

REGIONAL HEGEMONY IN THE PERIPHERY: A STUDY OF NIGERIA**Talibu Oladimeji**

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Abstract

The article examines Nigeria's place in international political system in relation to the concept of hegemony. It seeks to assess the scholarly claim of Nigeria as a regional hegemon in Africa. The unclear classification of some countries in the global political system and the function such states could play in promoting peace and stability has not received expected attention of international relation scholars. This does not come as a surprise as the discipline itself is rooted in American and European diplomatic practice. As such, it is necessary to provide tentative, if not permanent, designation for state like Nigeria in the contemporary global system. It is conventional in the history of international relations to ascribe all changes in the global politics to the influence of superpowers or great powers. The role of other actors, most especially in relation to Nigeria, is not properly examined and this has resulted in what can be termed as "identity crisis". In order to provide designation for the role Nigeria plays in global politics, it is important to engage in some sort of empirical analysis. Thus, the article examines the extent to which Nigeria can be designated as regional hegemon in Africa. In conducting this research, process tracing, discourse analysis and latent content analysis are utilized in analyzing documents, interview transcripts, and existing published works.

Keywords: Nigeria, Hegemony, Africa, Benevolent, Proxy.

INTRODUCTION

Most scholars of international relations accept the denominator of relative material preponderance of state as one of the reliable indicators of regional powerhood. Schirm (2006:2); Nolte (2010:889); Bach (2007:303); Frazier & Stewart-Ingersoll (2010) agree that high Gross Domestic Product (GDP), population, military capability and relative economic prosperity are the indicators of regional power status of a state within a delineated geographical setting. This does not only apply to regional hegemon but also great power and global hegemon (Prys, 2010:8). It is on this basis that power of a state is measured in relation to another. In differentiating between regional power and hegemon, Prys

(2010:10) established that the ability of a regional power to convert such relative material preponderance to perform certain task and carry the regional burden is an important indicator of regional hegemonic position. One of such tasks is the provision of public goods i.e. maintenance of peace and order. Prys, therefore, identifies four main factors that may transform a regional power to regional hegemon. These factors are: self-perception, regional perception, provision of public goods and projection of power to secondary states within a region (Prys, 2010:21).

It is thus based on this delineation that Nigeria as a regional hegemon will be examined. To provide further empirical evidence for these hegemonic indicators,

sections have been devoted for such. The aim of this research therefore is to consider the extent to which Nigeria can be considered a regional hegemon in African continent since 1960. The discussion is primarily based on material capabilities and to what extent such capabilities allow for a strong and influential foreign policy decisioning in Africa. Of course, it must be remembered that there has to be willingness and ability to maximise the resources potential of a state in the implementation of active policies. Resultantly, this discussion hinges upon resources and power projection that establish the hegemonic position of Nigeria in Africa which inform the employment of multilateralism as an important option to actualise and maintain the regional hegemonic status. To examine the hegemonic posture of Nigeria in Africa, and most importantly in West Africa, the typology of Prys (2010); Buzan & Weaver (2003); Nolte (2010); Lemke (2002); Patrick & Stewart-Ingersoll (2010) is adopted in providing the basis for Nigeria's regional hegemonic presence in Africa.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Nigeria and Self Perception Image in Africa

The process of leadership assumption by Nigeria in 1960 can be linked to Nigeria's material capability and colonial experience (Bach, 2007:303). Such material capabilities are embedded in demographic preponderance, geographical location, huge natural resources and huge military budget allocation. Colonial experience can be found in the way African was partitioned by the Europeans; the experience of slavery; economic marginalisation and neo-colonial temptation (Osuntokun, 2005:38). All these factors summed together have endeared Nigeria to claim leadership position in Africa and place the continental burden on its shoulders (Ajayi, 2006: 114; Akinyemi, 2005; Shaw, 1987: 42).

The Nigerian nationalist leaders who were instrumental to the eventual attainment of Nigerian independence also played greater role in defining the course of leadership role being played by Nigeria subsequently after independence. The leadership perception of Nigerian role in Africa can be likened to role theory which defined the role a country will play within the international system based on the perception of leaders (Holsti, 1970:235). In 1960, shortly after Nigeria attained its independence, the first Prime Minister of Nigeria, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, on August 20, 1960 at the Federal House of Assembly, declared that Nigeria was "adopting clear and practical policies with regard to Africa; it would be our aim to assist any country to find solution to its problem" (Al-Hassan, 2009: 2). The declaration was based on the role Nigeria was expected to play within Africa after independence.

