



Nigeria's Contribution to Africa's Regional Integration: Assessment of its recent Performance

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Abstract

This paper investigates the recent performance of Nigeria towards Africa's regional integration as a major power in Africa. The main objective of the research is to determine the extent of Nigeria's commitment to the realization of the African Union's vision of becoming a fully integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa; and a dynamic force at the global level. Since her independence in 1960, Nigeria has been widely acknowledged as a leading power in Africa (The Giant of Africa) by several studies because of its preponderant political, economic and military power; influence; and benevolent contributions regarding to the liberation and progress of Africa. However, there are hardly substantive assessments of its recent performance towards Africa's integration. The study adopts the Hegemonic Stability Theory; and descriptive analysis method to analyze data obtained from secondary sources. Analysis of the 2016 and 2019 Regional Integration Index (ARII) reports covering the period from 2010-2019 reveals that Nigeria has performed poorly towards the continent's integration among its peers, both at the continental and sub-regional levels. The paper concludes that Nigeria's poor performance would significantly slow the acceleration of Africa's integration; and the country risks losing its leadership position in Africa to its rivals, especially South Africa. It recommends that the Nigerian government should take deliberate steps in formulating and implementing policies that would improve its performance across the five dimensions of the regional integration; and it should strengthen its commitment to consolidate its leadership position in Africa, and motivate smaller countries to contribute their best.

Keywords: Africa, Nigeria, Performance, Regional Hegemon, Regional Integration

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Introduction

Since the end of the World War II, the world has continued to witness a remarkable surge of interest in regional integration as a mechanism for achieving some collective political, economic, social, cultural or security objectives. For example, Western European countries formed the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957, which became the European Union (EU) in 1993, and presently consists of Central and Eastern Europe countries; South East Asian countries formed the Association of South Eastern Nations (ASEAN) in 1967;



counties in the Americas formed the Organization of American States (OAS) in 1948; and Africa countries formed the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963, which was later converted to the African Union (AU) in 2002. Studies on regional integration like Gramsci (1971, 1985), Kindleberger (1973); Keohane (1984); Webb & Krasner (1989); Gilpin (1988) among others show that regional hegemons or regional powers play some vital roles in the attainment of the objectives of regional integration (Dauda, et. al., 2019). Common examples are the roles played by the hegemony of Roman Empire in the 17th century, British Empire in the 18th and 19th- 20th Centuries, U.S. hegemony in North America and at global level since the end of the Cold War (Myers, 1991). More recently, regional powers like Brazil in southern America, Russia in Eastern Europe, India in Southern Asia, China in Eastern Asia, South Africa in southern Africa and Nigeria in West Africa have all been acknowledged for their outstanding leadership roles in promoting the integration of their respective regions (Olusola, 2013; Uzodike, 2016).

Although there is no consensus in the literatures that Nigeria is Africa's clear regional hegemony, it has like no other country in the continent contributed immensely to the decolonization and total independence of Africa, and maintenance of peace, security and political stability in many Africa states such as the Congo, Chad, Liberia, Sierra Leon, Congo, Ivory Coast, Mali, Somalia etc. (Garba, 2021). For these and many more, Nigeria has been widely acknowledged, and reckoned with within and outside of African as a "regional power" (Ogunubi & Ukeke-Uzodike, 2016); as 'The Giant of Africa' (Holmes, 1987; Dauda, et. al., 2019); and 'Big Brother' to many African countries because of its leadership role, benevolence and commitments to addressing the plethora of issues and problems affecting the continent at large. However, analysis of the 2016 and 2019 African Regional Integration reports covering the period 2010 to 2019 reveals that Nigeria's performance towards the attainment of Africa's regional integrations targets was quite very low at the continental and sub-regional levels but studies have not paid adequate attention on this recent poor performance and its implications to the actualization of the AU's vision and Agenda 2063. Therefore, the main objective of the research is to determine the extent of Nigeria's commitment to Africa's integration, and to suggest ways for improvement.



Conceptualization

Regional Integration

The term regional integration can best be conceptualized when one understands the concept region in the first place. Nye (1968, p. vii) defines region as ‘a limited number of states linked by a geographical relationship and by a degree of mutual interdependence’. This definition views a region as an association of countries based on geographical contiguity. However, for scholars like Hettne and Sodebaum (2008), Katzenstein (2015), geographical contiguity may not be the main criteria of defining a region. Hence, regions are purposeful social, cultural, political and economic interactions among states that may or not necessarily inhabit the same geographic area. Haas, (1968, p. 6), defines regional integration as the

The process whereby political actors in several distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities toward a new centre, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over preexisting national states. The end result of a process of political integration is a new political community, superimposed over the pre-existing ones.

Based on the foregoing explanations, this paper conceptualizes regional integration as an association of independent states with shared social, cultural or historical values; which may or may not necessarily occupy the same physical geographical location; for the purpose of promoting cooperation among themselves to achieve their common economic, social, political or security objectives, for which the states relinquish some of their national sovereignty to the regional institution. Therefore, regional integration in Africa refers to the cooperation for unity, peace and progress among the continent’s 55 independent countries.

