EUI WORKING PAPERS

Nigeria and Regional Security

Toni Haastrup and Elisa Lopez Lucia

European University Institute
Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies
Global Governance Programme

Nigeria and Regional Security

Toni Haastrup and Elisa Lopez Lucia

Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies

The Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies (RSCAS), created in 1992 and directed by Stefano Bartolini since September 2006, aims to develop inter-disciplinary and comparative research and to promote work on the major issues facing the process of integration and European society.

The Centre is home to a large post-doctoral programme and hosts major research programmes and projects, and a range of working groups and *ad hoc* initiatives. The research agenda is organised around a set of core themes and is continuously evolving, reflecting the changing agenda of European integration and the expanding membership of the European Union.

Details of the research of the Centre can be found on:
http://www.eui.eu/RSCAS/Research/

Research publications take the form of Working Papers, Policy Papers, Distinguished Lectures and books. Most of these are also available on the RSCAS website:
http://www.eui.eu/RSCAS/Publications/

The EUI and the RSCAS are not responsible for the opinion expressed by the author(s).

The Global Governance Programme at the EUI

The Global Governance Programme (GGP) is research turned into action. It provides a European setting to conduct research at the highest level and promote synergies between the worlds of research and policy-making, to generate ideas and identify creative and innovative solutions to global challenges.

The GGP comprises three core dimensions: research, policy and training. Diverse global governance issues are investigated in *research* strands and projects coordinated by senior scholars, both from the EUI and from other internationally recognized top institutions. The *policy* dimension is developed throughout the programme, but is highlighted in the GGP High-Level Policy Seminars, which bring together policy-makers and academics at the highest level to discuss issues of current global importance.The Academy of Global Governance (AGG) is a unique executive *training* programme where theory and "real world" experience meet. Young executives, policy makers, diplomats, officials, private sector professionals and junior academics, have the opportunity to meet, share views and debate with leading academics, top-level officials, heads of international organisations and senior executives, on topical issues relating to governance.

For more information:
http://globalgovernanceprogramme.eui.eu

Abstract

In this paper, we consider the development of Nigeria as a regional security actor, and the extent to which it shows security leadership in two dimensions: the sub-region West Africa, and in the whole of Africa. Whereas we contribute to studies that show, this paper provides a more nuanced assessment of the perceptions of Nigeria's regional role. We argue that Nigeria's dual regional role is a carefully constructed narrative that is central to its foreign policy objectives, and indeed its identity as an African state. The implication of this is that on the one hand borne out in Nigeria' regional performance vis-à-vis the Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS), which we explore in nuanced detailed. On the other hand, however, we also consider how Nigeria's sub-regional performance, the usual focus of academic discourse unfolds in the context of its pan-African commitments. In doing so, we highlight the various tensions that underscore and challenge Nigeria's role as a regional (African) leader. In particular, we examine claims of hegemonic ambitions, the impact of on-going national security challenges, the potential competition between Nigeria and others for leadership, and the role of external actors in discourses around who is a regional actor.

Keywords

Introduction

Nigeria plays a role in regional security governance at two levels: at the sub-regional level in West Africa and at the continental level of Africa. These two roles are interlinked and can reinforce each other. They are nevertheless different to the extent that Nigeria is the clear regional leader in West Africa where it is at the origin of, and dominates, the security architecture; while it is competing as a leader at the African level. In this chapter, we evaluate the construction of Nigeria as a regional actor on these two levels, highlighting how the material gap between Nigeria and other West African states, in addition to its normative foresight has helped secure its leadership position – even though internal issues make this leadership fragile. While in Africa, Nigeria has to contend with other regional leaders with different interests in, and perceptions of security governance in the continent.

In the first part of this paper we analyze Nigeria's security perceptions in West Africa and Africa before evaluating its sources of power and limits in a second part. The third part is dedicated to an analysis of Nigeria's security governance policies at both level, mainly through the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU). Lastly, we assess the mode and impact of Nigeria's leadership on regional security governance.

1. Nigeria's security perceptions: West Africa and Africa

Nigeria's security perceptions should be analyzed within Nigeria's historical context since its independence to understand how this participates to the shaping of its contemporary representations of security issues.

a) Nigeria's Security Perceptions: Vulnerability and Leadership

Nigeria's perception of security, framed in the West African and, to a lesser extent, in the African, context have been historically characterized by three interconnected elements: a sense of vulnerability; a strong representation of the connection between national and (sub)regional security; the perceived necessity to be the guarantor of West Africa's stability, and to be its leader as well as Africa's regional leader.

In examining the discourses of Nigerian diplomatic and military officials, politicians, and scholars, there is evidence of an established nexus between national and regional security: perceived national threats also have transnational or regional dimensions; conversely, (sub)regional security is deemed as having a potential effect on national security and stability. The former Nigerian Minister of Defense, Dr. Haliru Mohammed Bello (2012, p.8) articulates this by citing Nigerian national defense policy objectives as including the 'security and stability in the West African sub-region through collective security.' Similarly, in a speech at Chatham House, former Minister of Defense, Dr. Erelu Olusola Obada (2013), defines 'regional security, by way of combatting terrorism and other transnational crimes' as being of strategic interest to Nigeria. She further reiterates that 'internal fragilities, illegal trafficking, piracy, unreported and unregulated fishing, Islamic fundamentalism, oil theft and pipeline vandalism as well as terrorism' often are 'transnational in nature.' This official narrative is also recurrent in the work of Nigerian scholars (Bah 2005, p. 78; see also Fawole 2008, p.106), thus contributing to the broader discourse on this connection between national and regional security represented as inseparable.