In this way, what could be regarded as "founding fathers" were those actively involved in the process that led to the attainment of Nigeria's independence in 1960. Most of these elites occupied positions in the civil service, parliament, press, and educational establishments. To some of the so called founding fathers the colonial experience served as a school of sort that later dictated their response to the outside world in the course of formulation of country's foreign policy (Folarin, 2010:217). The founding fathers, reminiscent of their colonial experience, were of the views that the Nigeria's independence was not complete until the whole continent achieve freedom to govern their affairs. Since some of these nationalist leaders were product of colonial education, they have learnt basic rudiment concerning freedom, equality, justice, and democracy (Folarin, 2010:218). These provided them with background knowledge of the need to tailor Nigeria's foreign policy towards the

dismantling of colonial rule from the continent. It should be stressed here that the Second World War also proved to the Nigerian nationalist leaders that the Europeans lacked any moral right and obligation to perpetuate their lordship over colonial territories (Osuntokun, 2005:30). Some of Nigerian soldiers who were actively engaged in battle front in Europe, East Asia, and North Africa narrated their ordeal to nationalist leaders at home. The myth of European invincibility and superiority were discarded and the nationalist leaders were convinced that the so-called white people were not immortal as earlier presumed (Olusanya, 1968:227). Some of these founding fathers are Herbert Macaulay, NnamdiAzikiwe, Anthony Enahoro, Pa Imoudu, Obafemi Awolowo, Aminu Kano, Ladipo Solanke, and Ahmadu Bello and they employed the use of available channels to fight colonialism in the continent (Ubaku, Emeh & Anyikwa, 2014:60). Some of their actions were Afro-centric in nature which later set tone for the role perception of Nigeria in the continent. The relative large number of educated elites in Nigeria which dictated the vocal manner with which their ideas of freedom and equality were communicated to the African continent served as policy precedence which Nigeria later assumed in the continent.

Thus, it was coincidental at the time Nigeria got its independence to discover that most of these vocal elements later occupied some political positions in the administration of the country. This gave them ample chance to set the tone of foreign policy towards leadership aspirations in Africa. Nnamdi Azikiwe, the first Nigerian President stressed thus:

Britain (and the West) cannot be fighting a war of liberation and yet keep (us) in political bondage... (African) soldiers are now shedding their blood. In the deserts of the Middle East, in the jungles of Burma, in

the wilds of North Africa, in the mountains of East Africa, they are sacrificing in order to make the world safe for democracy. They fight and die so that...the rest of the world may have life and enjoy political freedom...Will their sacrifice be in vain? (Azikiwe, 1943: 60).

In addition, Obafemi Awolowo, the Premier (i.e. Governor) of the Western Region disclosed in 1966 that,

It is not infrequently the case that Africans demand that something should be done for them simply because it is being done for the Europeans...There is a burning desire to demonstrate that the Africans too can do what Europeans can do. This is natural and legitimate (Awolowo, 1966: 112).

The nature of roles Nigeria conceived for itself immediately after independence were primarily Africa-centred. In this way, it may be safe to conclude that Nigeria's Africa-centred policy orientation is as old as the state itself. It needs to be stated here that the continental leadership notion being held by Nigerian leaders gained currency during the colonial period and this has remained the same for most part of post-independent years (Folarin, 2010:219). This leadership aspiration has persisted for decades and nothing has made Nigerian leaders to jettison the African leadership conception. It is even more ironical to note that the policy articulation has remained the same despite some periodical social, economic and political upheavals being experienced by Nigeria (Nwoke, 2005:115). Perhaps, the persistence may be explained by the roles Nigeria conceived for itself in Africa of which no leader has deviated from. According to Obadare (2001), the best suitable explanation for such persistence in Nigeria's role conceptions in Africa is a function of demography, economy and natural endowments. The same factors might have propelled the first Nigeria president, Nnamidi Azikiwe, to lament during his address at a public gathering in London on July 31, 1959

that “It should be the manifest destiny of Nigeria to join hands with other progressive forces in the world in order to emancipate not only the people of Africa but also other peoples of African descent from the scourge of colonialism” (Azikiwe, 1961: 64).

It needs to be stressed here that the Nigeria’s perception of its natural leadership position in Africa might have played a role when the first Prime Minister, Balewa, reacted to Kwame Nkrumah’s proposal for United States of Africa in 1960. Nkrumah, the President of Ghana at the time, proposed that African countries were artificial creation of the colonial masters and that all African countries should unite to become one country (Oliver & Atmore, 1971:285). In reaction to the proposal, Balewa insisted that “Nigeria is big enough and does not need to join others... if others wish to join Nigeria, their position would be made clear to them in such a union” (cited in Phillips, 1964: 90). Eventually in 1963, when Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was about to be inaugurated it was Nigeria’s position that later prevailed and adopted by the collectivity of African countries. According to Oliver & Atmore (1971:285), “in the eventual formation of the OAU in 1963 ...it was the view of Nigeria’s Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, and not that of Ghana’s Nkrumah, that was adopted by OAU”. Thus, this position contradicts earlier assumption by some scholars who are of the view that Ghana under Kwame Nkrumah was more assertive than Nigeria in the leadership of Africa. Nigeria in the 1960s can be better described as being cautious in its foreign policy assertiveness. Nigeria’s role conception has been well pronounced and established by the nationalist leaders and was free of any ambiguity since attaining political independence in 1960. Through the content analysis of speeches, parliamentary debates, official documents and press conferences, it showed that Nigerian

policy makers, leaders, public and military are aware of the certain roles perceived for the country. Thus, the self-perception of Nigeria’s leadership role in Africa is all-encompassing; ranging from collective security to economic integration.