Historical Background of Regional Integration in Africa

The quest for regional integration in Africa started in the 1950s by some prominent leaders of early independent African states but it was formalized with the formation of the Organization of Africa Unity (OAU) in 1963 at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The key objectives of the OAU were to promote the liberation of African countries from colonialism and apartheid, defend their independence and territorial integrity against external aggression; and to promote cooperation among member states (AU, 2000, p. 5-6). Regional integration in Africa evolved within the context of global wave for regionalism in the post-World War II which saw the emergence of numerous regional institutions for the purpose of promoting cooperation and



regional economic integration. For example, Western Europe had established the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951, which became the Europe Economic Community (EEC) in 1957, and European Union (EU) in 1993. In South East Asia, the Association of South East Nations (ASEAN) was formed in 1967. While Arab countries formed the Arab League in 1945. Southern American countries formed the Latin America's Free Trade Area (LAFTA) was formed in 1960; and North American countries formed the North America Free Trade Area (NAFTA) in 1994. In Africa, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) was formed in 1963, which became the African Union (AU) in 2002 (Union of International Associations (2018).

The OAU (1963-2002) has played a significantly role in facilitating the attainment of independence of many present African countries such as the combating of apartheid in South Africa; promotion of African unity; and effective reduction of inter-state conflicts in the continent. However, after the demise of colonialism, the need for deeper cooperation among the African countries to address their common economic, political, social and security challenges within the continent, and the desire to have a collective position of impact in the global economy have necessitated for the transformation of the OAU to AU, which Nigeria has also played a leading role (Eghweree, 2014). By September 1999, African leaders held the 4th Extra Ordinary Summit at Libya and came up with the Sirte Declaration which recommended among other things, for the establishment of the African Union. In July 2000, 53 African countries adopted the AU Constitutive Act at the 36th Extra Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government held in Lome, Togo, and the OAU was eventually converted to the AU at the 2002 Durban Summit held in South Africa.

To fast-track Africa's regional integration, the AU proposed for the establishment of a continental government at the AU Conference held at Uganda in 2005 under the title 'Desirability of a Union government of Africa' (Biswaro, 2012). On 16 May 2013, the 'Agenda 2063' was launched at the AU's Ordinary Assembly in Addis Ababa to mark its 50th Anniversary, and it was adopted on 31 January 2015 at the Ordinary Session of the AUS's Head of State and Government. This agenda is a 50 year long term strategic framework formulated by the AU for the acceleration of socio-economic development and



implementation of AU initiatives for the establishment of a single continental government renamed 'United States of Africa' by the year 2063.

Vision and Objectives of the Africa Union

The vision of the AU is to become “an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in global arena’ (AU Commission, 2015, p. 3). The objectives of the AU include, to achieve greater unity and solidarity between the African countries and the people of Africa; to defend the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence of its member states; to accelerate the political and socio-economic integration of the continent; to promote and defend African common positions on issues of interest to the continent and its people, to encourage international cooperation taking due account of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; to promote peace, security, and stability on the continent; and to promote democratic principles and institutions, popular participation and good governance, among others (AU, 2000).

Theoretical Conceptualization of Nigerian’s Commitments to African Integration

The role of Nigeria towards Africa’s integration since her independence in 1960 could be likened to the role of a regional hegemon as conceptualized by the Regional Hegemonic Stability Theory. The theory is associated with the works of scholars like Antonio Gramsci (1971; 1985), Kindleberger (1973), Keohane (1984), Gilpin (1987; 1988), Webb and Krasner (1989), Yarbrough & Yarbrough (1992), David Lake (1993), Prys (2008, 2010) etc. Kindleberger (1973) introduced the Hegemonic Stability theory to explain the how British and U.S. hegemony which he described as Pax-Britannica and Pax-Americana have contributed to the stability of the international system. Kindleberger (1973). The theory conceptualizes a hegemon as any state which is economically and militarily more powerful than others globally or at regional levels, which is capable and willing to provide leadership, and to establish rules for the maintenance of stability of the globe or region.

According to the HST, a stable international system is more likely to be established and sustained where a hegemon plays the role of the leader or stabilizer, the absence of which would result to instability in the system. According to Kindleberger (1973, p. 305), ‘for the world economy to be stabilized, there has to be a stabilizer, one stabilizer’. The stabilizer, here refers to a hegemon. He explains that, “a liberal economic order needs leadership, a country which is prepared consciously, under some systems of rules it has internationalized,

to set standards of conduct for other countries; and to seek to get others to follow them” (Kindleberger (1973, p. 28). He claims that, the global depression experienced in 1929 and 1939 occurred because there was no hegemon to provide the needed leadership role.

However, a hegemonic power must be able to demonstrate ability, willingness and commitment to the stability of its region. Ability means the capacity to protect the region from external encroachments/aggression. Willingness implies that a hegemon must have the will to carry the burden (bear the cost) associated with leading the system, especially the provision of public goods like international peace, stable internal political economy, aids to weaker states etc. (Prys, 2010). While, commitment implies that a hegemon must be able to remain committed to the role of a hegemon such as provision of public goods, enforcing rules, protecting the region from external aggression etc. (Kindleberger 1973’; Keohane 1984; Myers, (1991;Schirm, 2006, Bach, 2007, Prys, 2008; 2010; Nolte, 2010). Moreover, according to Olusola (2013, p. 30), “a hegemon can be endorsed, because it proffers certain goods and services that benefit states that are less powerful”.

