Foreign Policy and Regional Hegemony in Africa: A Study of the Nigeria-South Africa (2014) Arms Deal Debacle

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Abstract: This study investigates the efficacy of foreign policy thrust and instruments in attaining hegemonic status, especially by rival states within a region/continent. Predicated on this, the paper zeroes-in on the relationship between Nigeria and South Africa, identifying their interaction as delicate oscillation between cooperation and competition, with the 2014 Arms Deal debacle marking a watershed. As a qualitative study that relied on secondary data, the adoption of realist theory as framework backed by textual analysis informed the findings, discussions and recommendations of the paper. An appropriately articulated and executed foreign policy thrust by Nigeria to capture national interests will boost the country's chances of levelling up with South Africa in the fierce competition for regional hegemony.

Keywords: Foreign Policy; Regional Hegemony; Arms Deal; Regional Power; Africa; Debacle

1. Introduction

As states continue to coexist with one another in the international system, they do so within the context of competition and cooperation in the exploitation as well as distribution of resources. (Oni & Taiwo, 2016) It is in line with this custom that states, globally, engage with one another. Where exploitation and distribution of resources exist, competition for the control of these resources abound. This competition can manifest at global, regional, sub-regional and domestic levels. In the quest for relevance within the African continent, several African countries have

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attempted to attain significant status within the region; Nigeria and South Africa inclusive. As Seteolu and Okuneye (2017) highlight, Nigeria and South Africa are the two largest economies in the African region; both are viewed as harbingers of development in the continent and Hegemons within their sub-regions. Over the years, Nigeria and South Africa have collaborated to situate the region as a critical global actor in international political and economic relations.

Since independence in 1960, Nigeria has assumed several roles in Africa, some of which are regional leader, regional power, liberator, to mention but a few, across the different administrations in Nigeria. (Folarin, 2010) In the West-African sub-region, it can be stated that Nigeria is the dominant leader both politically and economically as a result of her resource endowments and geography. (Oni & Taiwo, 2016) These roles have influenced Nigeria's foreign policy thrust, which centred on making Africa the centre piece. As a result of Nigeria's status in the region, the regional responsibilities and commitments that the country has assumed are rather huge, in view of the size of the countries bordering it, and the capacity of their economies in comparison to Nigeria's. (Adeyemi-Suenu & Inokoba, 2010) These obligations derived from the Afrocentric foreign policy posture that the country has adopted which required her to expend large amount of resources in addressing issues on the African continent in order to attain and sustain the role of regional hegemon in Africa.

South Africa came to the fore in the quest for regional power within Africa with its freedom from the strongholds of apartheid in 1994. South Africa's celebrated entry into the African democratic environment has brought about changes in the power structure of the African leadership space. (Ogunnubi & Isike, 2015) Prior to South Africa's entry as a democracy in the region, Nigeria was the dominant regional leader, but since 1994, South Africa has contended with Nigeria for regional superiority and relevance in different dimensions. This competition for superiority, arising from their foreign policy objectives, manifests in several forms. It finds expression in their contest for leadership of the African Union; Nigeria's quest to become a member of the G20 (Group of 20) which South Africa belongs to; the quest for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council; competition for economic hegemony in Africa; Nigeria's pursuit of inclusion in special multilateral institutions like BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa). (Molele, 2012) These are some of the few manifestations

of the contest for regional hegemony between both countries on bilateral and multilateral levels.

Some scholars argue that Africa's hegemonic power claim tilts in favour of South Africa. Obi in (Ogunnubi & Amao, 2016, p. 299) posits that this is based on the fact that South Africa is "projecting Africa's voice and interests a global economic forums and groups, and in its effectiveness as Africa's sole player in the BRICS and G20." The argument is that South Africa has taken strategic steps that has earned her recognition on a global scale in comparison to Nigeria which has been playing in the league of democratic and independent nation-states much longer than South Africa. A contrary argument is that Nigeria qualifies as the regional power owing to the huge population, superior power capabilities based on its possession of hard and soft power in the region and acceptance of its leadership by majority of the states within the region. (Ogunnubi & Okeke-Uzodike, 2016) This position however may only be acceptable at surface level owing to the domestic challenges, leadership ineptitude and policy discontinuities that have hampered qualitative representation of the true capabilities of Nigeria's power potentials at regional and global levels.

