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RESEARCH ARTICLE

AN EVALUATION OF THE ROLE OF NIGERIA AS A HEGEMON IN MAINTAINING PEACE AND STABILITY IN THE WEST AFRICAN SUB-REGION AND ITS CURRENT REVERSAL IN THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORT TO CONTAIN THE BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the role of Nigeria as a Hegemon in maintaining peace and stability in the West African Sub-Region and its current reversal while confronting the Boko Haram (BH) insurgents. Due to the scarcity of basic essentials of life such as food, health, education, and shelter in the West African Sub-Region, comes the inadequacies that led to the growth of impoverished, uneducated, unemployed, hunger-stricken and restive populations all over the Sub-Region. The effect of the above scenario is the prevalence of conflict between ethnic nationalities leading to instability in some countries of the region and threat to their National Security. Nigeria, as one of the sixteen states of the sub-region was worried about the rising conflict in the region due to its effect on the people in the areas of peace and stability. So, as a hegemon in the region due to its strong economic and human resources as well as its military power through the formation of Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS), it was able to assist in many ways to bring about peace and stability in the region. But very unfortunate for Nigeria, the reverse has become the case as it has been confronted with the menace of Boko Haram insurgency with its aim of compelling Nigeria to fully implement the Sharia system of governance and consequently pose a serious threat to its national security with activities which include killing, abduction and destruction of both private and public properties with the Nigerian military that assisted other West African countries in peacekeeping been unable to contain the deadly insurgent group and instead seeking for assistance from the neighboring countries in its fight against BH. The objective of this paper is to evaluate the role played by Nigeria in peacekeeping in the West African Sub-Region and why the reversal for the country despite its strong army that assisted other West African countries. The method adopted was that of qualitative where documentary data such as journal, texts and news papers were evaluated and analyzed. The finding shows that while Nigeria was able to use its military and economic might to assist in bringing peace and stability to some conflict ridden counties in the region, it has been unable with the same military to combat the Boko Haram insurgency, instead, it is now seeking for the assistance of the neighboring countries and Western countries to come to its assistance in combating the Boko Haram.

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INTRODUCTION

The economic and military dominance of Nigeria in West Africa Sub-Region serves as factors that made Nigeria's dominance or hegemony to play the role of helping towards peace and stability in a region with several conflicts. The influence of Nigeria from the above point of view portend it as the potential to shape the affairs of the sub-region and more so was the weaknesses of some of the West African states (Eric, 2000:7).

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On the other hand, crises in other parts of the Sub-Region were unable to be contained due to lack of capacity to meet the security need of their states as a result of their poor economic base and insufficient security forces. Of late, the international community showed lack of interest in intervening in conflicts within sub-Saharan Africa in general and West Africa in particular as the Liberian, Sierra Leone, Burundi and Rwandan civil wars have proved despite their enormous capacity to do so (Vogt, 1992). This stance of the international community such as UN and United States of America goes to show that African countries' security conflicts must have to be handled by themselves hence the need for a "hegemon" such as Nigeria in

the West African Sub-Region. As explained above, the apparent non interest by the international community to intervene directly in resolving African conflicts has led to the need for African leaders to come up with their means of providing common security by states of the region. For West African Sub-Region, The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) became the rallying point spearheaded by Nigeria.

The ECOWAS was formed in 1975 with the aim of taking care of the economic and security situations of the member nations which became weak at that moment with the aim of providing the needed leadership due to lack of funding. Many member states have not been paying their contributions or supporting the ECOWAS projects and this has affected the effectiveness of the organization (Olaniyan, n.d). The above scenario brought about the need for a capable state that can provide an alternative platform to not only mobilize other member states but also help in galvanizing ECOWAS towards the attainment of its set objectives. Nigeria as earlier mentioned has the economic and military power and also command the respect within the international community that makes her to play the role of "hegemon" as expected of it by providing the kind of leadership the region needs to address its problem and consequently, the international community decided to stop in intervening directly or finance the entire peacekeeping mission in any part of Africa (Jeffrey, n.d)

