

THE IMPACT OF BAD GOVERNANCE ON NIGERIA'S HEGEMONIC DECLINE IN WEST AFRICAN SUB-REGION

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria has been acknowledged to be the West African Hegemon by both the West African countries and the western countries. The country's economic strength in Africa as well as its military capability combined to qualify her as a regional hegemonic power. The country has demonstrated her willingness to act like a hegemon as evidenced in her series of involvement in the regional peacekeeping operations as well as economic assistance rendered to her neighbors. Nigeria's hegemonic power is however, on the decline since 1996 when the western powers declared pariah status on the country. Democratic governance did not make any radical alteration on her hegemonic decline. Using Kenneth Waltz levels of analysis the research identified corruption, insecurity, and rising poverty brought about by bad governance as the major causes of the country's hegemonic decline in West Africa. The research conclude by suggesting measures to be taken in order to forestall the continuous decline

Keywords: Nigeria; Hegemony; West Africa; Decline; Bad Governance

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's "manifest destiny" to rule Africa started from the country's independence in 1960. The country is the most populous country in Africa and the largest black nation in the world with abundant resources at its disposal. It is therefore, the country's manifest destiny to rule over African countries to deliver the African dream of growth and development. Her leadership role is uncontested in the West African sub region. Her population of 180 million is over 50% of the population of West African states put together. One of five West African is a Nigerian and the country is the 4th largest military power in the entire Africa after Egypt, Algeria and South Africa; and the first in the West African region (Adekeye Adebajo, 2000; Cilliers, Schünemann, & Moyer, 2015). With a GDP of over \$ 5 billion USD after the rebasing of the country's economy in 2013, the country emerge as the strongest economy in Africa (World Bank, 2014).

However, from 1994 up to 2015 the hegemonic power of Nigeria has been subjected to a zigzag decline. The country was declared a pariah state in 2006 by the western countries because of the undemocratic behaviours of General Sani Abacha; the military leader of the country from 1993 to 1998. The country was subjected to severe economic and political sanctions from the western countries which include her suspension from the British Commonwealth of Nations (Sklar, 2004).

In 1999 Nigeria returned to democratic rule after General Abacha's death on the 8th of June 1998. The country was re-integrated into the "Dignified Nations" enclave as a result of President Obasanjo's shuttle diplomacy where he toured to many countries to assure them

that Nigeria has changed. Obasanjo introduced series of economic and political reforms in the country to ensure the country is in tune with the globalization trend. He also established institutions that would ensure democratic sustainability such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC). However, despite democratic governance, the country's hegemonic status continued to decline after a brief recess from 1999 to 2004. Nigeria's international reputation continued to decline due to records of human rights violations, electoral malpractices that marred free and fair elections in the country, corruption which has become endemic in the country and general insecurity in the country (Adamu & Rasheed, 2016; Badejo, Agunyai, & Buraimo, 2015; Nwagboso & Otu, 2015; Opejobi, 2016; Suleiman & Aminul Karim, 2015; H. M. Umar, Ismail, & Abdul-hakim, 2014).

This paper attempts to explain the causes of Nigeria's hegemonic decline in the West African region using qualitative method to analyze data and Kenneth N. Waltz's levels of analysis would be employed as an analytical framework to explain the Nigeria's hegemonic decline in West Africa.

Pillars of a Regional Hegemonic Power

Regional hegemonic powers are those countries that possess a relative degree of influence within their own region. They are defined as states which possess power sufficient enough to dominate subordinate state systems (Ogunnubi & Isike, 2015; Ogunnubi & Okeke-Uzodike, 2016). Thus, any country that has preponderant power economically, politically, militarily in her regional bloc is considered a regional hegemon. In South East Asia China is the hegemonic power in the region because it because it possesses all the requirements of a regional hegemon; in South West Asia India has over taken all other countries in both economic, political and military capabilities and willingness. In the South African region South Africa is the regional hegemon and Nigeria is the undisputable hegemon in the West African region (Omaamaka & Groupon-paul, 2015; Roy, 1994).

