

NIGERIA'S DIPLOMATIC HEGEMONY IN WEST AFRICA: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THE THREE GUINEAS: GUINEA CONAKRY, GUINEA-BISSAU, AND EQUATORIAL GUINEA

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Abstract

This article examines the evolution of Nigeria's "Pax Nigeriana" through a comparative historical analysis of its diplomatic and military interventions in the Three Guineas: Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, and Equatorial Guinea. Historically serving as the sub-regional "paymaster," Nigeria has shouldered a significant "hegemonic burden," contributing over 60% of the ECOWAS annual budget and expending an estimated \$20 billion on regional peacekeeping by 2025. While about \$688 Million have been expended in the Three Guineas alone since 1975. By analyzing Nigeria's interventions in the 2021 coup in Conakry, the 2022 stabilization mission in Bissau, maritime security leadership in the Gulf of Guinea and other related events, this study argues that Nigeria's hegemony has transitioned from raw military enforcement to a nuanced, normative stabilization diplomacy. Despite internal security pressures and a resurgence of regional instability through 2025, Nigeria remains the indispensable pillar of West African stability, albeit one increasingly constrained by the domestic opportunity costs of its "concentric circle" foreign policy.

Key Words: Pax Nigeriana, Nigeria, Foreign Policy, West Africa, Diplomacy, ECOWAS, Conflict Resolution, Hegemony, Three Guineas, Afrocentric, Concentric Circle

Introduction

Nigeria has dominated the geopolitical architecture of the West African region for decades. The famed nation is a hegemon in West Africa for a number of reasons. It boasts of overwhelming material preponderance, demographic & economic weight, over 200 million people, a massive market, represents about 60% of West Africa's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and acts as the economic engine of the region. Militarily, it is superior with the most well-equipped armed forces in the sub-region. In 1975, it was central to forming the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and maintains regional leadership via the organization. Blessed with immense natural resources, the nation is a top producer and earner from crude oil and agricultural produce which gives her enormous economic influence over its neighbors. Culturally, it has enormous soft power and influence with its music (Afrobeats), film industry (Nollywood), and food across the region and beyond. Famed as the "Giant of Africa", Nigeria is often considered the natural leader because it acts as a stabilizing force in turbulent times. Uniquely, Nigeria is diverse with over 250 ethnic groups and cultures and has remained resilient despite its significant internal economic and political instability.

As a "pivotal state," Nigeria's foreign policy is built upon the Afrocentric pillar, which posits that the nation's security is inextricably linked to the stability of its neighbors (Morasso, 2019). The nation's hegemonic stance is backed by an overwhelming asymmetry of power; historically, Nigeria's military strength has equaled the combined forces of the rest of the sub-region.

Since the turn of the 21st century, this dominance has been tested by maritime instability and military coups which has swept through the "Three Guineas, forcing a recalibration of Nigeria's diplomatic and military strategies. To understand Nigeria's varying modes of intervention, one must first recognize the divergent historical trajectories of the Three Guineas: from the socialist isolation of **Guinea-Conakry**, and the "militarized democratization" of **Guinea-Bissau** to the strategic maritime powerhouse of **Equatorial Guinea**. This paper tries to provides a comparative analysis of how Nigeria positions as a hegemony and utilizes its weight to resolve conflicts across the distinct linguistic and political landscapes of the area.

A Brief History of the Three Guineas

The three African countries—Guinea Conakry, Guinea-Bissau, and Equatorial Guinea— all bear the name "Guinea" because it was a general 15th-century Portuguese term for the West African region. It was a direct result of different European powers partitioning the same region, which was once popularly referred to as Guinea (Upper and Lower). The name originates from a Berber term, *Akal n-Iguinawen*, meaning "Land of the Black People," and was retained by the different countries after gaining independence. The Republic of **Guinea (formerly French Guinea)** and also referred to as **Guinea Conakry** after its capital, gained independence from France in 1958. **Guinea-Bissau (formerly Portuguese Guinea)**, gained independence from Portugal in 1973 and added its

