

NIGERIA'S FOREIGN POLICY, REGIONAL LEADERSHIP AND THE CRISIS OF NEOCOLONIAL DEVELOPMENT, 1960 – 2016.

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Abstract

The study offered a plausible critique of the leadership pathology that bedevils Nigeria's hegemonic ambition in Africa – especially the disconnect between the development of its power resources and leadership role. That is, Nigeria's attempt to play a hegemonic foreign policy in Africa without a fundamental domestic capacity to sustain such role. The objective of the study was to examine the extent to which Nigeria used its assumed leadership position in Africa to bring about tangible development at home. The theoretical model adopted for the study was political realism, otherwise known as the power approach. The utility of this theory for the study is that States in international relations are always “possessed” by their national interest which nations attain only by improving upon the elements of their national power relative to other States. Findings from the study revealed among other things, that Nigeria consistently pursued its domestic development objectives independently of its foreign policy goals. The study recommended among other things that although Nigeria's foreign policy in general remained Africa – centred, it should, however, be more inward –focused, aimed at adding value to Nigeria's development.

Keyword: Foreign policy, regional leadership, domestic national development.

Introduction

Foreign policy is that formal, legal and authoritative expression of national interest by the government at the international arena through the constitutional process of the State. It is that pursuit of the explicit objectives which State strives to achieve beyond its borders and the set of strategies designed to achieve them. It is that deliberate course of action embarked upon by a State to either preserve or alter a situation in the international system in a way that is consistent with own goals or objectives. Uhomoihbi (2011) opined that the two fundamental ingredients governing the conduct and administration of foreign policy are state objectives and capability. For him,

objective refers to the national goals that are pursued by the State, while capability refers to the wherewithal for pursuing and achieving these goals. In other words, there must be a correlation between the goals that State sets out to achieve and its capability for attaining them.

Ate (2011) argued that Nigeria at independence did not have the means to sustain her leadership aspiration but rather was playing an adjunct leadership role for the West. For him, the notion of an Africa-centeredness of Nigeria Foreign Policy as such did not stem from a strategic choice made by Nigeria's new political leadership on the basis of the fundamental national interests of the country, but was indeed a derivative of the enormous influence exerted on it by the major Western powers, principally Britain and the United States, in the context of their cold war priorities in Africa. The new Nigerian political leadership accepted uneasily its allied role in the Western security system because of a perception within the ruling political parties that such an alignment was necessary to guarantee regime security and its domestic (Northern) political hegemony vis-à-vis the national opposition forces based in the southern part of the country. The ensuing regional (i.e. African) partnership between Nigeria and the Western alliance, survived until the outbreak of the Nigerian civil war in 1967. Thereafter, it was modified because of conditions arising both from the civil war as well as changes in Nigeria's political economy after the war, that is the refusal of its Western partners to provide the Federal Government with the requisite military assistance necessary to suppress Biafra's rebellion in the eastern region of the country and post-war Nigeria awash in petro dollars which make them no longer depend on the West for financial assistance to execute their national development plans. The point being emphasized here is that, the pre-occupation by Nigerian government on regional issues of political liberation, peace keeping operations, conflict resolution, institutionalized the Africa-centredness syndrome without the leadership ever assessing seriously the development benefits to Nigeria's economy arising from its foreign policy decisions. In other words, foreign policy initiatives were never linked originally, to the requirements of transforming the national economy, nor were the reality of a weak domestic economic capacity ever considered as a fundamental constraint on such initiatives.

Foreign policy of any nation must be based on the premise of national interest. This is because; it is the yardstick that one could use in assessing the success or failure of any foreign policy. An exploration of Nigeria's foreign policy in the past decades reveals that Nigeria has consistently been pursuing her domestic development goals independently of its foreign policy. The conduct of the nation's foreign policy has not been translated into a source of national development. Consequently, the nation suffered serious development challenges. Though Nigeria's development or transformation plans emphasized the promotion of economic development, its policy

makers have failed in their attempt to use the country's foreign policy as an instrument to promote domestic economic transformation. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the years since independence; most governments often adopt policies in their foreign policy that appeared inconsistent and contradictory to the country's domestic development. Nigeria's foreign policy since independence until the greater part of the 21st century was not specifically designed to be an instrument of national development but to facilitate the political objective of leadership role in African affairs. This feature appears to be a function of historical antecedent that Nigeria's first foreign policy engagement were instigated by the great issue of the East-West conflict, which did not give Nigeria's political leadership an opportunity to think of the positive use of foreign policy as a strategic instrument for engineering national economic transformation. Reflecting on these, it has been posited that:

Nigeria's claim of manifest destiny to lead the African region on the attainment of political independence in 1960 was made against the background of domestic, continental and global challenges, which Nigeria was to handle, based on the country's high potentials on human and material resources. Right from independence, Nigeria's foreign policy has been determined by several factors, being the most populous Black country in the world may have compelled her to shoulder, wittingly or unwittingly, the leadership of the Black world. This led to Nigeria's feeling that she had a responsibility far beyond her borders, some might say beyond her means (Omelle, 2004: 3, Osuntokun, 2005: 5).