From the above perspective therefore, the role of maintenance of peace in the West African Sub-Region became the responsibility of the African themselves hence the need to engage countries that have the capacity to intervene like Nigeria which became the "hegemon" of the region. Nigeria in its hegemonic capacity was able to galvanize the West African Sub-Region in the areas of peacekeeping using the ECOWAS platform; assisted in the areas of regional democracy and good governance; grant technical and financial assistance to member nations as well as humanitarian intervention in the West African regions. Despite the above role played by Nigeria as a hegemonic leader in this Sub-Region, it became confronted with the phenomenon of Boko Haram insurgents since 2002 and it has found it very difficult to contain this group using the same strong army that serves as a contributing factor of its leading the West African Sub-Region as a hegemon but instead reversed to seeking assistance from those weaker neighboring countries that it led previously to come to its aid to counter the Boko Haram menace as well the western power, for instance, Their mission received a boost recently when the American President Barack Obama deployed a total number of 300 military personnel to Cameroon for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance operations against Boko Haram insurgents ([vanguard, 2015](#)).

Furthermore, it has also been reported that Nigeria in its effort to combat the Boko Haram decided to boost the current military efforts by enlisting the services of mercenaries from South Africa. As confirmed by the news agency, the mercenaries were, estimated to be about 250 personnel with Specialized Tasks which include Training, Equipment and Protection (STTEP), they were being deployed along with fighter jets in Operation Fire Force ([Emma, 2015](#)). From the

above development therefore, the questions that comes to mind then is why is it that the same Nigerian army that assisted in containing conflicts earlier in the Sub-Region has now become a weeping nation seeking for military assistance from the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) of the West African Sub-Region? This paper therefore wish to evaluate the hegemonic role played by Nigeria in peacekeeping in the West African Sub-Region and why the reverse has become the case in its efforts to combat the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria at the moment.

Theoretical Framework

The term, theory is regarded as a set of facts, principles usually emanating from the study of a body of knowledge relating to the phenomenon been studied. More so, theory is also referred to as a scientifically acceptable general principle or body of assumptions offered to explain a phenomenon ([Rosamond, 2000:9](#)). Another scholar, Ben Rosamond viewed theory as "the process of theorizing to a large extent, a mechanism for the generation and organization of disagreement" he went further to state that theories sharpens the sense in which analysts understands the assumptions about the way in which the world works (*ibid*). From another perspective, Gerry Stoker observes that theories "help us to see the wood from the trees because good theories select out certain factors as the most important. Theories are of value precisely because they structure all observations" ([Stoker, 1995:16-17](#)). The theory of hegemonic stability is the theory adopted to analyze this paper. One of the first proponents of this theory is Robert Keohane who according to Goldstein states that the international system would most probably be stable when a "hegemon" or nation-state is the dominant world power ([Goldstein, 2005:107](#)).

From this background therefore, a state should have the ability to single handedly dominate the rules and arrangements of the region. The central Idea of the hegemonic theory is that stability of the International System requires a single dominant state to articulate and enforce the rules of interaction among the most important members of the system. For instance United Nations (UN) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) are dominated by the United States of America and Nigeria respectively. The attributes are the Capability to enforce the rules of the system; the Will to do so; and a Commitment to a system which is perceived as mutually beneficial to the major states. Therefore, the hegemonic state must have a large, growing economy; dominance in a leading technological or economic sector; and a political power backed up by projective military power.

Hegemonic Stability Theory actually refers to several different bodies of theory, each concerned with the role of a hegemonic or superior power in global politics. The basic claim, in each case, is that the international political and economic system is at its most stable when it is under the control of a single state, the "hegemon." A hegemonic power is one which is powerful enough to effectively control all important international rules, agreements, and institutions, through a mixture of diplomacy, persuasion, and military and economic coercion. By the same token, a country powerful enough to impose its will upon the rest of the world will establish a system of rules and norms that

contribute to global stability. Charles Kindleberger (*The World in Depression*) has argued that the economic difficulties of the 1920s and 1930s were the result of the collapse of world leadership: Britain had not recovered from the First World War, and the United States could not assert itself until after the Second.

In view of the central issues as contained in the hegemonic-stability theory, Nigeria exercises some hegemonic commitment through the ECOWAS due to its strategic position being the heart of Africa and particularly the West African Sub-Region; its population and size as well as its economic resource endowment and most particularly its military might. Nigeria has the greatest military power in the Sub-Region. A major factor that contributed in making Nigeria a "hegemon" is the multiplicity, complicity, lethality and regional destabilization of Africa's predatory war crises. Particularly, the nature of West African conflicts which was mainly intra-state instead of inter-state gave serious concern on method of intervention to be provided in the nation's internal affairs. The above notwithstanding, the impact in terms of humanitarian crises, refugees and internally displaced persons; child soldiers; small arms proliferation; annihilation of human and personal effects; poverty and destitution knows no boundary.

