

## **Liberia's Post-1990 Ecomog Incursion: An Assessment of Anglophone – Francophone Dichotomy**

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### *Abstract*

*One of the successful stories of regional economic communities (RECs) today is that of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Founded in 1975, it is a conglomeration of states having similar but distinctively different colonial experiences in West Africa; the Anglophone, the Francophone and the Lexiphone. Contemporary political events in the world had made ECOWAS flexible and receptive to reforms. Although there was little internal wrangling within the ECOWAS member states, because of the transformation and expansion of the economic bloc's re-establishing, its grasps over political, security and social events within the sub-region after the cold war, the development brought division in ECOWAS, and expressed such in the form of Anglophone and Francophone dichotomy, for reason of not agreeing to military intervention. The ECOWAS shift from non-interference principles to military intervention was noticeable when ECOMOG intervened in Liberia's 1990 internal conflict; thereby changing her non-interference posture to that of collective security action as an alternative in the sub-region. This paper attempted to establish the shift in ECOWAS security paradigm, leading to a division within ECOWAS member states along 'linguistic lines' and how this division affected ECOWAS in the post-Liberian intervention. Additionally, it x-rayed the nature, manifestation and consequences of such dichotomy. The paper recommended a policy option for ECOWAS to guard against future distractions among the member states in order not to divert ECOWAS from achieving her goals of economic integration.*

**Keywords:** *ECOWAS, Post-1990, ECOMOG'S incursion, an assessment, Anglophone - Francophone, dichotomy.*

### **Introduction**

Since after independence, states have been involved in regional integration as a strategy for solving developmental related challenges in Africa. This is for reasons of the accrued benefits of "regional integration" that have been identified as a pivotal factor in the promotion of economic development. This was among the reasons a number of regional integration

arrangements has been established in the last four decades to ‘promote regional cooperation accompanied by continental development (Friday, 2016).

The economic community of West African States, ECOWAS, is one of these examples of regional economic communities (REC’s) in the world. It was founded in 1975, with the sole objective of economic integration within the member states of ECOWAS, and a drive towards an improved economy and enhanced livelihood of the people (Oja, 1980). The West African sub-region, has an abundance of various raw materials, both minerals and natural resources. In addition, the human capital found within that West African sub-region is economically productive and is engaged in farming, fishing, animal rearing and other agricultural activities.

The language barrier that exists within this is enormous. One of the legacies the colonial masters banqueted to the people of these regions is the existence of the dominant colonial master language and partly culture. Broadly and language wise, the West African states have three broad colonially-oriented lingua-franca; the Anglophone, the Francophone and the Lusophone. These divisions come out glaringly because of the colonial dominance that existed during colonialism and to some extent that exists within neo-colonialism, either as a hangover effect of colonialism or because of the present-day neo-colonialism as it unfolds now and then, with-in the relationships of the erstwhile colonies, and the colonial mentors. This has long-term policy effects or rather consequences on the states of Africa that, at a point in time, had been colonised and is still left with the experience. Only the states of Liberia and, to some extent, Ethiopia, were never colonised in Africa. The indirect rule system of the British and the French policy of assimilation as it existed then, during the colonial master’s dominance in their spheres of influence has succeeded in orienting the citizens according to how they were administered during the colonial days.

In ECOWAS West Africa, for example, the existence of these viable regional groups, came at the time when the cold war was still in place, and the global political equation was of bipolarism and the balance of power antics also characterised the politics between and among the states in the international system. ECOWAS came as a single economic bloc, bringing the Anglophone, the Francophone and the Lusophone states into one single ‘union’, despite the different posture of nationalism and anti-colonial postures, both “Peaceful and radical.... how possible is the ...for the process of integration to neutralise the burden of external inclined links, the action as well as the interest-laden relationships with ex-colonial powers” who still are having a visual signal in Africa (George, 1994).

So many academic papers have been written on the issues of the balkanisation of the anglophone-francophone, the division within and the implications for ECOWAS as a group. In the literature, little or no work was found on the nature, dimension and consequences of such dichotomy between the English and the French-speaking countries in West Africa, with respect to the new conflict management approach and under the banner of ECOWAS. This paper, therefore, sought to examine the nature of dichotomy, the dimension of the

dichotomy and the consequences of the dichotomy in the post-cold war period, and attempted an evaluation of its implications for ECOWAS as a group. This analysis is with reference to Liberia's conflict, and the approach to intervention by the ECOWAS as a body to virtually bifurcate the organisation into two different linguistically– inclined groups. Lastly, the paper made recommendations for good policy options for ECOWAS as a bloc, so that it does not get distracted on its economic objective.

### **Background to the Formation of Ecowas**

ECOWAS was created when on 28<sup>th</sup> May 1975, General Gowon of Nigeria and President Eyadema of Togo signed a treaty providing for the setting up of what the Togolese President called “an embryo of a West African Economic Community” (John, 2012). Fundamentally, ECOWAS, is to ‘promote co-operation and integration, leading to the establishment of an economic union in West Africa to raise the living standards of its peoples while maintaining an enhanced economic stability, at the same time fostering relationships between and among member states, so as to contribute to the progress of Africa's development’(ECOWAS, 1993).

