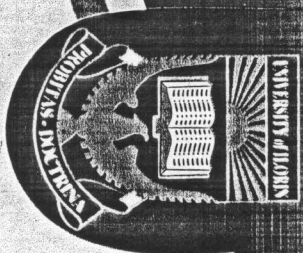
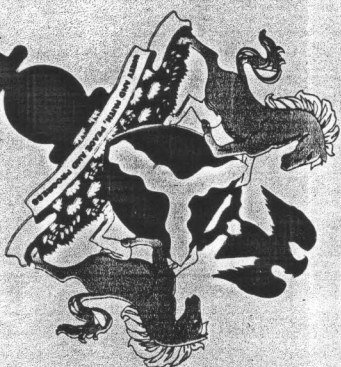


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POLITICAL SCIENCE Review

Vol. 6 No. 1. 2014



Published by:
Department of Political Science,
Faculty of Social Sciences
University of Ilorin, Ilorin Nigeria.



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The Quest for Political Prominence amidst Economic Obscurity: Interrogating the Basis of Nigeria's External Behaviour

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Abstract

Nigeria is widely seen as occupying the leadership position in Africa. Nigeria's political elite shares the sentiment in their speeches and public expressions. However, there is wide gulf between public aspiration for leadership and real outcomes in terms of how African countries react to those aspirations. This paper argues that Nigeria's weak economic base, despite the rebasing of the GDP which makes the country the largest economy on the continent, serves as a drawback on the realization of Nigeria's leadership desires. Using the various indicators of real economic performance, the paper concludes that Nigeria's economy has not been able to support its quest for political leverage in continental affairs.

Keywords: Leadership, Africa, economy, Asymmetry

Background

It is a legitimate desire of states to be able to shape outcomes of contestations in a way that suit their preferences. In order to be able to protect a nation's interests and shape issues, events and policies in a way that aligns with its interests, each state seeks influence, relevance and power. Indeed, it is a widely-held perspective among scholars and practitioners of international relations that power is the currency of international politics such that the more of it a state possesses, the more it seeks (Morgenthau, 1993; Spegele, 1996; Vasquez, 1983). Theoretical discourses on the dynamics of state behaviour have highlighted the basic components of power credentials of states. In order words, for a state to be regarded as being 'powerful', it ought to possess certain tangible elements of power. These include the geo-strategic component, large population size, military strength, technological advancement, sophisticated information/propaganda machinery and, above all, a strong economy.

The geo-strategic component comprises of three elements. First, climatic condition of the country and how it enhances or inhibits agricultural and industrial production is an important geo-strategic consideration. Where the climate is suitable, adequate food production for the population and steady supply of raw materials for industrial production (especially the agro-based and allied industry) are guaranteed. In places where the climatic condition is unfavorable for agricultural and industrial production (as a result of incessant flood or drought, for example), the country will be heavily dependent on foreign source of food, raw materials and other basic needs. Such a state could hardly wield any reasonable degree of influence in regional or global affairs.

Another element of the geo-strategic index of power is the geographical location of the country and the politico-strategic advantages (or disadvantages) derivable therefrom. While some states are completely landlocked (e.g. Niger, Chad and Mongolia), some are coastal and located along important international shipping routes (e.g. Singapore). Yet, some states are islands, creeks and archipelagoes (e.g. Philippines and Indonesia). All these have implications for access to economic resources, industrial activity as well as defence strategy and capability. For instance, landlocked states are generally unattractive to foreign investors because of the difficulties associated with higher transaction costs in comparison to coastal states. This, in addition to other strategic vulnerabilities (like the heavy reliance on neighbors' ports for imports and exports), lessens the capability for autonomous or assertive foreign policy posture by such states.

Physical size of the country is another element of the geo-strategic component of state power. Territorial size has been an important geo-strategic consideration from the times of empires (Spykman and Rollins, 1939). Conventional logic suggests that countries that have large territorial size have greater access to land available for agricultural and industrial production. By extension, the larger the geographical size of a country, the greater the probability of abundant natural resource endowments. On the other hand, countries with smaller geographical size are vulnerable to shortages of land for economic activity (especially large scale agriculture) and valuable natural resources. Smaller countries, therefore, tend to exhibit greater degree of external dependence in terms of importation of strategic raw materials and valuable natural resources. Another strategic fallout of large territorial size is that it provides some insulation against potential threats of invasion by a foreign

power. Smaller states could be more easily over-run in battle than larger states. It is important to note, however, that there are exceptions to the conventional belief that is attached to physical

5. For example, Russia (17,075,200sq km), Canada (9,984,670sq km), USA (9,826,630sq km), China (9,596,960sq km), Brazil (8,511,960sq km) and Australia (7,686,850) are countries that are easily recognizable not only on the world map but also in global affairs. This is partly due to their large physical size. Similarly, all are richly endowed with variety of natural resources in addition to other benefits of large geographical size.