Even though there are hardly any consensus in the literatures that Nigeria is Africa’s regional hegemon, the country has clearly demonstrated the qualities of a hegemon i.e the ability, willingness and commitments to the cause of Africa above most of its peers, which have earned it a global recognition as a regional power in Africa and a clear hegemon in the West African sub-region because of its unmatched commitments to the continent (Dauda, et. al., 2019). Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, and in fact, “Nigeria is the largest black nation in the world. One out of every four Africans and one out of every five persons of African origin is a Nigerian” (Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD, 2012, p. 6); and in every 10 West Africans, 6 were Nigerians (Olusola, 2013, p. 7).As of 2022, Nigeria had over 218million estimated population; which is higher than the 123million of Ethiopia; 110million of Egypt; and 59million of South Africa, its closest regional power rival (World Bank, 2023a). Economically, Nigeria has enjoyed the status of largest economy in terms of volume GDP for decades. It is the Africa’s number 1 crude oil producer (Olusola, 2013), and the world’s 7thas of 2022 (Punch, 2023). It is a source of crude oil import to many countries of the world, including Africa. Although, South Africa challenges Nigeria’s position as the region’s largest economy, the latter has maintained its



hold on that position since 2013 after the rebasing of its economy (Olanrewaju & Olorunkanmi, 2020). As of 2022, Nigeria's GDP was \$477 billion, which is higher than the \$476 billion of Egypt, and South Africa's \$405 billion (World Bank, 2023b). Moreover, even though Nigeria is 4th in terms of military capability in Africa after Egypt (1st), Algeria (2nd) and South Africa (3rd) of 2022 (Elijah, 2023), it has been reckoned with as a major contributor to UN, AU and ECOWAS peacekeeping programmes (Dauda, et, al. 2019; Mustapha, 2020).

Nigeria has never nursed the ambition of dominating or taking over the territory of its fellow African states, but that of promoting brotherliness through its benevolence. This was made clear in the maiden speech of its Prime Minister Abubakar Bafawa Balewa's at the United Nations in October 1960, in which he categorically stated that, "We shall never impose ourselves upon any other country and shall treat every African territory, big or small, as our equal, because we honestly feel that it is only on that basis that peace can be maintained in our continent" (Permanent Mission of Nigeria in the United Nations, 2015, par. 4).

Nigeria has enjoyed remarkable influence in Africa since 1960 until 1994 when South Africa got independence from the apartheid regime. During General Sani Abacha's military regime, South Africa challenged Nigeria on the need to return to democratic rule. It even led the call for Nigeria's sanction at the Commonwealth of Nations over its human rights abuses, including the extrajudicial killing of Ken Saro Wiwa and nine other human rights activists (Olanrewaju & Olorunkanmi, 2020). Unlike at the continent's level, Nigeria's position as a regional hegemonic power in the West African sub-region is clearly uncontested by any of the other 14 independent states, namely Benin, Ghana, Mali, Cote d'voire, Senegal, Liberia, Gambia, Sierra Leon, Togo, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde and Niger. Nigeria played a significant role in the formation of ECOWAS in 1975, which Headquarter is situated in Abuja, the Nigerian capital city.

Contribution to Regional Integration in Africa Since 1960

As explained in the theoretical framework, a region needs a hegemonic power i.e., a country that is capable, willing and committed to playing the leadership role in promoting order, stability and development of the region. Nigeria has significantly committed time and resources for the protection, order, stability, and progress of Africa, especially regarding the



struggle for the total liberation and independence of the continent from colonialism, promotion of unity and regional integration among African states; and support for the maintenance of peace, security, and political stability across Africa countries (Dauda, et. al., 2019). First and foremost, Nigeria has made Africa as the centre piece of its own foreign policy immediately after the declaration of its political independence, and it stood for Africa and for Africans regarding any issue that affected any part of the continent (Udey & Okoroafor, 2016; Idagu, Obiageli, & Luka, 2020; Garba, 2020). Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, asserted that “...Africa must claim first position in our external affairs” (Akindele & Ate, 2000, p. 140; Ojukwu & Euka (2020, p. 65). While addressing the Federal House of Assembly in August 1960, he also stressed that Nigeria would take “clear and practical policies with regard to Africa; it would be our aim to assist any country to find solutions to its problems” (Al-Hassan, 2008, p. 1).

One major area Nigeria has played a prominent leadership role is the promoting of unity and integration among African states, and the formation of the Organization of African (AOU). Before Nigeria got independence in 1960, some prominent first-generation intellectual leaders and Heads of State of Independent African states like Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Ali Ben Bella of Algeria, Gamal Abdel-Nasser of Egypt, Leopold Senghor of Senegal, Sekou Toure of Guinea, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, Julius Kambarage Nyerere of Tanzania, King Haile Salassie of Ethiopia, Mau Mauof Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya etc had started coming together in the 1950s to promote the total liberation of Africa from colonialism based on a shared ideology known as Pan-Africanism, an ideology for the actualization of complete political independence, unity, solidarity and cooperation among African countries against colonialism. However, between 1960 and 1961, the independent countries got divided into three blocks, namely the Brazzaville, Casablanca and Monrovia blocs regarding how they would approach post-independence integration in Africa (Qobo, 2007; Fagbayibo, 2017). Nigeria deployed its influence to convince the Monrovia and Brazzaville blocs and subsequently, the Casablanca bloc to agree on a gradual approach, leading to the eventual formation of the African Unity (OAU) on 25 May 1963, at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (Garba, 2020).