Furthermore, ECOWAS seeks to ensure “the harmonisation and co-ordination of national policies and the promotion of integration; the establishment of a common market; and the establishment of an economic union, including the creation of a monetary union (Elowson, 2010), as stipulated via the 1993 revised treaty. Article 3(2) (a) provides that all national policies, programmes, and activities in the domain of agriculture, (exploitation of) natural resources, industry, transport and communication, energy, trade, money, finance, taxation, education, information, culture, science, technology, tourism and legal matters” should be harmonized.

Geographically located in Western Africa, south of the Sahara, the ECOWAS community is composed of 15 politically sovereign independent states, namely of the “Republic of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo” (Udoh, 2015).

From the onset, Nigeria's concern to limit the external influence of the external world in the political and economic activities of the sub-region explains her proactive role in making sure that ECOWAS succeeds. While “regional integration was still proclaimed as a prime objective of the Community, its emergence reflected Nigeria's pervasive concern with stabilising and controlling its external environment” (Daniel, 1983). The Francophone states that the sub-region, Ivory Coast and Senegal in particular, see Nigeria as ‘a threat’ against the French interest in the region because of “Nigeria's new political and economic influence in West Africa”(Daniel, 1983). He further argued that the creation of the *Communauté économique de l'Afrique de l'ouest* (C.E.A.O.) a French alternative for ECOWAS, was an attempt by six francophone countries - the Ivory Coast, Senegal, Niger, Upper Volta, Mali, and Mauritania, with the active support of France to counterbalance.

The biggest threat to the solidarity of ECOWAS members has been internal and comes from the cultural divide between its Francophone and Anglophone members. Francophone and Anglophone Africans have had their suspicions about each other's lifestyles and administrative competencies, with the Francophones believing they were more attuned to the sophisticated lifestyles of the French (Bamfo, 2013).

### **Methodology**

This qualitative research paper used a thematic form of data presentation and analysis. Data was collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviews, with 8 questions on the schedule. The collected data was coded using NVivo software, version 10, to organise the data. The analysis was then made from the inferences and the structure of the data as organised by the software. Seven (7) respondents were interviewed; six from the ECOWAS headquarters in Abuja, Nigeria, and an academic, who is also a scholar on West African issues and affairs. A model was developed from the software, and the themes created are discussed in the analysis.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The explanation by scholars on the type of Africa's post-colonial states with their colonizers is that of exploitation. The imperial West can go to every length to maintain the exploitative relationships between them and their colonies.

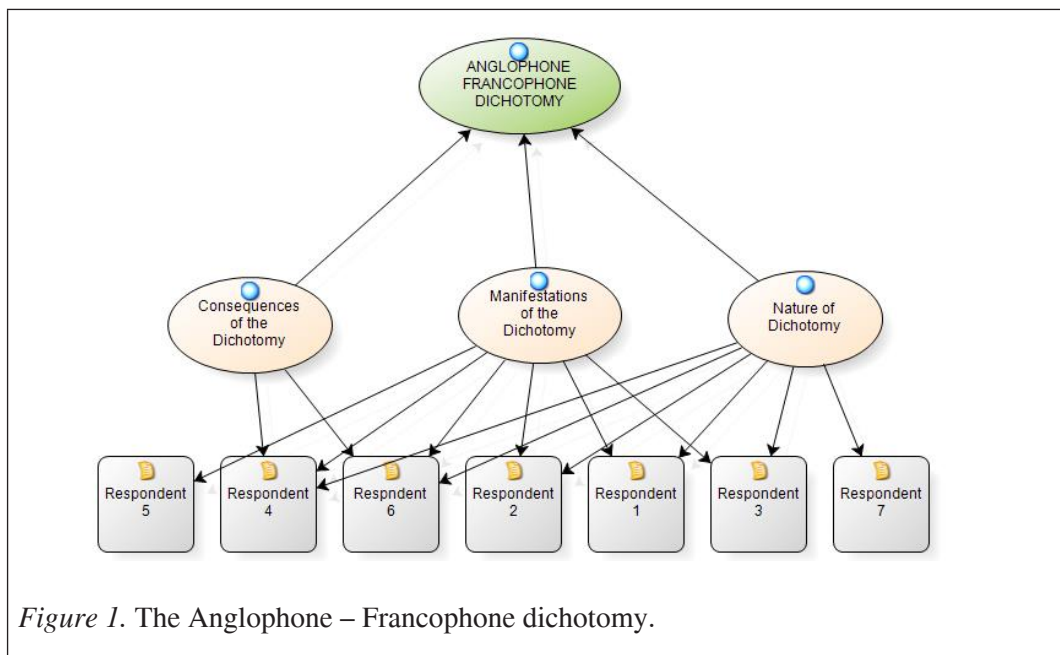
Neo-Colonialism is "the existence of ongoing influence of the former colonial powers" (Martin, 1985). It is a brand new "form of domination applied after the colonial period "by the former colonisers on their ex-colonies (Crozier, 1964). It is also seen as a new process by "imperialist powers with new hidden mechanisms in order to reinforce capitalism maximise profit and maintain the economic, political, ideological and military influence of colonial times, (Vajrushev, 1974). Putting all these, Haag (2012) argues that:

neo-colonialism is here defined as a retro-alimenting system of domination and exploitation installed and preserved by the former colonial ruler in its ex-colony, in which economic, financial and military means serve to keep in power favourable leaders and impose favourable policies which again secure economic and financial benefits.