The ease and speed with which Saddam Hussein annexed Kuwait represents a graphic illustration of the vulnerability of states with smaller territorial sizes.

size of states. In other words, there are cases where countries that have small territorial sizes have amplified other indices of power (for instance, technology) to obliterate the shortfalls in physical size. Nevertheless, while the external behavior of territorially large states could be autonomous and sometimes aggressive, smaller states could hardly sustain such independent external behavior.

The size of a country's population is another important indicator of the nation's power credentials. Unlike the geographical size of the country, the role of population size as an index of power is quite contentious. In the first place, there is no generally agreed benchmark for 'large' population. Besides, whatever the ambiguity associated with 'large' population, it is double-edged sword in the sense that it could be an asset or a burden. As an asset, large population could offer large markets for goods and services making it attractive to foreign investors. It could also provide required manpower for industrial production and personnel for war. On the other hand, large population could constitute meaningless liability when the bulk of the population is untrained and illiterate. It may also not present reasonable market value when large chunk of the population lacks appreciable purchasing power and wallows in poverty. Above all, the revolutions in nuclear and robotic technology have decreased the utility of population size in warfare and industrial production.

Military strength has been an indispensable indicator of state power credential for centuries. Even though traditional calculation of

state capabilities tended to give primacy to military index, contemporary power calculus cannot ignore it either. Indeed, the ultimate determinant of outcome in political contestations among actors in global affairs, when other instruments have failed to yield desired results, is the military. The actual size of the military and military expenditure (in absolute and per capita basis), quality of military leadership, combat-readiness, command and control system, quality of weapons, state of weapons technology and reliability of intelligence are some of the determinants of military strength of states. Where these indices are possessed in appropriate proportion, the military is likely to be stronger and the state will have the capability to pursue an assertive foreign policy. The reverse is the case for states that lag behind in terms of the military indices.

Another notable power index is technology. Indeed, the classification of countries into developed, underdeveloped or developing, bear at heart, even if unconsciously, the level of

7. Examples include Singapore, Japan and South Korea.

8. The sudden rise of China as a favored destination for foreign investment is attributable to its large population size. A similar proposition could be made of India and Brazil.

technological advancement. Technological sophistication is reflected in a nation's capacity to produce value-added goods and services and attain self-sufficiency in basic needs for high quality living standards. The level of technological development is also reflected in defence capabilities. Closely related to technological advancement is a nation's ability to utilize information and propaganda paraphernalia in furtherance of its national interests. Access to and control over the flow of information as well as the use of propaganda instruments through global media networks enable parent states to shape public opinion on issues dominating the global agenda. Through such process, matters of concern to states with weaker control of propaganda instruments are either crowded out in the information market place, or, are framed in a way that aligns with the interests of the powerful states. Therefore, countries that occupy the upper side of the information asymmetry wield greater influence than states on the lower end of the pendulum.

Among the potent indices of state power is economic strength. Defined in terms of the size of a country's Gross Domestic Product (absolute and per capita), economic strength is inextricably linked with

the other elements of power. For instance, it is a strong economy that can sustain a virile military as well as support research in technological advancement. In international politics, a strong economy enables the state to influence the behavior of other countries through positive reinforcement and punitive measures. With respect to the former, generous aid, preferential market access and massive foreign investment are often used to support friendly states as reward for policy alignment with the benefactor (Moon, 1983; Richardson, 1981; Moon, 1985). On the other hand, reduction or suspension of foreign aid, trade sanctions and other discriminatory practices are often used to 'punish' unfriendly states. It takes a wealthy and strong economy to be able to sway the behavior of other countries in a way that align with the preferences of the benefactor state. This is because the expectation of future benefits that would enable the beneficiary state to fulfill its obligations by ensuring better living conditions, generate jobs and alleviate poverty for its citizens are important considerations in external behavior. Without a strong economy that offers opportunities for other states in terms of benefits, it is difficult to imagine how a state could wield durable influence in regional or global affairs.