The above mentioned predicaments resulting from conflicts in this Sub-Region and their effects on national security visa avis regional defense provided Nigeria-ECOWAS relations in the sub-region to become strong, mutually reinforcing and inseparable with total aim toward emancipation of West Africa and its people. Nigeria from the angle of hegemonic stability theory participated in series of peacekeeping missions such as that of Congo in 1960, Sudan, Mali, Sierra Leone just to mention a few as organized by the United Nation. Nigeria's direct involvement as the chief mediator in numbers of territorial disputes and crises assisted to put a stop to further escalation of conflicts in the West African Sub-Region ([Agbakuru, 2013](#) and [Agbamu, 2015](#)). Supporting the evaluation from the hegemonic stability theory and the hegemonic position of Nigeria as a hegemon in the West African Sub-Region a renowned Scholar of refute, Ali Mazrui st stated thus "In the 21 century, France will be withdrawing from West Africa as she gets increasingly involved in the affairs [of Europe]. France's West African sphere of influence will be filled by Nigeria – a more natural hegemonic power" (Mazrui, 1986). The above goes to buttress the facts that placed Nigeria as a "hegemon" in the West African Sub-Region, but then a "hegemon" today may be in reverse become a needy nation tomorrow as it is presently the case with Nigeria at the moment.

METHODOLOGY

The method of data collection for this paper was that of qualitative, which is regarded as a research method of inquiry that produces result in words rather than statistics ([Bello, 2007](#)). Furthermore, it is also referred to as a research that is based on behavior; person's of live functioning of organization, interaction between nations and cultural phenomenon ([Straus and Corbin, 1998](#)). The research uses

different approaches which include that of explanatory and historical approaches of study with emphasis on documentary as well as library researches. Particularly, the emphasis on sources of data for this paper was historical in nature through which data are obtained from journals, documents, contextual study and analysis of documentary evidences. There include documents and reports; journals, Newspapers and Magazines; speeches from government and internet. This paper is basically conceptual because it is partly from an ongoing research work.

The Hegemonic Role Played by Nigeria in Peace Keeping in West African Sub-Region

From 1967 under the Gen. Yakubu Gowon regime, Nigeria was faced with political instability and social upheaval. The secession tendency of the Eastern Region from the Nigerian federal structure resulted in a devastating civil war between the federal government and the Biafra. As a result of this war, comes the security problems in Nigeria since 1970 which made the country to regard Africa as the "centerpiece" of her foreign policy and the spirit of good neighborliness was also imbibed ([Aluko 1989](#)). The Federal Government began to regard the countries nearest to it as its special "area of concentration" in its foreign diplomacy because it realized that the security of the country was tied to that of its neighbors. The federal government started to take special interest in the internal affairs of neighboring countries to ensure that hostile force did not replace governments friendly to Nigeria.

It was in line with the above trend that the Nigerian government started to show deep concern for peace and stability in its neighboring states and thus, assumed the Big brother status. One of the methods adopted by Nigeria in furthering her African policy and her hegemonic status in some of the followings:

Given of Aids to Some Poorer Nations

Nigeria as a hegemon in the West African Sub-Regions and coupled with the oil boom under the regime of Former Head of State in person of General Yakubu Gowon, a period which Nigeria became wealthy, aids were granted for the developmental purposes of some poorer African states ([Fulani 1991](#)). The purpose of why Nigeria had to play the above role was due to the fear of French capacity to harm and perpetuate other mischief within the region because Nigeria is strategically surrounded on all sides and shares contiguous borders with the Francophone states of Cameroon, Chad, Niger Republic and Benin Republic, in addition to several other Francophone states in West and Central Africa ([Akinyemi, 1999](#)).

For instance, during the Nigeria civil war, France persuades other former French colonies to throw in their support for the rebels. But Nigeria was fortunate in the sense that majority of Africa states, with the exception of Ivory Coast, Gabon, Tanzania and Zambia, saw the wisdom in adhering to the doctrine that the borders of African states inherited from colonialism were sacrosanct and thus could not be redrawn by force. Many of them realized that their own fragile multi-ethnic composition could also be threatened should the Biafra experiment be allowed to succeed. The reality is that many of

them, operating from enlightened self-interest, pragmatically supported Nigeria's federal Government. Nigeria learnt the valuable lesson that France, though a non-African nation, was really a power and great foe to contend with.