There is a plethora of literature on the relationship between foreign policy and domestic development, put in another way, the debate on the underlying principle guiding Nigeria's interventionist policy in Africa has been subjected to various contending argument among scholars which is between two camps – those who believe that Nigeria's Africa-centred foreign policy concentration is blatantly pursued without any specific regard for the country's domestic interest and those who maintained that as long as Nigeria's security and development interests are concentrated in Africa, Africa will naturally remain the “centre piece” of Nigeria's foreign policy and the arena where her leadership potentials can be demonstrated. For instance, Ate (2011) in his article “Nigeria's foreign Policy: from the cold war to the era of globalization”, argued that, the pre-occupation by Nigerian governments on regional issues institutionalized the Africa-centeredness syndrome without the leadership ever assessing seriously the developmental benefits to Nigeria's economy arising from such foreign policy decisions. This according to him, is why, foreign policy record of the Nigerian political leadership was after fifty years adjudged to be anti-development. Similarly, Adeniyi (2005) in his article “Costs and Dividends of

Foreign Policy” argued; Nigerian people have not been directly considered as the focus or relevant factor in foreign policy postulations. For him, it has always been assumed that the afro-centric and Black Diaspora philosophies like self-preservation and national security would benefit Nigeria in the long run. This raises the questions of whether there is any premium on the value of life or welfare of Nigerians because defending and protecting a nation whose people are valueless is meaningless. Moreover, foreign policy successes in which Nigerians are not direct beneficiaries are not likely to enjoy the support of the people.

Gambari (2008) in his article “From Balewa to Obasanjo: The Theory and Practice of Nigeria’s Foreign Policy” argued that Nigeria’s Foreign Policy has never been directly related to the needs of the masses of its people. Rather, this policy has been formulated, articulated and implemented in highly elitist circles, reflecting the needs and aspirations of national elite of political, business, bureaucratic, military and traditional ruling groups. Never very cohesive, Nigeria’s national elite is deeply divided among ethnic, religious and ideological lines. Hence, the history of Nigeria’s foreign policy has been related to some extent, to a quest for national consensus behind the major goals and objectives of its external relations. Similarly, Mustapha (2008) in his article “The three faces of Nigeria’s Foreign Policy: Nationhood, Identity and External Relations” argues that the cultural geography of colonialism clearly assumed a fragmented population of natives superintended and held together by imperial benevolence. For him, what is the issue here is therefore not the existence of the Nigerian nation-State as an entity but its inability to develop sufficient consensus on vital domestic and foreign policy issues due to conflicting interests and perceptions. In this climate, the national interest which the formal foreign policy machinery seeks to promote is often subverted internally.

In all these intellectual exercise by the above scholars, there is a critical gap between Nigeria’s leadership role in Africa and domestic development and so it is within this context that the study examines the extent to which Nigeria has used her foreign policy leadership position in Africa to bring about tangible development at home. The central proposition of this study is that Nigeria cannot provide a credible leadership for Africa without a sustained effort to develop the appropriate domestic-cum-structural foundations because leadership in foreign affairs cannot be divorced from power and influence. To be clearer, two specific propositions will buttress the general concern of the study: a) Nigeria’s regional leadership ambition can only be sustained in the context of a successful technological development and economic growth at home. b) For Nigeria’s leadership ambition in Africa to be perceived as legitimate and supported at home, its implementation of the policy must be seen by Nigerians to advance the domestic national development agenda. In view of these, the

study seek to answer this question, to what extent has Nigeria's leadership role in Africa influenced its domestic development goals?

Theoretical Explication of the Discourse

The theoretical framework adopted in the analysis of the subject matter is political realism otherwise known as the power approach. It is the school of thought that explains international relations in terms of power politics. The principal line of thinking of the realist school is in terms of power and its exercise by States. Realism as the traditional orthodoxy in the understanding of international relations from the point of view of the national interest has an intellectual pedigree in classical scholars like Hans Morgenthau, Machiavelli, Hobbes and Thucydides. The principal line of thinking of the realist school is in terms of power and its exercise by States. They see power as the prime motivation of political life in international relations.

