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**Secondary Powers vis-à-vis South Africa:
Hard Balancing, Soft Balancing, Rejection of
Followership, and Disregard of Leadership**

Sören Scholvin

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GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies

Leibniz-Institut für Globale und Regionale Studien

Neuer Jungfernstieg 21

20354 Hamburg

Germany

<info@giga-hamburg.de>

<www.giga-hamburg.de>

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Abstract

The second-most powerful states in regional hierarchies – or “secondary powers” – can be expected to contest against hegemons. In this paper, I assess the power that secondary powers in sub-Saharan Africa wield vis-à-vis South Africa and suggest that their intended and unintended contestation can be captured as hard balancing, soft balancing, rejection of followership, and disregard of leadership. Angola’s foreign policy is marked by a mix of these types of contestation and a recent shift towards soft balancing, which results from Angola’s increasing economic influence in some regional countries. Kenya might reject followership or even hard-balance in economic affairs but has not done so yet. Nigerian–South African relations are characterised by a disregard of South African leadership, especially in security policy, and unintended economic soft balancing.

Keywords: balancing, contestation, regional powers, secondary powers, Angola, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa

Dr. Sören Scholvin

is a research fellow at the Institute of Economic and Cultural Geography, University of Hannover. He is also an associated researcher at the GIGA.

<scholvin@wigeo.uni-hannover.de>

<www.giga-hamburg.de/en/team/scholvin>

<www.wigeo.uni-hannover.de/soeren_scholvin.html?L=1>

Secondary Powers vis-à-vis South Africa: Hard Balancing, Soft Balancing, Rejection of Followership, and Disregard of Leadership

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1 Introduction

Economists, geographers, and political scientists have debated intensively about the rise of non-Western states over the last two decades. In addition to numerous publications that examine this phenomenon at the global level, these emerging powers, including South Africa, have been studied as regional hegemonies that advance projects of regional leadership (e.g. Adebajo, Adedeji and Landsberg 2007, Flesmes 2009, Schoeman 2003, Schoeman and Alden

2003, Scholvin 2013, Simon 1998).¹ In spite of frequent calls that not only leaders but also potential followers be more deeply investigated (e.g. Cooper, Higgot and Nossal 1991), research on how states react to the leadership projects of emerging powers remains thin.

From the perspective of the realist school of international relations (hereafter, IR realism), the second-most powerful states in regional hierarchies – or secondary powers, as Ebert, Flemes, and Strüver (2014) call them – can be expected to pursue competitive or even confrontational policies vis-à-vis hegemon. The concept of contestation deals with this phenomenon. Contestation is defined as “counterpolicies of secondary states that seek to achieve the goal of maintaining external security vis-à-vis the primary power through competitive or conflictive means” (Ebert, Flemes and Strüver 2014: 222). Inroads to applying the concept to sub-Saharan Africa have been made by Flemes and Seith (2014), who argue that the increasing economic and military power of Angola, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Nigeria has allowed these states to pursue subregional leadership projects that are not necessarily compatible with South Africa’s objectives. The regional hegemon, meanwhile, has recently been replaced by Nigeria as the region’s largest economy. The success of its diplomatic and military interventions in intrastate conflicts has been limited at best (Rupiya 2013, van Nieuwkerk 2014). In other words, South Africa’s influence in sub-Saharan Africa appears to be declining, not only in absolute terms but also relative to the influence that secondary powers wield.²

In this paper,³ I analyse contestation against South Africa or, more broadly, the foreign policies of secondary powers, concentrating on economic and security aspects. I first elaborate on the concept of contestation. Whilst I have applied this concept in other publications (Scholvin 2017, 2018), I now advance a more complex conceptualisation of contestation, which leads me to eight categories that capture how secondary powers contest against hegemon. In contradiction to the aforementioned definition, I moreover stress that contestation may occur even if unintended. I then assess the economic and military power of major powers in sub-Saharan Africa as well as their respective capacities to transform power into

1 I understand hegemony merely as superiority in terms of national power. It does not necessarily depend on specific policies that would define a hegemonic state.

2 Delimiting South Africa’s sphere of influence is a rather complicated endeavour (Scholvin 2014b). South Africa is a member of institutions that promote continental integration, most importantly the African Union, and institutions that are of subcontinental scope such as the Southern African Customs Union, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA). Although the regional power has a leadership claim for the entire continent, exemplified by Jacob Zuma’s efforts to mediate in Libya in 2011, South Africa does not usually play an important role north of the Sahara. Its influence is strongest in Southern Africa. There is also a significant engagement with other parts of sub-Saharan Africa, as demonstrated by the deployment of South African military personnel to the Central African Republic and Sudan, efforts to foster economic integration with the East African Community (EAC), and significant investment by South African companies in West Africa, particularly in Nigeria.

3 I am very thankful to Sandra Destradi, Hannes Ebert, and Daniel Flemes for their comments on the various draft versions of this paper.

influence.⁴ The third part of this paper provides an assessment of the foreign policies of the secondary powers to determine what type of contestation they are pursuing.

I conclude that in the recent past Angola disregarded South African leadership rather unintentionally. But now, it is rejecting followership and pursuing a strategy of soft balancing against the hegemon, a rather moderate form of contestation. Kenya is not, at present, contesting against South Africa, but there is a certain potential for rejection of followership in economic affairs, perhaps even hard balancing. The Nigerian–South African relationship is marked by incidents of diplomatic friction that have undermined South African leadership. Yet this disregard of the hegemon’s leadership falls short of a grand strategy of contestation. Nigeria’s new economic diplomacy constitutes collateral soft balancing, a form of unintended contestation.

2 Contestation as an Analytical Concept

“No state considers itself a pure follower of another state,” Flesmes and Castro argue (2016: 78). Hence one would expect the second-most powerful states – actually, all states – to contest against hegemons in some way in order to preserve their autonomy and self-determination. From the perspective of IR realism, contestation is an almost self-suggesting strategy, because a hegemon poses a potentially grave threat to other states in an international arena characterised by the principle of anarchy. Contestation is similar to but not identical to balancing. Waltz (1979) distinguished between internal and external balancing: the former aims to increase national economic and military power; the latter is about forming alliances. States use internal and external balancing to reduce the gap in power between themselves and others.