This nexus can be understood to some extent by looking at the history of Nigeria since its independence in 1960. At independence, the Nigerian armed forces were minimal at best, as the expectation of war, which required a defensive force was very low (Fawole 2008, p. 97). In subsequent years, safeguards locked into the continental Organization for African Unity ensured that

should such a possibility arise, other African states were ready to defend against foreign incursion. Rather, the military turned inward to the task of governance over defense with successive military governments.

The civil war (1967-70)[1] radically changed the security thinking of Nigeria, by exposing a vulnerability that did not exist before. Several factors highlighted these vulnerabilities obvious of which was the ability of the Southeastern region to secede from the Federal state. Further, and as Obi (2008, p. 184) highlights, the potential for foreign incursion can exist outside of direct attack. In this case, France was able to use its former colonies such as Cote d'Ivoire to influence the Nigerian political situation by supporting the Biafran secessionists. It is not surprising then that at the end of the war, Nigeria sought to mend ties with its neighbors quickly by maintaining close relations with them in the hopes of being able to control events as they unfold in West Africa.

Thus, from the 1970s, a 'new phase emerged in the country's security thinking that connected its national interests in the post-decolonization period with aspirations for regional leadership' and the intention to create a sphere of influence where its national security could be guaranteed (Obi 2008, p. 188). The new sense of vulnerability and the consequent need to protect itself against extra-regional power led to the assertion of the country as the regional leader or 'big brother' of the region which is a common metaphor used by Nigerian officials (Adebajo 2011, p. 13; Nigerian political official 2013b; ECOWAS military officer 2013a). This new stance was also enabled by the recent oil wealth of the country, used to finance this ambition.

The creation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975, including all West African states, was also a response to this situation. The perception within the Nigerian diplomatic corps, armed forces, political circles, and within the academic community was that France was a divisive influence within the region especially against Nigeria (Osuntokun 2008, p. 144; Fawole 2008, p. 99). ECOWAS was therefore conceived to undertake a *rapprochement* with Francophone countries in West Africa in a forum where Nigeria would be the undisputable leader.

The cautiousness of Nigeria towards French influence remains even now when relations with France are better. Recent French intervention in Côte d'Ivoire and Mali reveals that Nigeria is only tolerant of France inasmuch as it can support regional stability but treat its engagement as a 'necessary evil' given the strong aversion to extra-regional powers in the region (Ohia 2013).

The narrative of security constructed by Nigeria is thus a response to the above vulnerabilities and focused on the idea of a 'Pax Nigeriana', a term coined by former Nigerian Minister of Foreign Affairs (1985-87), Bolaji Akinyemi. 'Pax Nigeriana' was derived from the similar 'Pax Africana'[2] justifying the leadership role Nigeria has ascribed to itself in Africa (Adebajo 2011, p. 12). The narrative of 'Pax Nigeriana' is further grounded in Nigeria's foreign and security policy thinking: the concentric circles doctrine. According to Gambari (2011, p. 70), former Nigerian Minister of Foreign Affairs, who promoted its formal adoption in 1984, the national interests of Nigeria are based on four concentric circles: 1/Nigeria and his direct neighbors; 2/ECOWAS; 3/Continental African issues; 4/The international stage. This still guides Nigeria's foreign and security policy even though it has not resulted in concerted strategies. The consequence of this lack of strategic grounding is that while regional security is at the core of Nigeria's foreign policy, there is no clear reflection on how this can precisely serve Nigeria's national interests. One political leader acutely reflects this lack of clarity, stating (of Nigeria's interests): 'Politically speaking we are regional leaders, it is important to ensure

---

[1] The Nigerian civil war, also known as the Biafra War, started with the secession of the Southeastern provinces of Nigeria under the name of the Republic of Biafra. The war started in 1967 when the Nigerian government launched an operation to recover the seceding territories. They succeeded in 1970.

[2] Pax Africana according to eminent Africanist scholar Ali Mazrui (1967) is the idea that Africans need to take responsibility for the continent's peace and security.

the stability of the region, it has to be so' (Nigerian political official 2013b).[3] Yet, it is in this vague concentric framework that Nigeria defines security threats, especially threats it perceives as having local and transnational dimensions.

b) Nigeria's Perception of Contemporary Security Threats

Nigeria's perceptions of its main security risks have generally and openly been articulated as having these two main dimensions: the national (local) and the regional (transnational). In addition, Nigeria views responses to these risks and threats as necessitating cooperation with other states, in a context where it is visible as taking leadership for and in (West) Africa.

Presently, the most pressing security challenge according to Nigerian officials and as presented in official documents is terrorism. They refer to the national dimension of terrorism citing the activities of the Islamist sect Boko Haram in the Northeast of the country. The local-transnational dimension is especially evident here. Whereas Boko Haram is best understood in the local and historical context of (Northern) Nigeria, there is also evidence of close connections with Al Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) operating in the Sahel, an internationally recognized terrorist group. Nigerian officials in particular emphasize this transnational dimension in order to underscore the relevance of regional cooperation, and integration of security apparatuses particularly in West Africa. Nigeria is especially determined to foster border cooperation with neighboring countries and continue to engage in regional armed missions through ECOWAS as evidenced by the intervention in Mali in 2013.[4] Nigerian Minister of Defense Obada (2013, p. 4) and other members of the political and military establishment underscore the potential for spill-over from Mali in terms of weapon circulation and radicalization (Nigerian political official 2013a; Nigerian military officer 2013a) if Nigeria did not support and undertake an intervention.

