HEGEMONY AND LEADERSHIP IN AFRICA: AN APPRAISAL OF NIGERIA’S ROLE

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Abstract: Nigeria is endowed with numerous natural and human resources in which the country has utilized such for the betterment of Africa. Nigeria’s leadership role towards achieving stability and development in Africa cannot be overemphasized. This has canvassed for Nigeria’s big brother commitment in Africa. The country is mostly referred to as the giant of Africa, this is not only attributed to its population size, but also in the area of human and material resources. The possession of natural resources, particularly the crude oil has assisted Nigeria’s economy in the global markets which invariably made the country one of the reckoning points when determining the production of oil at the international markets. This has equally empowered Nigeria to contribute more to the Africa’s stability and development. These prominent role and contribution of Nigeria to Africa qualifies it more to be a regional hegemon among other contenders in the continent. The study makes use of trait theory of leadership and hegemonic stability theory to appraise Nigeria’s role and contribution in Africa as an essential tool for the country to assume regional hegemon in the continent. This study therefore is a qualitative in nature that employs the use of secondary source of data to appraise Nigeria’s function and leading role in Africa as a tool to assume a regional hegemon in the continent.

Keywords: Leadership, Hegemony, Stability, Africa, Nigeria


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Introduction

The task of the leader is to get his people from where they are to where they have not been.

(Henry A. Kissinger)

The anarchical nature of the global system influences the level at which actors of the international system such as States, exercise their power in order to show the greatness in them. The leadership influence of some powerful States like Nigeria in Africa, through its economic resources, stability functions and developmental initiative have made many scholars to argue in favour of its hegemonic potentiality and qualities in Africa. As argued by Nye, the hegemonic existence of a State with excess power can be considered as the stability element of a region (Ogunnubi & Okeke-Uzodike, 2016). As a result of this, there is a need for an existence of a powerful state in every region, in order to ensure the stability of the region which will invariably promote the development activities in such region. A hegemon is needed in Africa to address socio-economic, political and security challenges facing some of the African countries (Habib & Selinyane, 2006). As such would assist to promote the respect and recognition of Africa at the global arena.
The leadership role which Nigeria has been playing in Africa particularly the West African sub-region, could be attributed to its economic and military capabilities in the continent. The country’s high level of natural resources endowment which invariably influence its economic viability in Africa canvassed for the positive impact it has played in Africa’s development and stability. Nigeria’s leadership role has accorded the country with certain level of respect and recognition both within Africa and beyond. As a result of the country prominent role and contribution to the development and stability of Africa, a number of scholars argued that Nigeria has assumed a position to be reckoned with in any discourse relating to Africa. Hence, Nigeria’s leadership function in the continent both at the regional and sub-regional levels in Africa, is arguably described the country as an African hegemon.

The hegemonic position in Africa is a debatable issue in the continent both among the state-actors and the scholars. Similarly, apart from Nigeria’s candidature, literature has identified numerous contenders of the hegemonic race in Africa to include countries like South Africa, Egypt, Algeria, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Morocco among others (Tella, 2018). Despite the number of contenders in the hegemonic race in African continent, many scholars believe that only Nigeria and South Africa have demonstrated the potentiality to assume hegemonic position in the continent (Flemes, 2009; Nolte, 2010; Ogunnubi, 2014; Seteolu & Okuneye, 2017).

In spite of the role and function performed by South Africa in the continent, many scholars such as Adebajo and Landsberg (2003), Saliu and Omotola (2008), Tavares (2011), Ogunnubi (2014), Ogunnubi and Okeke-Uzodiike (2016), Dauda and Ameen (2017) among others, agreed that Nigeria qualifies to be a hegemon in Africa due to its numerous advantage and contribution to the continent over South Africa, and other contenders. Similarly, the leadership role and function exercise by Nigeria in Africa as argued by Dauda, Ahmad and Keling (2017), Abba, Osman and Muda (2017) showcase the country’s effort in the continental stability of Africa which is capable of promoting the country’s chances of becoming an Africa’s hegemon. Therefore, it is against this backdrop that the study is appraising Nigeria’s leadership role and contribution in Africa which is capable of making it a hegemon in the continent.