Nigeria's Leadership Aspirations in Africa and its Basis

The hallmark of Nigeria's external relations is the desire to be considered as Africa's power-house. Successive Nigerian governments have firmly attached to the principle of Africa-as-centerpiece (Saliu, 2005). The underlying motive is to be able to shape the direction of key issues concerning the region and mobilize other African states towards aligning their policies and perspectives with regional (or Nigeria's) preferences. In this light, Nigerian officials have often been preoccupied with the goal of harmonizing and unifying Africa's position on core global issues. This is quite understandable because, individually, most African states are too small to be able to make notable mark on global discourse, much less, shape it. It is thought that maintaining a united front would increase the weight of African voice than if each state had gone separate ways. Therefore, there is need for leadership which would galvanize the various interests and project a common African position to the international community. In the view of most Nigeria's leaders (and Nigerians generally), the country that is best suited for the leadership position is Nigeria. The question is how are these desires manifested? And, what are the bases of the leadership aspirations?

It is quite noticeable that Nigerian leaders rarely seek or pursue goals in the international system without wrapping it around regional interests. The quest for debt relief which was championed by for President Olusegun Obasanjo is a good example. Similarly, the promotion of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) which was designed as the framework for engaging Africa's development partners is another manifestation of Nigerian leaders' emphasis on Africa's (rather than Nigeria's) interests. Ironically, it would not be too surprising to see that while Nigeria's leaders were busy promoting NEPAD as a development strategy in various capitals across the globe, South African and other African leaders were selling their respective domestic development strategies and initiatives. There are several instances in which Nigeria assumed prominent role in conflict resolution initiatives across the region. All these **are** geared towards establishing Nigeria as a builder of Africa's consensus **on regional** and global affairs. The next question is: what are the bases of Nigeria's aspiration?

Bearing in mind the earlier discussion of the indicators of power of states, it might be useful to examine how the **basis of Nigeria's** leadership aspiration connects to (detach from)

9. See selected speeches of President Olusegun Obasanjo in Ad'Obe Obe (ed.) *A New Dawn: A Collection of Speeches of President Olusegun Obasanjo*, Vols. I, II & III, Ibadan: Spectrum Books.

10. South African leaders, for instance, were promoting Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative in South Africa (AsgiSA) and Joint Initiative for Priority Skill Transfer (JIPSA) across the world. See Pan African News Agency (PANA) *Daily Newswire*, April 17, 2006.

the various indices of power. The petro-dollar windfalls of the 1970s and Nigeria pro-active role in supporting the liberation movements in Southern Africa marked the 'golden era' of Nigeria's leadership aspiration in Africa. However, while the mid-70s undoubtedly offered a major turning point in Nigeria's African diplomacy and international relations in general, evidence of Nigeria's grand aspiration dates back to the immediate pre- and post-independence years. Almost immediately after independence, Nigeria began to display some firm posturing in championing the cause of Africa which crested with the suspension of relations with France in 1961 ostensibly to protest the French atomic tests in the Sahara (Aremu, 2005; Akinterinwa, 1990 & 1999). Given its 'track record' of championing African interests, it is believed that Nigeria

should occupy the position of being the unrivaled voice on African affairs.

Population size offers yet another major ground for the leadership aspiration that characterizes the approach to Nigeria's external relations. By virtue of being the most populous African (or Black) nation, it is usually assumed, almost complacently, that Nigeria's leadership should be incontrovertibly evident. Often, in making cases either for foreign investment or representation to the nascent African Union Pan-African Parliament or the proposed UN-Security Council enlargement, the country's population size is usually presented as one of the justifications for Nigeria's position. It is rarely noted that huge population, if Nigeria's population of about 140 million can be described as such, is double-edged (as observed earlier) and could hardly be an automatic component of a nation's power credentials. If, for instance, a significant proportion of the population is well-educated and well-trained, it could be the engine of growth and development and, by extension, a veritable diplomatic bargaining tool. The potentials for huge market, business process outsourcing and other collateral economic activities of the *post-modern* age would necessarily endear the country to the international community as the experiences of resurgent China and India suggests. On the contrary, **huge** population could be a burden when, as it seems in Nigeria, a **sizeable** portion of the population operates of the margins of survival **without** sound education. Neither would a huge population size offer much **market** value that could attract significant investment, much less serve as **valuable** diplomatic tool, when the greater bulk of the people battle poverty in sprawling urban squalors and rural areas.