However, other regional actors like South Africa are less concerned with the issue of terrorism, which does not impact as much on their sub-regional security dynamics. Consequently, there is a tendency for competing security priorities and perceptions at the continental level. We see this for example in Libya during the last days of Colonel Ghadafi where South Africa and Nigeria did not seem to agree on the cause of action. Nigeria supported the NATO airstrikes citing responsibility to protect as being a greater imperative, while South Africa was reticent about the engagement of non-African countries. This 'battle' happened within the AU causing many to question the extent to which the AU can be an effective actor if its most prominent members diverge. Beyond the difference in security perceptions – with Nigeria concerned with the risk of spillover of the Libyan conflict – it was also a question of competition for continental leadership.[5]

Other overlapping security transnational security threats which constitute priorities for Nigeria as well as for the continent as a whole include organized criminality including drug, and small arms and

---

[3] This lack of clearly defined framework for Nigeria's engagement in the region could weaken its commitment. Indeed, Nigerian citizens are increasingly skeptical towards this engagement seen as draining money away from pressing economic and social challenges, as well as from internal security issues.

[4] In January 2012, secessionist Tuareg groups in Northern Mali launched a rebellion against the central government. The rebellion was soon taken over by Islamist groups such as AQIM and Ansar Dine. After the rebellion started threatening the capital Bamako, the French government launched a military intervention in January 2013 in support of the Malian government. They were soon joined by an African-led mission (AFISMA) under the command of Nigeria and now replaced by a United Nations mission (MINUSMA).

[5] This competition has been obvious in many other occasions. South Africa and Nigeria also seemed to have been at opposite sides of the most recent crisis in Cote d'Ivoire with South Africa supporting incumbent Laurent Gbabgbo while Nigeria and the international community backed Alassane Ouattara the recognized winner of the elections. Further, while Nigeria has sought a permanent seat on the United Nations (UN) Security Council, South Africa has steadily blocked this possibility. In retaliation, Nigeria actively opposed to the replacement of AU former chief, Jean Ping by Dlamini-Zuma after his initial term.

light weapons (SALW) trafficking. ECOWAS identifies them as major threats (Convention on SALW; Political declaration on Drug Abuse, Illicit Drug Trafficking and Organized Crimes in West Africa) and the AU (Plan of Action on Drug Control). On the one hand, drug use itself is seen as a challenge to public health; but trafficking in drugs also is also viewed as a facilitating criminality in countries in Central, East and West Africa that support the transit of drugs from South America and Asia to Europe and North America. West Africa is noted as the transit point for cocaine from South America (UNODC, 2013).

The pervasiveness of small arms all over Africa is viewed by many as being directly linked to the intensity of various types of conflicts within and between African states, and banditry of which Nigeria is not exempt. There is the fear, for instance, that SALW trafficking nourishes the conflict in the Niger Delta where most of Nigeria's oil is located. All the crimes concerning oil (smuggling, theft, pipeline vandalism) committed by militant groups, organized crime networks or mere every-day criminality, are presented as being very costly to the country's economy (Nigerian military officer 2013a; Obada 2013, p4).

All these threats constitute security challenges that underscore vulnerability and the necessity for regional stability. Importantly, these threats extend beyond traditional security concerns to address new security challenges with implications for both political stability and economic livelihoods. The connection between national and (sub)regional security is thus recurrent in Nigerian security discourses.

2. Nigeria's strength and weaknesses: from material capabilities to political legitimacy

Nigeria's status as a regional leader is based on the material (economic, demographic and military) gap existing between the country and the majority of other African states, in particular within West Africa where it is the most powerful state according to these indicators.[6] However, this gap hides the material fragilities of Nigeria. Further, its power in Africa does not only stem from material sources; its source of power is also political through the legitimacy it gained with its actions at the sub-regional and regional levels.

Nigeria's economy is the biggest in West Africa where it represents around 75% of the economic strength of the sub-region, and the second biggest in Africa after South Africa (Adebajo 2008, p. 12). The expansion of Nigeria's economy reached its highest level in the 1970s with the oil wealth that followed the discovery of oil in 1956 in the Niger Delta and the oil crisis in 1973. This enabled the state to assert its status in the sub-region through 'oil diplomacy' – providing oil to its neighbors at concessionary rates and economic assistance (Adebajo 2008, p. 9); funding 70% of ECOWAS budget, as well as financing and providing the vast majority of the armed forces for the Economic Community of West African States Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) missions in Liberia and Sierra Leone at a moment, in the beginning of the 90s, where neither the United Nations nor the USA were willing to intervene in Africa (Bah 2005, pp. 78-79; Francis 2006, p. 13-14). At the continental level, Nigeria supported the fight against the Apartheid in South Africa and other liberation the other liberation movements (see speech by Oliver Tambo, 1977). Hence, Nigeria emerged in the 70s as one of the richest countries in Africa and used actively its economic strength to support its foreign policy and political status in the continent for which it obtained regional and international recognition.[7]

---

[6]   According to the National Power Index (index weighting factors of GDP, defense spending, population, and technology), Nigeria is the first state in Africa in percentage of the total global power share. As of 2012, it was 0.83%, followed by Egypt (0,61%), then South Africa (0.55%) and Algeria (0.38%). The forecast until 1960 indicates that Nigeria would keep the first place.

[7]   This political legitimacy is nevertheless limited by the criticisms addressed to its political system and the respect of the political and civil rights of its citizens. According to Freedom House (2013), Nigeria's status is a 'partially free' country with a freedom ranking of 4,5 (7 being the worst on the scale).