In the absence of colonialism, neo-colonialism strives through different hidden means and processes in West Africa by maintaining social, political and cultural ties with the imperial West that colonised them. The francophone ECOWAS states for instance, still maintain military ties with France. With this, the loyalty, commitments, dedication and contributions of the francophone states, in ECOWAS, will always be questionable, and division is bound to occur, to serve the interest of the 'imperial master'.

### **The Model**

This model is a pictorial presentation of how the data collected in the interview, was coded, organised and presented. The data collected was synchronised with the literature to analyse the project and the issues, thematically construed and addressed by this study.



*Figure 1. The Anglophone – Francophone dichotomy.*

### **The Nature of the Dichotomy**

All the states in West Africa except Liberia went through the colonial rule before attaining self-independence. The ‘principal colonisers’ were Britain, France and Portugal, thereby translating their ‘subject’ along the linguistic barrier of Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone. The institutionalisation by the colonial masters, of these divisions among the people of West Africa occurred through the creation of separate political units and divided societies. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, boundaries were drawn arbitrarily, without recourse to ethnic, linguistic and cultural barriers. This picture is captured in the work of Aremu (2010), who cited Alabi (2006:57) and Cammack et al. (1988:13):

the colonization of Africa by European powers in the 19th century created political units that divided ethnic groups in some cases and combined rival groups in others. As currently composed, boundaries of most Africa states were arbitrarily drawn without regard to ethnic and cultural affinities. This reveals that, in Africa, to them colonialism succeeded in many cases in dividing the same people across different boundaries.

This division in West Africa was revealed, when Nigeria seemed ‘so desperate’ to see the conflict in Liberia come to an end. This action was translated to mean that Nigeria, being an anglophone state, was having an agenda of hegemonic domination by the francophone states within ECOWAS. This perception, however, affected virtually every aspect of the efforts to solve the endemic crisis in Liberia; the mediatory role, the diplomatic angle as well as the use of the military force which became very difficult to be agreed upon by the member states. Howe (1996), captured the scenario that “ECOWAS itself was badly divided mostly between English and French speaking states-throughout ECOMOG’s existence. France had continued close political and economic links with its former colonies, most of whom feared Nigerian dominance of the region” (Howe, 1997:152). This affected the ECOWAS peace plan that was forward by the standing mediation committee (SMC). The strategy initially was, as put by Ademola (1995), that:

The initial response of Ecowas was to appoint a Standing Mediation Committee - with The Gambia, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, and Togo as members, and Guinea and Sierra Leone as observers - with a mandate to establish the facts in the Liberian crisis. This Committee, on the advice of Nigeria, created the intervention force with troops mainly from Nigeria, and smaller units from The Gambia and Ghana, and from Liberia’s immediate neighbours, Guinea and Sierra Leone.

Sighting the unprecedented turn on the initial plan, and believing that it was never the agreement as planned, and the changes coming because of advice from Nigeria, it heightened the fears of the French-speaking states, seeing the SMC making a turn at the original plan. The fact that, Nigeria had influenced the SMC to have a change in the outcome, and coming with ECOMOG as an option for the ECOWAS peace plan, anxiety set in, and Nigeria’s regional interests certainly were in play. This was the perception of the Francophones.

Lack of trust within the member states in the sub-regional economic bloc, led to the rejection of the ECOWAS peace plan by the “two leading Francophone countries in the region” (Rasheed & David, 2001) and these states did a lot to frustrate the military intervention via ECOMOG in Liberia because the ECOWAS peace plan was interpreted by the Francophone states as a “road show,” organised by the Anglophone (Rasheed and David, 2001; Max, 1996; Dóra, 2008), to perpetuate an agenda of anglophone control of West African states as a whole.

The data gathered from the interview respondents on the field, revealed further that the division existed because of the long existing politics between Britain and France. This politics also manifested itself in their ex-colonies in most parts of the world. The 6<sup>th</sup> respondent<sup>1</sup> for instance, remarked that.

I will be very frank with you. You see, the politics that goes on between Britain and France whichever way you handle it, you will see that it is affecting us in Africa (ECOWAS, September 2016).



The first respondent<sup>1</sup> also confirmed the existence of the division along linguistic lines, and believed that this was something that would continue to linger on within ECOWAS. He was confident that these differences were being managed within them.

Francophone, Anglophone and Lusophone divide, within ECOWAS is an issue that lingered on and perhaps, will continue to linger on for some time, but I can see that they are managing, the member states are managing these differences<sup>3</sup>.

The second respondent explained that the impact of colonialism or rather certain legacies, which the colonial masters, bequeathed to their colonies in the region still impeded both policy decisions and social relations among member states. However, these influences from the colonial masters “should not deter” ECOWAS from her objectives. In his words, he posits that;

we know, that this issue of colonisation is what we have been suffering.. when you trace back to history even in Nigeria, and the other member states, and we know that some of these colonial masters have influence over some of our decisions but we don't, as a body, internationally, we come to agree that, this should not deter the aims and objectives of what we want to achieve of what we want to achieve<sup>4</sup>.

The fact that such colonial masters' influence exists, and even influences some or most of the decisions of ECOWAS, certainly realising the economic integration agenda of the institution can hardly be achieved. France for example, had created the French equivalent of ECOWAS, the CEAO. France funded the “creation of the *Communauté économique de l'Afrique de l'Ouest* (CEAO)” in 1970, to enlist the francophone states of “Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal” as members. This action by France, was seen by Nigeria as a neo-colonial economic outfit meant to increase the necessities or wants of France by the Francophone West Africa (Emola, 1995) . There are facts from the academic literature that France was never comfortable with the growing relevance of Nigeria in West Africa. This perhaps might jeopardise their interests, particularly economic interests in West Africa. This did not get down well with France in particular and hence looked for possible avenues to contain the growing influence of the Nigerian states. Offu & Okechukwu (2015) content that.