The alternative to balancing is bandwagoning. Bandwagoning has received much less scholarly attention than balancing, arguably having been misunderstood as a strategy of weak states that lack the means or will to balance and thus give in to more powerful opponents, as exemplified by corresponding sections in the seminal works of Walt (1987: 113) and Waltz (1979: 29–31, 263). Schweller (1994) suggests, however, that there is more to bandwagoning: states that, in seeking to change the status quo, pursue offensive strategies may bandwagon with more powerful revisionists, each trying to achieve their objectives in unequal yet mutually beneficial partnerships.

For the analysis of secondary powers, the dualism of balancing and bandwagoning is too simplistic to fully capture the diversity of foreign policy strategies and does not adequately

4 As I show below, Angola, Kenya, and Nigeria are secondary powers. Elsewhere, I explain that Sudan, which is the fourth-largest economy in sub-Saharan Africa, hardly qualifies as a secondary power – at least not one that would be defined by its regional influence. This is due to governance deficiencies and the virtual absence of a foreign policy on sub-Saharan Africa. Ethiopia, which would otherwise have a certain potential to become a secondary power, has limited its economic and military influence to the Horn of Africa. Its foreign political interests hardly overlap with South Africa’s, let alone contradict them (Scholvin 2017).

reflect the innumerable means used to put those strategies into practice. Some scholars have advanced more complex conceptualisations of foreign policy strategy. Jesse et al. (2012), for instance, propose a continuum of responses to hegemony:

- 1) opposition, including hard and soft balancing,
- 2) balking and blackmailing as a way to resist,
- 3) “leash-slipping” and neutrality, suggesting a neutral attitude towards the hegemon, and
- 4) binding, bonding, and bandwagoning, which are accommodative strategies.⁵

Other types of strategies also fit in between the extremes of balancing and bandwagoning: Gries (2005) uses the term “buffering” to describe China’s efforts to cooperate economically with East and Southeast Asian states in order to reduce its vulnerability vis-à-vis the United States. Ikenberry (2003) defines binding as a strategy that aims to embed a hegemon in institutions that channel and limit the ways in which its power can be exercised.

The concept of contestation brings order to the muddle of foreign policy strategies. As a first step, Ebert, Flesher, and Strüver (2014) distinguish between revisionism and non-revisionism. Revisionism seeks to change the existing regional order – that is, the hierarchy of powers, interstate institutions and, as far as they exist, norms that guide interstate relations. Revisionist secondary powers seek to end hegemony in its present form, sometimes trying to become the primary power themselves. The struggle of the Frontline States against South Africa during the era of white-minority rule exemplifies revisionist contestation: Zimbabwe and its allies sought to end South Africa’s hegemony by economic, diplomatic, and military means (Geldenhuys 1981, Plaut, Unterhalter and Ward 1981, Uys 1988). Non-revisionist contestation, conversely, means accepting the existing regional order whilst seeking changes within it. The aforementioned strategies of binding and buffering exemplify non-revisionist contestation.

Ebert, Flesher, and Strüver combine the distinction between revisionism and non-revisionism with a distinction between direct and indirect means. They thus identify four types of contestation: First, on the revisionism side, hard balancing constitutes a direct challenge of the hegemon. Secondary powers that pursue a strategy of hard balancing are willing to engage in overt confrontation. Means along these lines are, most importantly, economic sanctions and military threats, including alliances with extra- and intraregional partners and col-

5 Balking is about states refusing to submit to the wishes of a hegemon. These states hope that many others will do so, making it impossible for the hegemon to punish every balking state. This strategy was pursued by Russia in the context of US sanctions imposed on Iran because of the latter’s nuclear programme. States blackmail by letting hegemons know that any action directed against them will be costly, as probably best exemplified by North Korea’s use of nuclear weapons. States that “leash-slip” do not fear being attacked by a hegemon. This applies to France in its bilateral relations with the United States. France expands its national power so as to pursue an independent foreign policy, not as a means against the hegemon. Switzerland pursues a strategy of neutrality, not allying itself with others. Britain has bonded with the United States, using personal relationships of leading politicians to influence the hegemon. The other strategies are defined throughout this paper.

laboration with armed non-state organisations that confront the hegemon. Hard balancing is exemplified, as noted, by the struggle of the Frontline States against Apartheid South Africa. Arguably, the military intervention by Angola and Zimbabwe in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in 2002 also falls into this category because it undermined the mediation efforts by South Africa. However, the Angolan–Zimbabwean intervention was due to motivations other than balancing against South Africa (more on this later). It counts, at most, as “collateral hard-balancing” – a term coined by Flesmes and Castro (2016) for Colombia’s foreign policy in the first decade of this century.

Second, Ebert, Flesmes, and Strüver suggest that indirect revisionism – that is, soft balancing – works through formal and informal institutions and constitutive principles such as legitimacy. By addressing institutions and legitimacy, they are apparently transcending a narrowly defined realm of IR realism. More generally, one might argue that soft balancing aims to reshape the regional order step by step and in processes that do not lead to open confrontation. Pape (2005), who concentrates on the reactions of major powers to US unilateralism during the presidency of George W. Bush, defines soft balancing as a strategy that challenges a hegemon’s (military) preponderance through non-military means: diplomatic arrangements, international institutions, and economic statecraft.

Ebert, Flesmes, and Strüver elaborate less on the two non-revisionist types of contestation, which they label reformism and resignation. Whereas they associate non-revisionist contestation with proactive approaches, meaning policies drafted by the secondary powers so as to react to hegemony, I suggest that instead of conceptualising non-revisionist secondary powers as states that do something, we should focus on them *not* doing something: non-revisionist secondary powers reject followership and disregard leadership. Secondary powers that reject followership accept hegemony itself but do not submit to the hegemon’s leadership project, meaning that they do not pursue policies that would support the hegemon’s vision for the region. Rejection of followership relies on direct means such as a lack of commitment to regional communities promoted by the hegemon. Disregard of leadership means that secondary powers simply ignore the leadership role of the hegemon and its preferences, but without working towards the fall of the hegemon. Doing so is based on indirect means – for example, entering trade agreements with extraregional powers that contradict the hegemon’s objectives or intervening in armed conflicts in third countries (or supporting such interventions) to the displeasure of the hegemon.

In contrast to more complex approaches to leadership and followership, which include the notion of leaders incorporating the needs of their followers into their own policies, thus striving for common goals and co-opting rather than coercing others and becoming legitimate (e.g. Cooper, Higgott, Nossal 1991, Goethals, Sorenson and Burns 2004, Ikenberry and Kupchan 1990, Northouse 1997, Pedersen 2002, Young 1991), my analysis is limited to the mere consideration of the objectives pursued by secondary powers. If these objectives are not

compatible with the hegemon's leadership project, the secondary powers are highly likely to reject followership or at least disregard leadership.⁶

Table 1. Types of Contestation

	Direct means	Indirect means
Revisionism	Hard balancing	Soft balancing
Non-revisionism	Rejection of followership	Disregard of leadership

Source: Author's own draft.

