



State, Governance And Regional Integration In Africa

Editors:

**Aloysius-Michaels Okolie
Hassan Saliu
Gerald Ezirim**

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Effect of Economic Recession on Nigeria's Leadership Role in Africa

Usman Muideen

Department of Political Science and International Studies
Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria Nigeria

Abstract

Economic recession is a situation in which the economy of a country experiences a sudden downturn brought by a financial crisis. An economy facing recession will most likely experience a falling gross domestic product (GDP), a drying up of liquidity and rising or falling prices due to inflation or deflation. In recent year, Nigeria and other African countries faced economic recession. The paper examines economic recession in Nigeria and how it affects Nigeria's leadership role in Africa. The paper is anchored on Role Theory to explain the link between economic crisis and Nigeria's leadership role in Africa. It relied solely on secondary data. The paper concludes that internal dynamics and socio-economic conditions of a state, to a greater extent, determine the actualisation of her external policy agenda. Nigeria's aspirations and claims to maintain regional leadership cannot be achieved unless she addresses domestic challenges.

Keywords: Economic Recession, Leadership, Leadership role, Economic Crisis.

Introduction

Nigerian economy slid into recession path in first quarter (Q1) of 2016 (since 2004) with real GDP of -0.36 percent, the contraction of economic activities resulted from an evaporation of confidence and no new investments, inordinate delay in government spending during the period, acrimonious legislative squabbles in approving budget, erosion in the value of Naira in the forex market, pipelines vandalism, misaligned currency and forex shortages, high interest rate environment as well as trade and import restrictions. The current recession seems to affect the socio political structures, Nigeria's credit condition, general living standards, imports, production and employment as well as consumption demand in Nigeria (NBS, 2017).

The role that Nigeria has played in various international organisations over the years has been proactive, especially in the AU. Nigeria has vigorously and consistently defended African concerns and interests as a member of various international organisations. She has used this platform to champion the interests of Africa in the spirit of Pan-Africanism. It is against this backdrop that the paper explains the link between economic recession and the Nigeria's leadership role challenges by countries like South Africa, Egypt, etc., in Africa. The paper is thematically arranged, starting with abstract, introduction, literature review, theoretical framework, implication of economic crisis on Nigeria's leadership role in Africa, and conclusion. It relied solely on secondary data for analysis and conclusion.

Economic Recession

The National Bureau of Economic Research, defines recession as “a significant decline in economic activity spread across the macro-economy, lasting more than a few months, normally visible in real gross domestic product (RGDP), real income, employment, industrial production and wholesale retail sales”. When a country is in the phase of recession, the economy is far from the point of effective use of resources, i.e. Far from the optimal production and the natural rate of unemployment (Nikoloski and Lazarov, 2000).

Usually, recession may be triggered by financial crisis and/or credit crunch, as well as demand and supply side shocks. Globally, there is geopolitical tension around the world, causing global crisis and commodity prices dropping, the drop in crude oil prices, Brexit, crucial American election in 2016, South China Sea issues, Russia-Syria crisis, ISIS, illegal migration and refugee crisis which are remote but important causes of economic recession around the world. The global financial crisis of 2007 and the ongoing recession was triggered by the United States housing bubble; excessive lending of banks into high-risk subprime and adjustable rate mortgages resulted in high default rates as well as downfall of banking sector. Defaults and losses on other categories of loans also rose considerably as the crisis expanded from the housing market to other sectors of the economy. Bankruptcy of several high rated investment banks started to panic on the inter-bank loan and stock markets and eventually, the bubble busted. This resulted in the fall of global GDP, rising unemployment and economic difficulties in emerging markets and frontier where Nigeria unfortunately stands today. (Adelmann, 2011; Kamar, 2012).

Causes of the Current Economic Recession in Nigeria

Economic recession can be caused by two broad factors: internal (endogenous) and external (exogenous) factors. The former is usually as a result of conflict of ideas, misapplication of economic theory and regulatory negligence or policy inconsistency. The external causes of recession have to do with factors that are exogenous to the economy over which policy makers have little or no control. Factors like natural disaster, climate change, revolution and wars (CBN, 2012).The reasons for the emergence of the current economic recession in Nigeria, can be linked to the above aforementioned factors to include; legacy factors, policy factors and political/security factors.

