Nigeria's Leadership Role and ECOWAS Interventions in Cote D'ivoire

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Abstract

ECOWAS abandoned the doctrine of non-interference in the domestic affairs of member States for constructive engagement/non indifference by its interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone. These 20th century decisive and forceful interventions under the auspices of ECOMOG led by Nigeria earned ECOWAS her pride of place as the first sub-regional economic bloc to venture into regional security roles in the global community. However, the region is still plagued with internal security challenges, terrorism, smuggling, illicit cross border trading and political instability occasioned by: bad governance, electoral violence, lack of free and fair elections, inability of incumbents to accept electoral defeat by opposition, attempts at tenure elongation through constitutional amendments, unconstitutional changes of government and French influence in Francophone states. The reluctance by Nigeria to lead ECOWAS military interventions to restore political stability between 1999 and 2012 in Guinea, Guinea Bissau, and Cote d'Ivoire, reverberated in the continent and global discourse. Many scholars described it as a sign of fatigue and withdrawal by Nigeria from peacekeeping. The return to democracy in May 1999 in Nigeria, after sixteen straight years of military rule, signaled a new approach to Nigeria's foreign policy without a change of objectives. Nigeria was not visible and did not lead in mediation or deploy militarily in Cote d'Ivoire creating coordination problems.

Keywords: ECOWAS, Leadership, Nigeria, Cote D'ivoire

Introduction

Nigeria funds and continues to initiate international leadership projects, particularly in West Africa, which has enhanced the country's status in the comity of nations. Successive Nigerian administrations from independence have been deliberate in promoting 'leadership' rather than 'domination' or 'imperial' roles in Nigeria's foreign policy goals and actions. Nigeria drew enormous influence and symbolized African States' interest by utilizing her resources for the anti-colonial struggles and dreams of economic emancipation of Africans through her support for the Organization of African Unity (OAU), now African Union (AU), but unfortunately, OAU could not stop the Nigerian and Angolan civil wars (Obi, 2009).

For national security, it is natural for Nigeria to seek for a platform to relate with her contiguous boundary States, so it is not surprising that a Nigerian leader championed the establishment of ECOWAS, whose treaty was signed in Lagos in 1975, to facilitate economic integration and self-reliance (Obi, 2009). The Nigerian Civil war from 1967-1970, opened the eyes of Nigerian leaders as other West African States were aiding and abetting insurrection, and were suspicious of the intentions of each other, coupled with the interference from France in the affairs of the Francophone states. Cote d'Ivoire was the first to recognize Republic of Biafra. Republic of Benin and Chad under the influence of France were alleged to have given secret support to Biafra. In order to reduce French influence and achieve sub regional peace and security, ECOWAS was the answer (Aworawo, 2016)..

Nigeria is not only a predominant state in West Africa but also initiates and exercises leading influences within the ECOWAS framework in her relations with neighbouring states, continent and globe. Nigeria has a preponderance of relative

material and financial dominance in the sub-region. With the highest Gross Domestic Product (GDP), population and military capabilities, Nigeria funds more than half of all ECOWAS activities. Nigeria is the highest contributor to ECOWAS community levy. Nigeria's contributions to security, order and peace in the sub-region are legendary and Nigeria is globally accepted as the leader of the region.

Even the unilateral military interventions in the crisis in Liberia and Sierra-Leone during the 20th century, were benevolent. Nigeria continues to deploy its trained manpower for the socio-economic development of benefitting countries within West Africa and beyond as a tool of foreign policy to gain goodwill for Nigeria in the comity of nations. Nigeria's self-representation in ECOWAS institutions do not reflect Nigeria's dominance.

The extent of Nigeria's efforts at establishing common norms even against Nigeria's interest to sustain ECOWAS, do not reflect the aspirations of a hegemon. Nigeria has been playing seeming hegemonic roles but without hegemonic goals. Although Nigeria appears to have hegemonic advantages, Nigeria has never made hegemonic claims on the sub region and her economy is still a commodity dominated one. Nigeria's military operations and security governance in the sub region still depend heavily on external assistance from global hegemonic powers. Nigeria's domestic politics, is also too crude to pass the sophistication required of hegemonic powers.