From the above therefore, Nigeria decided to embark on a policy of good neighborliness and the big brother status towards the surrounding countries. A new policy thrust that manifested in Nigeria in offering economic aid as well as technical assistance to a number of some neighboring countries. Nigeria constructed road and bridges for Benin Republic. It provided interest-free loans and other economic assistance to needy states. It engaged in joint ventures, partnership and investments with Benin, Togo and Guinea. Nigeria supplied aid to drought-stricken Niger Republic and even sold petroleum at reduced prices to a few other countries in Africa.

Nigeria's "Big Brother" Role in the Sub-Region

The reasons why Nigeria as a government decided to champion ECOWAS was predicated on its concern for sub-regional unity, economic, technical and political cooperation. Therefore, the aim was to reduce incessant and latent political and boundary problems, guarantee the member states a more respectable place in the international society, encourage a coordinated development and reduce their dependence on foreign powers. Nigeria has been actively playing prominent and outstanding roles by assisting countries within the sub-region and thus a hegemon in the West African Sub-Region.

The composition of the ECOMOG peace keeping force, its funding and timing revealed that Nigeria was determined to play a crucial role in a crisis within its sphere of diplomatic concentration. The ECOMOG was formed majorly by the former Nigerian Head of state in person of General Ibrahim Babangida arising from his political initiative and the ECOMOG's operations were made possible largely by his government as at then. Even though the emergence of ECOMOG and Nigeria's hegemonic role did come with some suspicions and criticism such as the fact that Babangida's administration in facilitating ECOMOG was to save his personal friend, Samuel Doe, but to Babangida, he viewed this military adventure as a way to pursue a dynamic foreign policy which has Africa as its centerpiece ([Okike 1997](#)).

In playing the hegemonic role by Nigeria was the Liberian peace process which was Nigerian's initiative through ECOWAS. The emergence of ECOWAS was as a result of Nigeria's diplomatic zeal Vis-à-vis- her conception of leadership role which she had continued to play until recently. Furthermore, Nigeria's dominant role as a hegemon was in its sourcing for solution through consultations and discussion between the members of the ECOWAS and negotiations which it organized between all the warring factions in Liberia to see that peace and stability was returned to Liberia. The hegemonic role of Nigeria in the West African Sub-Region also includes its role of maintaining democracy in the region, a role it exhibited during the political upheaval in Sierra Leone. Nigeria's intervention in the Sierra Leonean crisis generated some debate as at then, for instance, while some people were

in support of her role, some were not in support. To those that supported, they believed that Nigeria's role was based on humanitarian intervention because at the time Nigerian troops got into Sierra Leone, there was no government in that country. The elected president in person of Alhaji Tejan Kabbah was ousted, yet the military leader in person of Koromah then was there illegally as head of state ([Fawole 1999](#)).

From the above therefore, Nigeria deemed it necessary intervene in the crisis to bring peace and stability to that country due to its hegemonic role of leadership that it has to play in the West African Sub-Region particularly to avoid the murder of the nascent democracy that was put in place in that country as at that time. Additionally, Nigeria as a hegemon in the West African Sub-Region could not afford to be a spectator when events affecting national security were taking place in the sub-region considering her influential status in the sub-region; she was in the best position to tame the crisis. Besides the demands for peace and security challenges in West Africa, there was the demand for the aggressive pursuit of Nigeria foreign policy which is consistent with the policy of being "Our brother's keeper". It could be recalled that the legacies of Nigeria's past leaders is been followed in Nigeria's foreign policy position in the sub-region particularly whenever national interest is at stake and importantly when the integrity of the black man is involved. Nigeria's role in Sierra Leone crisis was therefore considered from the above perspective ([Fawole 1997](#)).