capital, Bissau, to differentiate itself. While **Equatorial Guinea (formerly Spanish Guinea)**, gained independence from Spain in 1968 and added "Equatorial" to reflect its location near the equator. Aside from shared nomenclature, one must also understand the history of conflicts in the Three Guineas. **Guinea Conakry**, has since independence been defined by periods of socialist isolation and recurrent constitutional crises. The 2021 overthrow of Alpha Condé by Colonel Mamady Doumbouya re-emerged Guinea as a challenge to ECOWAS's "zero tolerance" policy for unconstitutional changes of government. After **Guinea-Bissau's** grueling eleven-year war of independence against Portugal (ending in 1974), the nation entered a cycle of "militarized democratization". It has since been a laboratory for Nigerian-led stabilization, ranging from the massive ECOMOG deployments of the 1990 era to the 600-man Stabilization Support Mission deployed in June 2022 following a failed coup attempt. (Ojatorotu & Adeleke, 2017) **Equatorial Guinea**, the region's only Spanish-speaking nation, transitioned from post-independence isolation into a strategic maritime powerhouse following the discovery of vast offshore oil reserves. Nigeria's role here is dictated by resource diplomacy and the leadership of the **Gulf of Guinea Commission**, established to secure the volatile maritime border from piracy and mercenary activity.

Theoretical Framework: Hegemony and Afrocentricity

The analysis of Nigeria's role must be situated within a robust theoretical intersection of **Hegemonic Stability Theory** and the doctrine of **Afrocentrism**. While classical hegemony often implies coercion, Nigeria's role represents what Adebajo (2002) describes as an 'asymmetric interdependence.' In this framework, the hegemon provides critical regional public goods such as security and financial stability—in exchange for regional leadership and diplomatic influence, a position further analyzed by Ojatorotu and Adeleke (2017) in the context of modern collective security.

1. Hegemonic Stability Theory: Power Asymmetry in West Africa

In the West African context, Hegemonic Stability Theory posits that a centralized power is necessary to facilitate cooperation and maintain order within a fragmented regional system. Nigeria emerges as the natural candidate for this role due to its overwhelming military and economic preponderance. This structural asymmetry is the "engine" behind the Economic Community of West African States and its security arm, the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). This military hegemony allow Nigeria to act as a "pivotal state," ensuring that the chronic instability in Lusophone Guinea-Bissau or Francophone Guinea-Conakry did not metastasize into a sub-regional collapse (Ojatorotu & Adeleke, 2017; Oshita & Alli, 2020).

2. The Afrocentric Pillar and the Doctrine of "Concentric Circles"

Nigeria's hegemony is a deliberate choice rooted in the "Afrocentric Pillar," viewing the stability of West Africa as a prerequisite for Nigeria's own national security (Morasso, 2019). Under the "**Concentric Circles**" model, Nigeria views the political health of the Three Guineas as an "inner circle" concern, driving Abuja to act as a "Normative Enforcer" of democratic legitimacy of the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance. By 2025, this normative leadership has become the primary tool for Nigeria to address the "epidemic of coups" in the region, shifting the focus from raw military might to the enforcement of democratic legitimacy (Odubajo & Ishola, 2024; Ojatorotu & Olajide, 2021).

The Tripartite Mode of Intervention and Comparative Financial Analysis in the Three Guineas

The historical trajectory of Nigeria's engagement within the "Three Guineas"—Guinea-Conakry, Guinea-Bissau, and Equatorial Guinea—reveals a sophisticated, multi-dimensional strategy that has transitioned from the "heavy-handed" military interventions of the late 20th century to a nuanced, multi-modal hegemony in the post-2020 era. It adapted to the specific political landscape of each state through three distinct modes: **Normative Enforcement**, **Military Stabilization**, and **Maritime/ Diplomatic Guardian**, (Ali & Tsamenyi, 2013; Omo-ogbebor, 2017). Archival records from the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs and the Niger Basin Authority historical audits reveal that between 1975 and 2026, this strategic architecture required an estimated cumulative expenditure of **\$688 million**, reflecting Nigeria's commitment to regional stability through diverse modalities of power projection.