Regional Perception in Africa

From Nigeria’s independence in 1960, most African countries have realized the potential of Nigeria as the leading country on the continent most especially within the West African Sub-region. The regional perception towards Nigeria has made it to function actively as the main regional leader to be called upon in the wake of any problem. Nelson Mandela, the late former President of South Africa once affirmed that “the world will not respect Africa until Nigeria earns that respect. The black people of the world need Nigeria to be great as a source of pride and confidence” (Quoted in Maja-Pearce, 2013). As highlighted earlier, one of the most important ingredients of regional hegemonic status is the recognition given by the secondary state or regional partners (Prys, 2010). In this case Nigeria has been duly recognized, although with some element of resentment, as one of the most foremost regional hegemons in Africa. This regional leadership has been displayed in various countries through unilateral, bilateral and multilateral means. In 1960, Nigeria responded to the Congo civil war by sending troops under UN peacekeeping mission (Chibundi, 2003:5). In 1961, Nigeria also unilaterally condemned the testing of Atomic Bomb in the Algerian Sahara by France which ultimately led to the breaking of diplomatic ties between the two countries (Bolarinwa, Pers. Comm., January 28, 2015). The question that may arise here is: What was Nigeria intended to achieve by breaking diplomatic ties with France because of Algeria? One possible explanation for this might be an attempt to

warn France that Nigeria would not accept a situation whereby Africa, especially the francophone West African countries, would become a launch pad where its security could be compromised. Another possible explanation would be an attempt to deter further aggression from France given Nigeria's market potential to France's manufactured products. In 1975, Nigeria's regional leadership acceptance manifested in the manner with which African countries tacitly allowed Nigeria to lead African Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP) negotiation with the European Economic Community (EEC) (Aluko, 1983:84). Despite the incompatibility of the negotiation with Nigerian national economic interest, as critically evaluated by Nigeria at the time, Nigeria led all African countries to the negotiation in 1975 (Aluko, 1983:85). In the post-Cold War international system, most African countries, especially within the West African sub-region have on many occasions invited Nigeria to intervene in their internal affairs for purpose of installing political and social decorum. In 1990, in the early days of post-Cold War, Nigeria was invited by Samuel Doe of Liberia to rescue the country from imminent collapse (Salami, 2013:15). Also, in 1998, Sierra Leone under President Ahmad Tejah Kabah invited Nigerian government to restore order and rule of law in the country (Bach, 2007:309). In 2003, President Frederique de Menezes was deposed by military coup while attending the 6th Leon Sullivan Summit in Nigeria. President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria reacted by given 24-hour ultimatum for the restoration of the deposed president which was quickly honoured by the military junta (Odigbo, Udaw & Igwe, 2014:99).

In terms of public goods provision, Nigeria has restored order, rule of law, and promoting good governance in Africa. The successful formation of African Union (AU) in

2002 in Durban South Africa was the brainchild of Nigeria's President Obasanjo and South Africa's Mbeki. It needs to be stressed here that "the Nigerian democratic consolidation coupled with President Obasanjo's international influence helped sustain the eventual formation of the AU together with New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) which has received recognition from the European Union (EU), United Nations (UN) and the Group of Eight countries (G-8) as the only reliable mechanism through which African malaise can be ameliorated" (Bolarinwa, Pers. Comm. January 28, 2015). Before the transformation of OAU to AU Obasanjo, Mbeki and Abdulaye Wade of Senegal had earlier proposed the formation of African home grown mechanism that will guarantee the promotion of rule of law, human rights, good governance, democracy and eradication of corruption in Africa (Folarin, 2010:395). The document establishing NEPAD was finally ratified in 2001 in Abuja, Nigeria and was acceptable to African countries, the UN and donor countries (Pers. Comm., Bolarinwa, January 28, 2015). It needs to be stated here that the provision of public goods as espoused by most scholars as credible indicator of hegemony is not only peculiar to Nigeria. The promotion of African Union has been part of Muammar Gadaffi's campaign. Most African countries, most especially the two foremost continental hegemons, South Africa and Nigeria did not trust Libya's proposal as its African Union definition tended to override the principle of sovereign equality of member states (Akinterinwa, Pers. Comm., January 29, 2015). Earlier in the 1980s, Gadaffi intended to occupy part of Chad and also meddled in the internal affairs of Liberia in the 1990s. These two cases of West African encroachment made Nigeria to prevent the Libyan Gadaffi's proposal from seeing the light of the day.

Gaddafi proposed African unity under the umbrella of a President who will manage the affairs of the whole continent (Akinterinwa, Pers. Comm., January 29, 2015). This proposal made Nigeria to be wary of Libya in the proposed continental organization. Given the antecedents of Libyan overzealous leadership aspiration in the continent, Nigeria alongside South Africa designed the outcome of the continental organization in 2002 (Akinterinwa, 2015).

