and acceptable monetary union in West Africa”.

A common currency is vital to the actualization of a monetary union which the CFA (interpreted in French to mean French African Community) zone has achieved since 1945. “The CFA Franc is pegged to the French Franc and the French Treasury explicitly guarantees its conversion to the French franc (65% of the reserves of member states are kept in the Safes of the French Central Bank” (Vaknin, 2007:6). These and many more financial assistance and monetary discipline (which France lacks at home) were vividly elaborated by this author. This averment brings to the fore the practicality of the assimilation policy in the Francophone.

ECOWAS (2006:4) corroborates the above and earlier assertion by ADR (2003) on the common currency status by WAEMU and added that the CFA Franc “was linked by fixed parity to the Euro in 2001” The colonial policy of assimilation accounts for this level of integration by the francophone West African states. Akinyemi and Aluko (1984:23) however submitted that “...British West Africa had little or no experience in structured economic cooperation” having dismantled their institutions like the West African Currency Board, Cocoa Board and others shortly after Colonial rule. These may have entrenched the dichotomy between the Francophone and Anglophone countries. WAMI, 2002:33 underscored this while alluding to “the relatively poor performance of WAMZ countries compared to those of the UEMOA”.

The West African Monetary Zone (WAMZ) comprising the Anglophone West African countries and Guinea received impetus in 1999 as a means of fast tracking the regional integration process. The aim was to create a second monetary zone for the sub region and ultimately merge for the creation of a single ECOWAS currency with convertibility. Attempts at realizing this, had severally met with failure, resulting in rescheduling the launch of “eco” (the anticipated



regional currency) till December 2009, perhaps due to lack of commitment and political will which results from unstable democratic environment/culture.

The West African Monetary Agency (WAMA) and the West African Monetary Institute (WAMI) are the institutions saddled with monitoring the implementation of the regional monetary cooperation and the monitoring of multilateral surveillance respectively of WAMZ. The UEMOA Commission and WAMZ authorities are still affected by long consultations/ deliberations. It would appear that countries in the WAMZ are slowing down the process of monetary cooperation/ union due to inexperience and other institutional inadequacies as stated above. WAMZ institutions such as the Technical Committee, Committee of Central Bank Governors and the Convergence Council need to double their efforts.

A durable economic and monetary union according to Siddiqi (2001:20) "demands strong intra-governmental cooperation, more transfers of national sovereignty over key areas of economic policy making and sustained geo-political regional stability." This calls for strong institutions guaranteed by democratic stability, necessary commitment and sacrifice in order to achieve the "strong intra- governmental cooperation". ECOWAS, unfortunately is not intended to be supranational by creation (see Asante, 1986:73), therefore, more transfers of national sovereignty to the body may not be easily realizable and this slows down the integration process.

A synopsis of the foregoing shows that Monetary union implies that "joining always means giving up independent monetary policy and with a sizeable slice of national Sovereignty" This is in addition to other issues like members relegating the regulation of their money supply, inflation, interest rates and foreign exchange rates to a central monetary authority. These would appear to be a tall assignment or sacrifice for the WAMZ countries that are far from integration. This underscores the issue of commitment and sacrifice as driving force for regional economic integration.

A final obstacle to the integration process is the manifest low level of implementation of community acts, decisions and protocols by member states. This is corroborated by (ECOWAS, 2005:49 and xix- xxx) showing that some protocols dating back to 2001 have only been signed by two member states.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The Study traced the evolution and rationale for regional economic integration using ECOWAS as focus. The origin, structure and institutional framework for integration in the sub region were identified. It is observable that the motivation for regional economic integration differs, depending on the level of growth/ development of the region. The study resting on its observation on the

activities of some ECOWAS institutions indicated the need for concerted efforts and coordination of some institutions (WAMA, WAMI, WAEMU and WAMZ) whose main activities are to facilitate the process of achieving a customs union and monetary union in the sub region.

The monitoring of policy measures and strategic issues required for effective and sustainable ECOWAS customs union and monetary union is noteworthy. In this respect, special mention must be made of the convergence criteria and other macro economic and administrative policy framework required for a timely actualization of ECOWAS customs union and monetary union and the role of democratic stability in this cannot be over-emphasized.

From the findings of this study, the prevalence of democratic instability as a factor in the slow pace of achieving the objective of a borderless West Africa, with specific emphasis on Customs Union and Monetary Union was highlighted. In this regard, the need to cultivate democratic norms/practice and entrench institutions cannot be overemphasized.

In the light of the findings, the article recommends as follows:

Fiscal discipline for the countries constituting the West African Monetary Zone. The profligacy characteristic of their economies is a serious obstacle to the realization of the convergence criteria. The achievement of customs union and monetary union becomes difficult in this situation. It is however arguable that a stable democratic culture can engender the requisite fiscal discipline.

The leading economies in the sub-region should be more proactive in order to play pivotal roles as growth poles and by setting examples in democratic norms that can disperse or provide a “trickling-down” effect of socio-economic growth/development to the remaining economies. This is in addition to the benefits derived from economies of scale. Through this, the process of fast tracking the realization of a durable customs union and monetary union can be made possible.

- The institutions whose activities can hasten the actualization of customs union and monetary union especially those concerned with “convergence” and monetary union (WAMZ, UEMOA, WAMA, WAMI) should show better commitment to the process, and of course, effective coordination hinged on democratic practices and culture that can facilitate the ratification, adoption and implementation of related treaties, protocols and decisions geared towards speedy realization of a borderless West Africa.

- Deliberate and conscious efforts should be made by ECOWAS leaders to cultivate and sustain democratic norms and practices which can usher in a stable democratic order in the subregion. This has the tendency of redressing the myriad of issues and challenges associated with the prevalence of democratic instability in West Africa.

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