Nigeria's population of 178,520,622 million is the largest in the sub-region (The World Bank, 2013). Nigeria's GDP after the rebasing of the country's economy in 2014 stood at \$ 521.80 billion USD overtaking South Africa to become Africa's largest economy with annual growth rate of +6.4% which is above the African average. The country has 2.2% of world's oil reserve, 2.7% of world's natural Gas reserve (World Bank, 2016). Nigeria has been assisting West African countries through the African Development Bank. The country has financed 43 development projects in Africa from 1976 to 1990 totaling \$240,764,220 USD in 27 countries across Africa (Adekeye Adebajo, 2000).

Nigeria is the largest contributor to United Nations Peace Support Operations (PSO) with over 70% presence; the country has actively participated in 40 out of 55 UN peace keeping operations across the world (Omaamaka & Groupon-paul, 2015). The country has sphere headed the West African peacekeeping in Liberia and Sierra Leone by contributing 70% of the human and material resources needed to restore peace from 1990 to 1992.. Thus, Nigeria is the most active country in West Africa and indeed the entire Africa in global peace keeping operations. Nigeria also championed democratic consolidation in Africa by re installing ousted democratic governments in Sierra Leone and Sao Tome, Cote d' Ivoire, Mali and Burkina Faso.

The Levels of Analysis

In his book "Man State and War Kenneth Waltz isolated 3 levels that can be employed to explain the causes of wars in the international system. The first image is the individual; the

second image is the state while the third image is the systemic or international level (Waltz, 2016). Waltz observes

“One may seek in political philosophy to question: where are the major causes of war to be found? The answers are bewildering in their variety and their contradictory qualities. To make this variety manageable, the answers can be ordered under the following three headings; within man, within the structure of the separate states, within the state system” (Waltz, 2016).

This paper would employ the second level as its analytical framework to explain the causes of Nigeria’s hegemonic decline in West Africa. The causes of war could be located within the state structure. Citizens tend to be united irrespective of their differences during wars. Citizens rally around the state forgetting whatever challenges they face internally because the failure of the state in wars is the failure of citizens. Thus, the Domestic level of analysis posits that unstable states may engage in wars with one another in order to achieve internal cohesion and stability. The extent of wars against other states is however, contingent on the type of government in power. Bad governments are more likely to pursue war with other states more frequently than good governments in order to cover up their internal weaknesses. Thus, “if war is to be eliminated states have to be reformed” (Tella, 2016, 146).

The Domestic Causes of Nigeria’s Hegemonic Decline in West Africa

Just as internal instability within a state cause’s war, so also the internal decay of the Nigerian state causes the country’s hegemonic decline in the West African sub-region. Nigeria has maintained her hegemonic control in the region since independence in 1960 up to 1994 when General Sani Abacha became head of Nigeria’s military junta having overthrown Chief Earnest Shonekon. From 1996 Nigeria’s declared a pariah state by the western countries as a result of the undemocratic behaviours of the Nigeria’s military junta. The Abacha regime was notorious in human rights abuses, insincerity in the democratic transition and flagrant disregard of international conventions. The execution of Ken Saro Wiwa, an environmental activist considered by the western countries to be pursuing a genuine cause as the “Ogoni Nine” with eight others known; the arrest of General Ousegun Obasanjo, former Nigeria’s head of state and an elder statesman who carried out a successful transition and handed over power to elected representatives of the people in 1979 and his deputy General Shehu Musa Yar’adua; the assassination of Alfred Rewane, a journalist known to be critical of the Abacha regime, are cases of gross violation of fundamental human rights. Many critics of the Abacha regime fled the country for fear of persecution such as the Nobel laureate professor Wale Soyinka. Nigeria was suspended from the British Commonwealth of Nations as a result of the execution of the Ogoni Nine. Series of sanctions were imposed on Nigeria including refusal of visa to the top members of the Abacha regime into the US. Nigeria’s international image was grossly hampered under the Abacha administration and foreign investors shun the country thereby creating unemployment in the country. General Abacha looted Nigeria’s treasury to the tune of \$ 5 billion USD. The sudden death of Abacha on the 8th of June 1998 opened a new page in Nigeria’s political history. General Abdussalami Abubakar took over the mantle of leadership and carried out the shortest transition programme in the country’s history and handed over to a democratically elected government in 1999.