Today, it is the 12th largest oil producer in the world, according to the US Energy Information Administration (2012), and the first one in Africa (2013, p. 1); while it possesses the largest natural gas reserves in the continent and it is the world's fourth leading exporter of liquefied natural gas (LNG) (2013, p.1). It has a fast growing economy with an annual growth rate averaging over 8% during the last decade (World Bank 2013, p. 7), and is now the 38th world economy.[8] In addition, its population is estimated at 168,8 million in 2012 by the World Bank (WB) which represents one fifth of the African population and almost half of the West African population; thus constituting a large reserve of human resources.

These facts nevertheless hide two major problems. Its economy relies mostly on oil exports to an extent of 95%, which makes it dependent on the fluctuation of oil prices (World Bank 2013, p. 8). Already in the 80s, following the decrease of oil prices, Nigeria plunged in an economic crisis and became heavily indebted to Western bilateral donor and international financial institutions. Consequently, it had to decrease its assistance to neighbors and lower its political role in the sub-region and in Africa (Adebajo 2008, p. 11). Whereas today its economy is developing, it is still largely inefficient. Gambari (2008, p. 61) points to the role of the incredibly rich Nigerian elite involved in corruption and rent-seeking activities, lacking the motivation to diversify the economy.

Moreover, the impressive economic growth rate and oil wealth of Nigeria conceals the level of poverty and important social inequalities: in the UNDP Human Development Index 2012, Nigeria ranks 153 among 186 countries. This situation stems partly from corruption and the very unequal redistribution of oil income. Social inequalities have a negative impact on the cohesion and stability of the country as they nourish the tensions between regions and ethnic groups. For instance, in the region of the Niger Delta where most of the oil is located, militant groups consistently demand a better redistribution of oil wealth sometimes though violent actions, affecting oil production. Overall, it creates a climate of insecurity throughout the country, unfavorable to economic development, but also to Nigeria's regional leadership. Indeed, beyond the fact that a drop in oil income would undermine its foreign policy, there is a perception among the citizenry that the government spends more on regional stability at the expense of tackling poverty and inequalities (Nigerian political official 2013b; ECOWAS official 2013). The climate of insecurity in this region and in the North of the country led to the mobilization of the armed forces to pacify these areas at the cost of more vigorous engagement in regional interventions such as in Mali. Conversely, these national security issues also provide an incentive for the government to get involved in regional security as transnational organized criminality and crises in neighboring countries – through an increased flow of weapon for instance – contribute to feed these local conflicts.

This industrial inefficiency of Nigeria has an impact on the defense industry. According to Fawole (2008, p. 111), it merely produces light arms and ammunition, lacking even the basic technology for the production of heavy weapons and vehicles. The Nigerian army is therefore well trained (Alli 2012, p. 11) but under-equipped and its modernization rate rather slow.[9] The lack of professionalization and the corruption of the armed forces are also often criticized by analysts and scholars (Adebajo 2008, p.11; Fawole 2008, p. 110; see also Thurston 2012, p. 10).

Nevertheless, the picture is not so negative. Since the civilian administration of Obasanjo (1999-2007) an effort is made at modernizing and professionalizing the armed forces; for instance, through cooperation with the US military (Fawole 2008, p. 111). In 2013, the Nigerian government decided to increase its defense budget by providing 31 billion dollars to defense with the aim of reaching 4,76 billion in 2016 (DefenceWeb, 12 July 2012).

---

[8]　However, it is still behind South Africa, which is the 28th world economy (World Bank 2012).

[9]　According to the SIPRI Military Expenditure Database 1988-2012 Nigeria only spent 1% of its GDP on defense in 2012 amounting to 21 billion dollars. South Africa spent 1,1% of its GDP amounting to 47,85 billion dollars. Compared to other African countries such as Algeria which spent 4,4% of its GDP or other regional/emerging powers such as Brazil (1,5%), India (2,6%), China (2%), Russia (4,1%) or Turkey (2,3%), it is not a considerable amount.

In any case, Nigeria remains the only country in West Africa whose armed forces were able to intervene in the various crises and civil wars arising in the sub-region since the beginning of the 90s. In 2013 they were also the main contingent of the AFISMA force in Mali together with the Chadian troops which joined later the mission. However, this most recent mission also revealed the lack of equipment and poor preparation of the Nigerian armed forces, which faced many criticisms pointing to their slow and difficult deployment (Adebajo 2013; Ibekwe 2013a; Ibekwe 2013b).

3. Nigeria's Role in Regional Security Governance

While we contend that Nigeria's role in regional security happens both at the sub-regional and continental levels, its role within the sub-region, provides the crucial foundation for all other security activities.

a) Nigeria in West Africa: ECOWAS

We should emphasize here that Nigeria's quest to assert regional leadership has translated into a strong engagement in the security governance of the sub-region, especially when armed intervention is necessary. If we take the regional security policy areas classified in Kirchner and Dominguez (2011) ('assurance', 'prevention', 'protection' and 'compellence') as a point of departure for analyzing regional security governance, Nigeria, mainly through ECOWAS, plays very active roles in these areas with the following aims: to launch regional actions in cases of crisis; to develop normative frameworks for security governance; and to promote conflict prevention measures and democracy. Nigeria is central here as it dominates ECOWAS in terms of funding and human resources – noting that the headquarters of ECOWAS are in the Nigerian capital, Abuja –, and shapes ECOWAS' decision-making process.