The decision of sending Nigerian troops was therefore believed to be consistent with the country's foreign policy. Nigeria's role in the West African sub-region is a giant and bold step in her foreign policy. Fortunately enough, Nigeria has been able to restore democracy at last considering the fact that her role in the crisis was blatantly criticized since it started in a military regime, even coming at a time when she had become a pariah nation. On the issue of granting asylum to Charles Taylor ([Akinbobola 2007](#)) of the Department of Political Sciences, University of Lagos, said in an interview with a reporter of *The Punch* newspaper that Nigeria is a signatory to the Geneva Convention. Nigeria has an abiding commitment, as it were, to be sensitive to the needs of refugees who feel insecure in their countries who are seeking for protection in Nigeria. Even though Charles Taylor has not applied for asylum in Nigeria, but Nigeria had to offer or grant the asylum to Charles Taylor perhaps, as a way of limiting the scope of the expansion of the crisis and war in Liberia. What President Obasanjo did was based on humanitarian consideration and of Nigeria's security ([The Punch 2007](#)).

It was argued that if the situation in Liberia was allowed to persist, it may threaten the existence of peace and stability in the neighboring countries through the influx of refugees who are mostly young people, some of whom are under fifteen years who had been used to carrying weapons and had been killing people. They may begin to perpetrate all kinds of atrocities in their host country, and this may possibly spread to other countries in the sub-region, including Nigeria, thereby creating a threat to her national security. The asylum granted Charles Taylor was a decision that went in the right direction, and designed to stop the violence and restore peace in Liberia.

It is certain that if Taylor was not granted the asylum, he would fight to the last man. A member of the House of Representative in Imo State stated that though Charles Taylor was never a friend of Nigeria but that it was very crucial that Nigeria played the role she played in granting asylum to the former war lord in order to stop the escalation of the hostilities to other West African countries. And since Nigeria is a force to be reckoned with in the West African sub-region, it was important that she played her big brother role. Nigeria's intervention in sub-regional crises can be justified in terms of protecting her national interest. Erstwhile military President Ibrahim Babangida went on to justify the intervention in the Liberian crisis when he said:

There is no gain saying that when certain events occur in this sub-region, depending on their intensity and magnitude, which are bound to affect Nigeria's politico-military and socioeconomic environment, we should not stand by as helpless and hapless spectators. The general belief was that events as they were unfolding in Liberia had the potential to jeopardize sub-regional peace and security but more importantly affect Nigeria's own national interest as the most prominent state in the Community ([Babangida, 1992](#)). This might not have been unconnected with the Libyan involvement in the crisis in Liberia. The Liberian warlord, Charles Taylor, reportedly received military training and considerable military, financial and logistical assistance from Colonel Muammar Gadaffi of Libya to launch his offensive against the Samuel Doe government in December 1989 ([Vogt 1992](#)).

To allow such externally backed insurgency to succeed carried grave consequence for the survival of weak regimes in the sub-regions. Babangida explained further:

The whole ideology rests on the fact that if we allowed a force from outsider to come in and cause instability in Liberia, chances are that such instability would spread into other neighboring countries in the West Africa region. We the West African leaders said we were not going to allow such a thing to happen, where anybody will just walk into the sub-region and take over control, also the leaders quite rightly decided that in order to ensure peace and stability in the sub-region, something has got to be done and this is what motivated everybody to get into Liberia ([Babangida, 1992](#)).

Perhaps what General Babangida was also referring to was the avoidance of a situation where any foreign-backed civilian insurgent group could take up arms to destabilize de facto regimes in West Africa, a scary development that had to be dealt with before it had a chance to become a precedent to be exploited by other disgruntled groups seeking political relevance. There is no doubt that General Babangida and other sub-regional rulers were uncomfortable with the fact that the Taylor rebellion had the military and financial backing of Libya, a country from outside the sub-region ([Garuba 1997](#)). Despite the role played by Nigerian leaders and its military prowess, same Nigeria is seeking for assistance from other nations including the western countries such as America and France as well as private security organization from South Africa. The question then seeking for answer in this paper therefore is: what then is responsible for inability of the same

military might that participated in the ECOWAS ECOMOG to restore peace and stability in West African Sub-Region's inability to combat the Boko Haram insurgency ravaging the north-east part of the country? The sub-title below seems to have provided some answers to the question raised above.

Why the Nigerian Government has failed to contain the Boko Haram Insurgents and Instead Reversed to Seeking Assistance from Neighboring Countries

The Nigerian government realized that as a result of many factors, the use of force could only be a stop-gap tactics in dealing with the Boko Haram. Some of these factors are the guerilla tactics adopted by Boko Haram which is not amenable to conventional military engagements. The following are some of the factors responsible for the inability of the government to contain the Boko Haram insurgents.