Good governance inhibit certain basic features among which are the observance of the rule of law, equitable distribution of societal resources, effectiveness in decision making, responsible to wishes of the citizens, inclusiveness, consensus oriented and participatory (Anazodo, Igbokwe-Ibeto, & Nkah, 2015). Good governance is therefore, an attribute of democracy and Nigeria is expected to showcase good governance attributes in the West African region as the

sole hegemon for others to follow. The reverse is however, the case in Nigeria as insecurity, endemic corruption; rising poverty level bedeviled the country even though there is a democratic government in place. Chinua Achebe, winner of the 2007 Booker international Price for Fiction described Nigeria's problem thus,

“The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely the failure of leadership. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land, or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to its responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which is the hallmarks of true leadership” (Anazodo et al., 2015, 45).

Lack of strong institutions in Nigeria was a major impediment to the realization of good governance. The legislative arm of government that is supposed to be the public watch-dog in accused of corruption and in most cases members of the legislature were elected through fraudulent means therefore, could not effectively exercise their functions. The judiciary which is supposed to moderate the activities of both the legislature and the executive was subdued first by the military and later by the civilian administration by awarding judges contracts as a bribe and undue promotions. Many judges in Nigeria are under investigation after the 2016 elections. However, even then observers believed the present Nigerian government is investigating the judges because they were suspected to aid the former government in election trials. The anti-corruption agencies were not strengthened to effectively carry out their functions and in most cases were used as a tool to intimidate opposition by the governments in power. The Bar which is supposed to assist in building strong democratic institutions were accused of conniving with fraudulent and corrupt politicians to delay prosecution or even sabotage court proceedings; thus making it difficult for the judiciary to carry out its constitutional functions effectively (Alenoghena & Evans, 2015; E.Adegbite, 2015; Gambari, 2008; Nwagboso & Otu, 2015; M. A. Umar, Derashid, & Ibrahim, 2016).

Corruption as an Evidence of Bad Governance Responsible for Nigeria's Hegemonic Decline

Corruption is the “misuse of position of trust for personal gains” (Salisu, 2000), either in the private or public sector. Corruption has manifested itself at all levels of Nigeria's political and economic spheres. Nigeria is a signatory to various conventions aimed at curbing the evils of corruption in the country such as the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) ratified by Nigeria in 2004 and the African Union Convention for Preventing and Combating Corruption ratified in South Africa in July 2002 (Ebegbulem, 2012; Kabir, 2015). Despite effort by previous administrations in Nigeria however, the incidences of corruption has been increasing in the country every year. Transparency International ranking of 2014 placed Nigeria at 136/174 countries surveyed. Although the ranking is a little better than the 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005 ranking which placed Nigeria second to the last; it is still very bad for a country that claims regional hegemony (Ahad, 2015; Ebegbulem, 2012; Ogunnubi & Okeke-Uzodike, 2016).

Corruption has manifested itself at the highest level in Nigeria. In 2008, General Sani Abacha was alleged to have stolen \$3.6 billion USD of the country's wealth despite his War against Indiscipline and Corruption. When General Abdussalami Abubakar took over power following Abacha's sudden death in June 2008; he organized a brief transition and handed over power to democratically elected government on 29th May 1999; but emptied the country's foreign reserve “in the name of financing the transition” (Aliu, 2013; Ebegbulem, 2012; Kabir, 2015; Onuigbo, 2015). In 1999 Chief Olusegun Aremu Obasanjo came to power

through a democratic election and vowed to return the country to its position of leadership in the West African region. Obasanjo engaged in a “shuttle Diplomacy” and toured many countries in the world including the western countries. He established two anti-corruption agencies, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC). Obasanjo’s administration however, became entangled in the corruption racket in Nigeria. Series of accusations and counter accusations between Obasanjo and Vice President Atiku Abubakar were traded; each accusing the other of massive corruption. Obasanjo was accused of a dubious privatization exercise where he sold public properties to himself and his cronies below the cost price (Aliu, 2013; Egbo, Nwakoby, Onwumere, & Uche, 2010; Ogbeidi, 2012).