This study presents the arms deal debacle of 2014 between Nigeria and South Africa as a flashpoint which marks a watershed in Nigeria-South Africa relations. Highighting this event is crucial to this study due to the nature of relationship existing between both countries, being a mixture of cooperation and competition. (Seteolu & Okuneye, 2017) The paper seeks to analyse how Nigeria's foreign policy can be strategically articulated and executed to attain regional hegemonic status based on the fallout between Nigeria and South Africa over the arms deal in 2014.

The questions posed by this study are: In the battle for supremacy between both countries, what is the effect of the arms deal debacle on the quest for hegemony? Can Nigeria's foreign policy posture be improved to realise its hegemonic aspiration? What are the challenges to and prospects of Nigeria's foreign policy as a tool for achieving regional hegemony in Africa?.

1.1. Method, Main Argument and Structure of the Paper

The discourse and interrogation of issues in this paper utilised qualitative method of study backed by textual analysis. Data was collected mainly via secondary sources such as books, journals, newspapers and internet sources. The Realist

theory as framework for discussion sets the basis for the analysis of foreign policy as an instrument of attaining regional hegemonic status in view of the realities of the power struggles among rival states. The theory is also underscored by Neo-Gramscian tenets in order to deploy a blend of theories that can aid the formation of strategic foreign policy to attain and sustain hegemonic status in a contemporary international system. The paper, thus advances the argument that a properly articulated and implemented foreign policy is crucial to attaining regional hegemonic status. It also argues that domestic challenges have circumscribed Nigeria's efforts in achieving the full potentials of her foreign policy thrusts. This assertion is made in the context of the inherent quest for hegemony within the African region, especially between South Africa and Nigeria. The paper is divided into the following sections: Section One introduces the study. The second section clarifies the key concepts in the paper – foreign policy, regional power, and hegemony. Section three presents the theoretical framework and its application to the study, while section four analyses Nigeria and South Africa's foreign policy objectives as it relates to the quest for hegemony, and identifies some flashpoints in their bilateral relations. Section five discusses the Nigeria-South Africa arms deal debacle and its impact on the quest for regional hegemony in Africa. It also analyses the challenges to Nigeria's foreign policy and explains why Nigeria seems to be behind South Africa in terms of regional and global relevance. The paper is concluded in section six with suggestions for attaining Nigeria's foreign policy drive in the quest for regional hegemony.

2. Conceptual Clarification

The concepts of foreign policy, regional power and hegemony are explained in this section.

2.1. The Concept of Foreign Policy

For a country to relate effectively with another, its foreign policy must be properly articulated, defined and strategically executed. The concept of foreign policy is crucial to the study of international relations. In analyzing how foreign policy is linked to regional hegemonic aspirations, one must first give clarity to the concept as it pertains to this study.

Ade-Ibijola (2013) sums up foreign policy as the intentions of the state that has been declared. While this definition may have captured an aspect of foreign policy, it is not complete. This is largely so because states may not always declare their intentions before they engage in actions externally. Also, the definition does not clarify the target of the declared intentions. Thus, it would have been apt to explain foreign policy as a representation of the state's attitude towards the international environment (Ajayi, Njoaguani, Olorunyomi, & Folarin, 2015).

Foreign policy can also be seen as an offshoot of public policy aimed at achieving aspects of the domestic policy that cannot be fully actualized without having interactions with other countries of the world (Ukwuije, 2015). This definition weaves the domestic and international environment together with the thread of policy, thus making the three factors indispensable in the foreign policy discourse. Rosenau's (1974) conception of foreign policy transcends the projection of state interests based on domestic policy. He identifies it as the authoritative actions which governments take or are committed to take, in order to preserve the desirable aspects of the international environment or alter its undesirable aspects.