The first proposition of realism is that States are the most important actors in global politics. States are governments that exercise supreme or sovereign authority over a defined territory. Sovereignty means that States are legally the ultimate authority over their territory and no other actor in the international system has the legal right to interfere in States' internal affairs. It is the State, their leaders and their citizens that are the key actors who determine what happens in the world. Realism is State-centric because of the central and predominant roles that States play in this perspective.

The second proposition of realism answers the question, why do States act the way they do in international politics? According to realism, States pursue their interests, defined as power. State interests are the reason behind every State act; and it is the maximization of power that is in a State's interest. Thus, everything a State does can be explained by its desire to maintain, safeguard, or increase its power in relation to other States. For this school of thought, the defining feature of global politics is that the international system exists as anarchy. Anarchy does not mean chaos or confusion but the lack of an overarching political authority or world government. Without a central government, international politics is akin to the philosopher Thomas Hobbes "state of nature" or "state of war" in which individuals must fend for themselves and life is "nasty, brutish and short". For the realist, anarchy is what makes international politics different from domestic politics. Because each State must follow a self-help strategy to protect its own interest as States are naturally competitive with each other, eyeing one another with necessary suspicion. Conflict, then, is an inevitable outcome, and for the realist, conflict and the use of force is the central concern in international politics. The utility of this theory for the study is that States in international relations are always possessed by the national interest which nations attain only by improving upon the elements of their national power relative to other states.

Nigeria's Leadership Role in Africa and Its Domestic Development

Nigeria's commitment to the problems of Africa has been awesome. The question is, what are the indicators to justify whether these claims are real? A cursory look at the balance sheet for the past decades suggests a mixture of gains and losses in Nigeria's external relations-cum African diplomacy. The gains fall within the domain of prestige and do not bear any connection to the economic security of Nigerian State or its citizenry. In any case, even when one assumes that the aforementioned are gains, there are countervailing loses that tend to obliterate them and directly challenge the leadership thesis (Arremu, 2010).

Among the breakthroughs was the suspension of a relation with France in 1961, ostensibly to protest the French atomic test in the Sahara, Nigeria's role in offering and mobilizing support for the liberation struggles across South Africa in the mid-70s and beyond, the politics of the emergence of the defunct Organization of African Unity (now African Union), eventual conclusion and subsequent exit from the Paris Club debt overcharged by the Obasanjo's administration (*The News*, July 18, 2005), the seeming international endorsement of Nigeria's re-entry into the global reckoning after the lull of the era of "area boy" diplomacy that characterized the Abacha years, successful hosting of high profile international events (e.g. CHOGM, All Africa Games etc) and the global personalities (such as Queen of England, two presidents of the United States, Bill Clinton and George Bush), including the recent visit by US Secretary of States, Hillary Clinton, and other world leaders, suggest that Nigeria had significantly shed the pariah status of the military years. Similarly, at various times, Nigeria was the chair of AU, Commonwealth, G77, etc. In the sphere of conflict resolution, the country hosted the peace negotiation on Darfur, assisted in restoration of the Sao Tome and Principe leader ousted by the military while on official visit to Nigeria and the restoration of Quartara (against Gbagbo Laurent) as the president of Cote d'Ivoire. Other cases of Nigeria's trouble shooting interventions include Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, and Togo. These gains only fall within the domain of prestige and do not enhance or translate to tangible economic/national development at home. Again, there are countervailing loses that tend to obliterate these gains and directly challenge the leadership thesis. The following points support this assertion:

One of the key diplomatic failures of the recent years would be the International Court of Justice ruling on Bakassi, which delivered decisive blow to Nigeria's claim to the Peninsula (*Weekly Trust*, July 22, 2006). While the country was still adjusting to the shocks of the unexpected judgment from the Hague, intense regional politicking ensued on the election of the president of the African Development Bank (ADB). After series of inconclusive rounds of voting in Abuja, the election ended in stalemate but Nigeria's candidate eventually lost to Rwanda's candidate in a rescheduled election in Tunis (*Vanguard*, June 15, 2005; *ThisDay*, May 22, 2005).

As if domino effect is being played out, the Francophone group within ECOWAS colluded, as usual though, to battle for the relocation of the ECOWAS parliament from Abuja to Cote d'Ivoire. This was in spite of Nigeria's contribution of over 72 percent of the organization's fund (*Daily Trust*, January 16, 2007). By the same token, evidence of collusion against Nigeria was apparent at the 2005 African Union Summit when the G4 proposal on Security Council reform was deliberated upon. The insistence by some African countries on veto power was to frustrate Nigeria's bid (*Vanguard*, September, 23, 2005). The point here is that the position of some African countries on issues where they ordinarily have little real stake, underscore the fragility of Nigeria's aspiration or claim to leadership role in Africa.