Statement of Problems
The regional hegemony in Africa is a contending issue among the state-actors and the scholars in the continent. This arguably canvassed for series of studies such as Adebajo and Landsberg (2003), Saliu and Omotola (2008), Tavares (2011), Ogunnubi (2014), Oladimeji and Ahmad (2015), Ogunnubi and Okeke-Uzodiike (2016), Dauda and Ameen (2017), Ogunnubi, (2017), Ogunnubi and Akinola (2017), Seteolu and Okuneye (2017), Reddy (2018) among others, that focused on Africa’s hegemony. However, it was observed that scanty studies appraised Nigeria’s leadership role and contribution in Africa as an instrument to boost the country’s chances to become a regional hegemon. Thus, the study appraises Nigeria’s function and leading role in Africa as a tool to assume a regional hegemon in the continent.

Methodology
A systematic review of literature is employ by the study which focuses on leadership and hegemony with particular reference to Nigeria’s role in Africa. The research is qualitative approach that is based on the secondary data as its sources. Literature on hegemony and leadership recorded on books, journal articles, Newspapers among others, are make use of.
Furthermore, the study makes use of trait theory of leadership and hegemonic stability theory to appraise Nigeria’s role and contribution in Africa as an essential tool for the country to assume regional hegemon in the African continent. Trait theory is borrowed from psychology discipline. It is also known as dispositional theory. The theory is a method to observe human personality. It is also used in the measurement of traits, that is, a habitual style of human thought, behaviour, and emotion (Kassin, 2003). Trait could also be viewed as a personality aspect that are stable over time and which could be influenced by one’s behaviour or attitude. Trait theory was propounded by Gordon Allport, an American psychologist, in his early work centered on modern psychological study of personality (Long, 1952). He believed that one’s personality motivates and shapes one’s behaviour or action towards an event in a particular society. Going by the nature and status of Nigeria, as the Africa’s richly endowed country, one can argue that, the possession of its natural endowment which make it a centre of attraction to numerous investors, and couple with its strong military capability canvassed for its leading role in the continent.

Similarly, the hegemonic stability theory as the complimentary theory for the study is traced to Kindleberger (1973) and scholars such as Gilpin (1987), Keohane (1984; 1989), Modelski (1987), Gadzey (1994), Webb and Krasner (1989). Although, the hegemonic notion is more attached to Antonio Gramsci, the General Secretary of the Italian Communist Party in his concept titled towards a Marxist approach. The theory was brought into limelight by Kindleberger (1973) when he related it to the rise and decline of America’s influence in global affairs. He posited that since states are rational in seeking for their interests, there is need for a leader to emerge in order to monitor the global stability. He argued further that for a state that would oversee the affairs of the system and ensuring stability and regulation of polity, such state should be regarded to as hegemon. Therefore, a hegemon must have the will and capacity to enforce the rules and commitment to the system for mutual benefits. Hegemon’s will and capacity should encompasses buoyant economy, technological dominance, strong political power and military strength.

Some argue that hegemonic stability theory shares similar attributes with structuralism and realism. As argued by Prys (2010: 9), realist would prefer to elect a hegemon from the “asymmetrical distribution” power among different countries. He argued further that, adoption one form of power as a yardstick would be unrealistic for such determinant. It can be argued that previously, power was attributed to countries with a high population, military, geographical position and endowment with natural resources. This is equally the position of Flemes (2009) that despite the fact that the United States’ military is powerful, the country spends huge amount on its defense for equipment. Arguably, this and other factors sustain the United States up till the present among other countries in the world.

There are two fundamental hegemonic outcomes which include; stability and security. As argued by Nye (1990), peace and economic stability motivate hegemon in the system. Meaning that, a hegemon can emerge in order to ensure peaceful atmosphere and economic development in a society. He posited further that “economic stability historically has occurred when there has been a sole hegemonic power [...] without a hegemonic power, conflict is the order of the day” (p.188).