The most noticeable dimension of ECOWAS' action in regional security is in the area of 'compellence' given the extent to which this has played a role in legitimating the organization. In 1990, an *ad hoc* instrument, the ECOMOG, was created to respond to the civil war in Liberia. It subsequently intervened in Sierra Leone (1991), Guinea-Bissau (1998-99), Cote d'Ivoire (2002), and Liberia (2003) under the leadership of Nigeria. For these missions, Nigeria provided between 70 and 80 percent of the troop contributions, and 80-90% of the funding (Obi 2008, p. 190; Alli 2012, p. 54). Today, an ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF) is being created within the framework of the AU. In 2012, the ECOWAS Authority within a broader African framework authorized the deployment of a contingent of the ESF to Guinea-Bissau, following the April military coup, to assist in securing the transitional process (ECOWAS Press Release 2012b). This was very much the initiative of Nigeria wanting to disengage the Angolan troops already present on the ground and perceived as a competition to its leadership. An uneasy compromise was reached on these following negotiations in the context of the AU. In Mali, ECOWAS launched the AFISMA that started deploying beginning of 2013. It was placed under the command of Nigeria which was one of its main advocate, and aims at helping restore democracy and fight the rebellion in the North of the country (ECOWAS Press Release 2012a). One notable exception to Nigeria's contributions was the refusal to send troops as part of the Guinea-Bissau mission, which ended up being a significant failure for the ECOMOG mission. This seems to demonstrate that Nigeria's participation is important to mission success (Adebajo 2008, p. 21; Alli 2012, p. 51). Nigeria took advantage of the security vacuum left by the international community in the wake of the many conflicts in the immediate post-Cold War period to intervene in order to further its security, but also to assert its role as leader in this regional context (Iwilade & Agbo 2012, p. 364).

Since the deployment of the initial ECOMOG missions, ECOWAS has been developing a permanent institutional and normative framework to address security challenges, which can be subsumed under the 'assurance' and 'prevention' areas of Kirchner and Dominguez (2011)'s classification. This institutional and normative framework can be traced back to the Mechanism for

Conflict Prevention Management, Resolution, Peace-keeping and Security (1999) until the more recent Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (2001), and ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) (2008). These texts are important as they reflect the move of regional security governance beyond strict sovereignty – invoking the responsibility to protect, interventions in case of serious threats to peace and security, and strict sanctions to respond to unconstitutional changes of government in a member state. They also indicate a turn towards a less traditional vision of security, increasingly centered on human security. The leadership of Nigeria was crucial here, as this transformation from the non-interference principle could not be done without its acceptance and impulse as the most powerful state in the sub-region.

More precisely, 'assurance', on the one hand, mostly takes the form of systematic electoral assistance missions each time an election takes place in one of ECOWAS member states like in Togo and Ivory Coast in 2010, or in Niger in 2011. On the other hand, 'prevention' is a strong dimension of Nigeria and ECOWAS' action in West Africa with an ECOWAS Early Warning System,[10] as well as recurrent sanctions and mediation efforts. Niger was for instance suspended by ECOWAS following the military coup in 2010. At the beginning of May 2012, the ECOWAS Authority imposed diplomatic, economic and financial sanctions against the junta in Guinea Bissau that seized power in the 12th April military coup. Moreover, Nigeria's leaders, often acting on behalf of ECOWAS, are very active in terms of mediation to resolve crises and conflicts in the sub-region: from the Lomé Peace Agreement ending the Sierra Leone civil war in July 1999, to the 2005-06 crisis in Togo when the two main leaders were invited in Abuja and signed a peace accord, to the mediation of the electoral crisis in Senegal in 2012 among others (Alli 2012, pp. 55-57). Finally, in terms of arm control and circulation, ECOWAS developed a landmark initiative with its Moratorium on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in 1998, replaced in 2006 by a binding Convention on SALW.

In the area of 'protection', ECOWAS took steps to develop a legal and normative framework to address transnational security issues with plans and strategies regarding various types of illicit trafficking: the Political Declaration and Action Plan against trafficking in human beings (2001), the Political declaration on Drug Abuse, Illicit Drug Trafficking and Organized Crimes in West Africa (2008) and its Action Plan. Moreover, a West African Police Chiefs Committee (WAPPCO) and an ECOWAS Committee of Chiefs of Defense Staff have been established and are very active, particularly the later one which got together once a month in the past year to exchange views and deal with the Malian crisis. High on the agenda are two new issues: counter-terrorism and maritime security (ECOWAS Authority 2013a; ECOWAS Authority 2013b). Nigeria is now strongly putting pressure for the adoption and implementation of regional strategies to deal with these challenges perceived as endangering its own security (Nigerian military officer 2013b).

Further, Nigeria tries to exert its influence on West African armed forces. It has military attachés in many states of the sub-region such as Ghana, Benin, Liberia and Mali (Alli 2012, p. 47). It also uses its prominent institution, the National Defense College (NDC), to train high-level military officers from other member states since 1996. This further integration by promoting mutual knowledge and building trust, but also foster Nigeria's role and influence (National Defense College official 2013; ECOWAS military officer 2013a).

b) Nigeria in Africa: from the Organization of African Unity to the African Union

Nigeria's role as a security actor has also been framed so that it resonates beyond West Africa. Indeed, as we said, while West Africa provides the space to exercise its security prowess, there is arguably a

---

[10] The ECOWAS Early Warning System monitors West African peace and security according to a certain number of indicators relating to political, humanitarian and human security issues. It comprises an Observation and Monitoring Centre based at the ECOWAS Commission in Abuja, as well as four zonal bureaus in Gambia, Benin, Burkina Faso and Liberia transmitting the information.

carefully constructed narrative that places Nigeria as a leader within the whole continent. The emphasis on a transnational outlook, in part, explains Nigeria's robust engagement in African security affairs especially since the creation of the African Union (AU).