Interestingly, since the return to democratic rule in 1999, Nigeria through the Obasanjo led administration and subsequent ones until the Mohammed Buhari administration, prefer to facilitate the establishment of norms and values that institutionalize cooperative hegemonic values in ECOWAS and even the African Union to foster mutual agreements on how to provide leadership to solve common problems and enhance development.

The military coup in Cote d'Ivoire in 1999 that spiraled into civil war in 2002, was predicated on the crisis of succession after the death of Houphouet Biogny in 1993. The policy of "Ivoirite"or (Ivorian-nes) introduced by President Henri Bedie which separated "true Ivorians" (both parents are Ivorians) from those who had one or both parents born outside Cote d'Ivoire is said to be the root cause of the crisis (Kode, 2016, p. 13). The coup by General Robert Guei was purportedly because of the policy, but Guei continued it and utilized it to exclude candidates for the 2000 elections, particularly, Alassane Quattara, believed to have one parent from Burkina Faso, Muslim and former IMF staff from northern Cote d' Ivoire (Kode, 2016).

Laurent Gbagbo and Robert Guei contested the elections, when Guei saw that Gbagbo was leading, he suspended the announcement of results and declared himself winner. This led to protest by Gbagbo's supporters forcing Guei to flee and eventually the Supreme Court declared Gbagbo winner (Kode, 2016). On September, 19th 2002, Gbagbo attempted security sector reforms which led to a mutiny later discovered to be an unsuccessful coup supported by foreign governments, the coup was thwarted but a rebel group, Patriotic Movement for Cote d'Ivoire (MCPI) emerged and took control of the north of the country, demanded for Gbagbo' resignation and called for new elections. Two other groups, Ivorian Patriotic Movement of the Great West (MPIGO) and Movement for Justice and Peace (MJP) all took up arms against the Government and this signaled the onset of the civil war (Kode, 2016, p. 14).

When eventually elections were conducted again in late 2010, and Laurent Gbagbo who controlled the government from 2000, refused to hand over to the opposition candidate Alassane Quattara who was declared winner by the Electoral Commission, another round of fighting and destruction of properties in the capital started in late 2010. ECOWAS then led by its Chairman, the President of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan, alongside other ECOWAS leaders, recognized the opposition candidate and threatened to use force on Laurent Gbagbo. French troops

arrested Laurent Gbagbo in March, 2011, before he accepted to go on exile and brought an end to the post elections violence (Bakare, 2019).

This thesis interrogates decades of intervention in Cote d'Ivoire with specific focus on the post-election crisis period of 2010-2020 as a test case of ECOWAS attempt at resolving conflicts arising from political crisis and strengthening democracy, using its legal instruments and mechanisms. The procedure will be to examine the role of Nigeria in ECOWAS to evaluate the effectiveness of mediation and electoral assistance in resolving the Ivorian crisis.

Theoretical Framework
To evaluate the influence exerted on a region or sub-regional organization by one of its member states, an actor-centered approach is required. Three theories: Hegemonic stability theory, Liberal inter-governmentalism theory and Regional leading power theory were reviewed but the theory adopted for the work, is the 'regional leading power theory' as espoused by Destradi (2010), but developed by Nolte (2010).

Regional Leading Power theory: main assumptions-indicate that the states considered as part of a geographical region: (i) belong to the region considered; (ii) they display a superiority in terms of power capabilities-the leading state possesses the largest power share in the region; (iii) that they exercise some kind of influence on the region; and (iv) demonstrate ideal-typical foreign policy that could be cooperative, benevolent or coercive (hegemon or leader) (Destradi 2010, p. 905). If we want to identify a regional power, one must go beyond the structure of power in the region and look at how regional order is created and sustained.