However, as many scholars applied the assumptions of the hegemonic stability theory to describe the global phenomenon, its application to African context has arguably proved different result. For instance, Adebajo and Mustapha (2008), Alden and Schoeman (2015) argue that using population and deposition of natural resources in a country is not enough for such country to be a regional hegemon. A case study of South Africa that is also
a contender of regional hegemon in Africa cited. Since the eradication of apartheid in South Africa, its economy has become buoyant which is attracting several nationals/investors to the country. This perhaps accelerate South Africa’s contribution to the global development. Better still, Nigeria’s contribution and its leadership role in Africa cannot be over emphasized due to its possession of hegemonic qualities such as buoyant economy, strong political power, population and military strength. Arguably, aside from deserving to a regional hegemon in Africa, Nigeria has succeeded in breeding future hegemon like South Africa, because the former had played a vital role towards the eradication of apartheid in South Africa (Koutonin, 2016). From the foregoing, the assumption of the two theories are considered suitable for the study to appraise Nigeria’s function and its leading role in Africa as veritable tool and yardstick to qualify as a regional hegemon in the continent.

**Conceptual Clarification**

**Leadership:** This term according to Ferkins, Shilbury, and O’Boyle (2017), has its origin traced to the of psychology. Several scholars have viewed leadership meaning differently. This influenced the argument of Eddy and VanDerLinden (2006) that such made it difficult to have a concise definition for the leadership term. For instance, Davis (2003) described leadership as “movement, taking the organization or some part of the it in a new direction, solving problems, being creative, initiating new programs, building organizational structures, and improving quality” (p.4). Similarly, Smith (2010) asserts leadership as “the ability to adapt the setting so everyone feels empowered to contribute creatively to solving the problems” (p.1). Smith’s definition of leadership encompassed the following as qualities that determine a leader in a given society: ability, adaptive, setting, empowers, feelings, contribution, solving problems, and creativity. Any individual-actor or state that possess the attributes itemized above, Smith considered such as a leader of a society.

Stogdill in his own opinion about leadership described it as a way of influencing an organized group’s activities towards achieving the goals and objectives of an organization (Stogdill, 1950). This shows how important the leadership is. Zaccaro, Rittman and Marks (2001) argued that leadership is a determinant tool to evaluate either success or failure of a team. Meaning that, if a team has a good leader, the probability for the team to sustain would be high and vice versa. Also, McGrath (1962) stressed that “…the primary purpose of leadership is to ensure that the group fulfills all critical functions necessary to its own maintenance and the accomplishment of its task” (p.5). This implies that a good leader must be skillful and creative in order to ensure the assigned goals and objectives of the team is achieve. The support of the team members to work together with its leaders mostly assist an organization to achieve a desire result. This could be made possible if leader encourage its team members to involve in the decision making which is capable of making them to feel among towards achieving the organization goals (Ahearne, Mathieu, & Rapp, 2005; Leach, Wall, & Jackson, 2003). As a result of this, each and every team members would have a sense of responsibility to efficiently work for positive outcomes for the organization’s set goals or target (Chesney & Locke, 1991; Locke & Latham, 1990).

However, due to numerous definitions and opinion of scholars on what constitute leadership, Birnbaum (1992) suggested that, “any comprehensive consideration of academic leadership must be able to accommodate both the strong leader and the weak leader views, because evidence suggests that while both may be incomplete, both are in some measure correct” (p.8). Meaning that, irrespective of whatever classification a leader fall into, its opinions and views should be respected in order to achieve a common goal.
Therefore, there are numerous form of leadership, but for the clarity of this study, the review of forms of leadership would be centred on the following:

a. **Strategic leadership:** this is a kind of leadership that categorize top leaders/management teams at the apex level of organization. As elaborated by Resick, Whitman, Weingarden and Hiller (2009), there would always be a dark side and bright side of the personalities of the top management members which could affect the goals of the organization if not properly managed.

b. **Empowering leadership:** this kind of leadership could be described as a supportive leadership (Bowers & Seashore, 1966). Hersey, Blanchard and Natemeyer (1979) viewed this kind of leadership as coaching and delegating style of attitude. This form of leadership leads its followers by example and ensure adequate provision for their welfare which invariably enhance desirable output for the organization.

c. **Participative Leadership:** this described a leadership behaviour that involve followers in making joint decision and sharing of influence (Lam, Huang, & Chan, 2015). Vroom and Yetton (1973) and Vroom and Jago (2007) developed participative form of leadership from normative decision-making model. This was done in order to compare between the autocratic decision-making style and the participative decision-making style.