In the post-Cold War years especially, atrocities on the continent have encouraged Nigeira's desire, if not action, to engage in Africa beyond West Africa. This is borne out in the extent to which Nigeria is encouraging the integration of ECOWAS security apparatus into the continental African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). The APSA was created as the security apparatus of the African Union, which is the OAU's successor. The APSA functions on the logic that the sub-regional groupings like ECOWAS constitute a building bloc of African security more generally. In this way, sub-regional and continental security is mutually constitutive. Further, this suggests that Nigeria's broader role in Africa will, to a large extent be measured by its engagement in West Africa, albeit within an evolving mindset. Consequently, fitting Nigeria's role in Africa within the rubric of 'assurance', 'prevention', 'protection' and 'compellence' is mostly tied into the ECOWAS.

Nigeria has been instrumental in creating these dimensions within the APSA. Its role within the APSA has helped to prioritize some of its own security threat perceptions including piracy and trafficking. More precisely, in the area of 'compellence', Nigeria has contributed to African missions like the AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS), AU Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) and although never deployed, Nigeria initially committed troops to the AU Mission in Burundi (AMIB). While Nigeria's role has been more limited on the continental stage, there are indications of a commitment to the still nascent APSA. To further contextualize this, as was mentioned above, Nigeria, has taken the lead in supporting the creation of a permanent ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF), a raid response and multidimensional team, which is in the process of being fully implemented. The creation of the ESF is part of the African Standby Force mandated within the continental Peace and Security Architecture. To date, the ESF lead by Nigeria shares the honor of being one of the most developed ones with the SADC Standby Force, led by South Africa.

4. Nigerian leadership: what impact on regional security governance?

Nigeria's promotion and use of ECOWAS in the field of security is contributing to foster security cooperation between West African countries and to build a regional community through the elaboration of political and security norms and standards accepted by all the member states. At the continental level, Nigeria has had a clear voice in shaping the development of the APSA, using the successes of ECOWAS as a blueprint for the developing institution. In West Africa, ECOWAS is now a regional organization with a supranational dimension that greatly interferes in its member states. It has a series of plans, programs and strategies to deal with the whole range of security issues affecting the sub-region (Alli 2012, p. 46). Even though not fully elaborated yet, a new vision of security is being established throughout the region based on human security rather than on the traditional vision of security referring to states and the protection of their territory. Habits of sanctions, mediations, and electoral assistance are now assimilated by ECOWAS and its member states to respond to a wide array of situations.

However, it is important to note that regional security governance also faces important problems and challenges. Indeed, the lack of institutional capabilities and financial resources of member states, as well as the very weak implementation of regional texts makes it difficult to move forward – in particular concerning transnational security issues such as illicit trafficking that require effective national implementation. The lack of capabilities also affects the operationalization of the ECOWAS Standby Force that is still not effectively on standby as was shown during the deployment in Mali. According to the officers interviewed at the ESF headquarter (ECOWAS military officer 2013a; ECOWAS military officer 2013b) member states' lack of resources makes it impossible to have armed forces actually on standby. Hence, the political will, the armed forces and the financial resources of Nigeria are necessary to the functioning of regional security governance. The recent maritime security

strategy, for instance, in which Nigeria has a strong interest, is already being operationalized, whereas the Action Plan on drug trafficking has not been implemented since 2008. The risk here is that Nigeria's internal security issues mobilize its armed forces and financial resources to the extent it cannot invest as much in regional security governance. Recently, Nigeria withdrew some troops from the MINUSMA[11] in Mali to deal with Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria (Oyedele and Iroegbu 2013).

Hence, Nigeria is the key state for regional security governance in West Africa. Its acceptance and promotion of regional norms and standards, and of the supranational dimension, implying the end of the non-interference principle which was so important for African states after independence, can be understood within the frame of Nigeria's perceptions as analyzed in the first part of this paper. On the one hand, its 'big brother' syndrome and feeling of responsibility allow its involvement in sub-regional events. On the other hand, the sense of vulnerability towards extra-regional power involvement and towards the spill-over of security threats across the sub-region is an incentive to build a community to insure its own protection. ECOWAS thus serves as a key instrument in providing Nigeria with a legitimacy that helps to mitigate perceptions of 'hegemony'.

To some extent, Nigeria also shares the burden of protecting the region with the international community. It is important to emphasize that most of ECOWAS security governance programs and initiatives as well as those of the AU are funded by extra-regional states or international organizations. In ECOWAS, the Community budget is allocated to the every-day functioning of the institutions. The European Union (EU) for instance is particularly prominent with its Regional Indicative Program providing 119 million euro to regional security governance (RIP 2008-2013). United Nations agencies have also been active in supporting regional security institutions in Africa. Partners such as the US or the UK are very interested in initiatives such as the Maritime Security and the Counter-terrorism strategies and often contribute towards programs geared towards piracy and counter-terrorism. The UK is for instance funding the officer working on the operationalization of the Maritime Security Strategy within the ECOWAS Commission. Similarly, the German Technical Development agency heavily supports the development of continental early warning systems, especially the integration of sub-regional early warning systems into a larger continental network.