Another area Nigeria has played a significant leadership role in Africa’s integration is regarding to the liberation of African countries from the vetiges of colonialism in countries



like South Africa, Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia (Garba, 2020). It vehemently stood against the apartheid regime (1948 to 1991) in South Africa, a system of White minority racial rule characterized by repressions, human rights abuses and denial of fundamental freedoms, segregations and discrimination against black South Africans in all aspects of life (Garba & Akuva, 2020). On 21st March 1960, the apartheid police attacked Black South Africans at Sharpeville, resulting to the killing of 72, and wounding 184 of them since the massacre, Nigeria developed sympathy for the blacks and begun to mobilize support the antiapartheid movement. At the diplomatic level, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa established the National Committee against Apartheid (NCAP) in 1960. He mobilized other African states and led a campaign for the expulsion of the apartheid regime from the commonwealth at its 11th Prime Ministers' Conference in March 1961 held in London; and mobilized them to also isolate the regime (Udey & Okoroafor, 2016; Agbo, 2019; Vanguard, 2019; Garba, Mohammed & Francis, 2021; Bolarinwa & Falode, 2021).

Nigeria also led 22 African countries to boycott the Montreal Olympic Games in New Zealand in protest against New Zealand's links with the South African apartheid regime (Mustapha, 2020). When Mandela and 12 other human rights activists were sentenced to death, it was Jaja Wachukwu, the then Nigeria's Minister of Foreign Affairs who used his position as a representative at the UN to championed the converting of the sentence to life imprisonment (Agbo, 2019). Moreover, during the Obasanjo military regime, Nigeria stopped the selling of oil to the South African apartheid government, even though it had to lose up to \$41 billion as a result (Vanguard, 2019). The country also nationalized the British Petroleum in 1979 and changed its name to African Petroleum in opposition to the supply of oil to the apartheid regime in South Africa by the British government (Udey & Okoroafor, 2016; Garba, 2021).

Nigeria has also made some huge financial donations to black South Africans and the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan African Congress (PAC) under the South Africa Relief Fund (SARF), also referred to as the Mandela Tax. This include \$5 million annual donation by the government; \$3.7 million donation, \$3,000 personal donations by the Head of State, \$1,500 by each of his cabinet members, individuals and students. The government imposed 2% deductions on civil servants' monthly salaries imposed by Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo's regime from which \$10.6 million was generate and sent to ANC (Vangaurd, 2019; Agbo,



2019). In fact, more than any other country in the world, Nigeria has supported South Africa's anti-apartheid struggle with over \$61billion (Garba, 2020, p. 102; Garba, Mohammed, Francis, 2021), and has organized the World Conference for Action Against Apartheid under the General Obasanjo regime (Agbo, 2019). Nigeria also granted asylum to Thabo Mbeki from 1977 to 1984 who later became the president from 1999-2008, and 300 passports in favour of South Africans to enter Nigeria (Vanguard, 2019). It also granted financial scholarships for the black South African to study in Nigeria, among others. In fact, as pointed out by Osuntokun (2008, p. 142), '...without Lagos' steady support for the forces of liberation, the entire southern African region – including South Africa – might have spent longer years battling the forces of colonialism, settlerism and racist oppression'. Lagos was the federal capital city of Nigeria before it was move to Abuja in 1991.

Moreover, in defence of Africa's territorial integrity, Nigeria stood boldly against France by expelling its ambassadors and staff, and shutting down its borders against French air lines and ships for conducting an atomic bomb test in the Sahara in 1960 (Mustapha, 2020). It further threatened to expel more French citizens, if France conducts another nuclear test on Africa's territory (New York Times, 1961). Nigeria also strongly opposed the U.S. regardless of its status a super power, over its interference in the Angolan crises from 1975 to 1976. The then U.S. President R. Gerald Ford sent a letter to Nigeria (and other Africa states) through its Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr. Donald B. Easum requesting among other things that African countries should not to recognise the Soviet and Cuban backed People's Movement for the Liberia of Angola (MPLA) but National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) faction in the crises (New York Times, 1976).

Contrary to the interest of the U.S., General Murtala Mohammed unequivocally declared at the OAU's Summit in January 1976 that "Africa has come of age, it is no longer in the obit of any continental power. It should no longer take orders from any country however powerful. The fortunes of African are in our hands to make or mar..." (Agbo, 2019, par. 9; Garba, 2020, p. 103). In fact, not only did Nigeria boldly endorsed the MPLA, it also mobilized other African states at the summit to recognize it as the authentic government of Angola against the US-backed UNITA (Garba, 2020; Mustapha, 2020). Moreover, N13.5million was donated to the MPLA for military equipment by the Murtala regime (Newsum & Abegunrin, 1987). When the Organization for Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) imposed oil embargo on



the US in 1973 for supplying weapons to Israel during the Arab-Israeli war, Nigeria generously sold oil products to some African countries at concessionary prices for 90 days (Mustapha, 2020). Also, it donated N1.14billion to Niger Republic for the purchase of security vehicles to improve its security in 2022 (Adebayo, 2022).