The first step of an empirical assessment of contestation in any given region is the identification of its hegemon and secondary powers. An initial hypothesis on contestation depends on the region's power structure: a huge gap in power between the hegemon, on the one side, and the secondary power(s), on the other, suggests that non-revisionist contestation or, at most, soft balancing will take place, because the secondary powers are too weak to sustain a prolonged and overt confrontation. The same hypothesis derives from the existence of a cluster of secondary powers. If the gap in power is rather small and/or if there are many secondary powers, these secondary powers will be able to risk revisionism, perhaps even direct confrontation. The second analytical step addresses the question of whether the hegemon and the secondary powers share common goals. If they do, non-revisionist strategies will probably dominate, with secondary powers rejecting followership and disregarding leadership in the rather few cases characterised by incompatible objectives.⁷

For the analysis of the policies pursued by the secondary powers, it is important to address a difficulty that comes along with the concept of contestation. Those who study contestation seek to understand, first, why secondary powers contest and, second, how they do so – meaning, through what strategies.⁸ Yet capturing the motivation of foreign policy is challenging: secondary powers may cooperate with extraregional partners on security and trade or

6 As a side note, from my viewpoint emerging powers that pursue a proactive regional foreign policy offer a leadership project. This project may be recognised and it may generate followership, which I, unlike Destradi (2010) and Schirm (2009), see as a possible outcome and not as a necessary condition of leadership. Also in contrast to Schirm, followership results, in my understanding, from the existence of common goals, not from primary and secondary powers adapting their individual positions so as to find common grounds.

7 In my understanding, common goals are hence a condition for the acceptance of leadership. If there are common goals, secondary powers will choose to follow and accept the primary power's leadership. If there are no common goals, the primary power will offer leadership but it will fail to generate followership or, at least, its leadership will be disregarded. Although I do not share Destradi's (2010) definition of leadership, my empirical analysis adheres to an idea that she mentions in the conclusion of her article: leadership (or the acceptance thereof) is policy-specific. Destradi suggests that emerging powers choose different approaches, ranging from coercion by brute force to the mutually beneficial pursuit of common goals, depending on the policy in consideration. I argue that secondary powers also contest differently from one policy to another.

8 For example, Flesmes and Wehner (2013) analyse strategic reactions of South American secondary powers vis-à-vis Brazil. In another article, they identify the drivers of contestation against Brazil (Flesmes and Wehner 2015).

promote a project of regional integration that constitutes an alternative to organisations dominated by the regional hegemon. But are these policies necessarily driven by the intent to contest against the hegemon? Might they not rather serve objectives that have little or nothing to do with the hegemon? Related to this, do single incidents of friction or even a series of such incidents prove the existence of a strategy of contestation? To use more academic terminology, the mere co-occurrence of two phenomena does not mean that these phenomena are causally related.

From my point of view, it would be inaccurate to argue, as Flandes and Castro do, that any explanation of contestation that does not refer to secondary powers pursuing the objective of contesting against a regional hegemon is “complementary and synergic” with contestation being the explanation (2016: 77). For example, Kenya’s military intervention in Somalia is due to security concerns over Islamist militancy in Somalia (and in Kenya itself) (Anderson and McKnight 2015, International Crisis Group 2012, Miyandazi 2012). This explanation does not exclude the possibility that Kenya might have intervened in Somalia to contest against South Africa; however, the mere existence of this possibility does not prove causality.

An initial answer to this dilemma is that secondary powers are aware of potentially negative effects of their policies on the hegemon. These effects and, even more importantly, the reaction of the hegemon to policies that undermine its objectives enter into the policymaking process of secondary powers. Hence, if secondary powers pursue objectives unrelated to the hegemon but know that their preferred policies work against the leadership project of the hegemon, contestation is not coincidental.

Still, I would argue that there is a difference between knowing that one’s policies may displease a hegemon and designing policies for the very purpose of displeasing a hegemon. I therefore find a second answer more convincing: contestation exists and matters even if secondary powers do not contest intentionally. In their aforementioned article, Flandes and Castro acknowledge that contestation is not necessarily intended. As long as one is interested in the consequences of foreign policy, recognising unintended contestation makes sense because intended and unintended contestation have the same effect on regional interstate relations: they cause friction between the hegemon and the secondary powers, diminishing the prospects of cooperation and increasing the risk of more intense contestation.

Unintended contestation stands at the very core of the security dilemma (Herz 1950, 1951): if a secondary power increases its (military) capabilities, it will, effectively, balance against the primary power. The impact of such a course of action does not depend on whether the secondary power increases its capabilities in order to balance. This fact hints at a theoretical inconsistency of analysing intended and unintended contestation from the perspective of IR realism. Identifying intended and unintended contestation obviously requires understanding the motivations that drive foreign policy. IR realism, at least its predominant version, is not, however, a foreign policy theory. It deals with the structural features that shape international relations. Waltz (1959, 1979) himself distinguished sharply between interna-

tional relations and foreign policy, the latter being the outcome of domestic factors, which are examined in foreign policy analysis (e.g. Allison 1971, Snyder, Bruck and Sapin 1962). Waltz's theory of international relations explains international outcomes, not state behaviour. Taking this approach to an extreme, one would argue that systemic factors force secondary powers into contestation no matter what the preferences of their respective governments are.

Mearsheimer (2009) criticises this understanding of IR realism, albeit without offering a solution. His argument is that if the theory neglects state behaviour, it will be of limited explanatory value because international outcomes are strongly influenced by choices that governments make – choices that often contradict the implications of Waltz's theory. Several scholars have therefore tried to combine international relations and foreign policy into one theory (e.g. Posen 1984, Snyder 1991, van Evera 1999). Without incorporating these theories, my approach to contestation reflects them insofar as my explanation of the contestation by secondary powers against South Africa, in particular my distinction between intended and unintended contestation, is largely based on considerations unrelated to the regional distribution of power.