Therefore, the prestige surrounding the whole idea of being the most populous **Black** nation seem to be tenable only in the thinking of the leadership and **probably** some sections of the *un-informed* public. Not surprisingly therefore, **the** total foreign direct investment (FDI) into the non-oil sector, which **has** greater multiplier potential for employment generation and poverty alleviation, *expected* by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 2006 was about \$3 billion (*ThisDay*, July 7, 2006). Compared to \$41 billion and \$50 billion *actual* investment by Toyota and Nissan respectively to renew production facilities in Thailand or even ¥27 billion invested by Toyota in South Africa in 2005 alone (*JETRO White Paper*, 2006), the total anticipated non-oil investment in Nigeria pales out as insignificant even if it were realized, and reveals the wide

gulf between the potential of population size and its actual value in international political economy. Thailand and South Africa each has less than thrice and less than half of Nigeria's population respectively.

Nigeria's record of participation in peace keeping operations also forms part of the claims to leadership status in the region. At the United Nations, continental and sub-regional levels, the record of Nigeria's contributions to international peace keeping and peace building initiatives appear to attract some credits for being one of the top contributors of troops to peace missions. However, in addition to the acknowledgements, there have been intermittent reports of unethical behavior by some Nigerian contingents that serve to blemish Nigeria's participation. Besides, it is common knowledge that contributors of troops to UN peace keeping operations are usually paid per soldier and there are insinuations that the pecuniary motivations, rather than altruistic motives, may be behind the frequent deployment of troops. Above all, the credits for peace keeping can scarcely be claimed by the contributors of troops alone to the exclusion of the financial contributors to the peace keeping account of the world body. With respect to financial contributions to international organizations, it is hard to claim much credit since only recently did Nigeria offset its arrears in international organizations. On the whole, hardly could participation in peacekeeping operations *per se* offer much reliable claims to regional leadership.

The foregoing analysis reveals that the indicators of national power discussed in early sections do not synchronize fully with sources of Nigeria's leadership aspiration in Africa. Although the geographical components appear to favor the country to a certain degree, on the basis of other indicators, Nigeria could not be said to have scored reasonably high. With respect to population size, for instance, even if the population size of 140 million is taken to be large population especially by African standard, the fact that large sections of the

11. For details of the allegation of malfeasance and unethical conducts against Nigeria's contingents in peacekeeping operations in the Congo, see "Our Congo Shame" *This Day*, September 22, 2005; and "Nigeria Police in Congo" *Daily Champion*, September 30, 2005. The fact that large sections of the population lack access to qualitative education and a vast majority live below poverty line diminishes the credits accruable from population size. With respect to technological advancement and control over information and propaganda machinery, Nigeria rates very poorly on those indicators.

Above all, the various economic indices suggest that the Nigerian economy is weak and could hardly support an assertive foreign policy posture that is required of a regional leader. Indeed, in what ways does Nigeria manifest economic weakness in comparison to some other African nations? The next section probes this question with a view to juxtaposing it with the quest for regional relevance by Nigeria.

Nigeria's Muted Economic Standing and the Quest for Political Relevance

It might be useful to consider Nigeria's *real* status using some selected indicators to determine whether Nigeria's economic status supports the leadership aspiration on the continent. First, based on market value and equity turn over (in US\$), the *African Business* 2006 ranking of top businesses in Africa shows that the highest ranked Nigerian firm was in 44th position and only 4 Nigerian companies made the top 100 companies in Africa. South African companies occupied the top ten positions while 68 companies of the top 100 African businesses are South African. Egypt has 18 of its firms among the top 100 while Morocco has 7. The 2007 ranking by the same magazine reveals a similar pattern. Of the top 100 African companies, 62 are South African, 18 from Egypt, 9 from Morocco while Nigeria has 7. Meanwhile the highest ranked Nigerian firm occupies the 46th position. (See *African Business*, April, 2007: 16-20). The 2008 ranking of top businesses in Africa conducted by *Forbes* also reveals that none of the top ten companies in Africa is Nigerian.