Another area in which Nigeria has also shown unmatched leadership commitment in Africa is regarding the promotion of peace, security, unity and political stability in West Africa and Africa at large through the aiding of peaceful settlement of disputes. Common examples of this include contribution to peacekeeping in Congo, Chad, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Mali, Darfur, Guinea Bissau, Togo, Rwanda and Somalia, among others (Garba, 2020; Idagu, et. al., 2020). Between 1960 and 1964, it supported the United Nations' peacekeeping operation in Congo known as ONUC (Operations des Nations Unies au Congo) with troops more than any other African state (Alli, 2012). Between 1979 and 1982, it spent up to \$82million in helping to resolve the Civil War in Chad (Dauda, Ahmad & Keling, 2017). Under the regime of General Sani Abacha, Nigeria hugely supported Nigeria in the Liberia peacekeeping process during the first Civil War from 1990 to 1997. It donated up to 12,000 troops which was over 80% of the 16,000 total troops deployed by ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) for the mission (Obi, 2009, p. 125), and spent \$12billion (Olawole, 2015). During president Obasanjo's regime, Nigeria also supported the ceasefire monitoring mission under the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) during the Liberian second Civil War that started in 2003 (Obi, 2009; Olawole, 2015; Mahmud, 2022). In addition, refugee camps were provided for over 6,000 Liberian refugees in Ogun States in Nigeria (Olawole, 2015). Sadly, Nigeria had over 1,000 of its soldiers killed in Liberia, and it spent over N135million in treating its wounded soldiers (Dauda, Ahmad & Keling, 2017; Mahmud, 2022).

Between 1997 and 2002, Nigeria also contributed up to 80% to 90% of the 13,000 total troops deployed under ECOMOG II for peacekeeping in Sierra Leone during Abacha to Obasanjo regimes (Obi, 2009; Osakwe & Audu, 2017). It also contributed about 3,500 of the troops mobilized under the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), a number higher than those of Ghana, Gambia, Guinea, Mali etc., and expended over \$8billion in peace keeping in Sierra Leone (Osakwe & Audu, 2017). During Goodluck's regime, Nigeria alone



deployed up to 1,200 troops (combat armies and air force) of the 3,300 total troops approved by ECOWAS to contain insurgency and terrorism by al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghrib (AQIM) in Mali (Agande, 2013; Campbell, 2013; Idagu, et. al., 2020). It also expended over \$45million, equivalent of over N7.2billion for operations, logistics and humanitarian supports during the peacekeeping operations under the UN approved Africa-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) in 2013 (Premium Times, 2013).

After Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999, President Obasanjo reinvigorated efforts at promoting political stability, democratic sustainability and regional integration in African. Obasanjo took diplomatic steps that led the restoration of democratically elected government in Sao Tome and Principe, Cote d'Ivoire, and Guinea Bissau's following the staging of military coups in those countries (Oshewolo, 2018; Garba, 2020; Idagu, et. al., 2020). During president Buhari administration, the Nigeria led ECOWAS countries to resolve political crisis in Gambia by compelling President of Gambia, Yahya Jammeh to hand over power to Adama Barrow the president elect, after losing the presidential election, which he initially accepted the result but later changed his mind. Consequent to Nigeria's role, Jameh had to quit power to allow for peaceful transition (Hartmann, 2017). These contributions were made for the interest of Africa despite Nigeria's prevailing internal challenges, including the ongoing Boko Haram insurgency, which was believed to be linked to AQIM (Agande, 2013; Campbell, 2013; Idagu, et. al., 2020). That was why President Jonathan, "we believe that if we stabilize northern Mali, not just Nigeria but other countries that are facing threats will be stabilized (Agande, 2013, p. 10).

Nigeria has also been well recognized globally as a major contributor of troops and finances to various UN peacekeeping programmes in which many African countries are beneficiaries (Mustapha, 2020), such as in Congo (1960-1964), West New Guinea (1962-1983), India-Pakistan (1965-1966), Lebanon (1978-1983), Chad (1979 & 1981-1982), Iran-Iraq 1988-1991), Angola (1989-1995), Namibia (1989-1990), Western Sahara (1991), Iraq-Kuwait (1991), Kosovo (1991), Cambodia (1992-1993), Somalia (1992-1995), Yugoslavia (1992-1993), Mozambique (1992-1995), Sierra Leone (1992), Rwanda (1992-1993), Congo (2010), Mali (2013), Sudan (2004), Southern Sudan (2011), and Central African Republic (2014), among others (Dauda, Ahmad & Keling, 2017).



Moreover, Nigeria was a leading African voice that advocated for the reform of the UN Security Council to allow Africa to have a Permanent Seat in the Council. So many African and Asian states were inspired by Nigeria and they joined the clamour. Although, the permanent seat is yet to be granted, the struggle has led to the expansion of the UN Non-Permanent Seats (Udey & Okoroafor, 2016). Nigeria was elected to serve in the Security Council as non-permanent member from 1966-1967, 1978-1979, 1994-1995, and 2010-2011 (Udey & Okoroafor, 2016; Mustapha, 2020). At the sub-regional level, Nigeria has also played a leading role in the formation of ECOWAS in 1975 during General Yakubu Gowon's military regime after earlier unsuccessful attempts by Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone to form it from 1964 to 1965 were unsuccessful (Udey & Okoroafor, 2016). It has also played a leading role in the establishing the ECOMOG (Udey & Okoroafor, 2016; Idagu, et. al., 2020); formation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and the Africa Peer Review Mechanism in 2003, and the framing of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) in 2002 to detect, prevent and combat human rights violations, and crimes like terrorism, banditry, piracy, kidnapping etc. (Dauda, et al., 2019; Mustapha, 2020).