> What strategies are they adopting to secure allegiance and following of other states: one must differentiate more clearly between the strategies of regional powers, the reactions of other actors in the region and

the final outcomes. Those regional orders are the result of the interaction between states that aspire to regional leadership and other states in the corresponding region (Nolte, 2010, p. 894).

As a toolbox for analyzing the inconsistent, and confusing courses of action, sometimes using their power resources and at other times not bringing to bear their power regional power strategies are conceived by Destradi (2010) as existing in a continuum of empire, hegemony and leadership. Those regional powers follow a wider range of strategies, not just cooperative or benevolent in their foreign policies. From a unilateral, highly aggressive and coercive strategy described as 'imperial', to an extremely cooperative one aimed at reaching common goals referred to as 'leading'. In between the two extremes are different kinds of 'hegemonic' strategies (Destradi, 2010, p. 908).

The idea of a continuum is to accommodate the varied contextual classification of the terms: empire, hegemony and leadership in international relations discourse. By analyzing the goals pursued, the means adopted as well as the degree of legitimization or 'self-representation' by the dominant state, the essential features of empire, hegemony and leadership are described (Destradi, 2010, p. 903).

Hegemony is described as either 'hard', 'intermediate', or 'soft'. It is hard when strategies are coercive but do not involve recourse to military power and the hegemon appears cooperative but behaviour is different from self-representation, with pseudo-legitimization but subordinate states resist or comply based on the cost of non-compliance and do not change their orientation towards the hegemon. Intermediate if they involve provision of material benefits, through inducements and appear cooperative, with partial legitimation and subordinate states, may not resist. Soft hegemony involves the use of persuasion, socialization, cooperation and

there is legitimation. Compliance is based on a re-definition of norms and values and there is change in subordinate states' orientation to the hegemon

Leadership features are either 'leader-initiated' or 'follower-initiated'. Leader-initiated leadership involves the realization of common goals by a socialization process initiated by the leader. With common norms there is cooperation not much distinction in the disposition and behaviour of member states. There is legitimation and willing followership and observed changes in the orientation of subordinate states. Follower initiated leadership involves subordinate states mandating the leading state to act on their behalf or pilot them to achieve a desired goal, so there is legitimation and acceptance of such managerial functions and cooperation from all. Such actions are reactions to a threat or seeming lack of coordination (Destradi, 2010).

Applied to the study, the role of Nigeria is the independent variable while ECOWAS interventions are the dependent variable. Utilizing regional leading power theory analysis, Nigeria is part of the ECOWAS region. The role of Nigeria as a leader is acknowledged not only in the region but globally. Nigeria initiates projects to guarantee and sustain order among ECOWAS member states. By evaluating Nigeria's foreign policy strategies and actions in ECOWAS, participation in ECOWAS initiatives and contributions, through the theory, it explains how Nigeria influences ECOWAS and also how Nigeria's participation in ECOWAS redefines her national strategic interests or objectives.

The theory also enables the justification for the actions taken by Nigeria in ECOWAS interventions in Cote d'Ivoire as 'leading'. The effectiveness of how this leadership is utilized to create and continue to establish order in the region as well as define the future aspirations of ECOWAS can be analyzed.

There are common norms embedded in ECOWAS protocols and crisis prevention frameworks that engender the adoption of any of the strategies described in Destradi's

regional leading power continuum as 'empire', 'hegemonic' or 'leading'. Leadership and hegemony are correlated. They are not opposites. Leadership and hegemony lie in a continuum from hegemony to leadership. Both arise as a result of mutual or reciprocal relationships, depending on the goals pursued, the means adopted, degree of legitimization and the self-representation of the States' involved.