The Nigerian legislature which is supposed to be the public watchdog was also engulfed in corruption cases. Nigerian legislators have always been in the newspapers headlines for corruption allegations. During the inaugural sitting of the Nigerian Senate in June 1999, Senators were alleged to have collected eight hundred and fifty thousand Naira each in order to vote the president’s choice Evans Ewerem as senate President against the popular Chuba Okadigbo. They also received five million naira each instead of three million Naira as furniture allowance (Aliu, 2013; Gonzalez, 2016; Markovska & Adams, 2015). The first four years of legislative exercise in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic witnessed the impeachment of three senate Presidents all on corruption charges. For example Okadigbo was impeached for over invoicing the cost of contract for street lights installation by up to seventy three million Naira. Adolphos Nwabara was removed for receiving a fifty five million naira bribe from minister of education to secure approval for the inflated budget of his ministry in 2005. Senator Iyabo Obasanjo, daughter of the Nigerian president at that time was arraigned before the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) for collecting ten million Naira bribe as her own share of the loot of unspent budget of the ministry of health in 2006 (Aliu, 2013; Angahar, 2014; Ogundiya, 2009).

The judiciary and the police that are expected to enforce law were also deeply involved in corruption cases. The police instead of being a friend of the public have translated itself as the number one enemy of the public in Nigeria. Illegal road blocks are common features of Nigerian highways where innocent citizens are forced to give bribe before they are allowed to pass or be intimidated. The official slogan of bail is free has never been adhered to by the Nigerian police; with every citizen involve in police case forced to pay for bail or be detained beyond the 24 hours stipulated before taken to court. The judges in Nigeria were not left behind. Many judges were intimidated by the military and later corrupted by the politicians to dance to their tune especially in election petition cases. The case of a fraudulent and un transparent judgment delivered against the Ogoni nine during the Abacha regime which sentenced Ken Saro Wiwa and other eight Ogoni activists are cases of judicial compliance under the military (Abu, Abd, & Aziz, 2015; Ikein, 2016; Kabir, 2015).

Nigeria lost about \$ 8 billion USD to corruption from 1999 to 2007 (Adebajo A. & A. Mustapha, 2010) despite two anti-corruption agencies put in place by the Obasanjo administration. The ant-corruption agencies were accused of being used as a tool by the ruling party in Nigeria to intimidate and silence opposition members or perceived enemies within the ruling party. Nigeria’s continuous low ranking by Transparency International is enough to understand the extent of corruption in the country (Ahad, 2015; Akpomera, 2015; Angahar, 2014; Ogunnubi & Okeke-Uzodike, 2016).

Corruption has certainly eroded Nigeria’s hegemonic credentials in West Africa and dented the country’s international image as a gatekeeper in West African region. As such investors are wary of the country which results in the foreign investment transfer from the country

from 1999 to date. Investors complained of being subjected to pay bribe at all levels of official engagement before they are granted approval or permission to proceed to the next stage in their business endeavors; thus declaring Nigeria not a good place to do business. Consequently the country's growth and development is hampered which results in massive youth unemployment and general insecurity as a result of the youth restiveness (Afolabi & Ehinomen, 2015; Alabi & Fashagba, 2010; Eme & Onyishi, 2014) (Afolabi & Ehinomen, 2015). Professor Patrice Lumumba, the Director General Kenyan Law School in a keynote address he delivered to the Nigerian legislators lamented that only three countries in Africa were able to convert corruption; Botswana, Mauritius and Rwanda and that explained why they have stable democracies and steady economic development. Lumumba's statement was very embarrassing for Nigeria which is supposed to lead other countries by example. According to Lumumba, these countries have "demonstrated in word and deed that they mean what they say in the fight against corruption" (Nigerian Television Authority, 2016).