It was for the roles played by Nigeria as described above and many more that Nigeria's leadership position in Africa has been highly acknowledged by other Africa states and the international community as 'The Giant of Africa' (Holmes, 1987), the 'Big Brother Africa', the 'Africa's Great Power', or 'Africa's Hegemon' (Garba, 2020; Mustapha, 2020; Olanrewaju & Olorunkanmi, 2020). In fact, there is a popular saying that "if Nigeria sneezes, the rest of African nations catches cold" (The Cable, 2015, par. 9). These recognitions are because of Nigeria's uncommon capabilities, geographical size, resources, population, benevolence, and influence, which are attributes of a regional hegemony. It was in acknowledgment of what Nigeria stand as for in Africa that Barack Obama, the former U.S. President, once said that Nigeria 'is critical to the rest of the continent and if Nigeria does not get it right, Africa will really not make more progress' (BBC, 2010).

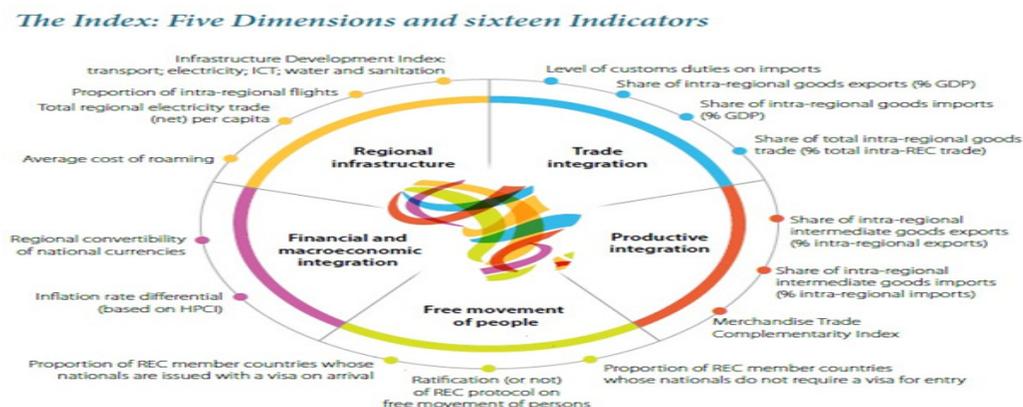


Methodology

This study is a descriptive research. Secondary data were obtained from various sources of literature such as published journal papers, books, official reports, online publications etc. Descriptive analysis method was adopted and statistical tables and figures were used to present and analyze the performance of Nigeria based on the Africa Regional Integration Index reports 2016 and 2019, which cover the period from 2010 to 2019. The reports were considered very advantageous to the study because they provide comprehensive and reliable statistical information and rating of each country's performance across the five dimensions of the regional integration namely, free movement of people, regional infrastructure, trade integration, production integration, financial and macroeconomic integration; and regional.

The index was developed based on the Abuja Treaty of 1991 by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), in collaboration with the African Union Commission (AUC) and the Africa Development Bank (ADB), which was approved at the AU-ECA Conference of Ministers in 2014. It is advantageous because it provides a yardstick for monitoring and evaluating progress with Africa's integration through the activities of the Regional Economic Communities (RECS) and their various countries across five (5) dimensions broken down into sixteen (16) indicators (UNECA 2016). The 5 dimensions are: Trade integration, Productive Integration, Free Movement, Financial and Macroeconomic Integration; and Regional Infrastructure. Each dimension is broken down into specific key indicators, totaling 16 as presented in figure 1.

Figure 1: Five Dimensions and Sixteen Indicators of Africa Regional Integration



Source: United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (2016, p. 11).



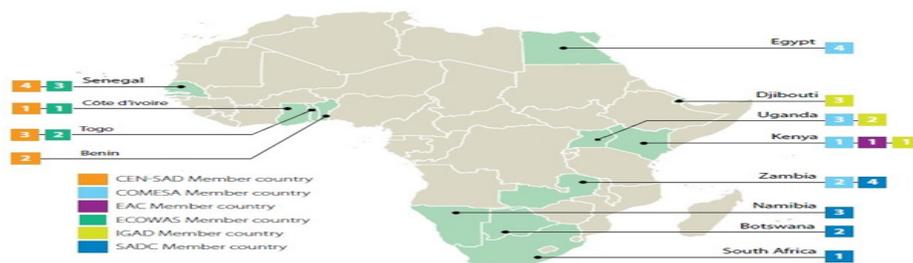
In each dimension, the RECs and their countries were ranked in three levels namely, *High Performer*, *Average Performer* and *Low Performer*. A country is ranked as a *High Performer* at the continental or REC level when it scores above the average score or when it performs high in at least 3 of the 5 dimensions of the regional integration index; as an *Average Performer* when it scores within the average score; and as a *Low Performer* when it scores less than the average score (UNECA 2016). Prior to the developing of this index, there was hardly any agreed yardstick for measuring the performance, rating and progress of Africa's integration.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Nigeria's Regional Integration Performance at the Continental Level

The continental regional integration report of 2016 reveals that of the 54 African countries ranked across all the 8 RECs that were recognized by AU as its regional integration building blocks, only 28 countries were found to be top performers (UNECA, 2016, p. 18).