Legg and Morrison in (Nwosu, 1994, p. 106) conceive foreign policy as "a set of explicit or implicit objectives of a given social unit or set of strategies and tactics designed to achieve the objective..." They proceeded to assert that foreign policy also addresses "the perception of a need to influence the behaviour of other states or of international organisations..." The goal of foreign policy would therefore be to "...either maintain the existing pattern of behaviour or change the present pattern of initiating a new set of policies or by attaining or halting the implementation of existing ones." In other words, though foreign policies may be implicitly or explicitly stated, they should achieve the aim of influencing, initiating or changing policy in such a way that it favours the country.

Ola (2017) sees foreign policy as the range of government actions in its relations with other bodies similarly acting on the stage in order to advance the nation's interest. This definition infers that foreign policy should target non-state actors as well as state actors due to the increasing relevance of non-state actors in international affairs. Foreign policy can thus be captured as the actions and attitude of the state based on its internal environment to the external sphere with the goal of protecting national interests and achieving international relevance.

2.2. The Concept of Hegemony

Hegemony has been used interchangeably with dominance, leadership, power and a few other concepts. This informed the need for scholars to attempt an articulation of what hegemony really entails. The term "hegemony" originated from the Greek word "hegemonia" which refers to the dominant and oppressive status of one element in the system over the others. (Yilmaz, 2010, p. 194)

Mansfield in (Ogunnubi, 2013, p. 30) defined hegemony as "the holding by one state of a preponderance of power in the international system or a regional subsystem, so that it can single-handedly dominate the rules and arrangement by which international and regional political and economic relations are conducted." This definition still projects the domination factor as a means to exert influence. This view is similar to Nye's (1990) who identified a hegemonic state as one that is able to dictate or at least dominate the rules and arrangement by which international politics and economics are conducted.

Talibu & Ahmad (2016, p. 16) argue in accordance with Nigerian foreign policy vocabulary that hegemony denotes "benign leadership and shouldering of continental responsibilities." Warner (2016, p. 5) however underscores the concept of "illusory hegemony" which occurs when a "state aspirant of regional or sub-regional hegemony possesses some, but not all, of the empirical qualities typical of a hegemon: namely, the realist attributes of a hegemon without the attendant liberal credentials." By realist attributes of hegemony, he refers to military, economic, and population dominance; while the liberal credentials refer to legitimacy and popular acceptance of rule. (Warner, 2016, pp. 8-9) Following these conceptualizations, this paper is tempted to posit that both Nigeria and South Africa are on the path to regional hegemony, but have not fully attained it. What currently exists may however be likened to Warner's (2016) conception of illusory hegemony.

2.3. The Concept of Regional Power

There is no consensus of opinion among scholars on the meaning of regional power. Nolte (2010) posits that the difficulty in classifying a state as a regional power lies in the fact that such status is not solely dependent on power resources, but also with global and regional power hierarchy configurations. Scholars have attempted to present criteria that can be useful in identifying states that can be accepted as regional powers based on the submissions below:

Osterud (1992, p. 12) conceives a regional "great" power as:

- a state which is geographically a part of the delineated region;

- a state which is able to stand up against any coalition of other states in the region;

- a state which is highly influential in regional affairs;

- a state which, contrary to a "middle power", might also be a great power on a world scale in addition to its regional standing.

Osterud's (1992) view of what constitutes a regional power is centred on the following: geographical location; military strength; influence in regional affairs; possible influence on a world scale. He is not explicit however on the means via which a state can attain the status of regional power, as well as the resources required to achieve such aspirations.

A rather exhaustive list of what regional power entails is presented by Nolte (2010, p. 893) thus:

- which articulates the pretension (self-conception) of a leading position in a region that is geographically, economically and political-ideationally delimited;

- which displays the material (military, economic, demographic), organisational (political) and ideological resources for regional power projection;

- which truly has great influence in regional affairs (activities and results);

- which is economically, politically and culturally interconnected with the region;

- which influences in a significant way the geopolitical delimitation and the political-ideational construction of the region;

- which exerts this influence by means of regional governance structures;

- which defines and articulates a common regional identity or project;

- which provides a collective good for the region or participates in a significant way in the provision of such a collective good;

- which defines the regional security agenda in a significant way;

- whose leading position in the region is recognised or at least respected by other states inside and outside of the region, especially by other regional powers; and

- which is integrated in interregional and global forums and institutions where it articulates not only its own interests but acts as well, at least in a rudimentary way, as a representative of regional interests.