d. **Transformational/charismatic leadership:** this form of leadership has been a common approach over the years. It describes leadership behaviour to encompassed four elements – inspirational motivation, idealized influence (which are attributed to charismatic leadership), intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration (described followers who are inspiring to work as team to achieve a better result for an organisation) (Yammarino & Bass, 1990; Yukl, 2002).

e. **Ethical leadership:** this term focuses on the orientation of leaders in doing what is just, guiding others, fairness, demonstrate a high sense of integrity, and encouraging members of the team to work and comport themselves in an ethical manner (Den Hartog, 2015; Hassan, Mahsud, Yukl, & Prussia, 2013; Palanski & Yammarino, 2009).

f. **Self-leadership:** this is a kind of strategy is used to influence and control one’s actions and behaviours that one noticed or observed within oneself which could serve as motivation towards adding value to one’s action in an organized setting (Manz & Sims Jr., 1980).

g. **Shared leadership:** this is a collective method of leadership style by which a leader assigned responsibility or tasks among its team members (Yammarino, Salas, Serban, Shireffs, & Shuffler, 2012). As argued by Pearce and Sims Jr. (2002), shared leadership encompasses that leadership can arise from either a context or members in an organization rather than a designated leader.

**Hegemony:** According to Snidal (1985) and Lake (1993) who are theorists of hegemonic stability believed that leadership could be either benevolent or coercive. To them, the determinant to separate benevolent and coercive leadership is based on the level at which costs and benefits of togetherness is shared among members. There are numerous
intellectual debates on the concept of regional hegemon and what differentiate super powers and the middle powers. Nolte (2010) attributed the challenges in describing the regional hegemonic power to “general lack of analytical instruments to identify and to compare regional powers and to differentiate regional powers from great powers and middle powers” (p.881). He further defined a regional power as:

i. State which articulates the pretension (self-conception) of a leading position in a region that is geographically, economically and political ideationally delimited;

ii. State which displays the material (military, economic, demographic), organisational (political) and ideological resources for regional power projection;

iii. State which truly has great influence in regional affairs (activities and results). In addition, it is expected that a regional power is a state;

iv. State which is economically, politically and culturally interconnected with the region;

v. State which influences in a significant way the geopolitical delimitation and the political-ideational construction of the region;

vi. State which exerts this influence by means of regional governance structures;

vii. State which defines and articulates a common regional identity or project;

viii. State which provides a collective good for the region or participates in a significant way in the provision of such a collective good;

ix. State which defines the regional security agenda in a significant way;

x. State whose leading position in the region is recognized or at least respected by other states inside and outside of the region, especially by other regional powers;

xi. State which is integrated in interregional and global forums and institutions where it articulates not only its own interests but acts as well, at least in a rudimentary way, as a representative of regional interests (Tella, 2018: pp.2-3).

Similarly, some scholars also attested to the fact that there are uncontested numbers of attributes for a regional hegemon to emerge, at the same time some salient characteristics (Destradi, 2010). Ogunnubi and Okeke-Uzodike (2016) described regional hegemons as “role models and leaders within a particular region by carrying out leading activities that are general accepted by neighbouring states” (p.3).

Due to significant numbers of definition for regional hegemons, the following attributes could be identified in a potential hegemon of a region. These include: material preponderance (which comprised of military, economic and demographic power), that makes a hegemon to be a giant in its domain; harmonious relationship with other states with in the region in the areas of economic, political and cultural; ability to initiate economic development that would have positive impact on all states in the region; implementing its favourable foreign policy for the benefit of the states in its region; readiness to play a leading role towards achieving development to the region, ability to influence regional affairs through its economic, security and political agenda among others (Ogunnubi & Okeke-Uzodike, 2016).
Nigeria’s Hegemony in Africa: Afrocentric Policy

As it has been emphasized that there are numerous contenders of African hegemon, but only Nigeria and South Africa are at the forefront among the contestants in the continent (Nolte, 2010; Ogunnubi, 2014; Seteolu & Okuneye, 2017). Going by the Nigeria’s historical background, particularly when the country attained its independence in 1960 from the British colonial power, one would notice that the country’s foreign policy principles and objectives are made in accordance with the provision for African development and stability. This is what Gambari (1989; 2017) and Adebajo (2008) described as notion of four concentric circle of Nigeria’s national interest: first, Nigeria is concern with the security and welfare of its citizens, which also include its neighbouring countries (such as Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Benin); second is on West Africa countries under Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); third priority is on African continent in general; and lastly, the entire world at large. Looking at the principle of Nigeria’s foreign policy through the notion concentricism propounded by Gambari, one would argue that the country is operating an afrocentric policy in Africa.