On the one hand, it is evident from this then, that Nigeria has its limitations which impinge on its material powers and its legitimacy as a regional actor and leader. The necessity of French interventions in Ivory Coast and most recently in Mali is illustrative of this limitation. On the other hand, the consequence of extra-regional involvement however is that what constitutes regional governance is influenced by ideas and ideals beyond (West) Africa. Various concepts such as 'human security', 'comprehensive security', 'good governance' are now well integrated in the (West) African discourses. ECOWAS and its officials are very permeable to these ideas as they seem to respond to the needs of the region, and to the extent they are in constant need of funding and support from the international community (Lopez Lucia, 2012).

Finally, despite the commitments by Nigeria to an African level of security engagement, this is sometime prohibitive due mainly to the fact that the sub-regional security architectures that constitute the building blocs of the APSA are at different levels of evolutions. The unevenness has thus made it difficult to have a fully functional and integrated continental architecture. A second prohibition is the competition between Nigeria and South Africa which plays out at the continental level. This rivalry presents to the rest of the world a dysfunctional continental architecture, which challenges the viability of the AU and especially the APSA as these institutions depend heavily on external contributions. Undoubtedly, the ability to govern security at the continental level is jeopardized.

---

[11] The MINUSMA is the UN mission that replaced the AFISMA in Mali from July 2013.

Conclusion

We have shown that Nigeria is a clear participant, and sometimes leader in the governance of security in Africa. This role is emphatic in the West African region, where Nigeria through ECOWAS has contributed troops and other resources to military missions among other security activities. Moreover, Nigeria has consistently advocated to non-Africa partners on behalf African states for financial and hardware contributions to resolve conflicts and humanitarian emergencies.

In this way, there is evidence that Nigeria is also shaping the trajectory of the APSA as one of the core members that reconstituted the OAU to create the AU. Yet, we also note that Nigeria's role in regional security is challenged by a variety of issues that will not be overcome soon. This of course raises the question of how well Nigeria can continue to perform as a regional security actor, and what implications this may mean for African security at the sub-regional and continental levels.

Bibliography

Adebajo, A. (2008). 'Hegemony on a shoestring. Nigeria's post-Cold War foreign policy'. In: Adebajo, A. & Mustapha, A. R. (eds.) *Gulliver's troubles. Nigeria's Foreign Policy after the Cold War*. Durban: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, pp. 1-37

Adebajo, A. (2013). 'Decline of Nigeria's foreign policy'. *The Guardian Nigeria*, 6 May. Available at: http://ngrguardiannews.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=120890:adebajo-decline-of-nigerias-foreign-policy&catid=38:columnists&Itemid=615 [accessed 26 September 2013]

Alli, W. O. (2012). *The role of Nigeria in regional security policy*. Abuja: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. Available at: http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/nigeria/09372.pdf

Bah, A. M. S. (2005). 'West Africa: From a Security Complex to a Security Community'. *African Security Review*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 77-83

Bello, H. M. (2012). *Ministerial Platform on the Activities, Programmes and Achievement of the Ministry of Defence. From May 2011 to May 2012*

DefenceWeb (2012), 'Nigeria's defence budget expected to grow by 22% over next four years', 12 July 2012. Available at: http://www.defenceweb.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=26736 [accessed 22 December 2013]

ECOWAS Authority (2010). *Extraordinary Session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government on Côte d'Ivoire*, Abuja

ECOWAS Authority (2013a). *Final Communiqué of the Forty-third ordinary session of the Ecowas Authority of Heads of State and Government*, Abuja

ECOWAS Authority (2013b). *Final Communiqué of the Forty-second ordinary session of the Ecowas Authority of Heads of State and Government*, Yamoussoukro

ECOWAS (1999). *Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention Management, Resolution, Peace-keeping and Security*, Lomé

ECOWAS (2001). *Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance Supplementary to the Protocol relating to the Mechanism For Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security*, Dakar

ECOWAS (2008). *ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework*, Ouagadougou

ECOWAS Press Release (2012a). *ECOWAS Mediation, Security Council recommends deployment of regional force in Mali*, n°105/2012, 13 April 13 2012.

ECOWAS Press Release (2012b). *ECOWAS to send troops to Guinea Bissau*, *Mali*, n°121/2012, 27 April 27

European Community-West Africa (2008). *Regional Strategy Paper and Regional Indicative Programme (RIP) 2008-2013*

Fawole, W. A. (2008). 'Militaries, militias and mullahs. National security issues in Nigeria's foreign policy'. In: Adebajo, A. & Mustapha, A. R. (eds.) *Gulliver's troubles. Nigeria's Foreign Policy after the Cold War*. Durban: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, pp. 96-115

Francis, D. J. (2006). 'Linking Peace, Security and Developmental Regionalism: Regional Economic and Security Integration in Africa'. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development,* vol. 2, no. 3, pp. 7-20

Frederick S. Pardee Center for International Futures. Power Index. Available at: http://www.google.com/publicdata/explore?ds=n4ff2muj8bh2a_&ctype=l&strail=false&nselm=h&met_y=POWER&hl=en&dl=en#ctype=l&strail=false&nselm=h&met_y=POWER&fdim_y=scenario:1&scale_y=lin&ind_y=false&rdim=world&idim=ungroup:219&idim=country:CN:US:IN&hl=en&dl=en [accessed 22 December 2013]

Freedom House. Nigeria scores 2013. Available at: http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2013/nigeria [accessed 22 December 2013]

Gambari, I. A. (2008). 'From Balewa to Obasanjo. The theory and practice of Nigeria's foreign policy.' In: Adebajo, A. & Mustapha, A. R. (eds.) *Gulliver's troubles. Nigeria's Foreign Policy after the Cold War*. Durban: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, pp. 58-80