Case Study 1: Guinea-Conakry — Nigeria as a Normative Enforcer

To understand Nigeria's diplomatic engagement with Guinea-Conakry to date, one must first recognize Guinea's unique historical identity as the "rebel" of the Francophone world. In 1958, under the leadership of Ahmed Sékou Touré, Guinea famously rejected Charles de Gaulle's "French Community," choosing immediate independence over continued colonial integration (Omo-ogbebor & Sanusi, 2017). This foundational act of sovereignty established a tradition of **isolationist socialism** that often placed Guinea at odds with its neighbors, yet its geographical position as a key player of the **Mano River Complex** makes its internal stability a vital national security interest for Nigeria. Three core events in Guinea that elicited Nigeria's interventions were:

1. The 2021 Coup and the "Epidemic of Contagion"

On September 5, 2021, the Special Forces Group led by Colonel Mamady Doumbouya overthrew the octogenarian President Alpha Condé, who had controversially secured a third term through constitutional engineering. This event was not merely a domestic crisis; it was a direct challenge to Nigeria's vision of a democratically stable West Africa. Following similar upheavals in Mali, the Guinean coup signaled what historians call an "epidemic of coups" in the COVID-19 era, threatening to normalize unconstitutional changes of government across the sub-region (Chin & Kirkpatrick, 2023)

Nigeria's response, channeled through ECOWAS, was swift and reflected its role as a "**Normative Enforcer.**" Rather than the direct military intervention seen in the 1990 era, Nigeria spearheaded a strategy of **institutional delegitimization**. Under Nigeria's leadership, ECOWAS suspended Guinea from all decision-making bodies and imposed targeted sanctions, including travel bans and the freezing of financial assets belonging to the Comité National du Rassemblement pour le Développement. Recently in January 2026, General Mamadi Doumbouya was sworn in as a civilian president after elections in December 2025, leading ECOWAS to lift sanctions and lift the country's member suspension.

2. Nigeria and the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance

The primary tool in Nigeria's diplomatic arsenal during this crisis was the 2001 ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance. As the regional hegemon that historically bankrolled the creation of these democratic norms, Nigeria insisted that the "zero tolerance" policy for power grabs must be absolute (Odubajo & Ishola, 2024; Ojatorotu & Olajide, 2021). Nigeria's diplomatic hegemony in Conakry was expressed through its ability to "multilateralize" its foreign policy; by using ECOWAS as a shield, Abuja avoided the perception of "Big Brother" bullying while still ensuring that its democratic preferences are enforced.

The efficacy of this normative pressure is evidenced by the "negotiated transition." Throughout 2022 and 2023, Nigerian mediators, often working behind the scenes with the ECOWAS Commission, pushed the Doumbouya junta to commit to a 24-month transition timeline.

3. The Mano River Complex and Strategic Stability

Nigeria's obsession with Guinea's stability is rooted in the "Second Circle" of its foreign policy: the security of the West African sub-region (Morasso, 2019). Guinea shares borders with Sierra Leone and Liberia—two nations where Nigeria spent nearly \$13 billion and thousands of lives to end civil wars in the 1990 era. (Kamara, A. B. (2021, July). Guinea served as a critical rear base during those conflicts and should Guinea descend into protracted civil strife, the fragile peace in the Mano River Union would likely collapse, undoing decades of Nigerian-led stabilization efforts. In this context, Nigeria acted as a "Strategic Stabilizer." By preventing a total state collapse in Conakry, Nigeria protected its historical investment in the peace of Sierra Leone and Liberia. This is a clear manifestation of the "Hegemon's Burden": the necessity of paying for the peace of a neighbor to avoid the much higher cost of a regional war.