The Military

It could be recalled that Nigeria's military has been known for its good performance and reputation internationally due its involvement in several peace keeping missions in Africa which are still fresh in minds. Yet the government's in ability to contain the Boko Haram insurgency can be adduced to the non performance of the military through its wrong approaches. For instance, the military has a poor human rights attitude which made the people not to have confidence in them. Another problem that bedeviled the military which contributed to its poor outing against the Boko Haram is their sub-standard equipments, insufficient training or none at all and most importantly, low motivation from their commandants ([BBC, 2014](#)).

The problem leading to none performance of the military are dimensional, firstly is the inadequate military hardware to be used in prosecuting the fight against the insurgency which was hindered due to the refusal of the previous military rulers of the country for the fear that such military weapons of modern standard would be used for the purpose of coup against them, the military leaders ([Walker, 2014](#)). Secondly is the issue of training of the military personnel. United Kingdom which happens to be the former colonizer of Nigeria refused to grant the military training assistance and also sales of standard and modern military hardware due to the fact that Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International are all against the Nigerian military based on the tactics they applied in the fight against Boko Haram. For instance, it was reported that Amnesty International informed that about 600 people were extrajudicially killed by the military during attack on Maiduguri's Giwa barracks in March 2013, which serves as one of the reasons why the sale of lethal weapons to Nigeria has been prohibited by UK law (*ibid*).

James Hall, a retired colonel and former UK military attaché to Nigeria confirmed to BBC on the above views by Walker when he states that "Without the training, they won't be able to get the equipment, and we aren't giving them the training either," ([BBC, 2014](#)). The above position as corroborated by Hall has been debunked by the Nigerian military when in a press conference that took place on 7 May, 2014 in Abuja;

Brigadier-General Olajide Laleye informed journalists that the military were doing what they could to stop the insurgency. But to Nigerians, the result of all the claimed efforts of the army is not on the ground, hence the continued attacks by the insurgents. It was further argued that another factor responsible for the ineffectiveness of the military option is the improved nature of the Boko Haram in terms of training and use of sophisticated weapons such as improvised explosives which also contributed. The insurgents carried out deadly attacks on military facilities and civilian populace of Maiduguri Metropolis and Bama barracks.

In the said onslaught, the insurgents used Anti-Aircraft and Rocket Propelled Guns, Armored Personnel Carriers and other sophisticated weapons that destroyed some Military aircrafts in the Air force base and Airport as well other military and police barracks. Several military and police personnel and innocent civilians were killed by the insurgents ([News Diary Online.com 2013](#)). It is therefore paramount to state here that the rise of Boko haram with sophisticated weapons and acquired training that equally made it possible for the group to dear the government forces and frustrate the national security of Nigeria in this manner cannot be far from its establishment of links with international terrorist organizations which supported it with weapons, training and funds.

Political Factor and Leadership Failure

Prior to the emergence of the present administration, the political leadership of the three states in the north-east where Boko Haram has been worse heat were controlled and ruled by opposition party. While Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) was the ruling party, the north-east has been under the control of the opposition, the All Progressive's Congress (APC). The above scenario made some loyalists to the president to ill advise him and hence, he distanced himself from the Boko Haram insurgents at the early part of its activities, the stance that brings about his inability to nip the activities of the group in the bud. This postulation was supported by an environmental activist, Mr. Mtee, when he stated that "People around the president, his closest allies, informed him that this Boko Haram is manufactured by the Northerners to play politics," particularly when it was stated by the North after the 2011 election that the country would be made ungovernable for the elected President been a Southern president ([BBC, 2014](#)).

Mtee went further to state that the military commanders also played politics with Boko Haram insurgents as well, when he said "If they give the impression that Boko Haram activities is a very bad situation, they risk being branded incompetent, so they give a less bad picture to their bosses." From this perspective, when the conflict escalates to a more serious level, it became hard to be dealt with effectively" ([Mtee, 2014](#)). Still on the angle of political lapses that made it difficult for Boko Haram to be contained by the government is the accusation of the opposition party by the ruling party that Boko Haram has been supported by the APC. To this accusation, the publicity secretary of the APC', Lai Muhammed reacted that it is the party's acknowledgement of the underlining socio-

economic and political conditions that is misinterpreted by the PDP as APC's 'sympathy' for Boko Haram.