Nation states have conflicting national interests and capabilities, achieving homogeneity and rationality in their foreign policy, also depend on the statesmen who personify them, who think and act to either increase, conserve, consolidate or demonstrate state power depending on the conditions pre-requisite to maintaining order and peace in international society. The structure, behaviour and reactions to the relations of member states of regional blocs can be understood and explained, by also taking into consideration other regional influences like the global economic and post-colonial relations, continental and sub-regional geo-political alliances and even domestic pressures in each state of the region.

The restrictive influences of global level initiatives on regions, the internal dynamics of nation states as well as the regions where they belong, all make the latitude of a broader conception of regional leading power strategies as a continuum, very relevant for my analysis of the role of Nigeria in ECOWAS interventions in Cote d'Ivoire. The role of Nigeria as a leading power in West Africa is not in doubt in Africa and the World.

Methodology
The descriptive qualitative research design using Cote d'Ivoire as a case study was adopted to facilitate data collection, analysis and interpretation. Primary data was collected through open ended questions during the conduct of oral interviews with individuals who experienced and or managed the ECOWAS intervention initiatives, as well as experts on ECOWAS affairs. Fifteen (15) respondents were interviewed and the qualitative data that

was collected was analyzed and summarized using regional leading power theory constructs but presented in tabular forms. Thematic literature reviews with interviewees quotations and relevant information sources were combined to draw conclusions to establish research objectives.

Data collection and analysis is combined to align with theoretical constructs and the case study. Care is taken on the evaluation and review of books, documentary accounts, ECOWAS records, and reviews of processes in magazines, journals, newspaper reports and the like, for content analysis of relevant data to answer the research questions

Data Presentation/Analysis

Table 1. Responses on the usefulness of Nigeria's leadership in ECOWAS

S/N	RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	Benevolence	3	20%
2	Cooperative	3	20%
3	Coordination	7	46,7%
4	Dominance	2	13.3%
	TOTAL	**15**	**100%**

Nigeria's role in promoting peace, security and democracy, through its leadership in ECOWAS is undisputed. ECOWAS countries recognize the need for Nigeria's leadership. The responses mirror the different aspects of leadership expected according to the leading power continuum. However, the necessity of coordination with 46.7% of responses is the most useful leadership value required in ECOWAS and of Nigeria. Nigeria's benevolence and cooperative dispositions are acknowledged but 13.3% of respondents still view Nigeria's unilateral diplomatic decision not to engage militarily as self-representing and controlling given Nigeria's pre-eminence in the sub-region. This fact is in agreement with Ebegbulem (2019) submission that:

> the pre-eminence of Nigeria in terms of population, resources and engagements in West Africa, places Nigeria as a regional hegemon, but it is the understanding that 'economic development and regional integration cannot be superimposed' in a conflict prone and unstable West Africa, that has been the motivation for Nigeria's overreaching involvement (Ebegbulem, 2019, p. 30).

Without Nigeria taking the driver's seat or backing another country in the region to do so, coordination will be difficult. Mediation, negotiation, diplomacy, sanctions, ceasefire agreements and military actions, all require a regional leader to drive implementation for any form of success. While Nigeria is not exempted from the challenges facing ECOWAS states, Nigeria has continued to shoulder the burdens of the body. Nigeria has its own challenges and is at liberty to adopt policy actions appropriate to her national interests. Nigeria continues to initiate, mobilize and share leadership with other countries in the region to drive integration despite possessing hegemonic advantages in the sub-region.

Table 2 Responses on the effectiveness of Nigeria's Leadership Role in ECOWAS Interventions in Cote d'Ivoire.

S/N	RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	Weak/Soft	7	46.7%
2	Leading	4	26.6%
3	Hegemonic	3	20%
4	Dominance	1	6.7%
	TOTAL	15	100%

A summary of 46.7% of the respondents described the leadership as weak, while 26.6% felt it was not decisive but gave room to smaller states like Burkina Faso and Togo to initiate peace agreements. That Nigeria's absence in leading mediation teams and non-military deployments despite leading in funding the interventions was considered not effective. Nigeria was not visible in most of the intervention measures.