Nolte's (2010) characterisation of regional power can be summarised into the following: For a country to be accepted as a regional power, the country must first assume a leadership position in the region; possess tangible resources to project regional power; exhibit influence in regional affairs; display interconnectedness with other countries in the region; define and engage clearly attainable regional projects; provide collective good for the region; pursue a regional security agenda; receive regional acceptance of its leadership; and be at the forefront of global forum and institutions that would enable the country advance regional interests. These characteristics highlight that regional powers must be able to engage multilateral means to establish power and influence within the region while maximising the use of key resources that may be economic, political or cultural.

Flemes (2007, p. 11) simply states that there are four crucial criteria that must exist in identifying and classifying regional power in international relations. He avers that potential regional powers will be compared via:

- formulation of the claim to leadership;

- possession of the necessary power resources;

- employment of foreign policy instruments, and;

- acceptance of the leadership role by third states.

In other words, regional power can only exist when it has indicated its claim to leadership and identified its sphere of influence; possess the necessary power resources which may come in form of hard and soft power (Hard power is a concept employed to describe the use of military and economic resources to influence the behaviour or interests of actors, while soft power refers to influence drawn from a state's culture, history and diplomacy (Nye, 1990); employs adequate and specific foreign policy instruments; and gain the acceptance of its leadership role by other states within and outside the region.

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If a checklist were to be developed to identify whether or not Nigeria and South Africa qualify as regional powers based on the foregoing criteria presented by these scholars, they would fall short in one or more criteria (such as the active engagement of regional development projects and provision of collective good). This is why Ogunnubi and Uzodike in (Ogunnubi & Amao, 2016, p. 307) posit that regional (hegemonic) power refers to "a state that enjoys superior power advantages, possesses political and economic capabilities, boasts of a combined capacity for considerable influence on its neighbours, and enjoys a considerable level of acceptance of its regional leadership." From this conception of regional power, Nigeria and South Africa can be categorised as regional powers as they both possess political and economic capabilities that have enhanced their influence within the region.

3. Theoretical Framework and Application of Theory

Several theories in International Relations have attempted to improve the understanding of power relations. The dominant approach in the field however, has been the Realist approach. (Baylis & Smith, 2005) The realists posit that the basis of international relations is the power struggle among nations which tries to maximise their interests. Major proponents of the realist theory include: Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hans Morgenthau, Thomas Hobbes, E.H. Carr, Kenneth Waltz. (Yilmaz, 2010)

The realist theory presents some assumptions. First, states are the main actors of global politics. Secondly, realists affirm that states' behaviour is influenced by the external environment and internal characteristics of actors, implying that culture or ideologies do not make any difference. The external environment is the anarchic system of the world. Thirdly, states seek for survival, thus the struggle for power is inevitable, and a zero-sum game is central to the theory. States will go into conflicts or even wars to maximize their power at the expense of others. Lastly, states are assumed to be rational actors. (Dirzauskaite & Ilinca, 2017)

Applying the theory to a discourse on hegemony imports that a hegemon would meet the following criteria as postulated in Dirzauskaite & Ilinca (2017): A hegemon must have substantial relative power in comparison to other actors within the given scope. Secondly, a hegemon should be willing and able to engage rules or foreign policy within international politics. Put differently, a hegemon should have

the capacity to exhibit international leadership role, and its leadership must be recognized and accepted by other major powers.

It can be inferred from the above elucidation that realism emphasize the possession of economic and military power to achieve dominance. However, it is crucial to also include the role of culture and ideology in the achievement of hegemonic status. It is in this regard that Konrad (2012) affirms that, while realism projects dominance of one state over another, Gramscian theory defines hegemony as a combination of coercion and consent which is not merely exercised by the state, but by civil society as well. The inclusion of the Gramscian theory, as postulated by Antonio Gramsci in the 20th century (Fontana, 1993) does not negate the tenets of the realist theory, but provides a blend that enables the inclusion of other factors such as culture, ideology and consent, crucial to attaining hegemonic status in contemporary international system. Interestingly, Nye (2002) posits that the universal nature of a country's culture tied with its ability to establish a set of rules and institutions that govern areas of international activity are core sources of power which are instrumental to any state that wields it. The combination of these theories is what informs Joseph's (2002, p. 1) averment on hegemony thus:

...the construction of consent and the exercise of leadership by the dominant group over subordinate groups; in its more complex form, this deals with issues such as the elaboration of political projects, the articulation of interests, the construction of social alliances, the development of historical blocs, the deployment of state strategies and the initiating of passive revolutions.