Figure 2: Map Showing the Top Performing Countries at Continental Level, 2016 ARII Reports

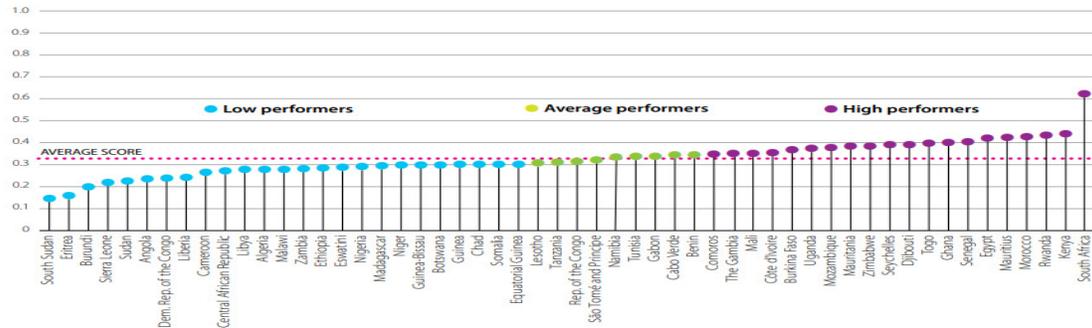


Source: ARII Report (2016, p. 25)

Also, as highlighted in Figure 2, 19 were considered deeply and broadly integrated countries, including Cote d'Ivoire, Benin, Togo and Senegal in CEN-SAD; Kenya, Zambia, Uganda and Egypt in COMESA; Kenya in EAC; Cote d'Ivoire, Togo and Senegal in ECOWAS; Djibouti, Uganda and Kenya in IGAD; Zambia, Namibia, Botswana and South Africa in SADC. Surprisingly however, Nigeria was not among the top performers i.e. the deeply and broadly integrated countries.



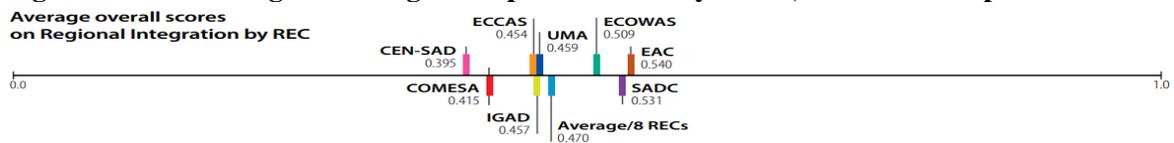
Figure 3: Graph Showing the Regional Integration Ranking at Continental Level, ARII 2019 Report



Source: Adopted from ARII Report (2019, p. 27)

The continental average score in the 2019 report was 0.327. Figure 3 shows that among the 54 countries ranked, 20 countries were ranked as high performers, 9 countries as average performers, and 25 as low performers. It further shows that South African was the Top performing country in the entire continent. Nigeria was ranked as the 38th country in the continent and 5th among the 9 average performers. This ranking clearly reveals that Nigeria performed very poor, despite being a regional power and a huge contributor of Africa’s GDP. The performance of each REC in 2016 was presented in figure 4 to see how the region where Nigeria came from actually performed.

Figure 4: Overall Regional Integration performance by RECs, ARII 2016 Report.



Source: Adopted from ARII 2016, p. 15).

Figure 4 shows that the average performance of the 8 RECs was 0.470. The EAC was ranked the best performing region with a score of 0.540; followed by SADC with 0.531; ECOWAS with 0.509; UMA with 0.459; IGAD with 0.457; ECCAS with 0.454; COMESA with 0.415, and CEN-SAD with 0.393 (ARII, 2016, p. 15). This revealed that the ECOWAS in which Nigeria belongs as its leader came 3rd among the 8 RECs. Nigeria’s scores and ranking among the 15 ECOWAS states is presented in Table 1.



Table 1: Nigeria's Regional Integration Scores & Ranking in ECOWAS, 2016 & 2019 Reports

Country	(2016 Score & Ranking)			Country	(2019 Score & Ranking)		
	Score	Rank	Category		Score	Rank	Category
Cote d'Ivoire	0.675	1	High Perf.	Cote d'Ivoire	0.667	1	High Perf.
Togo	0.671	2	High Perf.	Burkina Faso	0.561	2	High Perf.
Senegal	0.628	3	High Perf.	Senegal	0.516	3	High Perf.
Niger	0.556	4	Average Perf.	Togo	0.504	4	High Perf.
Benin	0.548	5	Average Perf.	Nigeria	0.464	5	Average
Ghana	0.546	6	Average Perf.	Mali	0.454	6	Average
Burkina Faso	0.537	7	Average Perf.	Ghana	0.434	7	Average
Mali	0.525	8	Average Perf.	Benin	0.391	8	Average
Nigeria	0.501	9	Average Perf.	Guinea	0.389	9	Average
Guinea Bissau	0.500	10	Average Perf.	Gambia	0.386	10	Average
Gambia	0.447	11	Low Perf.	Cape Verde	0.363	11	Low Perf.
Cabo Verde	0.439	12	Low Perf.	Niger	0.321	12	Low Perf.
Sierra Leone	0.404	13	Low Perf.	Sierra Leone	0.316	13	Low Perf.
Liberia	0.357	14	Low Perf.	Guinea Bissau	0.314	14	Low Perf.
Guinea	0.301	15	Low Perf.	Liberia	0.298	15	Low Perf.

