

NIGERIA'S ROLE SINCE THE FORMATION OF AFRICA UNION: IT'S LEADERSHIP STATUS IN AFRICA

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Abstract

This paper examines the role Nigeria plays in Africa in order to understand the power exerted by Nigeria in the transition from OAU to AU with the perspective of analyzing its leadership role. Thus, can Nigeria be seen as a hegemon based on the various developmental policies and regional integration relations in Africa? The historical perspective was used through secondary sources of data collection in gathering and review materials related to the study. Hence in order to explain this important paper, the hegemony stability theory was utilized which sees a single state to be above other nations and a provider in the international system. The study reveals that, Nigeria cannot be viewed as a hegemon, but as a leader that leads in order to open the road map for other countries to follow suit. Thus, Nigeria can be seen as a binding force that encourage and mobilizes other countries in Africa. As such, for Nigeria to be able to effect the necessary economic development in Africa, it is imperative for Nigeria to collaborate with other African countries, especially South Africa and emerging countries such as Rwanda in Africa.

Keywords: Leadership, Hegemon, Regional Integration

Introduction

The formation of Organization of African Unity in 1963 and the promising African Union, the issue of regional integration has been a prioritized agenda in Nigerian foreign policy. Consequently, in order to analyze the underlying principle of Africa as a center piece as enshrined in the foreign policy of Nigeria, it is important to evaluate the role Nigeria plays in Africa. Nigeria's foreign policy thrust takes into cognizance three major levels of international relationships; West Africa, Africa in general and then the world at large known as the "Concentric Cycle". As emphasized by Dunmoye (2011:247), to analyze and evaluate Nigeria's role in Africa Union, the contribution of Nigeria has to be understood from the historical perspective of formation, survival and contributions to Organization of Africa Union and subsequent African Union. Hence these roles played by Nigeria over the years and its hegemonic stand in the survival of the Economic Community of West African State (ECOWAS),

as had a reactive process in the regional integration of Africa as a whole. The formation of regional integration is premised on the belief and expectation that the vast potentials for development in Africa can better be harnessed through economic and political integration.

Thus, the leadership role played by Nigeria in the formation of Africa Union has given it a perception of a leading umpire in all affairs ranging from politics, social, cultural and economic. However, Nigeria's role in West Africa can be envisaged to be a stabilizer in context of Africa. Accordingly, can Nigeria be perceived has an hegemony, or can Nigeria be able to bring the much needed security, peace, economic and political integration in Africa. This paper tries to understand the role played by Nigeria in Africa in the formation of the AU and it continuous willingness and commitments to the growth and development of internal cohesion, political and pursuits of peace and security in Africa.

Literature Review and Theoretical Perspective

A hegemon is a global or regional leader in political, military, economic and often national, socio-ethnic formation (Habib, 2009: 150). Although others see hegemon as a state or nation that is so powerful that it dominates and influence all the other states in the political system. To this effect no other state has the military wherewithal to put up a serious fight against it. In crux, a hegemon is the only great power in the global system. A state that is substantially more powerful than the other great powers in the system is not a hegemon, because it faces, by definition, other great powers" (Mearsheimer 2001:47 in Tétényi, 2014:1). However, Geldenhuis (2010) in Tétényi, (2014:4), sees hegemon from three different forms of leadership perspective. Intellectual leadership refers to offering fresh ideas and new perspectives. Entrepreneurial leadership is about convincing others to follow the ideas and norms which have been put forth in intellectual leadership. This is the time when countries form alliances and make deals to support each other's positions. While leadership is the ability to persuade others to follow a given course of action which might not bein the follower's short-run interest if it were truly independent" (Kindleberger, 1981:1). Involves arm twisting and bribery.

This paper uses the theory of Hegemonic stability to analyze the leadership status of Nigeria in African Union. The central idea of this theory is that stability of the International System requires a single dominant state to

articulate and enforce the rules of interaction among the most important members of the system. The hegemonic stability theory was first proposed by economist Charles Kindleberger (1973) after an examination into the history of the Great Depression. He argued that a hegemon is a necessity (though not sufficient) condition for provision of the collective good of international economic stability. Stability only arises when a hegemon both bears the costs of providing this collective good and extracts the support of others. Robert Keohane develops Kindleberger's theory by explaining the relationship between a hegemonic state's economy and the international trade system with the theory. The hegemonic state not only can abrogate existing rules or prevent the adoption of rules that it opposes but can also play the dominant role in constructing new rules (Bergsten et. al., 1975: p14). In Keohane's (1984:p32) words, the hegemon "must have control over raw materials, control over sources of capital, control over markets and competitive advantages in the production of highly valued goods." The hegemon is provided with the means of leadership over other economies through control of financial capital, particular technologies and natural resources. For Keohane (1980: p132), hegemonic stability theory "holds that hegemonic structures of power, dominated by a single country, are most conducive to the development of strong international regimes whose rules are relatively precise and well obeyed.....the decline of hegemonic structures of power can be expected to presage a decline in the strength and corresponding international economic regimes."