The application of realism to a study on hegemony finds expression in the fact that a regional hegemon should be able to display characteristics of a global hegemon within the region while taking into consideration the tenets of hegemony as underscored by the Gramscian school of thought. Nigeria's foreign policy, since independence in 1960, was specifically designed to be an instrument of national development and to facilitate leadership in African affairs. It is to this extent that Nigerian political class, elite and scholars have longed for Nigeria to be Africa's leader, one to be reckoned with even within the context of global affairs (Akinterinwa, 2012). This drive has influenced the nature of Nigeria's actions within the region towards the goal of attaining hegemonic status. Some of these actions include: the key role Nigeria played in the formation of Organization for African Unity (OAU) in 1963 (now African Union (AU)) as a strategy to advance

its national and African interests; Nigeria's strategic use of the Commonwealth as a platform to underscore African position on institutionalised racism; the use of political and economic levers to tinker with the Western powers thought and action on issues affecting African interests; the steady support in material and human forms for the liberation forces in the fight against apartheid rule in South Africa; Nigeria being the driving force of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Nigeria's peacekeeping efforts within and beyond the African region to mention but a few. (Meierding, 2010, pp. 12-15)

The aforementioned strategic actions taken by the Nigerian government over the years tally with the realist conception of what defines a hegemon. Clearly, Nigeria has made attempts at depicting substantive power that has been acknowledged within the region. In terms of being able to engage rules and policy within the international arena, Nigeria continues to project African interests, even when in contrast to the opinions of Western powers. This could be seen in the encouragement of other African leaders to boycott the Montreal Olympic games in order to protest New Zealand's interactions with apartheid South Africa in 1976 (Bukarambe, 2000, p. 116). These examples characterise leadership within the region as provided by the Nigerian government. However, scholars like Oni and Taiwo (2016) argue that Nigeria's approach to hegemonic status has been flawed due to its seeming altruistic nature. Premised on the above, this paper seeks to evaluate Nigerian foreign policy as a tool for attaining regional hegemony status on the African continent. The contentions that exist between Nigeria and South Africa is reinforced by the desire to extend their power capabilities beyond the West African and Southern African sub-region respectively, with the goal of emerging as Africa's sole leader. The next section analyses Nigeria and South Africa's foreign policy in relation to their regional hegemonic aspirations.

4. Overview of Nigeria's and South Africa's Foreign Policies

As stated earlier, Nigeria's foreign policy has been largely Afrocentric since 1960 with a few modifications towards economic and citizen diplomacy in 1986 and 2010 respectively (Meierding, 2010). These additions however, were still operated within the context of the Afrocentric base of Nigeria's foreign policy. The Afrocentric foreign policy thrust and the successful execution of its objectives have put Nigeria at the forefront of the region's advancements. (Ujara & Ibietan, 2014) The core principles and objectives of Nigeria's foreign policy since independence

have centred on: African unity and independence; capability to exercise hegemonic influence in the region; peaceful settlement of disputes; non-alignment and non-interference in the internal affairs of the nation-states; equality of all states; multilateral diplomacy; and regional economic cooperation and development. (Akinterinwa, 2012; Ukwuije, 2015) As a result of the foreign policy goal of the Nigerian government, material and human resources were expended to advance Nigeria's policy at the regional level. These found expression in the financial resources and human capital that Nigeria has contributed to ensure peacekeeping and development via bilateral and multilateral means in the region.