Thus, AU and NEPAD function together as the continental organization to alleviate the sufferings of Africans. In this manner, Nigeria has been influencing preferences and values within Africa political space. At sub-regional level, Nigeria displayed its hegemonic position by singlehandedly sponsored the establishment of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975 which continues to provide platform for Nigeria's regional hegemonic position (Nwoke, 2005:120). In 1999, in recognition of its role in Africa, Nigeria under President Obasanjo proposed the integration of the ECOWAS and Southern African Development Community (SADC) to hasten the proposal of African Economic Community (The Washington Post, 1999). Obasanjo made the proposal during the 19th anniversary of SADC, the organization that clearly establishes the hegemonic position of South Africa in Southern African region. Both Nigeria and South Africa are the two regional hegemons in Africa with each providing public goods to their respective region. Both also direct the affairs of their sub-regional organization. In 1975, for example, Nigeria created a Trust Fund of \$80 million under African Development Bank to assist African countries in their developmental process (Mailafia, 2010:179). In this manner, some African countries willingly accept the leadership of Nigeria in Africa while other

tactically resent it. Thus, Nigeria has been acting as both proxy and benevolent hegemon in Africa since 1960.

Nigeria as a Proxy Hegemon

Nigeria as a proxy hegemon in Africa acts in two ways. First, it acts as the programme coordinator and part of implementation committee for the G-8 and other western countries. Second, it acts as the promoter of global values in terms of security, peacekeeping, peacemaking and mediation. Nigeria as one of the most influential countries in Africa is being regarded by world powers as the major Africa country to befriend. Nigeria is a *primus inter pares* in Africa. Most states (especially the great powers) and international institutions always put Nigeria in mind anytime the issue pertaining to Africa crops up (Akinterinwa, Pers. Comm., January 28, 2015). In this way, most of the continent responsibilities have always been placed on Nigeria's shoulders. Whenever there is any problem anywhere in Africa the first country of reference is Nigeria. This is the reason why Nigeria has been seeing intervening in all corners of Africa since independence. This role started from 1960, when the Acting Secretary-General of the UN, Mr. U. Thant appointed Nigerian Commissioner of Police as administrative officer in Congo (Chibundi, 2003:4). The same Secretary-General also appointed a Nigerian, Major-General Aguiyi Ironsi, as the first African Commander of the UN peacekeeping mission in Congo. Nigeria performed creditably "on the political and diplomatic front and also served on the UN Advisory Committee on Congo, the Secretary-General's Congo Club and later chaired the Congo Conciliation Commission (CCC), barely a month after joining the UN" (Sanda, 2010:63). The major rationale behind the selection was based on the perceived role Nigeria was expected to play in bringing peace

and order to African countries. It was also aim to create a sense of belonging for Nigerian government in the issue pertaining to Africa. In fact, Nigeria was accorded proper recognition on issue pertaining to Africa in 1960 by removing the Rajeshwal Dayal, head of the UN mission in Congo, on Nigeria's complaint and replaced him with a Nigerian named Francis Nwokedi and a Ghanaian (Sanda, 2010:63).

Since 1960, Nigeria has been acting as proxy hegemon in Africa through peacekeeping and mediating roles in the UN. According to General Agwai (2010), the head of the UN/AU joint force in Darfur,

The commitment to global peace in the UN has continued to define Nigeria's foreign policy since her independence in 1960. And nowhere is it more evident than in Africa which has remained the cornerstone of her foreign policy. Today, Nigeria is the leading peace-keeping nation in Africa and has shown tremendous leadership in all regional and continental efforts in conflict management.

In most of the trouble spots, where Nigeria intervened in Africa, it has always been acting on behalf of global hegemon and powers. This is mostly true of Sierra Leone and Liberia civil wars where the US and Britain allowed Nigeria to exploit all mechanisms to front the battle of reconciliation and peace building (Salami, 2013:141). Although, both the US and Britain later intervened, especially in Sierra Leone but the contributions of Nigeria to the eventual restoration of order in both countries was recognized and appraised by the UN (UNSC, 2003). The intervention of the major powers was needed in order to provide legitimacy for the intervention of the regional power. In terms of peacekeeping and peacemaking, Nigeria's Military Command in Kaduna has been approved as the UN training centre for would-be troops from West Africa (Alli, 2010). Inevitably, Nigeria has been performing the role of proxy hegemon in

African politics. Nigeria, as noted earlier, alongside South Africa played prominent role in the formation of NEPAD in 2001.