The commitment to the system which is perceived as mutually beneficial to the major states; economic. As earlier stated, Nigeria made Africa as it center piece in its foreign policy. From 1960 to 1966, the then Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa tilted the bulk of the country's guiding principles towards Africa. To buttress this, Ibeenu (2010: p11), said "In fifty years of independence, Nigeria's foreign policy has focused principally on Africa. Successive Nigerian leaders professed Africa as the center piece of Nigeria's foreign policy". The principles are:

1. Sovereign equality of all African states;
2. Respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of every African state;
3. Non-interference in the internal affairs of other African states;
4. Commitment to functional cooperation as a means of promoting African unity;

5. Total eradication of racialism and colonialism from Africa;
6. Non-alignment; and
7. Peaceful settlement of disputes by negotiation, conciliation or arbitration(Yakubu, 2011:p31).

The above principles have guided Nigeria's active role in the formation in 1963 and operation of the defunct OAU. These principles give a more robust and cogent understanding of leadership formation of Nigeria in African's affairs. Hence, is important to note that OAU was born out of the need for Africans unity and development. This is so because most African countries had just gained independence. The issues of pan-Africanism, anti-colonialism and imperialism were top on the agenda of both leaders and Africans in diaspora. Examples are Marcus Garvey, W.E Dubois, Kwame Nkrumah, JomoKenyata, Ahmed Sekou and many others (Yakubu, 2011:p32). However, the formation or birth of OAU was not without intense politics among nascent independent Africa countries who all wanted to influence decisions. As in the words of Ekpebu (1999) (quoted in Gusua 2013: p167), "yet the subsequent journey to the formation of the O.A.U was not in itself a smooth one, a great deal of in-fighting and rivalries had to be overcome to allow the formation of the organization at Addis Ababa in 1963. The independence crisis in Zaire in 1960 was instrumental in fragmenting African politics at the time"(Ekpebu 1999:189).

This division manifested among different countries with different views to the roadmap of African's development. Therefore, in the effort to establish the O.A.U, two factors became predominant and their interplay greatly affects the growth and development of this regional organization. These events include:

a) A movement for the formation and consolidation of independent states within existing boundaries, and

b) A pan African movement aspiring to unite all the states of Africa to join forces for general or particular purposes (Gusua 2013: p167). The latter was proffered by the group later known as radical group (Casablanca Group) led by Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana The Casablanca was formed in January 7, 1961, as representatives of Guinea, Ghana, Mali, Morocco, Libya, Egypt and the Algerian provisional government, met in Casablanca, adopted a charter which later become known as the Casablanca charter. The charter provided for a joint military command and an African common market. The group also advocated

for a socialist development of all Africa around a strong central authority. While the former was more favored by the conservative group which included Nigeria, Tunisia, Somalia, Congo, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Liberia, Togo and twelve Brazzaville Group (Monrovia Group). Dunmoye (2011:p248), pointed out that there were two meetings of the Confederation of Independence African States (CIAS), with the first held by the Ghanaian government which ended in dead lock. While the second phase marked the rift between the radicals known as the Casablanca group and the Monrovia group. As emphasized further, "whereas the Casablanca group wanted direct and complete political integration, the Monrovia group preferred the gradual approach to unity. According to the latter, there should first be unity of aspirations and socio-economic cooperation before total political integration. Nigeria felt that there was the need to reconcile the contending positions with a view to attaining continental cooperation. In this regard, the Prime Minister of Nigeria, Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, took the initiative to organize the conference of African and Malagasy States in Lagos in 1962. The Lagos Charter was drafted and it embodied of Nigeria's ideas about African Unity" (Dunmoye 2011:p248-249). Thus, it is important to note that Nigeria had always played a crucial role in the developmental stages in Africa. This is in line with fact that Nigeria had always influence decisions which brought about integration in Africa.