In the case of Third World countries, domestic economic development or, considering corruption, the personal interests of ruling elites can be expected to play a predominant role in foreign policy. In order to tell whether the hard balancing, soft balancing, rejection of followership, or disregard of leadership that result from the pursuit of these objectives through foreign policy is intended or not, we must examine whether corresponding policies are meant as a means of contesting against South Africa. For example, if a secondary power promotes Chinese investment in its own domestic market, this will lead to economic growth, which constitutes soft balancing against South Africa's economic primacy. If Chinese investment is merely meant to help overcome poverty, however, contestation will be collateral. If Chinese investment is meant to reduce the dependence of the secondary power on South African industrial products, I will consider it to be intended contestation. Whereas an analysis purely grounded in IR realism would not allow me to examine these motivations, an assessment of foreign policy that sheds light on domestic considerations does.

At the same time (and this leads me back to both my initial argument on the relevance of unintended contestation and Waltz), this paper is meant to show that contestation matters regardless of whether it is intended, because structural factors shape outcomes in the international arena. Arguing that contestation does not require intention means, however, that the aforementioned definition of the term needs to be changed. Intended contestation is indeed a set of "*counterpolicies* of secondary states that *seek to achieve the goal* of maintaining external security vis-à-vis the primary power" (Ebert, Flesmes and Strüver 2014: 222; emphasis added). Unintended contestation, conversely, constitutes a set of policies that boost the self-determination of secondary powers vis-à-vis the primary power, even though this is not their purpose. As a consequence, there are not four but eight types of contestation: hard balancing, soft balancing, rejection of followership, and disregard of leadership are types of intended

contestation, whereas collateral hard balancing, collateral soft balancing, collateral rejection of followership, and collateral disregard of leadership constitute their unintended counterparts.

3 The Power of Secondary Powers in Sub-Saharan Africa

Research on emerging powers is marked by efforts to bring the major IR schools and hence different understandings of national power together. Therefore, not only the material but also the discursive and institutional power of regional hegemon and secondary powers has been assessed (e.g. Flesmes 2010, Flesmes, Nabers and Nolte 2012, Godehardt and Nabers 2011, Nolte 2010). However, the concept of contestation is grounded in IR realism, as explained above, and although I do not maintain that discursive and institutional power are irrelevant, material capabilities appear to be decisive in contemporary sub-Saharan Africa. Regional organisations remain of little relevance and all their major decisions are taken unanimously by the heads of the respective member states (Hartzenberg 2011, Mair 2001a, 2001b, Peter-Berries 2001, Plenck 2015). While discourses, advanced by South Africa and some secondary powers alike, on legitimate regional leadership do exist, they have failed to generate significant followership. I thus limit my assessment of the power of sub-Saharan African states to material capabilities.

A standard indicator of national power is defence spending. It allows us to draw conclusions on which states are able to project military power to their wider neighbourhood. Table 2 shows the sub-Saharan countries with the highest military spending. Angola spent more than South Africa – the presumed hegemon – in each year depicted in Table 2, reaching 176 and 103 per cent of the South African defence spending in 2014 and 2015.⁹ Kenya and Nigeria reached 26 and 59 per cent of South Africa's defence spending in 2015.

Table 2. Defence Spending of Major Powers in Sub-Saharan Africa (in USD million)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Angola	4,777	4,473	4,694	6,411	6,842	3,994
South Africa	3,516	3,643	3,810	3,897	3,893	3,881
Nigeria	2,750	3,062	2,697	2,593	2,358	2,298
Kenya	790	807	913	901	819	1,002

Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute 2016.

Note: Considering that there are 48 independent states in sub-Saharan Africa, states that spent less than USD 750 million in 2015 are not shown.

⁹ Strictly speaking, this means that Angola is the regional military hegemon. South Africa would have to be considered a secondary power. Because a hierarchy of powers should involve numerous interrelated factors, I will stick to seeing South Africa as the hegemon and others, including Angola, as secondary powers.

Even outstanding representatives of IR realism include economics in their assessments of national power, as exemplified by Waltz's aforementioned definition of internal balancing. I measure national economic power by the respective gross domestic products (GDP) of the regional states. Table 3 shows that South Africa's GDP is smaller than Nigeria's.¹⁰ Both are far ahead of Angola. Drawing a line between secondary and tertiary powers is not easy, but I suggest that Angola and Nigeria – and to a lesser extent Kenya – are secondary powers. In 2015 Nigeria's GDP amounted to 153 per cent of the South African. Angola reached a GDP that was roughly one-third of South Africa's. The GDP of Kenya was only about 20 per cent of South Africa's in that year.

Table 3. GDP of Major Powers in Sub-Saharan Africa (in USD million)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Nigeria	369,062	411,744	460,954	514,966	568,499	481,066
South Africa	375,349	416,419	396,342	367,594	351,305	314,572
Angola	82,471	104,116	115,398	124,912	126,777	102,627
Kenya	40,000	41,953	50,410	55,101	61,395	63,398

Source: World Bank 2017a.

Note: Countries with a GDP of less than USD 50 billion in 2015 are not shown. Ethiopia and Sudan, which in that year reached a GDP of USD 62 billion and USD 97 billion, respectively, are excluded for the reasons given above.

In particular in the Global South, which is marked by considerable differences regarding national economic development, concentrating on GDP can lead to inadequate conclusions. I therefore use GDP growth rates and inflation rates to assess tendencies of economic development and macro-economic stability, being aware that large economies are not necessarily growing fast and that rapidly growing economies are not necessarily stable. Tables 4 and 5 reveal that the hegemon and the secondary powers are marked by mostly high GDP growth, with Angola outperforming the three other countries. Angola and Nigeria suffer from high inflation, as has Kenya in selected years. South Africa's inflation is modest.

Table 4. GDP Growth Rates of Major Powers in Sub-Saharan Africa (in per cent)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Nigeria	7.8	4.9	4.3	5.4	6.3	2.7
South Africa	4.3	5.0	5.7	5.4	6.4	4.6
Angola	14.5	13.5	10.3	8.8	7.3	10.3
Kenya	8.4	6.1	4.6	5.7	5.3	5.6

Source: World Bank 2017a.

Note: The countries are listed in the same order as in Table 3.

¹⁰ One would have to conclude that Nigeria is the economic hegemon, followed by South Africa as a secondary power. The size of a state's economy is, of course, only a very rough indicator of national power.

Table 5. Inflation Rates of Major Powers in Sub-Saharan Africa (in per cent)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Nigeria	13.7	10.8	12.2	8.5	8.1	9.0
South Africa	4.3	5.0	5.7	5.4	6.4	4.6
Angola	14.5	13.5	10.3	8.8	7.3	10.3
Kenya	4.0	14.0	9.4	5.7	6.9	6.6

Source: World Bank 2017a.