Since Nigeria’s independence, the country has actively participated in numerous efforts toward bringing development to the African continent. Notably among them was its role towards the formation of a continental organization in Africa known as the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), under which the country strived with other members to launch a campaign against colonialism, racism and apartheid (Wapmuk, 2014). As a result of Nigeria’s active role towards agitation for independence of other African countries through the OAU, many countries like Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Guinea-Bissau among others, were granted independence (Ariyo, 2014). Similarly, Nigeria was made as the United Nations Commission’s chairman on Apartheid in South Africa for its greater role and contribution towards condemning apartheid, racism and its sorts in Africa.

Having realized some of the objectives setting up the OAU as a continental organization in Africa such as the eradication of colonialism, unity and cooperation among others, Nigeria actively played a tremendous role in the transformation of the OAU to African Union (AU) in the continent (Edo & Olanrewaju, 2012; Wapmuk, 2014; Dauda, Ahmad, & Keling, 2018). It was argued that part of the influences that necessitate the successful transformation of OAU to AU was as a result of Nigeria’s goodwill and contribution to stability in many African countries which attributed to the consents of many African states to the transformation initiatives (Dauda, Ahmad & Keling, 2017). This demonstrates the Nigeria’s leadership, readiness and commitment to Africa’s stability and development.

In addition, Ogunnubi and Okeke-Uzodike (2016) stressed that Nigeria has shown sign of readiness and commitment to Africa through its principle and policy regulating its external relations. He pointed out that since the administration of Nigeria’s first prime minister, Alhaji (Sir) Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the country’s foreign policy principles have been consistent till date and that the following achievement credited to Nigeria cannot be disputed:

i. Eradicating apartheid;
ii. Advocating for debt relief and reparation for Africa;
iii. Supporting the decolonization process in Africa;
iv. Reforming and transforming the OAU into the AU;
v. Establishing ECOWAS as a sub-regional multilateral framework;
vi. Securing the status as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council (UNSC);

vii. Undertaking peace support operations across the world (Ogunnubi & Okeke-Uzodike, 2016: 9).

Therefore, one can argue that Nigeria’s foreign policy was made not for the benefits of itself alone but for the betterment of Africa, and the entire globe. As it was stressed by Gambari (1989), Ogunnubi and Okeke-Uzodike (2016) that, Nigeria has no hidden motives for making its policy favourable for the African continent, its goodwill invariably added to the humanitarian contribution and leadership mind of the country to the continent.

**Possibilities and Contradictions of Nigeria Becoming Hegemon in Africa**

Going by what scholars like Nolte (2010), Ogunnubi and Okeke-Uzodike (2016) and Tella (2018) among others, postulated as the attributes for a potential hegemon in a region, one would argue that Nigeria qualifies to be hegemon in Africa due to its numerous leadership role and contribution in the continent. One of such is described as material preponderance. The material preponderance encompasses buoyant economy, strong military force, and population.

**a. Buoyant economy:**

Nigeria’s economy has been one of the resources or tools that the country is used to influence decision and command respect in Africa. It is undisputable truth that, Nigeria is richly endowed with varieties of natural resources such crude oil, gold, iron ore, columbite, coal among others, with a conducive atmospheric condition which attract several foreign investors to the country. Apart from that, Nigeria’s topography is highly rich that grow varieties of both foods and cash crops which generate high income as revenue to the government of the country. Since late 1980s and 1990s, Nigeria’s economic resurgence has been dominant in African economy. In other word, Nigeria’s economy in 2014 is undeniably the most fast-growing economy in Africa with a GDP of $522 billion at 6.2% growth rate (Magnowski, 2014; Awojobi, Ayakpat, & Adisa, 2014). While South Africa came second with $350 billion GDP at 2.6% growth rate (African Economic Outlook, 2015).