Since the formation, the G-8, EU and the UN have accepted it as the forum to channel the developmental goals and assistance to African countries. This legitimization and global acceptance by global powers can be regarded as a signpost to the acceptance of Nigeria as a proxy hegemon in Africa. This recognition was brought to the fore in 2003 during the presidential election in Zimbabwe. Nigeria under President Obasanjo supported Zimbabwe's emergence which the West later denounced as an attempt on the part of Nigeria to compromise democratic standard (Folarin, 2010:401). The support given by Nigeria alongside South Africa were seen by the West as an attempt to rally support for their African brother in the face of western position (Folarin, 2010: 400). In 2003, Nigeria finally supported the withdrawal of Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth in 2003 together with John Howard of Australia. The voting was held in Abuja, Nigeria in which Australia and Nigeria voted for the suspension of Zimbabwe against South African vote (Nyoni, 2007). The West claimed that Mugabe's attempt to hang on to power at all cost impelled him to commit gross human right abuse, amendment of constitution and land reform against the white (Folarin, 2010:395). The reaction of the West to untimely position of Nigeria and South Africa was the reduction in the annual aid given to NEPAD. The G-8 had earlier promised to assist NEPAD programmes with \$64 billion and based on Nigerian and South African sympathy to Mugabe's cause, only \$6 billion was allocated (Folarin, 2010:401). With this financial disappointment Nigeria remained committed to NEPAD cause has ever and Obasanjo as the Steering Committee advised the AU member the need to forge ahead (Fawole, 2004: 47).

The step taken by the G-8 reveals that both Nigeria and South Africa are important strategic partners to the cause of major powers in Africa. Had Nigeria and South Africa went against the Zimbabwe cause, the response of the G-8 might be different to NEPAD. Thus, Nigeria has been a key player in African in relation to the interest of global powers.

Nigeria as a Benevolent Hegemon

Nigeria also plays an important role in Africa in the area of providing assistance to needy countries. This assistance is most channeled through OAU, ECOWAS and the Commonwealth (Mailafia, 2010:161). There are also some unilateral and bilateral channels through which Nigeria display its benevolence to African countries. For example, Nigeria under President Babangida established Technical Aids Corps Scheme (TACS) to assist needy African countries in the area of human capital and technical development. Nigeria is the only black Africa country that operates this kind of programme to assist needy countries in all areas of development (Mailafia, 2010:177). The scheme was established in 1986 by a decree to promote Nigeria's regional hegemonic posture in Africa and other parts of the Black world. It needs to be stressed here that the scheme is being operated under the flagship of ACP countries. This suggests that the assistance is not limited to African countries; it included all countries in the Caribbean and the Pacific. This scheme has achieved greater success in serving as important tool of foreign policy to assist the needy countries. According to Mailafia (2010:178),

In the East African country of Uganda, TACs volunteers were responsible for the design and implementation of the IT network of the Kampala Institute of Teacher Education. In the Caribbean nation of Dominica, Nigerian TAC volunteers successfully designed and

launched a new healthcare delivery system while one of the volunteers was retained as pioneer director of the Primary Healthcare System. In Zambia, a volunteer was said to have designed and launched the first programme in Dentistry at the Medical School of the University of Zambia. In the Gambia, one of the Nigerian volunteers became the first Vice-Chancellor of the country's pioneer university. In Jamaica, another volunteer drew up the first of the country's national land survey. Several other success stories have been registered in countries as diverse as Fiji, Seychelles and Sierra Leone.

In 2014, Brazil, Venezuela and Vietnam have also signified their willingness to benefit from the scheme and have made their position known to Nigerian government (This Day, September 10, 2014). According to the Director-General of the Directorate, TACs, Dr. Pius Osiyekanmi, "the scheme serves as enduring technical assistance scheme which identified the use of the large pool of trained man power available in Nigeria to enhance the social-economic development of benefitting countries" (This Day, September 10, 2014). The scheme was designed in 1986 as a tool of foreign policy to garner goodwill for Nigeria in the comity of nations. Under this scheme, over 38 countries have benefitted since 1986 in terms of provision of essential technical services and in its 29 years of cooperate existence the scheme has contributed over 4,000 volunteers to the ACP countries (Mailafia, 2010:177). In Fiji Island, for example, Nigerian corps has helped in drafting the constitution of the country and technocrats like medical doctors, teachers, lecturers, engineers, nurses and technicians have participated in the schemes since establishment in 1986 (This Day, September 10, 2014).

It is of interest to state here that the scheme is purely bilateral in nature to assist needy countries with no string attaches to the

assistance. "So it is mutually owned and there is no conditional ties attached to it, rather than just one Southern country assisting another Southern country" (Quoted in Babalola, 2011). The bilateral scheme is a signpost to Nigeria's hegemonic posture in Africa. Apart from the TACs, Nigeria also assists most African countries in financial terms by contributing immensely to the formation of African Development Bank (ADB) in 1964 (Mailafia, 2010:178). Nigeria was the third largest contributor to ADB in 1964 after Egypt and Algeria. Egypt has 10.1 % voting capacity which amounted to \$30 million while Algeria possesses 8.6% voting capacity which also amounted to \$24.50 million. That of Nigeria stands at 8.4% with subscription capacity of \$24.10 million. By 2005 Nigeria's subscription floated at \$197.86 represented 8.974% of the voting strength (Mailafia, 2010:179). Thus, some of the fund contributed to the bank is used in assisting poorer African countries. The former Secretary-General of OAU, Salim Ahmad Salim (2009) stated that "without Nigeria's help at crucial turning points, the Secretariat in Addis Ababa would have grounded to a halt" (Quoted from Mailafia, 2010:180). The financial contribution of Nigeria since independence to key multilateral institutions has been immense. The contribution is based on the issues at hand and official demands from various institutions. Nigeria has been enduring to perform its financial obligations in this regards (Alli, 2012:51). Mailafia, (2010: 178) opines that,