Note: Inflation is measured in consumer prices. The countries are listed in the same order as in Table 3.

In sum, South Africa faces one potential challenger that is arguably superior and two clearly inferior secondary powers in the economic arena – just like in the military arena. The potential challenge to South Africa is furthermore limited by the fact that Angola might be superior to South Africa in military terms but has a much smaller economy, indicating problems succeeding in situations that require non-military power. Nigeria, meanwhile, might rival South Africa economically but is much weaker in military terms, which is problematic considering the abundance of violent conflicts in Central and West Africa, including in Nigeria itself.

An assessment of national power should not stop at this point. The aforementioned indicators neglect that economic power and military power have to be transformed into influence. This transformation is marked by high losses in states whose political systems are not functioning properly – poorly governed states do not achieve their full potential, because of corruption and ineffective public authorities at various scales. I therefore add to my assessment of national power two indexes from the *Worldwide Governance Indicators*: control of corruption and government effectiveness.¹¹ These indexes operate on a scale from -2.50 (worst) to 2.50 (best). As tables 6 and 7 show, the secondary powers suffer from corruption and government ineffectiveness. South Africa performs better than its potential challengers. This implies that contestation against South Africa is limited not only by the rather small number of secondary powers and the wide gap in power between the hegemon and the secondary powers, but also because those secondary powers are unlikely to efficiently transform their economic and military power into influence.

11 Control of corruption refers to the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption. Government effectiveness is about the quality of public services and the degree of their independence from political pressures, and the quality of policy formulation and implementation as well as the government's commitment to such policies. Both indexes are based on several sources and measure the perception of the corresponding phenomena. For more information, see <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.aspx#doc>.

Table 6. Control of Corruption in Major Powers in Sub-Saharan Africa

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Angola	-1.32	-1.34	-1.29	-1.33	-1.45	-1.40
Kenya	-0.60	-0.95	-1.10	-1.06	-0.94	-1.01
Nigeria	-0.60	-1.13	-1.15	-1.21	-1.27	-1.10
South Africa	-0.60	0.03	-0.16	-0.11	-0.11	-0.04

Source: World Bank 2017b.

Table 7. Government Effectiveness of Major Powers in Sub-Saharan Africa

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Angola	-1.13	-1.15	-1.00	-1.22	-1.13	-1.01
Kenya	-0.54	-0.57	-0.52	-0.46	-0.32	-0.29
Nigeria	-1.15	-1.08	-0.99	-0.99	-1.18	-0.95
South Africa	0.39	0.41	0.35	0.44	0.34	0.27

Source: World Bank 2017b.

4 Angola: From Collateral Disregard of Leadership to Rejection of Followership and Soft Balancing

Angola's relations with South Africa have not been overly conflictive since the end of white-minority rule, but the secondary power has nevertheless opposed South African influence. Angola's contestation against South Africa has been shaped by a major reorientation of its foreign policy, which began in 2002 with the end of the Angolan Civil War, in which the ruling People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola, MPLA) emerged victorious against the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola, UNITA). Until the end of that war, Angola's foreign policy centred on the internal fight against UNITA. Other objectives were of marginal, if any, relevance. This is not surprising considering that UNITA posed an existential threat to the survival of the regime. In order to support domestic warfare efforts, Angola sought to reshape its neighbourhood by intervening in the DRC and, back in the 1970s and 1980s, by supporting the struggle against the Apartheid regime and, even more so, the occupation of Namibia (Malaquias 2000, 2002).

The first major incident of friction between South Africa and Angola occurred when the latter – along with Namibia and Zimbabwe – intervened militarily in the DRC in 2002. This intervention prevented the overthrow of the Congolese government. It happened at a time when South Africa's president, Thabo Mbeki, was pushing for a diplomatic solution. Angola's intervention represented a strategic decision on the part of the MPLA against UNITA, as it sought to disrupt UNITA's supply lines in the neighbouring country and helped to protect the oil installations in the enclave of Cabinda, which financed the MPLA's domestic war ef-

forts. In addition to that, the Angolan government apparently hoped that, as a consequence of its intervention, the DRC would become less inclined to allow UNITA access to Congolese territory (Scholvin 2013, Turner 2002).

For South Africa, meanwhile, the DRC and the entire Central African region were (and still are) an area of economic opportunities that can only be realised if violent conflicts there end. From the perspective of the Mbeki government, the best way to achieve this objective was to negotiate between the Congolese government and the insurgents (Landsberg 2002). The purpose of Angola's intervention in the DRC was not to confront South Africa: South Africa's economic objectives in Central Africa were, at that point in time, of little relevance for Angola's policy planning. Yet Angola's actions worked against South Africa's objectives, meaning that the 2002 intervention in the DRC constitutes a case of unintended contestation and – given that South Africa had clearly voiced its preferences for how the conflict should be addressed – demonstrates Angola's grave disregard of South African leadership.

Collateral hard balancing would be inadequate to describe the Angolan intervention because it did not, in any way, revise the regional order. South Africa did not long to change the regime in the DRC, whose survival was guaranteed by the Angolan military. The hegemon also continued to be a key mediator in the DRC and elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa. Angola did not become the new main player in regional security policy, and it certainly did not pursue this objective. What is more, Angola did not intervene because it thought that the South African approach was inadequate to solve the Congolese crisis. Intervening for such a reason would have represented an intentional disregarding of South African leadership. As explained, settling the internal Congolese conflict did not matter much to Angola. Hence the disregard of South African leadership was collateral, a by-product of a strategic decision whose motivation was not related to South Africa.

In recent years, the Zuma government has tried to improve Angolan–South African relations, mostly in order to make the Angolan market more accessible for South African companies. Jacob Zuma's first bilateral state visit as South African president led him to Luanda, where he underscored Angola's importance for the region and recalled Angola's support for the African National Congress during the struggle against the Apartheid regime (Schubert 2010). Still, Angola remains reluctant to act on issues of regional economic integration. Most importantly, the secondary power has not joined the free trade area established by SADC. Exporting to Angola and investing there remains difficult for South African enterprises. Whereas the Angolan government argues that it cannot join the SADC free trade area yet because its postwar economy is in a process of restructuring, Redvers (2013) points out that this argument appears to apply only to South African competition: Brazilian, Chinese, and Portuguese firms have been granted relatively easy market access.