Nigeria in the 1990s down to the new millennium was described by the CIA World Fact Book as “a regional power” with a growing sense of self-assurance and a developing capability to demonstrate it. In the three decades since independence...[Nigeria]sought and played various roles as regional leader, peacekeeper, mediator, and arbiter.

This is certainly one of the reasons why France was never comfortable with Nigeria. Nigeria, for many reasons, took the funding of ECOWAS as a challenge so as to contain the influence of France's interests in the sub-region. These developments, certainly would affect not only the relationship between France and Nigeria on the one hand, and Nigeria and the

francophones on the other, but also affect the policy decisions of ECOWAS especially on any issue that France, would have interest in. This agreement was in line with the opinion of the second respondent.

The respondent confirmed also, of the existence of the division in ECOWAS especially among the Anglophone and the Francophone member states of ECOWAS, but ECOWAS had moved ahead of such divisions already. He notes that sometimes scholars and academicians exaggerate the position of things from their perspectives. In his words.

So, it exists, but does not really... we try to move ahead, not look at it, is still scholars that say..., I will give you example, maybe you don't know, I am trying to widen your scope, knowledge about how scholars frame things. You know after the crises in Liberia, you know it straight to Sierra Leon, Guinea Bissau, as of 2000, there was, in Ivory coast, Cote d'Ivoire, apart from this recent one happened in 2010, Gbago, case, they also had crises, then, when it was ongoing, in 1999 Guinea Bissau, was a member of ECOWAS, they gave their notice to withdrew their membership, because the treaty says you can withdraw your membership after giving a one year notice. In 2000, they were allowed to go, they left, scholars, researchers, like you started, then no body... the reason for their pulling out was not stated in their meeting, we just see a final communique in their membership, but trying to interpret it, to analyse it that because of their colour, because of their tribe, they left, that if the minority takes over government, ECOMOG will aid them to come into power. Number two, the Arab Maghreb, they feel they may benefit more, if they belong to the Arab Maghreb Union. But at the end of the day, my own opinion, I think they were right, they wanted to come back, don't know better why they wanted to live, I think they wanted to belong to Arab Maghreb Union. My thinking then, it's all about politics, I am privileged to travel to some member states, when Libya was buoyant, trying to spoil member state with, some countries with their money, if you go to Niger, you will see Hotel Libya, is their investment, you go to Mali, if you go to Burkina Faso, some of these places, so, I am not talking as an ECOWAS staff now, I am talking as a research person with you, we are brain storming, so I am thinking Gaddafi did the same to some of these people, and lobbied them, I remember he attended some of our summits and said we are toothless bulldog these and that, he was using money to influence some of them, I am sure he engineered some of these things and they pulled out, my own thinking, at a time they wanted to come back I don't know what happened, because, I remember Ibn Chambas, in one of the meetings, he opens to say that Guinea Bissau said they will come back that year<sup>5</sup>.

He further raised many issues about politics, especially how other external forces permeated the member states with inducements, investments and promises. These inducements affected what I term as "the degree of loyalty" of member states to the mother body ECOWAS. I included this long quotation as part of the coded response, because it has thrown so much light, on the 'non-commitments' of some member states to the principles and ideals, which ECOWAS stood for, and also reveals the extent of the external influence other states have



on some of the member states. Therefore, if things like that could happen, and are still happening, states having substantial influence on states within ECOWAS, like France, having effective control of her ex-colonies, then many issues pertaining to policy decisions are susceptible to be influenced. Some ECOWAS decisions at the community level are bound to carry certain elements of external influence, and therefore, bound to be manipulated in line with her interest or her foreign policy interests within the West African region.

To the 3<sup>rd</sup> respondent, the division within the ECOWAS member states because of language barriers was not healthy to ECOWAS and the entire West African community. Allowing this division to continue to exist, there was no way how ECOWAS would be able to achieve her stated goals of regional economic integration with a 'divided house'. He noted that, though disagreements were inevitable and there were always "different paradigms" of looking at the same issues, such a division was not healthy for ECOWAS. These were his words. Yes, it was healthy, because that is what ECOWAS was built on to achieve where it is today. There were to be conflicts, there were going to be disagreements, there were going to be different paradigms and approaches of looking at the same situation.<sup>6</sup>

The 4<sup>th</sup> respondent saw the division within the ECOWAS institution as normal, meaning that because, different states with differing cultural and political experiences and exigencies were represented in ECOWAS, you must have some differences exhibited in the way things are done. Additionally, he opined that the ECOWAS interest should always have been the most important issue, which should always occupy a prime of place. He pointed the ECOWAS "major formula", stemming from her treaty was what has always been used to develop the conflict prevention framework and consensus. On his submission on the division of ECOWAS members' states, he posits that.