This he put succinctly when he states that:

The truth must be told, Boko Haram, similar to other ethno-political militias in post-1999 Nigeria, emerged against the backdrop of deepening poverty, social-economic deprivations, corruption, poor governance, police brutality and governance failures under the PDP since 1999. It is no coincidence that the Northern half of Nigeria, including the north-east corner (Boko Haram base), are the poorest in the country (Lai, 2014:2). Lai continued to expatiate that Boko Haram's activities escalated under the rulership of Late President Yar'Adua and so the group should not be regarded as a Northern plot against a Southern-Christian president, because the clash with the group and the police in July 2009 that led to the death of over 1000 members of Boko Haram along with that of Muhammed Yusuf was during a sitting Northern-Muslim president elected under PDP that has been in power since 2009 till date that Boko Haram transformed from a domestic based insurgent group to organization with links to an international violent Jihadist group (*ibid*).

Corruption

Corruption is another area that aided the failure of the government's fight against Boko Haram in Nigeria and this can be viewed from the procurement and administration, poor maintenance of acquired weapon meant to prosecute the war against the insurgents. The most serious aspect of corruption is the internal frustration that led the soldier's ranks and files to engage in what the military referred to as mutinies and refusing to take orders so as to engage in fight since September 2014. The repercussion was that 66 soldiers have been sentenced to death for that act. It is also recorded that desertion rate is high ([Obasi, 2015](#)).

The main reason for the emergence of Boko Haram could be regarded as religious fanaticism but corrupt practices among government officials and few rich ones in the society also led to protest against government neglect, because the masses did not benefit any shares, especially those in the north-east that happen to remain traditionally the poorest and least influential part of the Nigerian population. The challenges is that the present government is unpopular in the fight against the insurgency without capable security forces who are under-paid and ill-trained soldiers who rape and commit other crime against humanity such as Boko Haram which they were supposed to contain ([HRW, 2013](#)). More so, on corruption as a factor responsible for the ineffectiveness of Nigerian government to counter the insurgents was the argument that there are corrupt individuals within and outside the government that are corruptly benefiting from the fight against the insurgency through contracts and supplies to government. These people encouraged the government to handle the insurgents as freedom fighters rather than terrorists, so that the group will continue with its attacks to enable them, the contractors to remain in business ([Akpan, and Ekanem, 2014](#)). Despite the continued attacks by the Boko Haram along with its threats to the National security, the JTF has continued its

counter-measure strategy against the insurgents and was able to pursue the insurgents into the border towns of Cameroun.

Furthermore, the JTF was able to identify the operational base of the group in Adamawa state forest of Gombi where several trucks, hillux jeeps, motorcycles, IEDs and other operational facilities of the insurgents were confiscated. The biggest challenges that came out from this recent JTF onslaught were the dispersal of the group members into several states of Nigeria (Ahmed, 2012). At the moment, states under threat of Boko Haram include Kaduna, Kano, Adamawa, Taraba, Benue, Plateau and of course, Abuja, the seat of government. Dispersed but provoked, members of Boko Haram group fleeing the intensive fire power of the military in the north-east now freely operate as herdsmen and carrying out heavy assaults on citizens across north-west and central, buttressing the non-effectiveness of the military to combat the insurgents. It is reported that not less than 1,000 peoples have been killed via these camouflaging called 'herdsmen versus farmer's violence' in Katsina, Benue and Kaduna (*The Sun NewsPaper*, 2014).

Findings

The security dilemma as been experienced in Nigeria with regards to the inability of the government to contain the insurgency activities as created by Boko Haram and narrated above can be viewed from various perspectives as follow:

The first perspective concerning the security dilemma is the inability of the government security agencies to match the Boko Haram weaponry due to the sophisticated nature of the weapons used by the insurgent group. Boko Haram members used more sophisticated weapons compared to the Nigerian army because while the Nigerian government prior to civilian rule refused purchase new weapons for fear of coup, Boko Haram group were been supplied with modern weapons due to its transformation and links with international terrorist organizations. More importantly is the fact that the Nigeria army used for the prosecution of the containment of the insurgent group were trained for conventional war and not the asymmetrical war they were supposed to undertake with the Boko Haram, hence the security dilemma been faced by the government of Nigeria in its efforts to contain the activities of Boko Haram insurgents. The security dilemma been faced by the Nigeria government can also be regarded as its internal structural weakness such as socio-economic problems which includes poverty, unemployment and illiteracy to mention but a few. Boko Haram capitalized on this internal depression taken place in the country to carry out its devastating activities which has gone beyond the control of the country's security agents.