By objecting to regional integration on terms mostly set by South Africa, Angola rejects followership and this is intended as contestation. If one believes the declarations made by the government, this strategy aims to reduce the economic gap vis-à-vis South Africa. According

to Redvers (2013), it protects the economic interests of the Angolan regime's clientele. Beyond that, Angola is not only a member of SADC: it also participates in the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). ECCAS has made almost no progress in creating a customs union and free trade area since the formation of the Customs and Economic Union of Central Africa in 1964 and is far from constituting a means of contestation against South Africa, but it offers a path towards such an end that Angola may one day pursue.

Angola's contestation strategy is not exclusively non-revisionist. The state-owned oil company Sonangol plays a crucial role in Angola's foreign policy, investing abroad and thus gaining sometimes vital positions in the economies of African, European, and Latin American countries. In particular in the near abroad, Sonangol has invested in infrastructure and mining, including oil and minerals, as Roque (2013) summarises. Sonangol carries out joint oil exploration projects in Congo-Brazzaville, a move facilitated by tax and trade agreements signed in 2011. The company will probably also venture into Zambia if oil is found in the Western Province. Plans are already in place for an extension of the Benguela Corridor, a railway line from the Angolan coast to the Congolese–Zambian Copperbelt. The Angolan government seeks to rehabilitate the port of Lobito, at the end of that corridor, to facilitate the export of minerals.

Moreover, Sonangol has obtained concessions on the main port in São Tomé e Príncipe and vis-à-vis the expansion and modernisation of the country's airport. It partners with the local power and water company and the local oil company, the latter already being 70 per cent owned by Sonangol. The port of Buba and the Boe bauxite mine in Guinea-Bissau are also of interest to Angola. They will be linked in an exploration project, which will include the construction of processing facilities, a railway line, and a hydroelectric facility on the Corubal River. The mining company Bauxite Angola, which is connected to Sonangol, plans to invest more than USD 320 million in this project. The project might be extended so as to include mines in neighbouring Guinea.

As the last paragraphs indicate, the Sonangol Group is much more than an oil company. It has become one of the largest enterprises in sub-Saharan Africa. In addition to its core area, which is exploration and exploitation of oil resources, the group has diversified into air transport, banking, real estate, shipping, and telecommunications. Its most successful subsidiaries include two full-service banks: MSTelcom and Sonair. These are also involved in Angola's economic expansion into the near abroad. Sonair became the majority shareholder of the national air carrier of São Tomé e Príncipe, STP Airways, in mid-2012. Banks owned by the Sonangol Group are furthermore interested in taking stakes in banks in Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau. The DRC and Namibia are being considered as locations for future expansion. In São Tomé e Príncipe, Unitel International Holding, owned by Isabel dos Santos, who is the daughter of the Angolan president and Africa's first female billionaire (measured in USD), won a tender for landline and mobile telecommunications in 2013.

By expanding its economic influence in sub-Saharan Africa, Angola seeks to increase its own economic power, narrowing the gap vis-à-vis the regional hegemon. It thus refers to soft balancing. Contestation against South Africa also results from the fact that Angolan ports are positioned as alternatives to South African ports: the minerals extracted in the Congolese–Zambian Copperbelt are, at present, mostly exported via Durban and Richards Bay, which are South Africa’s largest harbours. Lobito might become a vital alternative, as the think tank Stratfor (2012) suggests. What is more, Angolan and South African companies compete over markets in sub-Saharan Africa and the position of the Angolan companies is reinforced by the political support that they receive.

Angola’s capacities to economically contest against South Africa are boosted by extraregional partnerships. China, Angola’s most important partner, is able and willing to provide the massive quantities of capital and specialised labour that Angola requires to undertake its ambitious reconstruction plans, including the aforementioned transport corridors. On the regional level, the China International Fund partners with Sonangol in several countries, heavily investing in the diamond sector in Zimbabwe, iron mining in Guinea, and also in extractive industries in Madagascar, Mozambique, and Tanzania.

5 Kenya: Potential Rejection of Followership and Hard Balancing

Kenya has pursued a project of subregional leadership since the beginning of this century, when the EAC, dissolved in 1977, was relaunched. Burundi and Rwanda joined the founding members – Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda – in 2007. South Sudan gained membership in 2016. The EAC became a customs union in 2005 and allows for the free movement of capital, goods and services, and labour. It seeks to establish a currency union by 2024. Against this backdrop, President Uhuru Kenyatta has pledged to make Kenya “the number one place to do business in Africa” with an “African Lion economy,” as the newspaper *Daily Nation* reported on 16 February 2013. Mabera (2016) points out that the secondary power seeks to turn into a newly industrialising, middle-income country in accordance with its *Vision 2030*.¹²

Economic diversification, infrastructure development, and macroeconomic stability in addition to human capital and technological progress have become critical to Kenyan politics. The present government, in particular, has put emphasis on economic development, which it associates with indigenous capital formation and indigenous control over the economy. This form of economic nationalism is linked to regionalism: Kenya ascribes high relevance to Africa and, even more so, to East Africa. Projects of regional integration have been fast-tracked in a coalition of the willing with Rwanda and Uganda, creating rifts in Kenya’s relations with Burundi and Tanzania. Cooperation with Ethiopia and South Sudan has intensified – first and foremost in the context of the Lamu Port–South Sudan–Ethiopia Transport

12 For more information on *Vision 2030*, see <http://www.vision2030.go.ke>.

Corridor (LAPSSET Corridor), but also with regard to security policy in Somalia and South Sudan (Kagwanja 2014).

The LAPSSET Corridor is a key project of Kenyan subregional leadership. It consists of the yet-to-be-built harbour of Lamu in Kenya; a yet-to-be-built oil refinery at that harbour; a rail, road, and pipeline network from there to Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Uganda; and agricultural growth zones and export processing zones along the corridor. However, there is no clear timeframe for the corridor and, as Browne (2015) notes, it appears that in public discourses officials from all involved countries are concentrating on accounts of achievements from the past and vague visions of what still has to be done instead of concretising their planning. Considering the instability of South Sudan, it is unlikely that the LAPSSET Corridor will be realised in the near future, at least in the way it was initially envisaged. A more modest version of the corridor, focused on Kenyan and Ugandan oil resources, might be pursued.