Well, if you talk about division, I think this is normal, because when you have a number of states, because interests vary, although now the interest now needs to be located in a major formula, which is the formula provided by the ECOWAS treaty from which it develops the ECOWAS conflict prevention framework....So the ultimate goal is to secure peace and that has been done, that is being done because it is a long process the process is still on, we are throwing everything at it to ensure that, at the very end things will be fine wherever ECOWAS needed or needed to intervene militarily.<sup>7</sup>

Adding to that, the goal was to secure peace in Liberia, which had been done, but there are a lot of processes still to be done. The issue of the division was sparked by the standing mediation committee's (SMC)'s decision to intervene in Liberia militarily despite the lack of a protocol authorizing ECOWAS to do that. But all the problems within are surmountable and that ECOWAS is doing all it could to overcome these divisions.

To the 7<sup>th</sup> respondent, though the division was real, he pointed out that one of the consequences of these divisions within the member states on language grounds was that

the implementation of “decisions and other administrative actions might suffer. There always would be issues whenever there were issues before decisions were reached, and implemented. He noted that.

Decisions and other administrative actions might suffer a logical implementation, due to the divisions, which has certain elements of heterogeneity. Also, these differences can be said to be unavoidable because of the cultural difference that is inherent in the nature and character of the states found within the economic community<sup>8</sup>.

Coalesced with the respondents' views, issues of dichotomy between the anglophone and the francophone in the ECOWAS community was glaring. It was an issue which a majority of the respondents opined that it must exist for reasons of having different culture, with different colonial orientation and behaviour coming together to live as one, and because of the external influences of the former colonial masters.

### **The Manifestation of the Dichotomy**

In ECOWAS, dichotomy between the francophones and the anglophones was manifest in many ways, but regarding the Liberian interventions of 1990 to 1997, it rekindled the traditionally colonial-embedded difference. The kick against ECOMOG as Howe (1996) and Max (1996) clearly point out was that they refused to contribute troops to ECOMOG and Burkina Faso, and accused the ECOWAS of bad procedural matters and “poor consultations” (Max, 1996). These were among the major issues that has made the ECOWAS to get divided during the crises. More specifically, May Sessay, posits that, the francophone ECOWAS member states were completely “unenthusiastic about the ECOMOG” idea (Max). Togo and Mali, were members of the “Standing Mediation Committee”, but refused to contribute troops at first, when ECOMOG was deployed to Liberia. Their refusal, despite being part of the decision at the SMC meeting, was to stand in solidarity with the resistance from Cote d'Ivoire. This decision to contribute troops to ECOMOG, to serve as peace keepers to Liberia and to observe a cease fire came as the recommendation or outcome of the SMC meeting. With these developments, the francophone states within ECOWAS believed that the Liberian conflict had given Nigeria, an opportunity to commence a “Pax-Nigerian” in the region. (Max, 1996). This is the belief of most of the francophone states, an idea infused in them by France, that Nigeria was having a serious hegemonic drive within the region and that Nigeria's irredentist tendencies should always be curtailed.

From the interviews conducted, there are divergent views and opinion on these. The 6<sup>th</sup> respondent opined that unless the colonial masters that earlier on had colonised the states in West Africa were united, it would continue to reflect the relationship of the masters within the subjects. This division not only manifested itself when it came to the Liberian conflict, it did exist during sporting activities, like football, and other social gatherings. In his words.

you can't run away from the division, until Britain and France are able to come together, then you expect African countries to now come together. Until then, there is going to be a division. ... You know, that division is also manifesting even in football! Every time we go for a gathering or some kind of election or whatever, it is very painful to me to, see how much Nigeria spends to sustain this ECOWAS, and yet when it comes to elective offices, all the Francophones will gang up, and they completely forget that it is Nigeria.... and they do it very easily and oppose us<sup>9</sup>.

Additionally, the respondent however, posited that given the opportunity to lead Nigeria, "if I were in charge of running the Nigerian government", he would "call it quits" with ECOWAS, because Nigeria in ECOWAS is only serving the interests of the French states found within the region.

ECOWAS had handled this division, which got manifested because of the creation of ECOMOG and the subsequent intervention in Liberia. France was behind the language and so many "policies in their countries", were still having a greater impact and control on their ex-colonies. In his words.

ECOWAS has since moved on beyond that stage of disagreement over the establishment of the ECOMOG.... because France, it is behind the language and is also behind a lot of policies in their countries, and still have staunch influence over these countries. Some of the interests of France naturally will clash with ECOWAS<sup>10</sup>.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> respondent, felt, that most of the member states still recognised their erstwhile colonial masters, and even took instructions from them. This was more related to the francophone states, with whom they still maintained so many agreements ranging from defence, economic to educational. He said.

that this issue of colonisation is what we have been suffering when you trace back to history even in Nigeria, and the other member states, and we know that some of these colonial masters have influence over some of our decisions but we don't, as a body, internationally, we come to agree that, this should not deter the aims and objectives of what we want to achieve of what we want to achieve<sup>11</sup>

To the 3<sup>rd</sup> respondent, the fact that there was an inherent difference in the culture of the people belonging to the ECOWAS community, certainly there must be misunderstanding that may arise from certain prejudices. The professional training and skills, orientations of "military doctrine" and so many things were different for the anglophones and the francophones. He puts it this way.

the military training is different, the military orientation is different, most of our Anglophone officers or soldiers were trained by the British. Now you have the

French approach, the French strategy, the French military doctrine, so, those things we are going to, is three-strange bed fellows coming together, there will be issues, but over time ECOWAS has learn to, you know, have harmony, you know, to create a harmony on these things. But, the central thrust of my own point is that, those things were necessary to achieve the ECOWAS we have today<sup>12</sup>.