An almost identical pattern was manifest in the ranking of African universities. The Webometrics survey indicates that the top 8 universities in Africa are South African. Of the top 100 African universities, 21 are South African, 13 Egyptian, Algeria and Morocco has 9 apiece while Kenya has 8. Nigeria and Tunisia tied with 4 each followed closely by Ghana and Tanzania with 3 of their universities among the top 100 in Africa. In the survey, the highest ranked Nigerian university, Obafemi Awolowo University, occupies the 44th position.

12. Analysis of the ranking in 2006 reveals that Nigerian Breweries was the highest rated Nigerian company. Others in the top 100 are First Bank Plc, Union Bank and Guinness Nigeria Plc. At 75th, 81st and 97th positions respectively. *African Business*, April, 2006, pp.32-33.

13. The companies are Standard Bank Group, FirstRand, Sasol, MTN Group, Sanlam, Telkom, Impala Platinum Holding, Royal Caribbean (Liberian), Orascom Telecom (Egypt) and Investec.

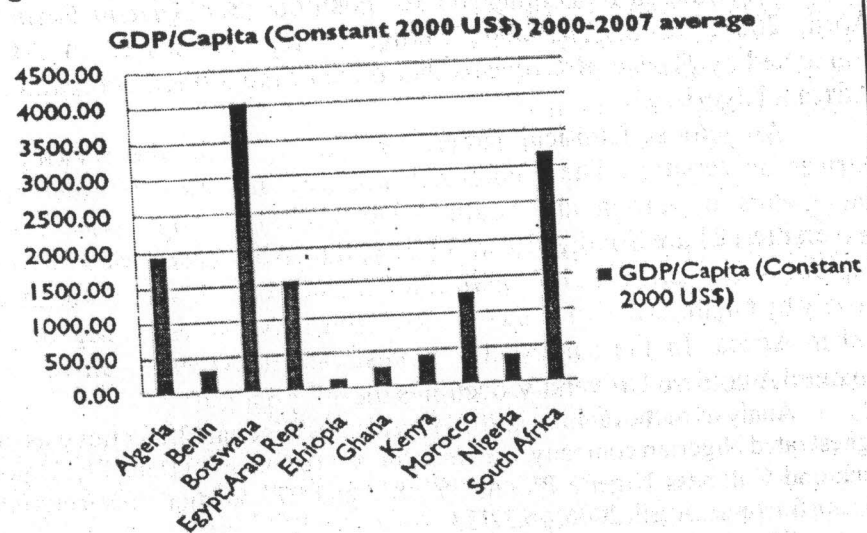
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(<http://www.clickafricque.com/Magazine/ST014/CP0000002787.aspx> accessed 30/12/2010).

followed closely by Mogadishu University at 45th. Considering the centrality of the role of universities as both the harbinger of innovation and driving force of development as well as a symbol of pride of a nation's level of modernization and advancement, Nigeria's ranking does seem to not support the prestige and leadership that is often bandied around.

Furthermore, let us examine a number of other indices in order to establish Nigeria's position *vis a vis* some selected African countries (across the sub-regions) to establish whether or not Nigeria's leadership aspiration in Africa has exemplary economic basis beyond a nostalgic attachment to the 1970s (*a la* support for liberation and anti-Apartheid struggles), oil or 'large' population. Figure 1 shows that among the selected countries, Nigeria has less than remarkable Agriculture (value added) as a percentage of GDP between 2000 and 2005 comparable to the "giant" status or African leadership claims.

Figure 1:



Source: World Development Indicators online database (various years)

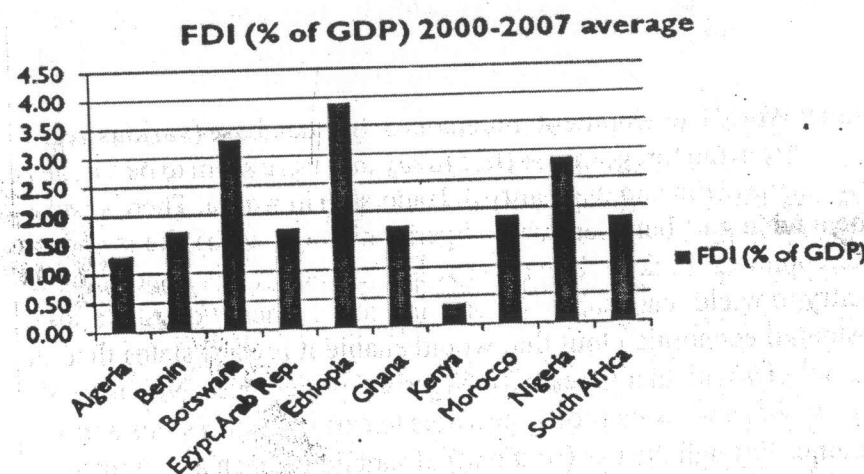
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14. Other Nigerian universities that made the top 100 are UI, University of Benin and University of Lagos at 65th, 79th, and 96th positions respectively. (see <http://www.webometrics.info/top100/continent.asp?cont=africa>). That Mogadishu University ranked very closely to Nigeria's top rated university is particularly not gratifying because Somalia had been without effective central government for more than a decade.