Similarly, it has been shown by the World Bank Operational Policies (2013) that Nigeria is topmost exporter of crude oil in Africa with biggest reserve of natural gas in the continent. This in no measure has boost Nigeria’s economy above other countries in Africa. In fact, buoyant economy of Nigeria is attributed to the leading role and financial contribution of the country to many multilateral institutions like ECOWAS, AU and UN (Ogunnubi & Okeke-Uzodike, 2016). Therefore, the figure 1. below illustrates the 2015 Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of African countries as shown by the world bank open data – indicator (2017).
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**Figure 1:** The 2015 Gross Domestic Product in Selected African Countries

![Gross Domestic Product in Selected African Countries, 2015](image)

From the figure 1 above, it would be observed that out of the 54 sovereign countries that constitute the African Union as a continental organization, only 19 countries appeared on the above figure. Meaning that other countries which do not appear in the figure, are having a GDP that below Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe has the least GDP of $14,659,000,000 among the countries appeared on the figure, while Nigeria is having the highest GDP of $537,966,000,000. Egypt came second with GDP of $330,765,000,000 and followed by South Africa that came third with GDP of $266,213,000,000. Going by African GDP as a yardstick to determine the regional hegemon in the continent, one can argue that Nigeria has what it takes to be a hegemon in the African continent.

**b. Populations:**

Nigeria is densely populated among the countries in Africa. This is arguably one of the tools that the country has been using to influence decisions in Africa, most notably during the transformation of OAU to AU. The 2006 population census in Nigeria indicates that the country was having over 140 million people as its population (Adebowale, Fagbamigbe & Bamigboye, 2014; World Bank, 2018). Similarly, the United Nations Economic and Social Affairs Department’s records shown the increase in Nigeria’s fast-growing population that, its population is increasing annually by 2.6–3.0 percent since the year 2000 (World Bank, 2018; worldometers, 2018). In other word, as at December, 2017 Nigeria’s population as illustrated by the United Nations Economic and Social Affairs Division, was 190,886,311 which positioned the country as the seventh densely populated country in the world (worldometers, 2018). Therefore, the figure 2. below indicates the 2015 Populations of African countries as reported by the world bank open data – indicator (2017).
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Figure 2: The 2015 Population in Selected African Countries

From the figure 2 above, one would observe that Nigeria has the highest population in the figure of 183,523,432 which canvassed for the argument that one in every black person found anywhere in the world is a Nigerian. The second in the figure was Ethiopia with population of 98,942,102, followed by Egypt with population of 84,705,681. The least populated country in the figure 2 is Libya with the population of 6,317,080. Other African countries that do not appear on the figure are having a population lesser than Libya.

c. Military capability:
This is another attribute which a regional hegemon should possess in a given environment (Ogunnubi & Okeke-Uzodike, 2016). Nigeria in this regard has sufficiently demonstrated its potential through its well-trained armed forces, particularly in West Africa sub-region. Nigeria has started its peacekeeping and peace-making efforts since its independence in 60s when it troops involved in keeping peace in Congo (Dauda, Ahmad & Keling, 2017). Nigeria has equally engaged and headed the peaceful resolution between Benin Republic and Togo in 1975. It at the same time actively involved in the troops deployment to Chad for peacekeeping during imbroglio (Okunnu, 2010). Nigeria’s role in holding African continent together from been disintegrate particularly, during the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) recognition by the OAU, as against the wish of certain members of the organization cannot be underestimated (Dokubo & Joseph, 2011).

Similarly, Nigeria contributed actively the process of bring peace back to countries like Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea Bissau, Sudan-Darfur crises among others (Dokubo & Joseph, 2011). The country has participated in peacekeeping missions both at the global level (United Nations peacekeeping initiative), continental level (African Union) and at the sub-regional level (ECOWAS). Nigeria’s military constituted larger percentage of the Ecowas Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) Army which at the same time contributed huge amount of fund for the maintenance of the force. As argued by Adigbue (2013), Nigeria spent over $82 million in Chad between 1979-1982. Also, its intervention in Liberia between 1991-2003 cost Nigeria a sum of $12 billion and 1000 lives of soldiers were loss. Abubakar (2009) equally argued that Nigeria had contributed above 80 percent of fund for
ECOMOG to embark on peacekeeping operations. According to the Abuja Bureau Chief, Madu Onuorah, “Nigeria has participated in 25 out of the 51 established UN missions {…} the country has led regional peacekeeping operations under the auspices of the OAU, as well as the ECOWAS {…} Nigeria spent an estimated $10 billion to fund this effort” (Oladimeji & Ahmad, 2015: 88).