For much of its independent existence, Nigeria has been a major contributor to multilateral institutions. Within the African context, the country has been a major contributor and/or dominant shareholder of such institutions as the African Development Bank Group, Shelter Afrique, Afrexim Bank, and the ECOWAS Fund for Compensation and Development, which was recently transformed into the ECOWAS Bank for

Investment and Development (EBID). In most African regional institutions in which Nigeria has been involved, she has contributed as much as 40 percent to the operational costs of those institutions. There was a time when Nigeria virtually underwrote the entire operational budget of the OAU/AU, at a time of fiscal difficulties when most member countries were not forthcoming.

In connection with the two regional organisations, OAU/AU and ECOWAS, Nigeria out-performed all other countries on the continent in honouring its official and unofficial dues. According to Madu Onuorah, the Abuja Bureau Chief, "Nigeria has participated in 25 out of the 51 established UN missions. The country has led regional peace-keeping operations under the auspices of the OAU, as well as the ECOWAS...Nigeria spent an estimated \$10 billion to fund this Effort" (Onuorah, 2013). In fact, Nigeria also engaged in unilateral aids agreement with some members of OAU and ECOWAS if it is discovered that the multilateral financial capacity cannot be sufficient. Professor Akinterinwa, the Director-General of Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA) surmised that "despite the fact that most Africa countries do not always reciprocate our father Christmas gesture, Nigeria has never stopped dolling out financial assistance to them" (Pers. Comm., January 28, 2015). Nigeria's financial contribution in the West Africa sub-regional multilateral institution is immense as the 75% of the official budget is contributed by Nigeria (Osuntokun, 2010).

It needs to be said that the overwhelming hegemonic power of Nigeria in West Africa has placed on it the responsibility to lead in some occasion with attendant huge financial commitment. Nigerian government spent on the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) operations in both Liberia and Sierra Leone one million US dollars daily (Alli, 2012: 52). The huge financial

contribution is not limited to the sub-region but also throughout Africa. According to Polish Ambassador to Nigeria, Grezgorz Walinski, "Nigeria has spent about \$13 billion on peacekeeping operation in Africa since 1960 and also sent over 250,000 members of the Nigerian armed forces to the UN's sponsored missions worldwide" (Agbakwuru, 2013). Also in the AU, the burden of running the institution is usually borne by the "big five". In other words, the financial burden of the AU rests on Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Nigeria and South Africa (Adetula, 2005:179). It is noted that the 75% of the annual budget of the Union is contributed by the five countries and the rest 25% percent are contributed by other 49 countries (Okereke, 2012:9). This shows that the financial contribution of country like Nigeria to the running of AU is quite alarming. One estimates concluded that as at 2008 Nigeria contributed \$14.4 million annually to the budget of the AU (Okereke, 2012:8). In fact, it was both Nigeria under President Obasanjo and South Africa under President Mbeki that sponsored the Millennium Partnership for the Recovery Programme (MAP) in the AU (Adetula, 2005:179). From 2014, the Nigerian financial contribution has risen to \$16.7 million annually representing 18% of the entire AU annual budget and this contribution does not include ad hoc financial largesse being dole out by Nigeria on regular basis (Business Day, April 1, 2014).

The maintenance and upkeep of ECOWAS soldiers have always been the responsibility of Nigerian government as the headquarters of the force is located in Calabar, Nigeria with subsequent endorsement by the UN of National Defence College, Nigeria, as the Peacekeeping training centre for Africa (The Guardian, September 21, 2010). It is of interest to note that the 130th Battalion of Nigerian soldiers has been converted to the standby force of ECOWAS with attendant

financial burden of maintaining the force in line with African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) (Alli, 2012:31). All these financial contributions by Nigerian government have not resulted in any complacency and there are more areas, especially in ECOWAS operations in Mali and Niger, where there are ongoing financial contributions to multilateral operations (Obayuwana, 2014). All these roles are both functions of material capabilities and Nigeria's Afro-centric orientation since 1960.

Nigeria's Regional Hegemony as a Function of Material Capability

In 1960 when Nigeria got its independence, its demography represented 25% of African population (Bach, 2007:302). This demographic preponderance suggests that at independence in 1960 one out of every four Africans was a Nigerian. This demographical preponderance and ethnic diversity dictated the position Nigeria would occupy in Africa. Its diverse population with close language and racial affinity in neighbouring countries like Chad, Niger, Cameroon, Republic of Benin, Togo and Equatorial Guinea endeared the Nigeria leaders at independence to conceive a special role for Nigeria in Africa (Folarin, 2010:218). Seeing Nigeria as the most populous Black Country in the world, Nigerian leaders started to assume leadership role in Africa in 1960. Thus, the enormous population which dictates the internal dynamism of Nigerian society as the potential force in the African politics made Nigeria to develop the largest military arsenal in Sub-Saharan Africa in 1960 (Bach, 2007:300). With its huge population Nigeria had thousands of able-bodied youth population to mobilise into its armed forces. The population also enables some countries to befriend Nigeria because of market potential as the sub-regional heavy weight in West Africa. This demographic