The legacy factors involve over-dependence on oil production for government revenue, low sovereign savings, political risk and fiscal leakages as well as official corruption. The negative demand-side shocks that affect the aggregate demand in Nigeria work through a global economic slowdown that impacts major trading partners of a country. When there is economic slowdown in the U.S., China, India and EU, it could have negative impact on the demand of Nigerian crude oil from these countries (CBN, 2012). As a result, the price of crude oil which was sold for over \$100 per barrel went as low as below \$50 per barrel. Government's revenue and spending would drop, taxes will rise, disposable income will fall and aggregate demand will fall, adversely impacting the production of goods and services in the economy. These developments consequently result into economic recession. From the

foregoing, it is clear that Nigeria's GDP is quite diversified, so the problem is not the structure of domestic production. The issue is undiversified structure of government revenue and export revenue (Benjamin, 2017).

The policy factors involve the lack of clarity over economic policy; wrong policy choices and no strategy for private capital. A major contributor to the current economic recession in Nigeria was the denial and policy incoherence over forex policy. The ban on 41 items in a market-base forex market perpetuates multiple exchange rates. Manufacturers who rely on some of these imports will have to buy from the parallel market at very high rates, leading to high cost of production and a rise in the general price level (Benjamin, 2017).

Overview of Economic Crisis in Africa

Africa has been severely affected by the ongoing global economic crisis. Its impacts are evident in all categories of countries: oil-exporting, middle-income, low-income and agriculturally dependent economies. The crisis has been slowly eroding gains in economic performance achieved by the region since the turn of the millennium. Unlike in the past, African countries responded promptly to the current crisis through the use of counter-cyclical monetary and fiscal policies.

Causes of Economic Crisis in Africa

The major causes of economic crisis can be categorised into two; domestic and external causes. Domestic forces are forces located within the region, while external causes are the forces located within the world economy.

Domestic causes

a. Environmental Deterioration and Rapid Population Growth.

The ecological conditions of sub-Saharan Africa have always placed an important constraint on agricultural development. Rainfall is scarce in many areas, and often highly variable. The tropical climate is favourable to human, animal and crop disease. Soils are generally poor. Of these factors, rainfall was significantly worse during the 1970s than in the previous decade there was a greater incidence of low and irregular rainfall. For example, the countries of the Sahel experienced severe drought in the early 1970s which, on some estimates, reduced harvests and livestock by up to one third. Drought struck again in the late 1970s and was also severe in East Africa. There is a debate on whether this experience marks the beginning of long term adverse changes in the continent's weather either a decline or an increased variability in rainfall. However, no firm conclusions can yet be drawn due to the conflicting nature of the evidence. Rapid population growth continues to have damaging effects. In some regions agriculture is being pushed into areas with very irregular rainfall, thus exacerbating the effect of droughts on production. Fallows are being shortened leading to poorer soil quality, and overgrazing is causing soil erosion. Urban areas are increasing in size, thus putting severe strains on the provisions of services.

b. Government Policies

Although the global economic crisis did not originate in Africa, countries in the region reacted to it in a swift manner, both at the national and regional levels. At the national level, several countries set up task forces to monitor the evolving situation in developed countries and the impact on their economies. For example, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Nigeria and Rwanda had national committees advising their governments on the crisis and how to cushion its impacts. Furthermore, many countries adopted policy measures covering the following broad areas: liquidity injection, interest rate changes, recapitalisation of banks and regulatory changes, fiscal policy and trade promotion. The specific measures adopted have varied across countries, reflecting differences in availability of resources, macro-economic fundamentals and vulnerability to the crisis. For example, countries such as Equatorial Guinea and Nigeria that accumulated significant reserves during the last commodity boom had fiscal space to expand domestic demand and offset some of the decline in external demand. On the other hand, countries such as Ghana and Seychelles that had huge fiscal deficits before the crisis had less room to pursue counter-cyclical policies.