Ibekwe, N. (2013). 'Nigeria: Nation Falters in Troops Deployment to Mali'. *Premium Time*, 6 February. Available at: http://premiumtimesng.com/news/118844-nigeria-falters-in-troops-deployment-to-mali-as-food-shortage-poor-logistics-hamper-operation.html. [accessed 26 September 2013]

Ibekwe, N. (2013). 'Nigeria: Hardship Mounts As Poorly-Fed Nigerian Troop in Mali Are Unpaid for Three Months', *Premium Time*, 18 June. Available at: http://premiumtimesng.com/news/138985-exclusive-hardship-mounts-as-poorly-fed-nigerian-troop-in-mali-are-unpaid-for-three-months.html. [accessed 26 September 2013]

Iwilade, A. & Agbo, J. U. (2012). 'ECOWAS and the Regulation of Regional Peace and Security in West Africa', *Democracy and Security*, vol. 8, no. 4, pp. 358-373

Kirchner, E. J. & Dominguez, R. (2011). *The security governance of regional organizations*. London; New York: Routledge

Lopez Lucia, E. (2012). 'A Tool for Security Governance: How is the Shaping ECOWAS Security and Defence Regionalization Process?'. *GR:EEN Working Paper*, n°17. Available at: http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/csgr/green/papers/workingpapers/gem/no1._elisa_lopez_luica.pdf

Mazrui, A. A. (1967). *Towards a Pax Africana: A study of ideology and ambition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Molele, C. (2012). 'Why Nigeria Hates SA: Gloves Off to be Champion of Africa'. *Mail & Guardian Online*, 8 June. Available at: http://mg.co.za/article/2012-06-07-gloves-off-to-be-champion-of-africa [accessed 26 September 2013]

Obada, E. O. (2013). *Nigeria's Defence Priorities: Domestic Stability for Regional Security*, 18 July, Transcript Chatham House

Obi, C. I. (2008). 'Nigeria's foreign policy and transnational security challenges in West Africa. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies,* vol. 26, no. 2, pp. 183-196

Ohia, P. (2013). 'West Africa: Nigeria, Other Ecowas States Welcome France Intervention in Mali'. *The Nigerian Daily*, 25 January. Available at: http://www.thenigeriandaily.com/2013/01/25/nigeria-other-ecowas-states-welcome-france-intervention-in-mali/. [accessed 26 September 2013]

Osuntokun, A. (2008). Gulliver and the Lilliputians. Nigeria and its neighbours. In: Adebajo, A. & Mustapha, A. R. (eds.) *Gulliver's troubles. Nigeria's Foreign Policy after the Cold War*. Durban: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, pp. 141-159

Oyedele, D. & Iroegbu (2013). 'Nigeria to Reduce Troops in Mali to Tackle Insecurity'. *This Day*, 19 July. Available at: http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/nigeria-to-reduce-troops-in-mali-to-tackle-insecurity/153768/. [accessed 26 September 2013]

SIPRI Military Expenditure Database 1988-2012. Available at: http://milexdata.sipri.org/files/?file=SIPRI+milex+data+1988-2012+v2.xlsx [accessed 22 December 2013]

Tambo, O. (1977). 'Speech y Oliver Tambo at the World Conference for Action Against Apartheid' African National Congress: Speeches. Available at: www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=4334

Thurston, A. (2012). 'Strategic Posture Review: Nigeria'. *World Politics Review*. Available at: http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/12494/strategic-posture-review-nigeria. [accessed 6 August 2013]

UNODC – United Nations Office for Drug Control (2013). *Transnational Organized Crime in East Africa: A Threat Assessment*. Available at: www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Studies/TOC_East_Africa_2013.pdf [accessed 22 January 2014]

US Energy Information Administration (2013). *Country Report Nigeria 2013*. Available at: http://www.eia.gov/countries/analysisbriefs/Nigeria/nigeria.pdf [accessed 22 December 2013]

US Energy Information Administration. Top World Oil Producers 2012. Available at: http://www.eia.gov/countries/ [accessed 22 December 2013]

World Bank. Database on world economies. Available at: http://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/GDP.pdf [accessed 22 December 2013]

World Bank (2013). *Nigeria Economic Report*. Available at: http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2013/05/14/000333037_20130514101211/Rendered/PDF/776840WP0Niger0Box0342041B00PUBLIC0.pdf [accessed 6 August 2013]

Interview list

ECOWAS official. 2013. Interviewed by Elisa Lopez Lucia. Abuja, 19 June

ECOWAS military officer. 2013a. Interviewed by Elisa Lopez Lucia. Abuja, 7 June

ECOWAS military officer. 2013b. Interviewed by Elisa Lopez Lucia. Abuja, 14 June

National Defense College official. 2013. Interviewed by Elisa Lopez Lucia. Abuja, 13 June

Nigerian military officer. 2013a. Interviewed by Elisa Lopez Lucia. Abuja, 9 June

Nigerian military officer. 2013b. Interviewed by Elisa Lopez Lucia. Abuja, 11 June

Nigerian political official. 2013a. Interviewed by Elisa Lopez Lucia. Abuja, 5 June

Nigerian political official. 2013b. Interviewed by Elisa Lopez Lucia. Abuja, 24 June

Author contacts:

Toni Haastrup

School of Politics & International Relations

University of Kent

Canterbury

Kent, CT2 7NX

Email: t.haastrup@kent.ac.uk

Elisa Lopez Lucia

Department of Politics and International Studies

Social Sciences Building

University of Warwick

Coventry, CV4 7AL

Email: e.lopez-lucia@warwick.ac.uk