factor might well explain the reason for French apprehension towards Nigeria's dominant force in West Africa (Bobboyi, 2010:102). The same demographic factor might also provide explanation for French relentless effort to court the friendship of Nigeria despite the seeming strain and stresses in the relationship since 1960 (Akinterinwa, 2005:88). Since 2004, Nigeria has become the largest trading partner of France in the whole of West Africa. Nigeria's demographic preponderance in Africa has enabled it to be the epicenter of African political economy since 1960. ECOWAS Report (2008) affirms thus,

A careful examination of the economies and population of the ECOWAS Member States shows that ECOWAS is a good model of regional economic integration in which the strong and weak co-exist to foster socio-economic development on a large scale. Nigeria is the dominant economy in the region accounting for 62% of the regional GDP in 2007. Given the size of the Nigerian economy in relation to its neighbours, it is expected that Nigeria will continue to play its leadership role, within the frame-work of solidarity, in fostering sustainable regional economic development.

Most international organizations (both governmental and non-governmental) know the importance of Nigeria as the demographic focus of Africa when it comes to policy implementation and execution. For example, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Health Organisation (WHO), the United Nations' Children Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) recognize Nigeria as the vocal point of all its policies in Africa (Osuntokun, 2013).

Although high population may be a hindrance to the domestic political stability which may inform the country to perform lesser role in regional politics but if the population is properly mobilized in productive

terms demography can be a blessing to a state. Thus, the demography dictates the level of GDP, Military, market potentials, productivity, diversity, and talents. In Africa generally, Nigeria's GDP is second to none and has the largest stream of talents in the whole of Africa. In this way the population has placed Nigeria in a comfortable position of being the epicenter of all activities in Africa. In 2015, Nigeria's population is estimated around 177.5 million constituting 60% of West African population (World Bank, 2015). In terms of economic capability, Nigeria has the largest economy in Africa with GDP of \$568.5 billion (World Bank, 2015). Its military capability is also the most powerful in West Africa and has the second largest armed forces in Africa after Egypt. In terms of capability, Nigeria occupies 4th position in Africa (Global Firepower, 2014). In addition, in Central Africa and some part of North Africa (especially in the Sahara Desert) Nigeria still exercise a measure of stabilizing force. It needs to be stressed here that the conception of hegemony in the Nigeria parlance, its utility and application is different from what obtains in the study of the US. Thus, the notion of hegemonic behaviour on the part of Nigeria in West Africa and other parts of the continent has been benevolent in nature. Since independence, Nigeria has been living peacefully with its neighbours and other parts of Africa. The nature of hegemonic position of Nigeria in Africa is a unique example of benevolent (not coercive) hegemon.

Nigeria's Afro-centrist Disposition: Source of Exhibiting Hegemony

The articulation of Africa as the centerpiece of Nigerian foreign policy began at the point of gaining political independence. The realization of Nigeria's place in Africa renders multilateral policy an invaluable mechanism in order to ensure that the African interest is pursued in the global politics. Given

the fact that Nigeria cannot act alone, multilateralism became an important instrument through which the African-focused policy could be attained (Meierding, 2010:11). In his words, Professor Ogaba Uche, Head of Research unit at NIIA, disclosed that “African-centred policy has been an important factor in the foreign policy of Nigeria since independence.... No Nigerian leader has deviated from this path since independence” (FGI, January 28, 2015). In this case, pan Africanism or better still, African unity became a mechanism through which the declaration can be achieved. In his foreign policy statement submitted to the House of Representative in August 1960, the Nigerian first Prime Minister, Balewa, stressed that,

Very particular attention will be devoted to adopting clear and practicable policies as regards Africa. It will be our aim to assist any African country to find solution to its problem and to foster the growth of a common understanding among the new nations of the continent. We are determined to encourage the development of common ties between all states. The difficulties which will confront us in promoting the friendly association of independent countries in Africa are fully appreciated, but we believe that they can be overcome if a start is made by emphasizing and building upon ...links which already exist (Balewa, 1960).

Nigerian political elite realized the enormous task before African countries ever before attaining independence and as soon as the date of independence is fixed, the foreign policy orientation of the nationalists in Nigeria was to define appropriate mechanism of defending African interest (Osuntokun, 2005:39). Joining the UN and Commonwealth of Nations in 1960 was not enough credential to pursue African interest and unity. It was when OAU was finally formed in 1963 that Nigeria was assured of its Afro-centric policy

and the need to showcase its hegemonic ambition (Chibundi, 2003:8).