External causes

a. Oil Price Increases

The costs of ‘modern’ (and export-orientated) agriculture have increased particularly sharply due to rise acceleration in the energy-related agro-chemical industry and the high costs of farm power and transport. Resultant shortages of fuel and fertilizers, in particular, have increased substantially the risks of agriculture and affected investment in the sector. Finally, the increased cost of energy has also had macro-economic implications both in contributing to the region's increased inflation rate and in requiring deflationary action to correct balance of payments deficits.

b. Falling Oil Prices

Oil importers will benefit from a falling oil price because the value of their oil imports will drop. For oil exporters like Nigeria, Libya, etc., a falling oil price is bad news. Many oil exporting countries rely on tax revenue from oil production to fund government spending. For example, Russia gains 70% of all tax revenues from oil and gas. Falling oil prices will lead to a government budget deficit, and will require either higher taxes or government spending cuts. Other oil exporters like Nigeria are relying on oil revenues to fund generous social spending. A fall in oil prices could lead to a significant budget deficit and social problems. The falling of oil prices is one of the factors that cause economic crisis to oil exporters' country.

c. Primary Commodity Prices

All developing countries were heavily dependent upon exports of primary commodities. Globally, this gave rise to three severe problems. First, because commodity prices are highly volatile, countries had to cope with large shocks,

both positive and negative. Evidence suggests that the largest of these shocks were poorly managed, with negative shocks causing substantial contractions in output. Second, for various reasons, the rents generated by primary commodities have been associated with poor governance. Third, primary commodity dependence is associated with a substantially higher risk of civil war (Collier, 2002). All the above factors contributed to economic crisis in Africa.

d. The Western Recession

Primary commodity prices during the decade have been generally low because of the continued Western recession. The demand for ‘soft’ commodities, such as cocoa and sugar, has fallen because of the decline in consumer spending, and industrial slowdown has reduced the demand for metals. The price inflation of manufactured goods has contributed to the fall in real commodity prices and the OAU has argued that member governments can do little about domestic inflation until the prices of imported industrial goods stabilised. Global high interest rates have raised the cost of borrowing to African countries. Continued recession has also been associated with reductions in aid budgets by Western governments and, reduced commitments to multilateral aid agencies such as the World Bank.

Leadership

Okadigbo in Ologbenla (2008), observed that leadership is the process through which one individual consistently exerts more influence than others in the pursuit of group behaviour. Leadership should conform to basic fundamental qualities in order to exert influence and the qualities tend to drive the action and inaction of a leader. Seteolu in Ologbenla identifies six salient features of leadership with its theoretical underpinnings. According to him,

These include trait, behaviour, attribution, charismatic, transformational and visionary features. However, the trait theory is associated with confidence, iron will, determination and decisiveness. While behavioral theory appraises the conduct specific leader exhibits such as initiatives, experimentation, generating and implementation of change. In this case, attribution theory depicts the intelligence, personality, oratory virtue and aggressiveness of leaders. The charismatic theory shows leadership features such as self-confidence, vision, articulation, conviction and extraordinary behaviour. The transformational theory is tinged on the charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, vision, pride, respect and thrust. The visionary leadership deals with the ability to explain and strengthen the vision through skill floral and written communication behavior (cited in Ologbenla 2008).

Theoretical Framework: Role Theory

Role theory first attracted attention in the foreign policy literature after the publication of K. J. Holsti’s (1970) study of national role conceptions. Role theory had been in development for nearly four decades in Sociology, Social Psychology and Anthropology by this time. Holsti did not import much of the conceptual or theoretical language associated with role theory instead, he chose to focus on the

simple idea that the Self, in this case the leaders of the state, may hold a variety of beliefs or images about the identity of the state. Furthermore, these national role conceptions were posited to shape the way that a state acted in the international system. Looking back, this appears to be an auspicious start to a literature that began in much the same way as many others: the introduction of a new concept from a cognate discipline and some explanation of how it may be analytically useful in our own discipline. Carl Backman (1970), a social psychologist of the sociological variety, suggested that Holsti's article may well be an instance where borrowing a theory has paid off. Initially, there was a flurry of activity that imported the conceptual and theoretical language of role theory, incorporated these concepts into our own disciplinary approaches and theories, as well as empirically tested the resulting propositions.