Financial Commitment: In Guinea-Conakry, Nigeria adopted a bilateral "subsidy" model favoring direct state-to-state engagement over multilateral branding. Following the 2008 political crisis precipitated by Lansana Conté's death, Nigeria channeled **\$40 million** into security sector stabilization to prevent military fragmentation. This was complemented by **\$3.5 million** in Ebola-related border security assistance in 2014. Historically, Nigeria has transferred over 200 military vehicles and small arms to Conakry since 1975, a "monetized gift" valued at approximately **\$65 million**. The cumulative investment in Guinea-Conakry totals up to **\$108 million** (Jemirade, 2021; Umezurike et al., 2017).

Case Study 2: Guinea-Bissau — The Stabilization Laboratory

Guinea-Bissau served as the primary "Stabilization Laboratory" for Nigeria's military hegemony. Since its independence from Portugal in 1974, Guinea-Bissau has been characterized by a phenomenon historians describe as "**militarized democratization**" (1991–2021), where the armed forces remained the ultimate arbiter of political power, regardless of electoral outcomes (Jaló, 2023). For Nigeria, the stability of Bissau is a litmus test for the viability of the "Pax Nigeriana" in a Lusophone context. The 1998 and 2022 events serve as reference points.

1. Historical Precedent: From ECOMOG to Near State Collapse

Nigeria's deep military involvement in Guinea-Bissau began in earnest during the 1998–1999 Civil War. When a military junta led by Ansumane Mané challenged President João Bernardo Vieira, Nigeria, acting as the "engine" of ECOWAS—deployed ECOMOG forces to prevent a total state collapse (Ojatorotu & Adeleke, 2017; Omo-ogbebor & Sanusi, 2017).

Despite these early efforts, Bissau remained volatile. The 1999 mission illustrated the hegemon's dilemma while Nigeria could successfully deploy troops to enforce a ceasefire, the lack of long-term institutional reform meant that the military remained a "state within a state," leading to decades of recurrent assassinations and coups.

2. The 2022 Crisis and the "Rapid Reaction" Model

The resurgence of instability in 2022 forced an evolution in Nigeria's strategy. On February 1, 2022, gunmen attacked a cabinet meeting in Bissau in a failed coup attempt against President Umaro Sissoco Embaló (Chin &

Kirkpatrick, 2023). Unlike the protracted and reactive missions of 1998, Nigeria spearheaded a "preventative" hegemony.

By June 2022, ECOWAS authorized the deployment of the **Stabilization Support Mission in Guinea-Bissau**, a **600-man force** designed to protect state institutions and deter military interference. Nigeria provided the strategic backbone of this mission, both in terms of troop contributions and funding. This deployment marked a shift from high-intensity "peace enforcement" to a more surgical "stabilization support" model, emphasizing that Nigeria would no longer tolerate the overthrow of democratically elected leaders in its "second concentric circle". Until Bissau suffered its ninth coup in November 2025, Nigeria's "stabilization diplomacy" yielded a fragile but persistent equilibrium as the presence of the ECOWAS **Stabilisation Support Mission in Guinea-Bissau** successfully deterred the military from a full-scale power grab, allowing for a semblance of constitutional continuity.

Financial Commitment: The Bissau theatre represents Nigeria's most sustained institutional commitment through ECOWAS mechanisms. Following the 1998 Civil War, Nigeria initially decided not to contribute troops to the ECOMOG mission in Guinea-Bissau. However, Nigeria later participated in the ECOWAS Mission in Liberia, which included a 620-strong contingent drawn from Nigeria, Senegal, and Burkina Faso (Oshita & Alli, 2020). This evolved into the ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB, 2012–2020), where Nigeria provided significant funding to counter narco-state instability. Archival estimates indicate that the initial 1998 intervention cost **\$120 million** in logistics and troop transport, while ECOMIB operations between 2012 and 2016 required **\$80 million annually**, with Nigeria providing approximately 60% of this funding. Following the 2022 coup attempt, Nigeria redeployed troops with current monthly operational expenditures of **\$1.5 million**. By 2026, the cumulative financial weight of maintaining institutional deterrence in Bissau is estimated at **\$450 million** (Omo-ogbebor, 2017; Oshita & Alli, 2020).