For purpose of definition and clarification, pan Africanism is an overzealous and emotional ideological leanings on the part of African countries and Africans in diaspora to unite together to fight a common course bedeviling the African people anywhere in the globe (Otinla, 2005:314). The idea emanated from the Africans in the US, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Brazil and Britain. Because of the racial discrimination against the blacks in Europe and Americas, some of them developed the idea of promoting the unity of black race. It was this idea that radiated to the home base of the black people, Africa. Nigeria therefore adopted the idea from the diaspora African and employed it to wage war against the maltreatment of the black race in Africa by the Europeans (Alao, 1998:121). It is not in the interest of this research to provide detail information on the intellectual origin of this ideology; the view here is to provide background information on the term. In the 1950s and 1960s, the spirit of nationalism and nationhood radiated to Africa from other parts of the world. In showcasing their grievances to the colonial masters, the Nigerian and other African leaders promoted pan Africanism as important tool to forge the unity of Africans against all externalities (Otinla, 2005:319). It was in this process that Nigeria got its independence in 1960. When Nigeria got its independence it became the single largest country by far on the continent. Realizing this position, Nigeria took the mantle of leadership of Africa upon itself and tried to rally round to unify African countries for a common cause. Professor Bola Akinterinwa, the Director-General of NIIA, highlights that,

The leadership of Africa was taken over by Nigeria at the point of independence. Nobody appointed Nigeria as the leader of Africa; the leadership was self-imposed. After we imposed the leadership

on ourselves most countries recognized us as we represent Africa in the global arena and our foreign policy is tailored towards African interest (Pers. Comm., January 27, 2015).

At the point of gaining independence, the address given by the Nigerian Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister was based on the African as the centre-piece of Nigerian foreign policy. The Prime minister stressed that his country would “work with other African states for the progress of Africa and to assist in bringing all African countries to a state of responsible independence” (Balewa, 1960). The question this may pose is: Why Nigeria took up Africa as the centre-piece of its foreign policy and what did it want to achieve with it after independence? A statement by the former Foreign Affairs Minister, Jaja Wachukwu, perhaps provides some clues. He said:

Our foreign policy is based on the following pillars; the concept that Nigeria is an African nation; it is part and parcel of the continent of Africa, and therefore is so completely involved in anything that pertains to the continent, that it cannot be neutral and must never be considered as a neutralist country. We want to make this absolutely clear: we are independent in everything but neutral in nothing that affects the destiny of Africa—all questions pertaining to Africa must be considered as pertaining to Nigeria. The moment Africa is affected, we are involved. We want to make this absolutely clear, Nigeria finds itself involved in anything affecting the African continent anywhere, in any square inch of African territory, we are involved... (Wachukwu, 1961).

From the foregoing statements, it seems implicit that the problems of Africa countries have always been seen by Nigerian leaders as theirs. Also in 1961, Namidi Azikiwe, the first President of Nigeria, in his

Address at Friend’s Hall, London registered his belief in the establishment of OAU that,

It is my firm believe that an African organization must emerge ultimately: it may be in the form of an association of African states or in the form of a concert of African states; but my main point is that so long as the form of government is clearly understood and an efficient machinery for organization and administration is devised, backed by multilateral conventions which would enhance the standard of living of Africans, safeguard their existence by collective security and guarantee to them freedom under the law in addition to the fundamental human rights, the dream of Pan-Africanism is destined to come true (Azikiwe, 1961).

Thus, the only way to alleviate some of the African problems is through African unity which later metamorphosed to the formation of OAU in 1963 by 30 African states. When the organization was formed Nigeria took the mantle of leadership and faced the continental malaise with pan African faith (Osuntokun, 2005:38). Some of the continental problems at the point of independence were colonialism, racism, apartheid, economic underdevelopment, civil strife and disunity. Most of these problems were addressed at multilateral level in OAU and the UN (Ogwu, 2005:10).

The attainment of independence of Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia and dismantling of racist regime in South Africa were all addressed through the UN and OAU. Added to this is the sponsoring of Pan-African zeal that incorporates about sixty countries from Africa, Caribbean and the Pacific. Nigeria led the union in order to protect the black race against the “divisive tactics employed by the colonial powers” (Otinla, 2005:326). The Afrocentrism continues to dictate Nigeria’s multilateral policy even after the eventual demise of colonialism and apartheid policy.

Nigeria under the leadership of President Obasanjo was instrumental in all stages that resulted in the transformation of the OAU to AU in 2002. With Nigeria's material capability alongside South Africa, Egypt, Algeria and Libya, AU established many subdivisions that can alleviate the sufferings of African countries. It can therefore be rightly asserted that the African centerpiece policy is one of the most important factors that account for Nigeria's multilateral policy.

CONCLUSION

Hegemony in Nigerian foreign policy vocabulary denotes benign leadership and shouldering of continental responsibilities. This research shows the meaning of Nigeria's hegemonic posture in Africa and how such hegemonic role has been established since 1960. It also established Nigeria's hegemonic position in Africa based on the typology of international relations scholars. In this manner, the article extended and broadened the concept of hegemony in relation to countries in the periphery. Nigeria being a member of the periphery is one of the most important state actors that dictate the course of event within African politics. Although, Nigeria may be suffering from some domestic troubles, accentuated by its domestic structure, there is no viable challenger to its hegemonic position in Africa except South Africa.

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