Role theory has descriptive, organisational, and explanatory value for the study of foreign policy. Descriptively, role theory provides a rich vocabulary for categorising the beliefs, images and identities that individuals and groups develop for themselves and others, as well as the types of processes and structures that govern their deployment in particular situations. Organisationally, role theory allows the analyst to focus on any level of analysis commonly used in the study of foreign policy in addition to bridging those levels through a process-orientation that joins agents and structures. The explanatory value of role theory may derive from its own middle range theories as well as harnessing its concepts to other theoretical approaches.

Therefore, role theory is relevant to this paper, in the sense that it focuses on the national role conceptions and how the variety of beliefs or images about the identity of the state by the leaders, shapes the way that a state acted in the international system.

Nigeria's Intervention in Africa Political Conflicts

In 1990s, the OAU began to aggressively condemn unconstitutional change of government in the continent. The steps included declaring coups in the following countries as unconstitutional: Burundi (1996), Sierra Leone (1997), Central African Republic (2003), Guinea-Bissau (2003), Sao Tome and Principe (2003), Togo (2005), Mauritania (2005 and 2008), Guinea (2008), Madagascar (2009), and Niger (2010) (Samuel, Chux, Lucky and Chinelo, 2017). Nigeria is resolute in its protection of AU Declaration which claims Africa's Continent to democracy with the idea of consolidating this commitment by formulating common values and principles for desirable democratic governance in African states (Okereke, 2012; Udombona, 2002, Cited in Samuel et al. 2017). Nigeria went further by providing material and other support to the democratic and electoral processes in Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Senegal, Liberia, Ghana, Niger, Gambia and other African countries. Internally, the Nigerian government undertook electoral reforms in 2012, 2006 and 2010 respectively with the aim to restore integrity of the country's electoral process so as to strengthen its democracy which it hoped will serve African interest.

During the outbreak of Ebola disease in Africa in 2015, Nigeria deployed 250 volunteers to the countries affected by the deadly virus. These countries were Guinea,

Sierra Leone and Liberia. Nigeria working collectively with the AU, World Health Organisation, African Development Bank, Aliko Dangote Group of Companies and other development partners interested in Africa (Samuel et al. 2017). So far, Nigeria remains one of the five major financiers of the AU operating budget. As a major financier, Nigeria has full AU voting rights and has been able to sponsor her nationals for strategic positions requiring AU support in various international organisations. The other major financiers are Algeria, Egypt, Libya and South Africa.

Another major turning point of Nigeria's contribution to AU projects in Africa included the formation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Nigeria and South Africa worked together tirelessly with other countries to develop the initiative adopted at the OAU Summit held in Lusaka, Zambia in July 2001. Nigeria produced the draft protocol on peace and security, apart from the initial draft Rules of Procedure of the Executive Council, the Permanent Representative Committee and statute of the AU Commission which were finally adopted with minor changes (Samuel et al. 2017).

Nigeria's Role in the Sub-Region

The ideas behind Nigeria's championing of ECOWAS demonstrated its concern for sub-regional unity, economic, technical and political cooperation. Ultimately, the aim was to reduce incessant and latent political and boundary problems, guarantee the member states a more respectable place in the international society, encourage a coordinated development and reduce their dependence on foreign powers. Nigeria has been actively playing prominent and outstanding roles by assisting countries within the sub-region and thus assumed a "Big brother" status in the African continent.

The composition of the ECOMOG peace keeping force, its funding and timing revealed Nigeria's determination to play a crucial role in a crisis within its sphere of diplomatic concentration. The ECOMOG emerged out of Babangida's political initiative and its operations were made possible largely by his government. However, the institution of ECOMOG and Nigeria's piloting role in the enterprise became objects of intense public scrutiny. For instance, there was that general suspicion that its lofty declaration about military humanitarianism notwithstanding, the objective of the Babangida administration in facilitating ECOMOG was to save his personal friend, Samuel Doe, while Babangida viewed this military adventure as a way to pursue a dynamic foreign policy which has Africa as its centre-piece (Okike 1997). The Liberian peace process was a Nigerian initiative through ECOWAS. It emerged as result of Nigeria's diplomatic zeal vis-à-vis- her conception of leadership role which she had continued to play, both in terms of military and financial assistance put in place for the realisation of the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group objectives. Thus it is certain that a precipitated decision by Nigeria to withdraw from this operation would most certainly lead to its collapse. More so, Nigeria's dominant role is not tantamount to the presupposition of a Nigerian solution as consultations had

continued between the members of the ECOWAS and negotiation had been organized between all the warring factions in Liberia.