Case Study 3: Equatorial Guinea — The Maritime Guardian

While Nigeria's interventions in the other Guineas have been characterized by troop deployments and normative pressure, its engagement with Equatorial Guinea represents a distinct iteration of hegemony: "**Maritime Guardianship**" and "**Resource Diplomacy**." As the only Spanish-speaking nation in the sub-region, Equatorial Guinea historically existed on the periphery of West African geopolitics. However, the discovery of massive offshore oil reserves in the 1990s transformed it into a central pillar of the "Second Concentric Circle" of Nigerian foreign policy (Morasso, 2019; Omo-ogbebor, 2017). Nigeria's distinct engagements as maritime/diplomatic guardians are thus:

1. From Isolation to Strategic Interdependence

Following its independence from Spain in 1968, Equatorial Guinea endured a period of extreme isolation under the regime of Francisco Macías Nguema. It was not until the late 1990 period, coinciding with the peak of Nigeria's **\$13 billion** regional peacekeeping expenditure, that the nation emerged as an oil-rich powerhouse (Omo-ogbebor & Sanusi, 2017; Visentini, 2016). For Nigeria, a stable Equatorial Guinea is essential to securing the **Gulf of Guinea**, a maritime corridor that handles the majority of Nigeria's oil exports and serves as the economic lungs of the Nigerian state.

Unlike the "militarized democratization" recorded in Guinea-Bissau, the threats to Equatorial Guinea have primarily been external: mercenary invasions and maritime piracy. Nigeria acted as a "security guarantor," providing intelligence and naval deterrence to protect the Nguema administration from destabilizing forces that could threaten the regional oil market (Omo-ogbebor, 2017; Visentini, 2016).

2. Institutional Hegemony: The Gulf of Guinea Commission

Nigeria's diplomatic hegemony in Malabo was exercised through institutional leadership rather than direct ECOWAS mandates. Nigeria was the driving force behind the establishment of the **Gulf of Guinea Commission**, an inter-governmental organization headquartered in Abuja and dedicated to the peaceful resolution of maritime and border disputes. This Institutional Hegemony allowed Nigeria to resolve overlapping maritime claims such as the dispute over the Zafiro oil field through joint development agreements rather than military confrontation.

3. Naval Power and Anti-Piracy Operations (2021–2025)

By 2025, the primary challenge to Nigeria's hegemony in this sector was the surge in piracy and oil bunkering in the Gulf of Guinea. Nigeria responded by transitioning from a land-based peacekeeper to a "Maritime Guardian." Through operations such as **Operation Prosperity**, the Nigerian Navy conducted joint patrols with Equatoguinean forces to secure the maritime economic zones (Omo-ogbebor, 2017). This role is a logical extension of Nigeria's "Afrocentric" identity. By securing the waters of Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria protects its own "inner circle" of national security. This paper posits that the failure of the Equatoguinean state to secure its waters could lead to a "piracy corridor" that would directly target Nigerian oil infrastructure.

Financial Commitment: The Malabo relationship exemplifies Nigeria's strategic maritime diplomacy in the Gulf of Guinea. The proximity of Malabo to Nigeria's delta oil fields approximately 100 kilometers, make Equatorial Guinea strategically vital to Nigerian security interests. During the 1980s, Nigeria perceived South African presence in Malabo as a threat to its interests and security, prompting a counter-hegemonic response Archival

records indicate that Nigeria deployed **\$110 million** in oil subsidies and technical aid during this decade to neutralize external influence. (Aworawo, 2010). Strategic defense materialized during the 2004 "Wonga Coup," when Nigerian naval assets deployed at a cost of **\$15 million** to protect President Obiang (Ukeje, 2009). Current maritime cooperation, focused on joint patrols and intelligence sharing, requires **\$5 million annually**. The total expenditure for Equatorial Guinea stands at about **\$130 million** (Ali & Tsamenyi, 2013; Elijah et al., 2022).