Poverty as a Factor for Nigeria's Hegemonic Decline in West Africa

Nations across the world have focused on poverty eradication as their main concern. Regardless of their economic status countries have emphasized poverty eradication as part of their development agenda. The Millennium Development Goals has poverty eradication as one of the targets it set to achieve by the year 2020. Although the definition of poverty has been diverse, there is consensus among scholars on what constitute poverty. The inability of a person to meet certain basic requirements of life signifies poverty. Thus, poverty is considered as lack of access to basic necessities of life such as food, water, shelter and clothing as well as inaccessibility to the social, cultural and means necessary to guarantee productivity, social reproduction and every-day life of the society (The World Bank, 2012). Poor people are those whose aggregate earnings are below the poverty line. They are also those marginalized by income and other basic needs of life (Akerle, Momoh, Adewuyi, Phillip, & Ashaolu, 2012; Arndt, McKay, & Tarp, 2016; Jacob, 2015; Toyin, Timothy, & Funsho, 2015).

Poverty has been rose systematically in Nigeria from 2004 to 2010. Rural poverty has increased from 63.3% to 73.2%, while urban poverty indices rose from 41.35 to 61.8% between 2004 to 2010 (NBS, 2016). Nigeria has ¼ of Africa's extreme poor and 10% of the world's out of school children, 10% of child maternal deaths and 25% of global malaria cases. The Nigerian national Bureau of Statistics report for 2010 indicates that 112.519 million Nigerians out of the country's population of 163 million lives in poverty (NBS, 2012). The paradox of Nigeria is that there are no correlations between the immense wealth of the country and its poverty level. Thus, Otu, Eja, Joy and Emeka (2011) rightly observed that in spite of a robust endowment in natural and human resources, "the level of poverty of her people stands in contrast to the country's enormous wealth". Nigeria has 1/4 of Africa's extreme poor, 10% of the world's children out of school, 10% of child and maternal deaths, and 25% of global malarial cases. The country has the most poor men and women after India and China (The World Bank, 2012). According to the National Bureau of Statistics 112.519 million Nigerians of the country's estimated population of 163 million live in relative poverty (Alkire & Seth, 2016; Hassan, 2015; Nandy, Daoud, & Gordon, 2016; NBS, 2012). Scholars citing available statistics from Nigeria Poverty Profile 2010 a survey by the National Bureau of statistics indicate that inequality and poverty is deep and pervasive with an estimated 70 percent of the population living in poverty (Jacob, 2015; NBS, 2016).

Collapse of Internal Security as a Cause of Nigeria's Hegemonic Decline

Militant groups emerged in Nigeria after 1994 and began to unleash terror in the country. The Odua People's Congress (OPC) was founded in August 1994 as a Pan Yoruba movement with the aim of pursuing the Yoruba agenda of protecting the South-west the discriminations and marginalization of the Northern ruling elites who have been ruling the country since independence. The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) was formed in 2006 in the South-south region with the aim of protecting their environment from the oil spillage and to demand for a larger share of the country's oil resources explored from their region. The Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOP) was also formed in 1999 in the South-east region as a pressure group to resuscitate the Biafran dream and in the Northern part of the country Boko Haram emerged in 2009 with the sole aim of establishing an Islamic Caliphate in the country. This article shall however, discuss Boko Haram because of its regional implications to the West African sub-region and how it transformed from a local insurgents group to a trans-national terrorist organization with affiliation to Al-Qaeda.

Boko haram means "western education is forbidden". It is a derivation from a combination of Hausa and Arabic languages; Boko meaning western education and Haram meaning forbidden. The original name of the group however, is Jama'atu Ahlul Sunna Lil Da'awati Wal Jihad; meaning "People committed to the propagation of the Prophets Teachings (Abu et al., 2015). The group is a salafist movement led by Muhammed Yusuf who was killed by the Nigerian security operatives in 2009. His death sparked up the violent activities of the group as response to the failure of the Nigerian government to prosecute Yusuf killers. Boko Haram's initial tactics was to attack government properties and security personale whether on duty or not but later went viral by attacking mosques, churches, schools, markets and innocent citizens perceived to be going against them including religious clerics who preached against their violent activities.