Beyond transport infrastructure, Kenya has been a driving force of the TFTA, which aims to bring together the 26 countries of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the EAC, and SADC in a commercial bloc. Market integration, infrastructure development, and cooperation on industrial policies are the three pillars of the TFTA. Kenya's interest in the TFTA is economic development through trade. It appears, however, that this free trade approach has been slowed down by South Africa's reluctance on trade liberalisation: South Africa sees the TFTA as a means to export its trade-restrictive, import-substituting policies to a wider region or – in other words – to promote regional rather than global value chains (Scholvin and Wrana 2015).

Looking at Kenya's economic initiatives from the perspective of contestation, Kenya constitutes a case of possibly intended contestation against South Africa. Boosting domestic economic development is motivated by domestic objectives. Hence at the moment there is, at most, collateral soft balancing, because the economic gap between Kenya and South Africa is shrinking. Yet Kenya is a counterweight to South Africa in regional economic integration, as suggested by the two countries' differing ideas regarding the TFTA. The economic nationalism of the Kenyatta government will lead to friction if South African firms start outcompeting Kenyan companies in East Africa, which might happen if economic integration between the EAC and SADC proceeds (Scholvin and Wrana 2015). In comparison to Angola, Kenya has not unleashed this potential for contestation, which would start with a rejection of followership regarding the TFTA and could lead to hard balancing if Kenya were to push for discrimination against South African firms and products in the EAC.

The second factor that shapes Kenya's foreign policy is its location in an insecure neighbourhood, with armed conflicts thriving in the Great Lakes Region, Somalia, and South Sudan. Humanitarian crises, including refugee movements, and cross-border activities of insurgents, pirates, and terrorists threaten Kenya, which has reacted by participating in military interventions in neighbouring countries. In 2011 Kenya sent 3,000 troops into neighbour-

ing Somalia, a military intervention mostly motivated by cross-border kidnappings by the Islamist militant organisation al-Shabaab. The operation aimed to create a buffer zone of about 100 kilometres on the Somali side of the border so as to prevent any future incursions into Kenyan territory. The Kenyan troops were later incorporated into the African Union Mission in Somalia.

Kenya has also deployed troops to South Sudan. This deployment remains modest, though, standing at about 770 members of personnel as of 2015 (United Nations 2017). The secondary power is furthermore involved in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, which has played an important role in Somalia, and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. The planning centre and secretariat of the Eastern Africa Standby Force is located in Nairobi, demonstrating Kenya's role as a subregional leader in security policy.

Subregional security policy is vital to building the LAPSET Corridor and realising *Vision 2030*. One might also argue that the military presence in Somalia guarantees a central role for Kenya in international negotiations on the future of the failed state.¹³ Unlike Angola's intervention in the DRC in 2002, Kenya's intervention in Somalia in 2011 does not constitute a case of unintended contestation against South Africa. South Africa plays only the most minor role in Somalia. South Africa's reaction to the intervention has been one of support: President Zuma pledged to back Kenya's policy on Somalia at a Commonwealth Summit a few months after the intervention began, as *Capital News* reported on 30 October 2011.

6 Nigeria: Collateral Soft Balancing and Disregard of Leadership

Cemented over the years by successive Nigerian governments, there is a strong conviction within the country of its manifest destiny as the champion of Africa (Bach 2007). On attaining independence, Nigeria's first president, Tafawe Balewa, declared, "We belong to Africa and Africa must claim first attention in our external affairs" (quoted in Ubi and Akinkuotu 2014: 418). Early Nigerian nationalists had some sort of messianic conception of their country's role in Africa, as Fawole (2012) argues. According to Agwu (2013), they pursued an altruistic foreign policy because of their own experiences with colonial oppression. By the mid-1980s, Nigeria had advanced its version of the Monroe Doctrine, calling for the end of external powers interfering in Africa, especially France in West Africa.

This is not the right place to examine whether Nigeria's Pan-Africanism is altruistic or rather a legitimisation of the pursuit of Nigerian interests. What matters here is that this secondary power has been committed to regional affairs, arguably to a greater extent than

13 As a side note, Kenya's intervention has not generated optimal outcomes. Kenyan troops in Somalia have been involved in illegal trade of charcoal, a major source of revenue for al-Shabaab, as *The Star* reported on 12 November 2015. Money made from the illegal trade of charcoal is said to be channelled into election campaigns of major political parties in Kenya (McEvoy 2013).

Angola and Kenya have. Yet Nigerian policy advisers and scholars have suggested lately that Nigeria's foreign policy should serve domestic objectives, first of all contributing to the welfare of the Nigerian people (e.g. Alli 2010, Ubi and Akinkuotu 2014). These often influential people argue that "un-economic matters [should not] predominate in [Nigeria's] external calculations" (John 2010: n.p.). Such recommendations are based on a critical interpretation of Nigeria's security interventions in West Africa, which occurred mostly in the 1990s, and its earlier support for African states fighting apartheid and colonialism. These efforts are seen as benevolent acts from which others, in particular Angola and South Africa, benefitted. Nigeria's economic presence in the countries that the Nigerian military supposedly stabilised has remained limited, and so have economic benefits for Nigeria (Ojeme 2011).

These thoughts are reflected by Nigerian policy planning. *Vision 20: 2020*, which was proclaimed in 2008, envisions Nigeria as one of the world's 20 largest economies by 2020. The *Transformation Agenda*, formulated under President Goodluck Jonathan in 2011, draws on *Vision 20: 2020*. It underscores the need to foster international ties that serve the economic development of Nigeria, including not only trade but also issues such as education and technological cooperation. Towards that end, binational commissions have been established with Canada, Germany, South Africa, and the United States. Steps towards fostering business ties with China have been discussed at foreign policy think tanks in the country. Most of Nigeria's diplomatic representations abroad now have to justify their economic usefulness (Ubi and Akinkuotu 2014).

Meanwhile, regional economic integration, and the success thereof, remains very limited. The implementation of an ECOWAS customs union has been postponed numerous times since 1976. A common monetary zone, originally envisaged for 2005, still appears unrealistic (Mair 2001b, Plenk 2015). Regional infrastructures are, despite some improvement, highly inadequate and poorly maintained (Ranganathan and Foster 2011). It is still too early to say whether there will likely be spillover effects generated by the 1,000-kilometre offshore pipeline that is being built to supply Togo, Benin, and Ghana with Nigerian natural gas.