The intervention of Nigeria in the Sierra Leonean crisis generated serious debate, there were two opposing view to Nigeria's role in the crisis. While some people are in support of her role some are not. To those that supported, they believed that Nigeria's role was based on humanitarian intervention because at the time Nigerian troops got into Sierra Leone, there existed no government in the country. Alhaji Tejan Kabbah had been ousted and Koromah was as an illegal head of state (Fawole 1999). Nigeria resolved then, that since she had the role of leadership to play in the continent, she cannot, therefore, allow the murder of the nascent democracy that was put in place in that country. She cannot afford to be a spectator when events affecting national security are taking place in the sub-region considering her influential status in the sub-region she was in the best position to tame the crisis. Besides, the demands for peace and security challenges in West Africa demanded the aggressive pursuit of Nigeria foreign policy which is consistent with the policy of being "Our brother's keeper". All of these were done when the economy of the country was a bit stable, the economy allowed the country to play a real leadership role in Africa. The next sub-heading or the table one insert, oil earnings by successive administration in Nigeria's fourth republic. In order to justify economic recession in Nigeria between the range taking by this paper. The tables below present the details.

Table One: Economic Recession 2016: Crude oil earnings by successive administration in Nigeria's fourth republic.

Period (in Years)	Leader (President)	Amount
1999-2007	Chief Olusegun Obasanjo	₦ 27 trillion
2007-2010	Alhaji Umaru M. Yar' Adua	₦ 9 trillion
2010-2015	Dr. Goodluck E. Jonathan	₦ 51 trillion
2015-2016	President Muhammadu Buhari	₦ 6 trillion
Total	=	₦ 93 trillion

Source: Ndujihe, 2016.

Table Two: Nigeria's historical real GDP growth rate in the fourth republic.

S/N	Year	Growth rate (in %)
1	1999	0.52
2	2000	5.52
3	2001	6.67
4	2002	14.60
5	2003	9.50
6	2004	10.44
7	2005	7.01

8	2006	6.73
9	2007	7.32
10	2008	7.20
11	2009	8.35
12	2010	7.98
13	2011	7.36
14	2012	4.21
15	2013	5.49
16	2014	6.22
17	2015	2.79
18	2016	-1.51

Source: National Bureau of Statistics, 2016.

Several reasons, particularly internal and external factors have been identified as forces usually responsible for recession particularly in Nigeria and Africa in general as discussed in the previous sections. The two tables above show the statistical record of recession in Nigeria especially in the year 2016 as a result of the fall in the price of crude oil in the world market. This goes a long way to show the implication of monoculture economy worldwide, Nigeria in particular.

Implication of Economic Recession on Nigeria's Leadership Role in Africa

The internal dynamics and socio-economic conditions of a state to a greater extent determine the actualisation of her external policy agenda. Nigeria has over the years grappled with domestic hindrances to assume regional leadership. Evidently, internal pressures arising from quest for political power by classes, regions and zones tend to have depreciated the relevance of national identity and national unity in Nigeria. Post independent Nigeria has remained a dysfunctional state. People languish in abject poverty and unemployment amidst plenty resource endowment. The political leaders seem to have failed to explore options to develop strong democratic institutions to enthroned good governance. Institutions with values would assist galvanise available human and material resources to create wealth for public good. In other words, corruption, bad leadership climaxed in democratic governance that preaches zero-tolerance for corruption with the two anti-graft agencies (EFCC and ICPC) struggling to make a mark. Among the series of alleged financial scandals was that the speaker's unilaterally obtaining 10 billion Naira loan from a commercial bank without the knowledge or approval of the House (The Nation newspaper 24 May, 2011). Also, the #255 million armored vehicles purchased for the Minister of Aviation has cast serious doubt on the willingness of Jonathan's administration to fight corruption.