The countries are Algeria, Benin Republic, Botswana, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria and South Africa.

Figure 2 indicates the net inflow of foreign direct investment as a percentage of GDP over the same time frame. It reveals that Nigeria's figure is not quite distinguishable compared to other 'less endowed' countries.

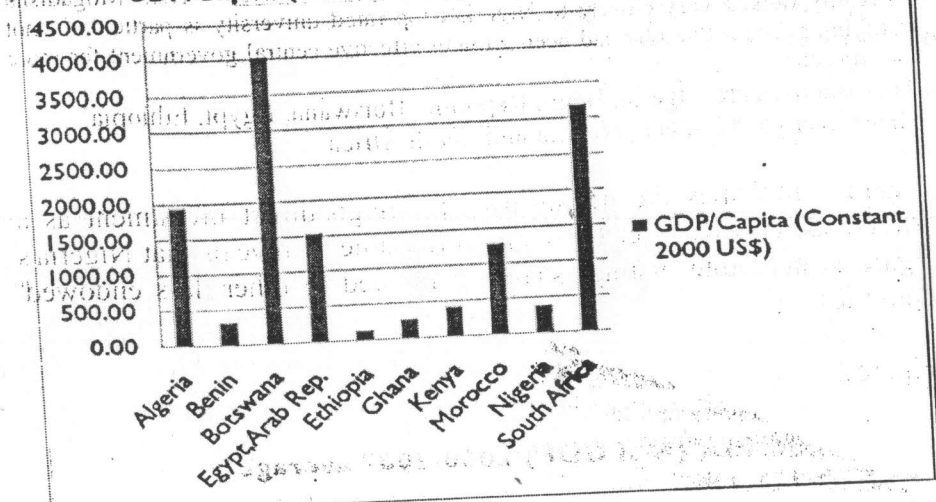
Figure 2:



Source: World Development Indicators online database (various years)

Figure 3 contains the numbers on GDP per capita for the selected states. Again, Nigeria's position appears to be unremarkable compared to other African states. Indeed, Nigeria's average for the years, \$416.4, is far lower than South Africa's \$3176.6 and Egypt's \$1543.3.

Figure 3:
GDP/Capita (Constant 2000 US\$) 2000-2007 average



Source: World Development Indicators online database (various years)

From the foregoing, suffice to say that there seem to be a huge gap between the claim and the reality of leadership in Africa. There seem also to be a wide gulf between what Nigeria think (or wish) she is and what other countries think (or believe) she is. Obviously, it is impossible for a country to wield reasonable regional influence when it does not possess substantial economic clout that would enable it reward states that align their policies with mainstream (or Nigeria's) preferences. Neither will the country with a weak economy be able to extract concessions and shape outcomes through the use (or threat) of sanctions (such as withdrawal of benefits discussed earlier). In sum, enforcing or inducing compliant behaviour from regional states would be practically impossible under these circumstances. Therefore, regional states are easily swayed, not necessarily by the overriding interests of the region, but by potential gains irrespective of where they come from. This probably explains

16. Even though GDP per capita remains technically controversial as a development measurement indicator, it obvious remains highly popular.

why, one several matters of regional concern, extra-regional actors with interests that contradict regional interests, often prevail.
Selected Cases of Direct Opposition to Nigeria's Leadership Aspirations