The 4<sup>th</sup> respondent, remarked that, for the fact that ECOWAS constituted member states with diverse cultural and language characteristics, differences would always be there. The most important thing was to always look at how we could move forward, since ECOWAS was able to move ahead of the difference, at whatever level. He submits that:

Now, well, there were differences, but I don't think we should dwell on the differences, we should now dwell on the fact that at the end, there is a resolution of those differences... language and culture differences are differences and they would remain differences, whether at the interpersonal level or at a more corporate community or governmental level<sup>13</sup>.

Additionally, he added that “the good thing about the international system”, was that international relations had its own rules on ‘bilateral and multilateral relations within state actors and the like; these rules should be made to govern relationships. These rules help to tackle tensions, whenever there are issues to do with such differences. This framework exists among the actors. He said that.

But the good thing about the international system, is that, over the years, key actors and key players have seen the need to put in place a set of rules to guide bilateral, multilateral relationships among member states, among states, now, so, this framework, there are many of them that govern relationships, what they try to do is to reduce or remove tensions that might have arise from the differences in religion, in language or in tradition<sup>14</sup>.

Lastly, he concluded that, while admitting that there were disagreements, “reason prevailed and decisions were taken” and the needful was implemented. There was a struggle among the member states on “who takes the lead, who should be in charge? “Citing examples that such struggles for wanting to always be in control also happens in other regional bodies. There should always be problems and challenges, but the ability to surmount these problems and challenges collectively makes the institution or organisations functional and relevant. His conclusion was:

So, my summary is that, yes, there was some disagreement on that basis but at the end of the day, reason prevailed, decision was taken and decision was implemented, and we learned lessons from these things. So, what happened in Mali, many, many years after, was also about who should take the lead, who should be in charge, that

was something that we also need to think about, when things happen, not just here but also in other regions. In Africa for instance, there is usually some undercurrent of context between the African Union and the regional economic grouping, as to who should take the lead? This is another dimension of the crisis, the conflict that we are trying to manage.... It will come up as a problem or as a challenge but it is made, it is resolved, before there, we now we will now agree that, well ok, you take the lead, people will argue for, argue against, at the end of the day you all come to an agreement, so and that is the whole purpose of international relations is to find ways, to make sure that countries work together, international organisations work together in the best interest of the International community, and that is what we saw, and that is what we would keep on seeing. There would always be problems, there will be challenges, the spirit that drives it makes it different that in spite of these challenges, in spite of these problems, we would overcome and go on ahead to deliver what we need to deliver<sup>15</sup>.

The 5<sup>th</sup> respondent viewed the issues in this manner. The existence of the anglophone and the francophone divides within ECOWAS made it difficult for ECOWAS to achieve its objectives. Most member states in ECOWAS did not contribute their quota, towards the growth and upliftment of the regional body. That, apart from aligning themselves to other smaller sub-regional unions within the West African region, most francophone member states was not up to date with their payment of financial dues to ECOWAS. Additionally, they did not contribute better ideas on of how problems should be solved within. He however, wanted the politics in ECOWAS to remain, but that should not be allowed to muddle the ECOWAS objectives. His remarks were:

Now the Francophone and the Anglophone, you know, are what is making ECOWAS not achieve its objectives, because the division among these two-linguistic sectors, is creating so many difficulties that most of the member states are refusing to contribute their quota to the growth and development of ECOWAS. As I told you earlier, most of them are aligned to certain key smaller unions, and that is why at the end you discover that many of them are refusing to pay their annual dues, many of them are no more aligned to ECOWAS, many of them do not support ECOWAS in any way, many of them do not contribute their,....they don't give a better idea as to how problems should be solved. So, the politics in ECOWAS should remain, but at the same time, it would not disorganise ECOWAS as long as ECOWAS stands by its objectives<sup>16</sup>.

The West African sub-region has many smaller political unions or groups, which other ECOWAS member states belong to. To him, more loyalty would zeal the participation if given to these smaller unions by many member states, like the MANO River unions (MRU) a small organisation belonging to Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. All these are ECOWAS member states, but have another body, different from ECOWAS. His argument is that, member states should give more attention to this smaller organisation or groupings, and not contribute much more ideas on how ECOWAS should be made to move forward. The question of loyalty or divided loyalty to ECOEAS is still manifesting in this submission.

The ideal, he argues, is for ECOWAS to focus on its ideal objectives of regional economic integration; the politics within ECOWAS will not stop ECOWAS from achieving its goals. I do not see this as being healthy if local politics exists within ECOWAS for obvious reasons; member states may have a priority when it comes to certain programmes, to connive and constitute a cog in the policy conception; also, when such a policy is conceived, and it is not in the interests of the member states in other smaller unions and groups, its implementation would be jeopardised. It is therefore not healthy in any way to have such local politics within either, based on the language difference or looking at other smaller organisational interests, which some other member states are into or align to in these respects.

These situations have really poised a challenge for ECOWAS, to really examine its protocol again. There are certain memberships, which ECOWAS should not have allowed her member states to hold while in ECOWAS, for it will jeopardise their interest and draw the organisation backward. Instead of moving ahead, the organisation will always be faced with the challenges of trying to settle issues of divisions, or spending so much time and energy to lobby the member states before policies are agreed upon and passed for action. ECOWAS should revisit such membership.

### **Consequences of the Dichotomy**

The presentation of the consequences of this division, emanated after the nature and manifestation of the Anglophone-francophone division in ECOWAS West Africa, taking into consideration the submissions made by the interviewees and synthesising these submissions with the existing literature.