After Nigeria's independence in 1960, there were expectations that Nigeria would play pivotal roles in the revival of Africa, but these expectations began to diminish even before South Africa re-entered the comity of nations as a democracy in 1994. Nigeria's role in the liberation of Africa from colonialism, the special support she gave to the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa, and the continued support given to African countries in times of crisis or need are memorable and worthy of mention. Nigeria's diminishing influence is traceable to factors such as: economic decline, the administrative lapses of some military regimes in the country (Umezurike & Asuelime, 2015), as well as poorly managed civilian administrations.

South Africa's foreign policy priorities since its first universal elections in 1994 emphasise the protection of human rights, democracy, fight against poverty and reconciliation in post-conflict areas in Africa. (Tétényi, 2014) During the apartheid regime in South Africa, the foreign policy of the country was centred on isolationist diplomacy. But, with its freedom from the apartheid, South Africa sought a prominent leadership role in Africa. Thus, the foreign policy is targeted at seeking identification and engagement with the rest of Africa. South Africa's quest for regional leadership is embedded in the "Mbeki Doctrine" which aims at "African Renaissance" and has found expression via South Africa's involvement in the New Partnership for Africa's Development. (Flemes, 2007, p. 19) The nature and stance of South Africa's foreign policy is traceable to the history of the South African people during apartheid and white minority rule, which underscores her policy direction in a bid to prevent a repeat of the past narratives.

Both Nigeria and South Africa have encouraged commitment to African development programmes commissioned by the developed countries, and attempts

to ensure that engagement with developed countries meets Africa's objective of weaning the continent from underdevelopment. They have also worked closely on conflict prevention and resolution, the establishment and effectiveness of the African Union, and proposed a detailed blueprint for sustainable development of Africa. (Tétényi, 2014)The Nigeria-South Africa relations have been a "potpourri of co-operation and conflict", as both states are immersed in rivalry on leadership issues, which created setbacks of sorts since the Obasanjo and Mbeki administrations. (Seteolu & Okuneye, 2017, p. 65) Both states continue to make attempts at extending their hegemony beyond their respective sub-region to emerge as Africa's foremost state. These attempts are not pursued in isolation; they are tied to the guiding principles of the national interest and have effect on Nigeria-South Africa bilateral relations. (Odubajo & Akinboye, 2017) These are visible both in cooperation and hostilities between both states. Several trade and investment exchanges have been made between the two countries as can be seen in the telecommunications, retail, media, banking, construction, engineering, oil and gas, service and hospitality sectors. (Ebegbulem, 2013) Both countries have also experienced diplomatic feud on several occasions as expressed in the "deportation" diplomatic row of 2012, arms deal negotiations debacle of 2014, and the frequent xenophobic clashes (Egwemi & Ochim, 2016) to mention but a few.

5. The Nigeria-South Africa Arms Deal Debacle and Implications for Hegemony Status in Africa: An Exposition

This section highlights the 2014 Arms Deal debacle that resulted in a diplomatic brawl between Nigeria and South Africa. This is essentially so, because it is perceived to represent a diplomatic blow on Nigeria by the South African government. It is arguable that this action taken by the South African government resonates negatively for Nigeria in the quest for hegemony within the region. In a bid to curb the spread of terrorism in Nigeria, the Nigerian government sought to purchase arms from South Africa to strengthen the fight against insurgency in the country. Akinola (2017) affirms that USA and her allies refused to sell arms to Nigeria based on concerns over human rights infringements by the Nigerian military on civilians in the course of prosecuting the war on terror in Nigeria.

In September 2014, Nigeria's attempt to buy arms from South Africa became a serious controversy when South African government officials intercepted and seized cash worth 9.3 million US dollars (Ibekwe, 2014; Ugwuanyi, 2016) found

aboard a private aircraft that Nigeria hired to purchase arms from South Africa. The plane consisted of one Israeli and two Nigerian arms agents working on behalf of the Nigerian government. South African government officials seized the money under claims that there were irregularities in the manner in which the arms deal was being executed. The seizure and subsequent actions was embarrassing to the Nigerian government, especially since she claimed categorically that the South African government was fully aware of Nigeria's intentions to purchase arms from her. (Akinola, 2017, p. 130) This is one out of many awkward situations that Nigeria found herself with South Africa in recent times.