Furthermore, Nigeria’s contribution of troops to Mali in 2013 January as argued by Adigbou (2013) gulped a sum of $34 million. Averagely, Nigeria spent a sum of $1 million daily for the up-keep of men on mission and other logistics. Nigeria ensures peace and stability in Africa through both its human and material resource. Its contribution to ECOMOG was argued by Dokubo and Joseph (2011) as the tempo that is sustaining the force of ECOMOG in the west African sub-region. Figure 3 below indicates the military expenditures of countries in West Africa in 2015. The reason for this is that, Nigeria mostly make use of ECOMOG where it contributed officers and men heavily for the maintenance of peace and stability in Africa.

**Figure 3:** The 2015 Military Expenditures in West African Countries

![Military Expenditures in West Africa, 2015](image)

From the figure above, it is clearly shown that Nigeria has the highest contribution to the wellbeing and the maintenance of ECOMOG to the tune of $5,200,000,000, followed by Ghana with the contribution of $650,000,000. This indicated that apart from donating troops for the peacekeeping exercise, Nigeria also shouldered more responsibility in terms of financing the troops for the exercise.

Therefore, the above figure 1,2, and 3, represent the possibilities of Nigeria becoming a hegemon in the African continent. However, the following are some of the factors that some scholars think could hinder Nigeria’s ambition of becoming a hegemon in Africa if not properly handled. The two notable factors that can jeopardize Nigeria’s chances are as follows:

i. The nefarious activities of extremist and violent sect called Boko Haram.

ii. Endemic corruption among the ruling class in the country, among others
Despite the pronounced Boko Haram insurgency and high rate of corruption in Nigeria, the government of the country has not relent in waging war to combat the insurgency and corruption facing the country. Notably, the present administration under President Muhammadu Buhari has promised zero tolerance for corruption and insurgency in Nigeria where he empowers anticorruption mechanism such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Independence Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), Investment and Security Tribunal (IST) and others. These agencies are empowered to investigate any corrupt cases particularly among the ruling class or the politicians in the country (Jumoke, 2015; Abati, 2016; Dodge, 2017; Post Nigeria, 2017). Again, the security apparatus of Nigeria such as the Armed forces, the police and other paramilitary are also empowered, and equipped to discharge their duties without fear or favour towards protecting lives and properties of the citizens and other legal immigrants residing in the country. Furthermore, the present government equally embark on the mass sensitization and awareness of the people on the need to expose any criminal tendencies or hideout in their domain to the appropriate authority in order to ensure peaceful environment. This is because “security” they say, “is everyone’s responsibility”. Therefore, to effectively curb the menace of insecurity, all hands must be on deck.

**Conclusion**

The attainment of hegemonic status and leadership in Africa as earlier identified, is contentious and debatable in the continent particularly among the state-actors and the researchers. Despite that, the available literature on what constitute hegemon in a region has arguably provided some measures or determinants of hegemon in an environment. As earlier stated that many African countries were agitating and competing for a hegemonic position in the continent but, only Nigeria and South Africa possessed some elements identified in the literature. Similarly, Bill Gates posited that “as we look ahead into the next century, leaders will be those who empower others” (cited in Yu, Vaagaasar, Müller, Wang & Zhu, 2018: 992), Nigeria in this case, has contributed immensely towards peace, stability and development of Africa in which numerous African states have been empowered through such means. Again, looking at the leadership role that Nigeria has been playing in the African continent, one would argue that the country is more deserving to be a hegemon in the continent. In addition to Nigeria’s possession of a regional hegemon’s criteria and couple with the benefits which the country has rendered to the African continent, one can argue that if Nigeria is chosen or appointed as the hegemon, the continent would benefit more especially in the areas of peace and stability of the region. To this end, Nigeria is having the potential and zeal of promoting Africa’s development, peace and stability, if considered by other African countries as the regional hegemon than any other aspirants.

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