Obi (2009), commenting on the effectiveness of Nigeria's leadership in Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea Bissau, he observed that while the Anglophone-Francophone rivalry that threatened the first ECOMOG operations appear to have diminished,

West African countries no longer question the need for Nigerian leadership, but the poorer, smaller and weaker states are offended by its unilateral diplomatic style. Nigeria under Obasanjo was absent in the military aspects, limiting herself to mediatory roles. The results revealed institutional weakness, poor coordination, paucity of resources, weak political will and capacities that may eclipse ECOWAS initial decisive successes in the sub-region (Obi, 2009, p. 131).

Nigeria initiated the development of the mechanism, protocols on good governance, peer review mechanism and ECPF, for legitimizing engagements and strategies for non-indifference and yet forgot to engage militarily for almost ten years. This created a leadership vacuum for coordinating the enforcement of peace agreements, prompting the AU to engage in the sub-region. Leveraging on the backing of AU, EU, UN and other development partners, without Nigeria prolonged the Ivorian crisis. In effect, the consensual hegemony by ECOWAS norms had no leader to coordinate implementation actions. ECOWAS global perspectives require Nigeria's leadership for effective interventions and integration in the sub-region.

It is the view of this study that no matter the style of the leader or domestic pressures, it is the goals a policy is meant to achieve that should determine policy actions. Nigeria's goal to provide leadership in the sub-region is at the heart of measures adopted, whether assertive or passive in both bilateral and multilateral instruments of foreign policy.

Table 3. Responses on why Nigeria did not deploy troops during ECOWAS interventions in Cote d'Ivoire.

S/N	RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	Peace Keeping Fatigue	2	13.3%
2	Domestic economic and Security challenges	4	26.7%
3	Lack of Political will	2	13.3%
4	To avoid accusations of unilateralism	7	46.7%
	TOTAL	15	100%

About 46.7% of respondents argue that the experiences of Nigeria in Liberia and Sierra Leone led Nigeria to opt for multilateralism rather those unilateral engagements. While 26.7% blamed it on political and internal security challenges associated with the pressure to end military regimes and the freedoms of democracy. Aworawo (2016), providing justification for the refusal to engage militarily argued that:

> Apart from the human and financial costs, Nigeria did not want to be accused of taking sides, to avoid reprisal attacks on the huge Nigerian population in Cote d'Ivoire. Also that Nigeria did not consider the location of Cote d'Ivoire within its strategic calculations and the complexities posed by the involvement of French troops that were already anti- Gbagbo

would have affected Nigeria's peaceful approach to the resolution of the crises (Aworawo 2016, p 6).

The strategic objectives of a country must not be compromised irrespective of its domestic constraints. Different Nigerian governments may have pursued the objectives of sub-regional integration with different passions but what is undeniable is that ECOWAS provides the Nigerian government the platform to promote the country's socio-cultural, economic, and political interests and Nigeria's leadership has enabled ECOWAS respond decisively to many intra-state conflicts in the sub region (Aworawo, 2016). Although Nigeria did not engage militarily in Cote d'Ivoire, she condemned every unconstitutional change of government in the sub-region and led ECOWAS forces to Guinea Bissau, Mali, and Gambia thereafter.

Table 4. Responses on what affects the decisions of ECOWAS member states to participate in agreed projects.

S/N	RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	Availability of funds	3	20%
2	Nature of bilateral relations between the countries involved	4	26.6%
3	National interests	2	13.3%
4	Proximity and consequences of non participation	6	40%
	TOTAL	15	100%

In determining what is most basic in participating in ECOWAS projects 40% of those interviewed agreed that because crisis in the sub-region has potential of spreading easily to neighbouring countries, proximity and avoidance of the spill-over effects of crisis is most important in making the decision to commit to any joint effort. This is closely followed by the nature of the bilateral relationships between the states involved with 26.6%. Funding and reliance on donor funds from colonial masters and global financial institutions still tie member states to pre-independence alliances. Nigeria's new approach to 'prime diplomacy

and mediation' can be captured in the address of Nigeria's former president, Goodluck Jonathan to the UN General Assembly in 2015: "too much effort and resources on the military aspects of peace and security have been incurred at the expense of mediation and preventive diplomacy.