Looking at the crisis that engulfed the state of Liberia in December 1998, and the subsequent deployment of the ECOWAS troops to Liberia, and also the many issues of legality and otherwise of these actions, the debates and arguments were injurious to ECOWAS. It was because the argument and counter arguments were counterproductive looking at the scenario on ground, the madness that was going on in Liberia, perpetuated by the rebel groups. This was because, there existed an organisation that had the same goals and objectives, but could not agree on a solution to the issue, which was bound to affect the entire member states negatively. Already, there were the issues of the refugees in Liberia, the issues of international citizens caught in the mayhem in Liberia, and issues of massive brutal killings and destructions of lives and properties. All these were not considered by others, and tended to halt the solution that would involve the military intervening in the crises in Liberia, in the name of politics the politics between the anglophone and the francophone states in the West African economic bloc, ECOWAS.

The issues of legality of intervention by ECOWAS (Bah, 2004) and (Ellis, 1995) have provided a clear position on issues of non-interference principles and of the UN and the OAU. On institutionalisation of the mechanism for collective security (Abass, 2000) provides an interesting argument on the relevance and importance of the mechanism. However, the



issues of Nigeria's hegemony and the anglophone control (Howe, 1997); Rasheed and David, (2001; Max, 1996); Bah, 2004) and the argument of the lack of mandate (Bah, 2004) opined, that they were advanced, by particularly the francophone states, to challenge the ECOWAS-agreed ECOWAS Peace Plan (EPP) to intervene militarily as recommended by the ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee Bah Sirjoh (2004) in his work titled, "ECOWAS and the Dynamics of Constructing a Security Regime in West Africa", captured the situation for intervention and the subsequent action of the francophone. He posits that.

The unprecedented nature of the ECOWAS initiative, however, triggered serious diplomatic and political controversy in the sub-region. The political and diplomatic acrimony that developed following the ECOWAS initiative divided the region into two opposing camps, mostly along linguistic lines. Whilst the intervening countries invoked humanitarian reasons amongst others for their intervention, those opposed to the action resorted to legalistic arguments anchored on the principles of sovereignty and non-intervention enshrined in the Charters of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU)<sup>17</sup>.

Looking at the responses of the respondents on the consequences of the anglophone and the francophone dichotomy, which came about because of the ECOWAS action in Liberia, the majority of the respondents submit that it is not healthy, and therefore bound to affect the ECOWAS as a body and the relationship between member states, taking the language angle. The response of the 6<sup>th</sup> respondent for instance was;

Let me tell you. It is these divisions that have made it almost impossible for ECOWAS to achieve her goals<sup>18</sup>.

The inability of ECOWAS achieving its goals as an economic bloc is because of these divisions. The possibilities of ECOWAS achieving its integration goals with such inherent historical divisions are very minimal. There is no any organisation that can achieve its objectives, with the existence of "in-house fighting".

...I never saw anything of benefit to Nigeria from ECOWAS, apart from the fact that we are the ones sponsoring everything. I think we have been sponsoring ECOWAS at a lost. Lost because the Francophone countries have contributed very little, very, very little with higher profit than Nigeria which has contributed so much with little profit<sup>19</sup>.

The 6<sup>th</sup> respondent was so pessimistic about any benefits that Nigeria could derive from ECOWAS. To him, Nigeria was only busy sponsoring ECOWAS at its detriment, that Nigeria is "sponsoring ECOWAS at a lost" Additionally, he posited that, looking at the contribution of the francophone states in ECOWAS, it was very minimal, but with a high profit, in comparison with Nigeria's input into ECOWAS, contributing much and reaping a minimal return. The francophone states were many in number in compares to the anglophone and the Lusophone states in West Africa. There was constant opposition, resistance and

hostile relationship between the French-speaking states and Nigeria, in the name of resisting Nigeria's hegemony in West Africa.

According to the fourth respondent, in the ECOWAS region, three languages are spoken; English, French and Portuguese. They are the official languages of the ECOWAS community. These cultural and language plurality will certainly have an impact on the seemingly single union, ECOWAS. It will have impacts on the social relationships of the member states. That "in ordinary relationship these differences could cause a problem. He said;

we always forget the fact that there are three languages and there are three countries that speak the other language, which is Portuguese. So, we know as a matter of fact that, in ordinary relationship these differences could cause a problem<sup>20</sup>.

He added that, while agreeing to the fact that there were some disagreements within the ECOWAS member states, which manifest them along the language barrier and on decisions taken to address the conflict, they came and went. We have seen that at the end of the day, "reason prevailed" on what was agreed upon, was implemented, and everybody had learnt their lessons. Also, many years after the Liberian crisis, the question of who "takes the lead"? or who should be in charge arises. The struggles for leading operations or having control whenever there were issues among the ECOWAS states, was one clear example of what happened many years after the crisis in Liberia. These divisions and the struggle for heading institutions, assignments and missions, is a phenomenon that resides with most of the African institutions, the African union and other regional groupings. The question among them always is who takes the lead?