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Mode and Financial Cost of Conflict Resolution in the Three Guineas (1975–2026)

The cumulative expenditure of \$688 million, synthesized in Table 1, underscores the strategic instruments and immense domestic cost of Nigeria's regional leadership.

Metric	Guinea-Conakry	Guinea-Bissau	Equatorial Guinea
Primary Hegemonic Mode	Normative Enforcement	Military Stabilization	Maritime/Diplomatic Guardianship
Key Instrument	2001 Protocol on Democracy	600-man SSMGB Force	Gulf of Guinea Commission
Strategic Objective	Managed Transition	Institutional Deterrence	Maritime Security Zone
Historical Cost Context	\$13B Regional Peace Fund	\$8B Sierra Leone Precedent	Joint Resource Protection
Budgetary Contribution	Security Sector Subsidies	60% of ECOWAS Budget	Naval Asset Deployment
Cumulative Expense	\$108 Million	\$450 Million	\$130 Million
TOTAL EXPENDITURE			\$688 Million

Source: *Data compiled from Omo-ogbebor, Aworawo, Ukeje, Ali & Tsamenyi, 2013 and Elijah et al.*

The Hegemon's Affliction: The Overall Cost of Peace in the Region

The central paradox of Nigeria's regional leadership is the "Hegemon's Affliction" vis-a-vis the extreme "opportunity cost" of bankrolling West African stability. The paper noted that while Nigeria is celebrated as a "regional savior," the financial burden has been immense. Notable costs include:

1. The \$20 Billion Legacy: While official state ledgers from the military era remain largely opaque, a synthesis of international diplomatic audits and recent military disclosures, applying a "linkage theory" of expenditure, revealed a staggering cumulative investment in regional stability. Conservative estimates place Nigeria's total fiscal outlay for regional peacekeeping since 1975 at **over \$20 billion** (Irabor, 2023; Kamara, 2021).

A critical pillar of this expenditure was the ECOMOG mission in Liberia. In a landmark disclosure in May 2023, the former Chief of Defense Staff, General Lucky Irabor, officially confirmed that the Liberian campaign alone cost the Nigerian treasury \$8 billion (Irabor, 2023). This figure serves as a verified baseline for 1990-1997. However, this was immediately followed by the high-intensity intervention in Sierra Leone (1998-2000). While President Olusegun Obasanjo famously cited an operational burn rate of \$1 million per day for the Sierra Leone theater (UNGA, 1999) more recent diplomatic audits provide a cumulative total. In 2021, the Sierra Leonean High Commissioner to Nigeria, H.E. Alie Badara Kamara, acknowledged that Nigeria's sacrifice across both the Liberia and Sierra Leone theaters totaled approximately \$13 billion (Kamara, 2021). By subtracting the \$8 billion baseline established for Liberia, we arrive at a \$5 billion verifiable expenditure for the Sierra Leone intervention.

Beyond these two primary theaters, the \$20 billion total is rounded out by "hidden" costs and ongoing regional levies. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) tracks hardware attrition—the literal wear and destruction of Nigerian military assets—which accounts for an estimated \$1 billion to \$2 billion in unbudgeted costs over fifty years (SIPRI, 2025). Furthermore, Nigeria's role in the "Three Guineas" (Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, and Equatorial Guinea) and the 2017 intervention in The Gambia was funded largely through the ECOWAS Community Levy. Official ECOWAS Commission audits confirm that Nigeria's contribution to this levy exceeded \$710 million in the early 21st century alone (ECOWAS, 2018). When these figures are linked with earlier missions, such as the 1981 Chad deployment (Abubakar, 2009), the fiscal profile of Nigeria's "Big Brother" diplomacy move from anecdotal rhetoric to a documented, multi-billion-dollar reality.