One might, at first glance, understand the emphasis that Nigeria now puts on economic growth as internal balancing directed against South Africa, according to Waltz's definition of the term. The logic behind Nigeria's economic diplomacy, though, is domestic economic development – in particular, poverty reduction, as just explained. This means that Nigeria's economic diplomacy qualifies as soft balancing against South Africa, but it is unintended. The extent of contestation remains rather modest because Nigeria's economic diplomacy is focused on the global level and, arguably with little success, on West Africa. South Africa does not compete with Nigeria in global markets because the two countries export different products. The hegemon's trade with West Africa remains marginal – but investment opportunities for South African banks, retailers, and telecommunication companies in the region, including in Nigeria itself, are considerable (Draper and Scholvin 2012).

Nigeria's record as a subregional leader in security policy is mixed, at best. Although Nigeria intervened in several conflicts in West Africa in the 1990s, its ability to change the situation on the ground remained limited. This was not only due to friction with the Francophone states, which became increasingly opposed to Nigerian dominance (Scholvin 2014a) – Nigeria's army also did not manage to gain full control over the countries in which it intervened. The best illustration of this is the inability of Nigerian-led troops to re-establish control over an estimated 85 per cent of Liberia in the early 1990s. The rebellion, which the intervention was to end, thus went on (Bach 2007). Today, Nigeria contributes significant contingents to UN peacekeeping missions in Liberia (approximately 1,500 members of personnel in 2015), Mali (320), and Sudan (1,000) (United Nations 2017). Considering that South Africa does not play a major role in West African security policy, this commitment of Nigeria has not led to conflicts with the hegemon.

Yet, there have been isolated cases of diplomatic friction. Nelson Mandela's criticism of human rights violations in Nigeria – the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other civil society activists in 1995, to be precise – and the blunt rejection of this criticism by Nigeria has become a major point of reference in studies on South Africa's post-1994 regional leadership (e.g. Schoeman 2003, Scholvin 2013). During the Mbeki presidency, Nigeria and South Africa cooperated on major initiatives, especially the New Partnership for Africa's Development. Landsberg (2008) argues that President Obasanjo and his South African counterpart managed to advance Pan-Africanism jointly, in a Nigerian–South African concert of powers. This concert did not last long. The election of South Africa's former foreign minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma as chairperson of the African Union caused severe friction, as the most powerful member states of the African Union do not usually nominate their own nationals as candidates for chairpersonship.

Nigeria and South Africa furthermore disagreed on how to react to the post-election crisis in Côte d'Ivoire in 2010. Nigeria backed the military intervention against President Laurent Gbagbo, whereas South Africa did not (Lynch 2011). Nigeria also supported the introduction of a no-fly zone over Libya in 2011, which led to massive airstrikes that allowed rebel forces to topple the Qaddafi regime. South Africa, meanwhile, sought to achieve a negotiated solution, using the framework of the African Union (Fabricius 2015). It had initially voted in favour of UN Security Council Resolution 1973, which authorised the enforcement of a no-fly zone, but soon criticised Western powers for abusing that resolution and called for an end to military strikes. Nigeria, conversely, did not voice any such criticism. Although Nigeria's intentions, in particular with regard to contestation, remain unclear, the secondary power undermined South Africa's position by disregarding the hegemon's leadership.

What is more, in 2008 the Nigerian government and the national parliament declared that Nigerians living in South Africa were victims of xenophobia, including physical violence. President Umaru Yar'Adua raised this issue during a state visit to Pretoria. Notwithstanding this diplomatic effort, deportations of Nigerians living illegally in South Africa con-

tinued (Bergstresser 2009). Tensions increased in 2012, when South Africa deported 125 Nigerians for alleged failure to provide genuine yellow fever vaccination documents. The Nigerian authorities reacted by denying 126 South Africans entry into Nigeria on the same grounds. Eventually the South African government apologised for the incident, apparently fearing for the considerable investment opportunities in Nigeria's booming banking, retail, and telecommunication sectors (Bergstresser 2013).

7 Conclusion

There are few states in sub-Saharan Africa that possess sufficient economic and military power to contest against South Africa, the regional hegemon. Moreover, the secondary powers – Angola, Kenya, and Nigeria – are marked by a considerable gap in power vis-à-vis South Africa, also because the conversion of their power into influence is hampered by poor governance. Contestation against South Africa is limited and often not intended:

- Angola has boosted its role as a subregional power, in particular through investments made by the state-owned company Sonangol. It has also proven capable of intervening militarily in its neighbouring countries. Its refusal to join the SADC free trade area and Sonangol's investments abroad – in particular those related to transport infrastructure projects that might undermine South Africa's role as the region's transport hub – constitute a strategy of contestation, a mix of rejection of followership and soft balancing, against South Africa. Angola's intervention in the DRC represented collateral disregard of leadership.
- Kenya possesses a subregional leadership role: in the EAC. Since the beginning of this century, Kenya's economic and security policies have become relatively ambitious, although the LAPSSET Corridor project betrays a considerable gap between objectives and outcomes. Kenya presently qualifies as a collateral soft balancer but there is potential for intended contestation against South Africa – rejection of followership and even hard balancing – because the secondary power is pursuing a vision of the TFTA that is hardly compatible with South Africa's. Increasing investment by South African enterprises in East Africa might also cause problems for Kenya's strategy of economic development. Kenya's intervention in Somalia, meanwhile, has been verbally supported by South Africa.
- Nigeria's foreign policy has recently shifted in the direction of economic diplomacy. This shift means that global rather than regional partnerships matter for the secondary power. The potential for conflicts with the hegemon is low, but Nigeria's economic diplomacy qualifies as collateral soft balancing. Sporadic incidents of diplomatic friction indicate that Nigeria does not accept a subordinate position. These incidents do not constitute a strategy of contestation; at least not one that would equal a foreign policy paradigm. Still,

as the failed mediation attempts in Côte d'Ivoire and Libya indicate, Nigeria is able and occasionally willing to disregard South African leadership.

What all cases studied in this paper suggest is that contestation is not often proactive, especially if it is non-revisionist. Binding and buffering, for instance, appear to be much less relevant for secondary powers in sub-Saharan Africa than the rejection of followership vis-à-vis South Africa and the disregard of its leadership. Contestation is hence more about secondary powers not adapting their policies to the hegemon's preferences than about secondary powers pursuing specific policies to weaken the hegemon. My analysis furthermore implies that research on contestation should acknowledge the limited foreign policy capacities of secondary powers. Even though convincing theories suggest that no state considers itself a pure follower of another state, secondary powers, at least in sub-Saharan Africa, have to deal with numerous issues that are much more important than improving their position vis-à-vis South Africa. If contestation occurs, it is often an unintended outcome of policies designed in pursuit of other objectives.

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