So, my summary is that, yes, there was some disagreement on that basis but at the end of the day, reason prevailed, decision was taken and decision was implemented, and we learned lessons from these things. So, what happened in Mali, many, many years after, was also about who should take the lead, who should be in charge, that is something that we also need to think about, when things happened, not just here in other regions, that is, usually in Africa for instance, there is usually some undercurrent of context between the African Union and the regional economic grouping, as to who should take the lead?<sup>21</sup>

It is evident, from the interview data generated; these differences generally were traceable from the roots, as having linkage with the seed of discord which the colonial masters planted in Africa, decades after the reign of colonial authorities in Africa. The cultural and language differences planted because of the partitioning of Africa and flinging to different colonial masters, the different parts of the continent to colonise, have left behind a very serious problem whose its consequences are costly to the entire continent and the West African sub-region specifically.

ECOWAS, as a group, has three official "organisational or group languages"; English, French and Portuguese. The cultural attitude as well as the civil openness and maturity

differ in all the three cultures. These seem to play a greater role in shaping the attitude and behaviours of the states within the sub-region and the African continent. It also means therefore, that the relationship between the states in West Africa, will certainly have these elements of cultural differences arising from the different languages existing within the region. This refers to the dichotomy of the states in ECOWAS, in relation to the actions taken on the Liberian first crises (1990-1997), which led to the shift in ECOWAS' stance on external interference and intervention, thereby abandoning the principles of non-interference. It resurges the traditionally old 'rivalry' based on suspicion of hegemony by the francophones. The French states are not secured by the activities of the anglophone states, for Nigeria is West Africa's presumed 'hegemon' (Akin, 2012). If the moves by the anglophone states are genuine they might have come out of the desire to put things right. On the Liberian crisis and its subsequent 'invasion' by ECOWAS for instance, some scholars are of the view that Nigeria must get involved. Akin & Johnson posit that consequently, states like Nigeria were increasingly expected "to take charge of their neighbourhoods" and share the increasing problems of governance globally<sup>22</sup>; perhaps because of her relative strong economy, with a large military institution and the capacity to take charge of the situation in comparison to other states in the region.

Though one body with the aim of achieving a stronger economic union, 'the generation' of Liberian crisis and the way and manner the crises was handled by the member states of ECOWAS, got them divided rather than uniting it. The dimensions of the division clearly show that, rivalry and perhaps envy inherently exist in ECOWAS, and the most unfortunate aspect of the whole situation was staged because of the cultural identity and language differences. Max A. Sessay, mentioned the role of some member states in fuelling the crisis. He reports that:

There is evidence that Cote d'Ivoire, Libya and Burkina Faso provided the training, money and weapons for Charles Taylor and his rebels. Libya provided most of the weapons, oil and money; Burkina Faso contributed men and training; and Ivory Coast was not only Charles Taylor's major conduit for supplies and reinforcement, but also the country that prevented any discussion of the Liberian conflict in the Security Council in the first year<sup>23</sup>.

If some ECOWAS member states can aid in the organisation and execution of the rebellion within the ECOWAS community, then ECOWAS has a long way to crave for unity to serve a common purpose. Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso are ECOWAS member states. While they succeeded in contributing to the destabilisation of the community by aiding Charles Taylor with his insurgents to unleash mayhem in the state of Liberia, they also connived with other francophone states to frustrate a genuine effort to address the crises at the community level. They neither contributed much towards the peace process.

Three main issues are said to be the challenges or rather consequences of these dichotomy, which arose from the ECOWAS-ECOMOG intervention. Apart from institutionalising the

division of the community members further into two major camps on language differences, it has proven that it will be very difficult for the ECOWAS member states to have an institutionalised regionally-based military institution that can be used by the community with the same or uniform military training under a single unit of command. Additionally, if there are any ECOWAS military operations in the region, there will be divided loyalty based either on cultural affinity or language predisposition. Lastly, looking at the financial troubles the ECOMOG went through during its intervention in Liberia, ECOWAS will not be able to finance military operations with her mean financial resources without having the assistance and support of other international bodies, particularly the United Nations, the United States and the African Union.

This paper has established from both the literature as well as the responses from the interviews conducted that the division within ECOWAS is real and uncalled for. Though the division had been there since the period of colonial rule, and immediately after the post-independence African states, it was mild and latent, but got further amplified with the crisis in Liberia. Partly the division was formed by the language and cultural barriers, the influence of France and the lingering differences and orientation which the colonial masters bequeathed to the post-colonial African states.

### **Conclusion**

From the foregoing, the decision to establish the economic group by the member states is a good one, for the development of the region. Although these states constitute enclaves of different colonial legacies with different political orientation, the benefits from the economic integration process will certainly trickle down to all the states and the entire ECOWAS community will benefit.

Colonialism was instrumental for the current behaviour of member states in ECOWAS. The erstwhile affiliation of subordination between the ECOWAS states and the former masters still lingers and affects the political, social, cultural and administrative orientation within the community. Nigeria is rich, powerful and resourceful, and therefore, is considered as a 'threat' to the existence of French interests in West Africa. France is still instrumental in dictating the policy direction of the French-speaking states in ECOWAS West Africa. France is envious of Nigeria, an anglophone state dominating and dictating the affairs of the sub-region.

### **Recommendation**

There is a need by ECOWAS to revisit its treaty, examine the protocols and articles, with the view to updating them. Key issues that need revision are in the areas of cooperation and commitments of the member states towards goal attainment of its stated objectives.

Nigeria should re-examine her external relations or foreign policy orientation with the view to re-defining her stance within the sub-region, particularly the “Africa-centred foreign policy pursuit” Additionally, the magnanimity extended by Nigeria to her neighbours have to be revisited.

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