As a result of the lack of palpable economic clout, regional states find it easy to disagree with or oppose Nigeria's preference (even if they are congruent with the overall African interest) to the disappointment of Nigeria officials. After all, Nigeria lacks that capability to grant durable reward or effective sanctions that would have attracted compliant behaviour. This is usually more apparent on African issues over which there are vested extra-regional interests. A good example was the intense politicking that marked the election of the president of the African Development Bank (AfDB) in 2005. After series of inconclusive rounds of voting in Abuja where several African countries (including Liberia and Sierra Leone) opposed Nigerian candidature, the election ended in stalemate but Nigeria's candidate eventually lost to Rwanda's in a rescheduled election in Tunis. The failure seem to have torn to shreds the 'giant-of-Africa' thesis at the nation's capital and brought to the fore some key unenviable realities: i. that Nigeria's leadership and influence does not extend beyond Abuja because of its frail foundation; ii. that challenges or opposition to the leadership aspiration emanates not only from outside but from within Africa; and iii. that sub-regional groupings would play increasingly decisive role in shaping outcomes in African affairs. The full implication of Nigeria's failure in that bid, especially on other more salient ambitions like the quest for a permanent seat at the UN Security Council, could be an interesting subject of further inquiry.

Another important case where African countries opposed Nigeria's interest concerns the relocation of ECOWAS Parliament from Abuja. Francophone group within ECOWAS colluded, as usual though, to battle for the relocation of the ECOWAS Parliament from Abuja to Abidjan (Cote d'Ivoire). This was in spite of Nigeria's contribution of over 72 per cent of the organization's funds (Daily Trust, January 16, 2007). ECOWAS Parliament was eventually relocated to Abidjan against Nigeria's preference. By the same token, evidence of (impliedly anti-

would the government have greater resources through diversified exports which could be used for the benefits of other African states and people, the economy would be strong enough to offer opportunities for prosperity for all. This would generate interdependence and a sense of 'mutual relevance' that would enable Nigeria to place an effective leadership role in harmonizing a unified African interest in relations to the wider world.

Second, there is need for redefinition of Nigeria's interests and goals with respect to Africa and the rest of the world. Without clearing defining the foreign policy goals, it leaves the foreign policy establishment with an unpredictable direction. Therefore, some non-strategic goals may be confused with the core objective of foreign policy. This may result in mis-allocation of limited resources from areas that directly concern the national interest to those that are merely peripheral. Third, there is need for overhauling the foreign policy establishment itself with a view to aligning it with changes in the region and the world. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the foreign missions require significant reforms that would reduce cost and increase effectiveness. For instance, the number and size of missions would need to be scaled down in order to conserve resources. Some Missions where Nigeria have little or no strategic interests (e.g. Belgrade, Serbia) could be served concurrently from nearby Mission (Moscow, Russia). Such re-organization and reform could be done without rupturing the overall objectives of Nigeria's external relations. Undoubtedly, Nigeria has a legitimate aspiration for regional leadership. However, the critical elements of power would need to be addressed in order to make the aspiration a reality. Leadership bequeaths responsibility and the wherewithal to fulfill the leadership obligations are yet to be fully acquired by the country. This explains the frequent opposition to Nigeria's leadership aspiration and the periodic failure of Nigeria's African diplomacy in that regard.

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Unsafe at any Margin: Interpreting the SWOT Analysis of
President Jonathan's Political future in Nigeria.

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Abstract

The struggle for the most coveted office in Nigeria has made the political environment to be somewhat tensed. The dimensions of the socio-political events being witnessed make it difficult for analysts to project what will happen after 2015 general election. It is in light of this that this paper attempts to analyze the re-election chances of the incumbent president amidst the tensed political terrain and events which characterized the build up to the election. The paper used the unfolding trajectories to interpret the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT Analysis) of the president Jonathan's political future identifying the driving force behind his political actions in recent times. The chances of the opposition party- APC- at dethroning the ruling party is also sized up with calculation and permutation that could enhance the upsurge. It is strongly recommended that the responsibility of saving the country from threading the line of failed state lies on the shoulder of every Nigerian, by genuinely making their thumb prints to count and not allow the politicians to jeopardize and truncate their hard earned democracy. The paper adopts qualitative method of analysis.

Introduction

It is incontrovertible that the 2015 general election will represent a watershed in the history of Nigerian government and politics. The socio-political and economic events being witnessed depicts the fact that the forthcoming election may make or mar the peace and unity of the country. Nigeria as an entity is presently sitting on a keg of gunpowder waiting for ignition. As Nigeria moves towards the 2015 general