Eventually, the Casablanca group met with the modified conservative group from Lagos and through a great deal of consultative activities were able to unite all Africa under the OAU in 1963 (Gusua 2013: p168). But to both group what was quickly realized was that solidarity is of paramount important in order to check the spread of divisive extra African influences all over the continent and thus during the October 1961 16th session of the UNO, Ethiopia called upon African states: "to join in the creation, under Article 52 of the UN charter, of a regional organization of African states, the basic and fundamental task of which will be to furnish the mechanism whereby problems which arise on the continent and which are of primary interest to the region could in the first instance, be dealt (with) by Africans, in an African forum, free from outside influence pressure" (Ademicael, 1976 in Gusua 2013: p168).

Thus, the charter establishing the OAU stipulates in its Article (1) thus

1. The High contracting parties do by the present Charter establish an organization to be known as the Organization of African Unity and

2. The Organization shall include the continental African states, Madagascar and other island surrounding Africa. While the organization is guided by article II of the charter thus.
 1. To promote the Unity and solidarity of the African states.
 2. Coordinate and intensify their cooperation and efforts to achieve a better life for the people of Africa.
 3. Defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity and independence.
 4. Eradicate all forms of colonialism from Africa, and to promote international cooperation, having due regard to the charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

To this end, the member states, shall coordinate and harmonize their general policies in the fields of

1. Political and diplomatic cooperation.
2. Economic cooperation, including transport and communications.
3. Educational and Cultural cooperation.
4. Health, Sanitation and Nutritional cooperation.
5. Scientific and Technical cooperation.
6. Cooperation for Defense and Security (OAU Charter, 1963:p3-4).

Subsequently is important to understand that Nigeria has been able to influence decision pertaining the African continent. As earlier mentioned the principles guiding Nigerian's foreign policy were similar to article ii of the OAU charter. Which indicates in essence the important position of Nigeria in African's affairs.

Achievement and Shortcoming of OAU

Many scholars and writers have tried to enumerate some achievements of OAU. According to Gusua (2013:p170-171), Dunmoye (2011:p251-252) and Eregha (2007:p209 in Eghweree, 2014) pointed out the following:

1. Anti-colonial struggle and decolonization in most African countries and the liberation struggle against apartheid in South Africa. And this was achieved through various ways especially with the adoption of the Lusaka manifesto in 1969 by the conference of the non-Aligned states, and the United Nations General Assembly. The manifest was a document emphasizing the intention of African states to solve the twin problems of colonialism and racism through peaceful means. This

led to the liberation of remaining colonial territories such as Cape Verde, Zimbabwe, and Guinea Bissau among others.

2. Peaceful Settlement of Disputes: the OAU was able to settle some inter-state conflicts such as the Morocco/Algeria border dispute in 1963 to 67, Ethiopia/Somalia boundary crisis 1977/78 and among others.

3. Economic and Social Cooperation: The struggle for economic cooperation in Africa was given priority in the O.A.U. This was to be achieved through economic regional integration which involves the process of intensive regional cooperation, mobilization of funds and acceleration of industrialization. In fact it was paramount that in the preamble to the O.A.U Charter it was spelt out thus:" the O.A.U Heads of State and Government recognize their responsibility to harness the natural and human resources of our continent for the total advancement of our peoples in all spheres of human endeavor"(The OAU 10th Anniversary 1966:36).In the areas of social development, issues of refugees were given priority especially during the de-colonization era. Refugees are known as politically and economically displaced individual outside the boundaries or control of their home country.

Thus the following are some of the shortcomings of OAU;

1. The OAU has been criticized for not been able to ensure good governance within African States and unable to give economic directions. In the words for Dunmoye (2011:p246), "Critics and cynics often go to the extent of castigating the organization as a toothless bulldog".

2. The issue of non-interference in the affairs of other state, which constitute the core principle of the OAU charter has been identified as a major setback.

3. Another major setback faced by the O.AU is in the handling of disputes among member states. The role of the O.A.U here is only that of mediating between disputants and has no power to impose a collective will on recalcitrant members. Even in some cases its meditative role does not produce instant remedies to feud as evidenced in the prolongation and persistence of the Congo crises. On this Wallerstein asserts (in Gusau, 2013:p174), that "The O.A.U was unable to play a decisive role principally because its members were

fundamentally and passionately split over the politics of the Congo and the definition of the O.A.U role”.