More seriously with regards to the security dilemma on the inability of the Nigeria government to contain the Boko Haram insurgents is the dilemma of human rights and genocide. The international communities, particularly the western countries such as America, British and France that refused to sell arms to Nigeria government for the prosecution of Boko Haram activities may be a fear of the weapons being used to crush the insurgents without regard to human rights. The debate on

human rights is buttressed with the fact that west felt that if arms are sold to Nigeria, the government will use the arms for mass destruction which to them is against the fundamental human rights of those to be affected in the north-east part of Nigeria, hence this debate assist in creating part of the security dilemma for Nigeria. It may be recalled that other earlier insurrections which includes the Nigeria civil war (1967-1970), the Maitetsine uprising of early 1980 and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) were seriously put under control through genocide with the exception of MEND that were granted amnesty and members rehabilitated. On the final note, for the country to see itself out of this security dilemma, the government may decide to take the part of winning the hearts and minds of the people as well as using the carrots and sticks as was adopted the Malaysian government under similar circumstance.

Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF)

Base on the declining situation of Nigeria in the aspects above and in the attempt to counter the Boko Haram activities, Nigeria security agents agreed that it does not have the mechanism to combat the Islamist insurgent group in a more effective manner, hence, the need for African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council decided to revisit the idea of Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) to assist the Nigeria government in the fight against Boko Haram. So, during its 29 January 2013 meeting, ahead of the summit of the AU Assembly held in Addis Ababa on 30 and 31 January of 2013, the above decision was then taken. According to African Union (AU) the MNJTF, is not specifically deployed to Nigeria, but only assigned to serve along Nigeria's outside borders within neighboring countries such as Chad, Cameroon and Niger with the aim of containing the terrorist group from expanding within the region. The irony of it all is that Nigeria whose security forces has being helping countries of the region in the past, has now become the one to be helped .by the same countries, a reversal of the role played by Nigeria prior to the emergence of Boko Haram

Recommendations and Conclusion

Over the past two decades, Nigeria has shown herself not only as an important actor within the West African sub-region, but also discharges responsibilities as regional leader. These positions, as well as the commitment underpinning them, have been expressed more forcefully in the defense of West Africa which in cooperation with other countries within the sub-region and abroad has helped in protecting the social, economic and security sectors of West Africa countries. From her intervention in Chad and the subsequent ones in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, Cote d'Ivoire and Sao Tome and Principe, to its active involvement in Mali recently, Nigeria has demonstrated its will, ability and commitment to maintaining peace across West Africa.

The country has also demonstrated its resolve for the promotion of economic, political and diplomatic cohesion in West Africa by helping to secure the sub-region as well as rid it of protracted civil wars through her commitment of oil resources, political and diplomatic tactics. Nigeria's

commitment of its oil resources, economic aid and military capability to securing the West African region has not only promoted and maintained peace and security regionally, but also confirmed the country's status as an important actor in African politics. The major concern in this paper, however, is the observable trend of Nigeria's greater involvement in these laudable foreign policy objectives of political, economic and social security of West Africa region to the neglect of the country's domestic economic, social and political challenges that are negatively impacting on the human security as a whole brought about its reversal position and the need for assistance from neighboring countries which led to the formation of Multinational joint task force as explained above as well as assistance from America and South Africa in the fight against Boko Harm insurgency.

Recommendations

In view of the foregoing, this paper recommends that Nigeria should be circumspective about how its gets involved in the internal affairs of other West African states, especially during crisis situations. It should also take cognizance of her domestic security challenges while trying to maintain peace in the sub-region. Policy makers and executors of Nigeria's foreign policy should balance the country's commitment to its external environment with her responsibility to the citizens and inhabitants for improved standard of living. Also, Nigeria needs to promote democracy, economic and social integration in the various independent states of the sub-region. It should intensify the application of diplomacy and related non-coercive approaches to conflict resolution. And final, other strategies such as human security in the manner of wining hearts and mind should be implored in the fight against Boko Haram insurgent group instead of the use of military force that is very effective.

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