The main aim of Boko Haram is to take over power from the Nigerian government which according to them is infidel. They want to impose an Islamic legal system. The western style government is unjust and therefore, responsible for the social inequalities, corruption, unemployment and unending poverty in the country (Agbibo, 2013). Government failures to provide basic necessities of life to the teeming Nigerian populace, large scale corruption that has almost been institutionalized in the country, the infrastructural decay, unemployment, armed robbery, prostitution and increase in poverty level in the country; were factors responsible for the emergence of Boko Haram. The group's name itself originates from the dissatisfaction of its members with the way and manner the western educated elites in Nigeria squandered the common wealth of Nigeria mercilessly without recourse to the predicaments of the over 163 million people in the country.

In June 2012, the US states Department included Boko Haram in the list of special terrorists group. The sophisticated weapons used by the group as well as the skills and tactics employed by Boko Haram in carrying out its activities indicate the group is not alone and is being assisted by international terrorist groups. The group's pledge of allegiance to Al-Qaeda proved the speculation to be true.

The group's stronghold is Borno state, North-eastern Nigeria; a state where less than 2% of the children below the age of five receive vaccination in 2010. 83% of youth cannot read and write with understanding; 48.5% of school age children do not go to school at all; 72% of children between 6-16 years of age do not attend formal schools in their entire life. The North-east region records 64.8% of poverty rate in Nigeria(NBS, 2012).

Boko Haram has eroded Nigeria's capacity as a regional power militarily thereby posing transnational threat to the West African sub-region. The group has launched several attacks to neighboring countries such as Chad, Cameroon and Niger Republic. The unprofessional manner in which the Nigerian security operatives are handling the insurgency has further weakened Nigeria's credibility as a capable regional hegemon. There were reports of massive human rights violations by the Joint Task Force (JTF). The house by house search employed by the JTF has exposed Nigeria's failure of intelligence gathering and violated the citizens' fundamental right to privacy(Charity & Mani, 2015; Onuoha, 2013; Oyewole, 2015; Zenn, 2014).

The inability of the Nigerian military to contain the Boko Haram insurgents forced the country to seek assistance from neighboring countries. Chadian forces were able within few days to push the insurgents back to the forest and killed many of them. The Chadian troops advanced some kilometers into Nigeria's territory which sparked criticisms from within and outside Nigeria on the embarrassing performance of the Nigerian military. The Nigerian military was quick to dismiss the fantastic role played by the Chadian armed forces as "mere exaggeration"(Ahmed & Eje, 2015; Charity & Mani, 2015; Mungai, 2015; Sheriff, Uke, & Adams, 2015). Whatever it is Boko Haram has dwarfed Nigeria's capacity as a West African hegemon and has left the country's international image hanging until the country can prove otherwise by restoring her credibility as the "giant of Africa"(Bakoup, 2016) (ASC, 2014; Alkire & Seth, 2016; Bakoup, 2016; Ejalonibu & Idowu, 2016; Kolade, Olayinka, Sunday, & Adesoji, 2015)

CONCLUSION

Nigeria's hegemonic status is in a state of decline from 1994 to date. The decline is essentially caused by a number of factors. Bad governance in the country is a major contributing factor to the country's decline and bad governance breeds poverty, corruption, inequality and general state of insecurity. The return of democracy in 1999 spelt out catastrophe to the Nigerian citizens instead of bringing solutions to the problems caused by prolonged military rule. Rule of law has been subverted by the Nigerian political elite in order to satisfy their selfish interest, corruption increased under the democratic government in Nigeria compared to the military era, poverty almost quadrupled, insecurity has dwarfed the capacity of the Nigerian security operatives and inequality has been on the increase since the return of democratic rule in Nigeria.

These internal factors have combined to erode Nigeria's hegemonic power in the West African sub-region; and subsequently reduced her international image. West Africa is the poorest region in the world as well as the most unstable region. West African countries also maintained high score in the corruption perception index. Therefore, any country that claims hegemony in the region must lead by example in the fight against poverty, corruption and insecurity. Nigeria therefore need to wake up from the slumber and face challenges of nation building in order to reverse the decline in her hegemonic status within the West African sub-region. Nigeria need to partner with France in military and intelligence sharing because of France strategic interest in West Africa in order to address the endemic insecurity particularly in the country and in the entire region generally.

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