Hence, due to these shortcomings and the facts that most African countries are in abject poverty, with different security and political challenges, these made it important to re-focus the Organization. This is attributed to the reality that some states still call for a more United African nation which could be envisaged in one umbrella. But the rally point of Nigeria and other states to take a gradual process in the economic and political integration also had no link to the achievement of a United Africa state which would mean the surrendering of the sovereignty of individual state. However, as asserted by Dunmoye (2011:p256), in September 1999, an extra-ordinary meeting was called and the call for the creation of the United State of Africa was initiated by the Late Col. Moamar Gaddafi, which was attended by 44 Heads of State in Sirte, Libya. Thus, by 2000 during the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government meeting in Lome, Togo, African Leaders adopted the Constitutive Act of the African Union. These were all in an effort to make the OAU meet up with the challenges of the millennium. As the need to strengthen and refocus OAU since it was a regional body originally formed to secure for Africa, freedom from colonialism and to position Africa for her voice to be heard in world politics, to enhance greater unity of African States and to check cases of internal crises in Africa. This is due to the fact that the European Union has become a near a perfect example of regional political integration for Europe. In general, the African Union finally adopted the constituting charter in 2001 when South Africa and Nigeria ratified its charter as the 35th and 36th members respectively, with an objective that can be said to be more comprehensive than those espoused by the OAU. Just like what Duncan (2003:76) in Eghweree (2014: p221) observed, “The OAU has served its mission and was due for replacement by a structure geared towards addressing the current needs of the African continent”. What can be gleaned from the assertion above is simply the fact that the need to replace the OAU was inevitable because the continental body had completed its mission of securing for Africa, freedom from colonial subjugation and dislodgement of apartheid in Johannesburg. That explains why the OAU which AU succeeded as regional body was aimed at achieving the following objectives:

1. To promote the unity and solidarity of African States, to coordinate and intensify cooperation and efforts of African States to achieve a better life for Africans.

2. To defend the sovereignty of African States as well as their territorial integrity.
3. To eradicate all forms of colonialism from Africa and to promote international cooperation among African States Eregha (2007) in Eghweree (2014:p221).

Methodology

The historical perspective was used through secondary sources of data collection to gather relevant materials related to the study in text books, journals, newspapers and documented materials.

Discussion of Findings

From the fore going discussion, it is quite interesting to note effort by Nigeria towards the unity and development of the African region. From the Lagos Plan of Action in 1980 through to the Abuja Treaty of 1991 for African Economic Community Treaty to the New Partnership for Africa's Development of 2001, it has always been the view of Nigeria and other Africans countries that integration on a continental basis could drive economic growth and bring about improvement in the standard of living of the peoples of the continent (Oloruntoba & Gumede, 2001:2). Furthermore, Dunmoye (2011:254), emphasized on the effort of Nigeria in the adoption of the Lagos Plan of Action in 1980, "which envisage a self-economy as well as regional economic integration" (Dunmoye, 2011:254).

It is remarkable to understand that the survival of the African organization as to do with the continuous contribution of Nigeria. As asserted by Dunmoye (2011:252), "the fact that OAU has survived till today is as a result of the contributions of Nigeria and other member states. Nigeria has contributed substantially to the sustenance and development of the Organization, especially in the area of international peace and security".

The leadership role played by Nigeria is very important in understanding the complexities in the politics of Africa. This is so because, after the independence of South Africa in 1994, it has emerged as contending force for the leadership role in Africa. As emphasized by Alden and Schoeman (2001:1), "South Africa's position on the African continent is widely seen to be one of dominance and leadership". The democratic transition in 1994 as a politically

unfettered South Africa launched a visionary campaign built around the notion of an 'African Renaissance' to restructure continental institutions in line with its interests (Alden and Schoeman, 2001:1). Even though before the liberation of South Africa from apartheid regime, Nigerian role in the Frontline States cannot be over looked. According to Ibeanu (2010:25), the Frontline States are the group of independent southern African countries bordering apartheid South Africa which include: Zambia, Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. And these countries were weak and poor compared to South Africa because they were economically dependent. And furthermore, South Africa was the regional economic hegemonic power and militarily superior with all the states combined. These major weakness led to the call for support from Nigeria. Ibeanu (2010:27), mentioned that, "the invitation extended to Nigeria to join the Frontline States held the possibility of redressing some of these disadvantages".