In analysing the political expediency for Nigeria to negotiate arms purchase with South Africa in view of the competition for superiority between both countries, one must bring to bear the fact that Nigeria attempted to make legitimate orders from other countries of the world such as America, Israel, UK and a few others, but the USA allegedly stood on the way of such negotiations based on their earlier mentioned human rights concerns. (Ibekwe, 2014) Nigeria was forced to engage in back-door negotiations with South Africa that ultimately went sour with the seizure fracas that attended the process. A discourse on the arms deal between Nigeria and South Africa would be irrelevant if Nigeria had embarked on her own weapons development programme through Defence Industry Corporation of Nigeria (DICON) that would have enabled her to be self-sufficient to some extent, especially since Nigeria possesses the human and material resources to embark on such quests.

In view of the security challenge facing the country at that time, it was necessary to seek assistance in combating issues of terrorism. Both the conduct of Nigeria and South Africa in the arms deal arrangement could have been handled better. Despite the intent to carry out a covert arms purchase, it should have been executed in line with South African regulations, and resolving such issues ought to take cognizance of enlightened diplomatic means and in the true spirit of African brotherliness. The diplomatic altercation that ensued led Nigeria to threatening South African companies should the purchase be stalemated. (Ipsos, 2014) Both countries eventually resolved to follow procedure and agreement on future arms negotiations and purchases to avoid a repeat of the ugly experience. (Ugwuanyi, 2016)

In 2013, the contest became more evident when Nigeria ignored South Africa's invitation to join the BRICS summit in South Africa. (Musawa, 2013) The year

2012 was memorable in view of the events that surround the quest for Africa's hegemonic power. There were contentions over the recognition of the government led by Manuel Nhamadjo in Guinea-Bissau at the AU (African Union) summit in January of that year with South Africa in opposition and Nigeria in support. (Musawa, 2013) By September 2012, Nigeria and South Africa were entangled in a diplomatic feud that involved the deportation of 125 Nigerians over allegations that they were in possession of fake yellow fever vaccination cards. The Nigerian government reciprocated by deporting 84 South Africans within two days (Oni & Taiwo, 2016, p. 68), and this ended with an apology from the South African government. In the same year, South Africa triumphed in the battle for the seat of AU Commission chairperson producing Dlamini Zuma as the first woman to lead the region on the AU platform.

In the competition for superiority between both countries, South Africa has been a step or more ahead of Nigeria, not by mere happenstance, but by consciously articulated foreign policy objectives and actions, visible in her active participation in regional and global governance (through institutions like SADC, BRICS, UNSC, AU) that position her at the forefront of affairs on the African continent in recent times. (Tétényi, 2014) This has been evident in the fact that South Africa is the only African representative on the membership of strategic multilateral organizations such as BRICS, IBSA and the G20. According to Nolte (2010), investment bankers at the beginning of the twenty-first century projected that the BRIC (before the inclusion of South Africa) represents the future emerging economic powers. Their projection was that by the fourth decade of the twenty-first century, China would have overtaken the US economy as the largest globally, and by the second half of the century, India may follow suit. Membership of such a grouping as the BRICS would have afforded Nigeria a good platform to transcend the regional scale, and operate on a global scale. Unfortunately, it is discernible from studies and projections that South Africa emerged over Nigeria to join the group.

Nigeria trails behind South Africa in recent times in a bid to catch up with her advancement in regional and global politics. While Nigeria may have obtained its ebbing title as "Giant of Africa" due to its activities in Africa during the decolonization process of Africa, factors that have partially aided the maintenance of the title till date is Nigeria's possession of hard (military) power; rising population which has greatly influenced the country's status as one of the largest economies in Africa; and the great influence that Nigeria has within the West

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African sub-region. This explains why Osaghae (1998) referred to Nigeria as a "Crippled Giant", while Oni and Taiwo (2016) remarked that the "Giant of Africa" title was self-bestowed. Nigeria needs to get over the "Big Brother" approach to foreign policy and realise that is not a sustainable path in seeking the desired relevance. Osuntokun (1987) avers that until the national and economic questions are addressed first, Nigeria cannot play a dominant role in Africa.