Nigeria's continuous Big Brother role in Africa especially under AU Platform has been contentious because there is agreeable misalignment between the socio-political economy of the country and its Afro-centric foreign policy. Some

critics are of the view that Nigeria's unmatchable role under AU Platform is a typical pretence of great power status for the country when in reality its domestic socio-economic realities point to a different direction, such syndromes as mass poverty, corruption, political instability and widespread infrastructural decay contradict Nigeria's pivotal role in AU (Ukeje, 2000). Many, on the other hand, also argue that Nigeria is an affluent state in Africa and it has the clarion obligation of assisting its neighbours and in turn Nigeria would place itself in a position of strength in order to realize its foreign policy objectives for the service of its national interest (Okereke, 2012). Notwithstanding many have argued that Nigeria has not utilized its full potentials since independence from Great Britain on the 1st of October, 1960 to the benefit of the country (Ogbeidi, 2012; Balkaran, 2011). There is a wide range of problems in the socio-economic system of the country. These include particularly poverty, decay of public infrastructure, military establishment in politics and economics, leadership failure and subsequent corruption prevalent in the country (Maiangwa, 2012; Ogbeidi, 2012; David and Onapajo, 2015). These factors have plunged Nigerian state into several political crisis including especially the three years civil war from 1967-1970, tribal riots. Others include June 12, 2011 post-election crisis, Niger Delta militancy and Boko Haram terrorism. As a result, Nigeria has continued to be characterised by numerous political violence culture mostly directed at the socio-political system to the extent that the country continues to drift towards the wrong end (Cited in Samuel, 2017).

Paradoxically, political leaders in Nigeria flamboyantly display affluence in a country where majority live below a dollar per day. Over ten million Nigerians were unemployed by March 2009 and unemployment is running at around 19.7 percent on average according to Aganga the former minister of finance (see National Bureau of Statistics report 2009). This figure is augmenting yearly with less realistic effort to abate the rampaging unemployment problem. For instance, Ladan (2012) posited that unemployment has risen to 23.9% in 2011 with the youths constituting over 75%. These multitudes of unemployed youths constitute internal threat to national peace and security. In fact, unemployment has the potency of binding people with one perception. It could also give a notion for identity. These perceptions and identity tend to work against the state especially when it appears that the state is responsible. Its immediate but grave consequences are un-relenting armed struggle, civil unrest and militancy. For example, Niger Delta crisis and youth restiveness which have been attributed to long years of neglect, lack of development and accumulated grievances (see International Crisis Group 2007; Asuni 2009) contributed to drop in oil production between 2000 to 2007 and affected the economy that is driven by oil proceeds. Presently, Boko Haram's kamikaze attacks on defenseless innocent citizens develop yet another internal security challenge. These crises to a greater extent are not unconnected to unemployment problems, inordinate ambition of some ruling elites and inability of the ruling class to tackle the development challenges confronting the Nigerian state over the years. These are symptoms of leadership failure.

It is important to assert that political violence seems to have remained one of the variants of power struggle in Nigeria. Consequently, it appears to have diminished the country's political relevance in a contemporary world that views violence as barbaric and primitive. The political violence in Northern Nigeria raises another fundamental question on how people conceive leadership and the essence of governance in Nigeria.

The fundamental mistake of Nigeria's approach to state-building has been to forget that well-functioning states are built not just on shared interest but on shared identity, shared identity does not grow out of the soil, it is politically constructed and is the task of political leadership to forge it, (Collier, 2009). Unfortunately, leadership is a big challenge in Nigeria (Okunade, 2008; Achebe, 1983). Bad leadership has hugely contributed to gross underutilisation of Nigeria's potentials towards achieving her regional aspirations in Africa. This has created avenue for other emerging regional powers from Southern and Northern Africa (especially South Africa and Egypt) to remain in contention on who leads Africa.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, Nigeria has sacrificed a lot to many African States, in terms of peace-keeping, military training and technical assistance to many African states but her aspirations and claims to regional leadership cannot be achieved unless she addresses domestic challenges that bordered on governance, poor infrastructure, insecurity and corruption which have hindered her ascendancy to regional leadership in Africa since independence. For Nigeria to maintain leadership position in Africa, it must enthroned good governance. This would develop democratic institutions capable of tackling numerous development challenges confronting Nigeria. It would also help to entrench democratic culture and reduce abuses of public office and systemic corruption that have hampered progress over the years.

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