Table 2: Consolidated Fiscal Audit of Nigeria's Regional Peacekeeping (1975–2026)

Expenditure Category	Confirmed Amount	Primary Document / Authority
Liberia Intervention (1990–1997)	\$8.0 Billion	Gen. Lucky Irabor, Chief of Defence Staff (May 2023)
Sierra Leone Theater (1997–2000)	\$5.0 Billion	H.E. Alie Badara Kamara, S.L. High Commissioner (July 2021)
Decadal Cumulative (1990–2000)	\$10.0 Billion	U.S. State Department Fact Sheet (Aug 26, 2000)
Daily Burn Rate (S.L. Peak)	\$365M / Year	UN General Assembly Official Records (A/54/PV.7)
Hardware Attrition	\$2.0 Billion	SIPRI Military Expenditure Database (1975–2025)
Regional Levies (2003–2022)	\$710.5 Million	ECOWAS Commission Status Report (2018)
Pre-ECOMOG / Misc	\$100+ Million	NIIA Research Series No. 08 (Abubakar, 2009)
TOTAL (ESTIMATED)	\$20.01 Billion+	

- Source: *Data Compiled from Abubakar, A., ECOWAS Commission, Irabor, L. E., Kamara, A. B., Obasanjo, O. and SIPRI.*

2. **The 60% Budget Burden:** Since year 2020, Nigeria has continued to provide about **60% of the total ECOWAS annual budget**. This means that for every diplomatic mission sent to Conakry or every stabilization troop deployed to Bissau, Nigerian taxpayers are providing the majority of the funding.
3. **Domestic Friction (2021–2025):** As Nigeria faces its own internal security challenges ranging from the Boko Haram insurgency to secessionist movements, the domestic "outrage" over the cost of regional hegemony has intensified.

Conclusion

The history of the Three Guineas confirms that Nigeria remains the indispensable pillar of West African security. Despite the immense financial and domestic costs, "Pax Nigeriana" has successfully prevented regional state collapse. Nigeria's diplomatic hegemony is not merely an expression of power; it is an instrument of institutional survival. As long as the "concentric circles" of its foreign policy remain intact, Nigeria will continue to serve as the primary safeguard for West African stability.

Recommendations

Towards achieving a sustainable Pax Nigeriana, this paper recommends to:

1. Institutionalize the "Hegemon's Burden" Through a Regional Stabilization Fund

Establish a dedicated West African Stabilization Fund with mandatory contributions from all ECOWAS member states, proportional to GDP. Given Nigeria's current 60% contribution to the ECOWAS budget, this would create equitable burden-sharing. Implement a "cost-recovery" framework where beneficiary states contribute to long-term stabilization costs through resource-sharing agreements, particularly in the maritime domain.

2. Strengthen Institutional Mechanisms for Democratic Norms

Revitalize the 2001 ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance with enhanced enforcement mechanisms, including automatic sanctions triggers and pre-authorized intervention protocols. Likewise, create a "Democratic Resilience Initiative" that provides technical and financial support to vulnerable states for electoral management, constitutional reform, and security sector transformation. Establish an ECOWAS Early Warning System focused on detecting coup precursors.

3. Enhance Domestic Legitimacy and Accountability

Establish parliamentary oversight for regional interventions, with regular reporting on financial commitments and strategic objectives. Create a "Regional Engagement Index" that measures the domestic benefits of Nigeria's hegemonic role, including economic opportunities, security dividends, and diplomatic influence. Implement a "Public Diplomacy Strategy" that communicates the rationale for regional interventions to Nigerian citizens.

4. Prepare for Future Challenges

Develop a "Climate Security Framework" for the Gulf of Guinea region, anticipating how environmental degradation may exacerbate instability. Create a "Digital Democracy Initiative" to address how technology and social media are changing the landscape of political stability and coup dynamics. Establish a "Post-Oil Transition Strategy" for regional security cooperation, recognizing that energy dynamics may shift in coming decades.

These recommendations aim to transform Nigeria's regional hegemony from a burden of necessity into a sustainable, institutionalized system of collective security that benefits both Nigeria and its West African neighbors.

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