Challenges to Nigeria's foreign policy revolve around domestic issues and the limited scope of the foreign policy thrust. The shortcomings include: leadership ineptitude, economic mismanagement, insecurity related to militant and terrorist attacks, corruption, financial fraud, electoral malpractices, infrastructural decay, ethnic/sectarian violence, resource control, and political instability. (Folarin, 2013) Nigeria's foreign policy stance is still heavily Afrocentric with emphases on decolonization, dismantling of apartheid, and eradication of racial bigotry, issues that are no longer pressing in Africa today. (Okpokpo, 2000) While it was laudable till the 1990s, it needs a rethink to meet the needs of contemporary international affairs. Issues like globalization, human rights, democracy, terrorism, migration and environment, are not properly captured in Nigerian foreign policy. (Akinterinwa, 2016)

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study argues that while Nigeria and South Africa may not have attained full hegemonic status in the region, it does not dispute the assertion that they are sub-regional powers in their own rights. What they have attained is likened to Warner's (2016, p. 5) concept of "illusory hegemony" in which regional powers in the international system "...seemingly possess realist attributes of a regional hegemon but lack the liberal attributes...to cover up insufficiencies in the latter through rhetorical assertions of competence, prevarication about failures, and rejections of intrusion by outsiders that might undermine their reputation as regional leaders."

There is a need however for Nigeria to adopt a more policy-oriented approach to obtaining global relevance instead of its dependence on providing assistance and projecting the "Big Brother" approach as the route. Policies targeted at positioning Nigeria's economy strategically ahead of South Africa's; providing resources useful to the rest of the world (apart from oil) and projecting its international

relevance should be articulated and properly executed. Predicated on the axiom that one cannot give what he does not have, Nigeria cannot give stability to Africa when it cannot give same at home.

It can be argued that, in the spirit of good neighbourliness, as espoused in Nigeria's foreign policy, Nigeria would need to maintain friendly bilateral relations with not just South Africa, but other African countries. In the contest for superiority between both countries, Nigeria has to be more articulate, strategic and realistic in the approach it chooses to win this continuous competition as her rival - South Africa is doing. It is essential as well for scholars to abandon the idea of projecting the previous assistance that Nigeria rendered to South Africa, in view of the fact that realism in international relations projects power as the ultimate goal of foreign policy and state actions. Simply put, "the basis of international relations is the power struggle among nations which try to maximize their interests". (Yilmaz, 2010, p. 192) Though, South Africa may be required to reciprocate Nigeria's efforts in the past on the fight against apartheid, but it would be unrealistic to expect that South Africa will ignore its national interests and quest for superiority in the region to gratify Nigeria's ego and pursuit. South Africa is advancing faster than Nigeria in the quest for supremacy, largely because it engages the very important factor of national interest with clearly articulated foreign policy goals. Thus, even if South Africa has other internal challenges that can slow down her quest, it makes up for the weakness via strategic policies with clarity of purpose.

Nigeria has what it takes to surpass South Africa in the quest for regional hegemony because the country has been active in the game of regional politics much longer than South Africa and possesses resources, human and material that outweighs South Africa's. Even with the seemingly inconsistent methods that Nigeria adopts in projecting her foreign policy, South Africa and most countries in the region still see Nigeria as a force to reckon with. This implies that, with the right policy direction backed by an effective domestic environment, Nigeria can be Africa's sole hegemon. Until Nigeria solves its domestic issues, such as leadership crisis, corruption, ethno-religious combustions and terrorism, to mention but a few, she might just continue trailing behind South Africa, and at the risk of other countries overtaking her in the race.

The paper therefore recommends that Nigeria needs to re-strategise properly and build on its foreign policy thrusts to capture national interests. As Ola (2017, p. 54) puts it, "foreign policies are meant to drive the economy of a nation and not strain

it." Nigeria's foreign policy objectives should focus on ensuring the protection and welfare of Nigerians at home and abroad, which can be fully captured in enriched citizen and economic diplomacy thrusts. The foreign policy objectives should tally with Nigeria's actions internally and externally, and also be restructured to properly articulate national interest. A realist approach that interrogates every proposed move with the question: "what's in it for us?" should be adopted. Nigeria already has the platform; it just needs to make proactive moves in the right direction.

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