Military coups, internal security challenges, insurgency, proliferation of arms and militarization of society because of conflicts, terrorism, smuggling, illicit cross border trading, are all prevalent in the region. Political instability occasioned by: ethnic and religious bias, bad governance,

electoral violence, lack of free and fair elections, inability of incumbents to accept electoral defeat by opposition, and attempts at tenure elongation through constitutional amendments are all common features of the regional environment.

Discussion of Findings

1.   The objectives of the foreign policy of a State may relate to certain friendly policy actions, but one may find the same State adopting completely different actions at a particular point in time depending on what such a State hopes to achieve. A State may adopt hegemonic actions like territorial or economic imperialism through military or coercive economic or diplomatic sanctions, not minding the legitimization or not of its actions, in pursuit of its national interests or those of its allies. Claims to such unilateral actions brought to the extreme are hegemonic. This exemplifies Nigeria's approach during the interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone. On the other hand, the use of mutual influence abilities by a State to achieve its aims irrespective of resistance and opposing claims without coercion or force on other actors in the international system is providing leadership: this second approach, was practically, the methods Nigeria adopted in the interventions in the Ivorian crisis.

2.   By evaluating States as leaders, it is clear that such States are not necessarily pursuing independent foreign policy, but are compelled to participate in international projects by the desire to be one of the key centres of influence, in the formation of global economic interdependence. Roles are specified by the rules of the group and leadership is expressed by representing the interests of the group. Leading to new poles of development and world multi-polarity. This has been the case of Nigeria within the ECOWAS sub-region and to a large extent, Africa as well. However, the return to democracy in May 1999 in Nigeria, after sixteen straight years of military rule, may have signaled a new approach to Nigeria's foreign policy without a change of objectives. Nigeria initiated the development of the mechanism, protocols on good governance, peer review mechanism and ECPF, for legitimizing engagements and strategies for non-indifference but for ten years was not visible in the forefront of ECOWAS. This created a leadership vacuum for coordinating the enforcement of peace agreements and other intervention mechanisms.

Nigeria's insistence on preventive diplomatic measures and mediation were in furtherance of the crisis management framework and protocols on Good governance and Democracy to address the root causes of the crisis in Cote d'Ivoire but Nigeria did not coordinate the effort between the periods of 2002 to 2012.

Conclusion

In concluding, what is evident is, Nigeria championed the formation of ECOWAS and has continued to sustain its operations for obvious economic and national security reasons which are still expedient today. Nigeria cannot afford to be passive or indifferent in any ECOWAS project, because of her strategic positioning.

Nigeria's Foreign Policies and sub-regional leadership roles are legitimate aspirations that have facilitated Nigeria's global reckoning, despite obvious socio-political, economic and internal security challenges in the country. Nigerian leaders must understand that to lead effectively, Nigeria must leverage on her hegemonic advantages to pursue her national interests in the sub-region. To sustain domestic acceptance of her regional efforts, Nigerian leaders must demonstrate the gains of their continued investments in the ECOWAS project.

Recommendations:

Coordination is the most critical leadership value ECOWAS needs to succeed. There should be established criteria for isolating extant coordinating authority for any project and specification of roles for member states like Nigeria, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire and Senegal represented in the Commission and standing Committees, to enhance their

influence on member states;

Nigeria's leadership roles in ECOWAS are useful and necessary but she cannot provide credible and effective leadership without addressing the myriads of problems plaguing the country. Now that the country has a Nigeria-ECOWAS permanent mission established in 2012, she should harness her hegemonic advantages in the region to ensure good governance in Nigeria and the attainment of ECOWAS goals.

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