Furthermore, as explained by Dunmoye (2011:254), Nigeria has been committed to the economic cooperation amongst Member States in promoting specific initiatives to foster economic development and integration in Africa. A Nigerian trust fund was established in 1976 within the African Development Bank. The fund was established to help poorer nations of the OAU and over 30 members' states have benefited (Dunmoye, 2011:254).

On the issue of peace keeping, Nigeria has played an important role in ensuring that peace ensued in Africa. Nigeria had sent peace keepers to various war torn countries. According to Yakubu (2011:101), Nigeria has contributed to ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), as she served as mediation to end the civil war in Liberia, where the Nigeria government financed the cost of the war at \$8 billion. While, Jega (2010:229), gave a detailed expenditures of some of spending for peacekeeping. "the country provided E15million pounds sterling to peacekeeping operations in the Belgian Congo in the 1960s; underwrote \$80million of OAU peacekeeping operations in Chad in 1982;". On trade and investment, FDI (foreign direct investment) to Nigeria stood at 5,5 billion USD for 2013 and invested abroad about 1,2 billion USD. Nigerian outflowing FDI was mainly concentrated in building materials, cement and concrete products (with groups such as the Dangote Group opening cement company Zambia, 2015) and financial services (Ernst and Young 2014 in Tétényi, 2014:14). Nevertheless according to Enweremadu (2013), in Tétényi(2014)explains the attractiveness of Nigeria as a business partner has

grown in the last decade, however persistence of poor governance, corruption, violence and political instability and the activity of Boko Haram all play a part in the country not seriously challenging South Africa yet as the Sub-Saharan African business partner.

Through bilateral and multilateral relations, Nigeria has been able to contribute to the economic development in Africa. Nigeria has been called with different names ranging from 'big brother to 'brother's keeper' because of the different assistance Nigeria has offered poor Africa nations. Nigeria was known to have supplied electricity and even scholarship were given to student abroad. As explained by Jega (2010),

For example, through its active participation in the Lake Chad Basin Commission (8 member countries) and the Niger Basin Authority (9 member countries) (see Chapter 10 above), Nigeria has contributed to the harnessing and management of common water resources for agricultural and socio-economic development of member countries, as well as expanded the scope of sub-regional economic integration. Using the Technical Aid Corps scheme, managed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nigeria has also, since the 1980s, contributed needed skilled personnel, such as doctors, nurses, engineers and teachers to many African and Caribbean countries, in spite of the fact that there is a shortage of these categories of human capital in the country itself. Similarly, through its participation in the African Development Bank (ADB), Nigeria has spread its petrodollars and extended financial assistance facilities to needy African countries to finance development programmes and projects. Through bilateral agreements, it has provided crude oil at subsidized rates to many African countries, including Ghana and Kenya" (Jega, 2010:232).

However, Nigeria is faced with various challenges ranging from lack good leadership, corruption, inconsistency in policy implementation and lack motivational welfare towards the military personnel. And also it is important to note that, Nigeria is also faced with varying degree of competition from emerging states such as Egypt, Rwanda, and South Africa. Oil export which is

the major source of revenue today, is threaten by the incessant attack by militant across the Niger Delta and the South west. Although with the government President Muhammed Buhari, there are high hopes for the needed change of policy to bring about the needed improvement.

Conclusion

Nigeria till date can be seen playing important role in the mediation and peaceful resolution of crisis in Africa. As recently witnessed, as President Buhari's effort towards resolving the crisis in Guinea Bissau through his special envoy Former Head of State, Obasanjo. And the coup that took place in Burkina Faso, where the vice president Osinbanjo also represented Nigeria to ensure a democratic government was also returned. On the issue of regional security, Nigeria have led the way where border countries have come into an alliance to defeat the fight against Boko Haram. Though Nigeria is seen as been more active in the regional organization such as ECOWAS rather than African Union. Ibeanu (2010:34), regards "Nigeria's foreign policy, particularly regarding Africa has been active and consistent".

Thus, based on the major findings, it is important to note that Nigeria is seen as a pace setters for other countries to follow. This could be identified as a hybrid collaboration as it does not wait for others to take action but rather always have a radical approach towards African issues. Consequently, Nigeria cannot be called a hegemon when compared to the US and China in terms of their military and economic might and the influence they have on the international arena. This could be attributed to the inability of Nigeria to possess the knowhow to effectively change the cause of the international system.

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