Source: ARII Report (2016, p. 44)

Source: ARII Report (2019, p. 36)

The average score of ECOWAS in the 2016 report was 0.509 (ARII, 2016). However, Table 1 shows that Nigeria scored 0.501 and came 9th in ranking out of the 15 in ECOWAS countries in the 2016 report. This means that it did not qualify as one of the top performers among the 15 countries in ECOWAS despite being the sub-region's hegemonic power. Another striking discovery from the report is that, it actually came 6th out of the 7 countries on the list of the average performers.

The average score of ECOWAS in the 2019 report was 0.464. The report shows that Nigeria did not make the list of the four (4) top performers. It only came 5th in the overall sub-region, and the first on the list 6 average performers. Although Nigeria appeared to have moved from 9th position in the 2016 report to 5th position in 2019, its score has actually declined from 0.501 to 0.464, which does not in any way indicate an improvement but just that other countries had also performed poorly as well.



Comparative Analysis of the Regional Integration Performances of Nigeria and South Africa

Nigeria and South Africa are the topmost competing regional powers for the position of Africa's hegemony so it was considered important to compare their performances. Even though Nigeria has been acknowledged as the largest economy in Africa, and in fact the acclaimed Giant of Africa, since her independence in 1960, the comparative analysis reveals that South Africa performed better than Nigeria at the continental level and at the sub-regional levels in the 2016 and 2019 reports as presented in Table 2.

**Table 2:** South Africa's Regional Integration Scores & Ranking in SADC, 2016 & 2019 Reports

Country	(2016 Score & Ranking)			Country	(2019 Score & Ranking)		
	Score	Rank	Category		Score	Rank	Category
South Africa	0.741	1	High Perf.	South Africa	0.667	1	High Perf.
Botswana	0.559	2	High Perf.	Mozambique	0.422	2	High Perf.
Namibia	0.555	3	High Perf.	Zimbabwe	0.395	3	High Perf.
Zambia	0.523	4	High Perf.	Mauritius	0.372	4	Average
Swaziland	0.520	5	High Perf.	Seychelles	0.352	5	Average
Zimbabwe	0.488	6	Average Perf.	Namibia	0.342	6	Average
Mozambique	0.483	7	Average Perf.	Comoros	0.338	7	Average
Seychelles	0.481	8	Average Perf.	Zambia	0.328	8	Average
Mauritius	0.466	9	Average Perf.	Botswana	0.326	9	Average
Lesotho	0.386	10	Low Perf.	Lesotho	0.303	10	Average
Malawi	0.367	11	Low Perf.	Malawi	0.299	11	Average
UR Tanzania	0.364	12	Low Perf.	UR Tanzania	0.293	12	Average
Madagascar	0.343	13	Low Perf.	Madagascar	0.286	13	Low Perf.
DR Congo	0.302	14	Low Perf.	Eswatini	0.253	14	Low Perf.
Angola	0.281	15	Low Perf.	Angola	0.226	15	Low Perf.
				DR Congo	0.188	16	Low Perf.

Source: ARII Report (2016, p. 46 & 2019, p. 36)

Table 2 revealed that South Africa contributed up 61% of SADC GDP and it scored 0.741 to rank as the best performer in the sub-region in the 2016 report. On the other hand, even though Nigeria contributed up to 75% of ECOWAS GDP, it scored 0.501 to rank the 9th in the sub-region. Interestingly to note is, only that Nigeria had failed to make the list of high performers, it came 6th on the list of the 7 average performers. In the 2019 report, Nigeria scored 0.464 and was ranked 5th in ECOWAS. Again, it did not make the list of high performers. On the other hand, South Africa maintained its top position in SADC with a score 0.667.



Conclusion

The paper concludes that Nigeria has shown serious commitment to African's integration in promoting the total liberation and independence of African states, the provision of peace, security and stability; promotion of democracy, and development since her independence in 1960, but the 2016 and 2019 Regional Integration Index reveal that it has recently performed poorly among its peers across all the five dimensions of AU's regional integration despite the fact that it has been a regional power, and the Giant of Africa as widely described. This shows that the size of country's economy or historical antecedents is not the yardstick for achieving Africa's regional integration but continuous commitment. Although the immediate reasons behind Nigeria's poor performance are yet to be investigated, there are two main implications for the findings. Firstly, the poor performance by Nigeria as a regional power would contribute to the slow actualization of the AU's regional integration targets; secondly, may discourage smaller African countries from contributing their best for the continent's integration; and thirdly, it may cause Nigeria to lose its dominant position and influence in Africa to South Africa, its major rival or any other country because according to the regional hegemonic theory, if a regional hegemon fails to remain committed to its leadership role, it would lose its position to its rival powers.

Recommendations

Based on the findings made in this research, the following recommendations were made on how Nigeria can improve its performance and make remarkable contributions to African's regional integration:

1. the Nigerian government should take deliberate steps in formulating and implementing policies that would help in improving its performance across the five dimensions of the regional integration, namely trade integration, productive integration, free movement, financial and macroeconomic integration; and regional infrastructure.
2. The Nigerian government should reinvigorate its contribution to African's integration to avoid losing its leadership status and influence on the continent to its rivals, especially South Africa.



3. The Nigerian government should demonstrate leadership by example to avoid discouraging smaller Africa countries from contributing their best to the continents' integration because many of them still look up to Nigeria as Africa's leader and role model.

4. Further research should be conducted to investigate why Nigeria's performance is quite low compared to its peers despite its status as a regional power, and its abundant resources.

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