Similarly, Africa's representation at the International Labour Organization (ILO) became another subject that tested Nigeria's leadership claim in Africa. Procedurally, the "African Group", a coalition of workers, government and employers met in Addis Ababa to discuss Africa's common position at the International Labour Congress (ILO). Decision of the group is normally forwarded to the African Union Labor and Social Affairs Commission to be eventually delivered to the Council of Ministers for ratification. The presidency of the 96th session of the International Labour Congress (ILC) that took place in June 2007 had this procedure reversed when the African Group nominated Nigeria. At the 10th ordinary session of Executive Council of the AU, Congo was nominated (as against Nigeria that was already nominated by the Group) and was forwarded to the African Group. Despite vehement protests by Nigeria's Hassan Sumonu, the Executive Secretary of the Organization of African Trade Union and Unity (OATUU) and others that the standard procedure was being violated through the unprecedented imposition of Congo, a complex combination of linguistic alliance and sub-regional bloc identity conspired against Nigeria's position. Even then, Nigeria's West African neighbours, which at various time had shared in Nigeria's Father Christmas largesse, including Ghana and Liberia, opposed Nigeria's aspiration. Interestingly, it is important to note that Nigeria had played the traditional big brother role by stepping down for Egypt to chair 95th session of the ILC in anticipation that the 96th session would be hers for the asking. Surprisingly, other African countries not only blamed Nigeria for not taking its turn, the then benefactor, Egypt, opposed Nigeria's bid and mobilized other Arab-African States to support Congo (*Vanguard*, May 26, 2007).

Nigerian leaders have far more foreign trips but this has not transcended into remarkable Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflow, especially into the non-oil sector as compared to Ghana and India whose leaders have far less foreign trips but has attracted more global attention in terms of investment and opportunities associated with globalization of production. Nigeria's record of external relations and its trickledown effect on the ordinary people remain highly contentious. In addition,

records of undignified treatments of Nigerians even by African countries and Nigeria's lackadaisical and ineffectual responses to critical issues of periodic murder of Nigerians abroad, including a Nigeria Consul with Nigeria's embassy premises in Czech Republic raise significant questions on the ends of Nigeria's foreign policy (Akinterinwa, 2003).

Successive regimes in Nigeria, since independence have formally declared Africa as the centre piece of their foreign policy. The 1979 and the 1999 constitutions further formalized this by providing that Africa should occupy the position of primacy in Nigeria's foreign policy. One of the major mechanisms for the conduct of this policy was the aid programme which the country has pursued since independence. The lubricant for the aid programme was the oil wealth. Virtually all the countries of Africa had obtained one form of assistance or the other from Nigeria. The main directions of the aid programme had been Nigeria's neighbours, the West African sub-region and frontline States, the freedom fighters, national disasters and other parts of Africa. This was the picture when the economy was in fair shape (Adebayo, 1983).

The general policy which guided Nigeria's aid programme was formulated in 1978. This was the brain child of the then federal commissioner for external affairs – Brigadier Joseph Garba. He criticized the existing ad hoc method of granting aid and called for the formulation of clear guidelines based on sound principles that would take into consideration Nigeria's domestic needs. The following were the provisions of that policy. In the first place, in giving aid, Nigeria should take into consideration her limited resources and therefore, apply a system of weighting which would be based on the following four criteria: a) Promotion of national interest (45%). b) Taking into account the availability of high and middle level manpower in Nigeria (20%). c) Contributing to national economy and creating productive capacity for Nigeria (25%) as well as d) Providing relief during disasters and national emergencies in the recipient country (10%). Secondly, in operating this programme, Nigeria's aid must be based on fixed principles and guidelines, and therefore, as much as possible. a) Cash payments must be discouraged. b) Whenever given, aid must promote, formally discreetly or informally, the national interest via the development of Nigeria's industries. c) Priority should be placed on multilateral rather than bilateral aids. That is, would be recipient countries must be advised in clear terms to seek their aid from such bodies as the African Development Bank, the ECOWAS fund and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in which Nigeria already had fat financial contributions. There should be no more cases of ad hoc granting of aids except in cases of natural disasters and emergencies. In order that Nigeria does not lose face by unnecessarily delaying decision on a request, the country should be brave to turn down requests which she could not meet or inform the country concerned that such request would only be met if spread over many financial years (Adebayo, 1983). All applications for aid should be

sent well in advance (by would be recipient countries) for consideration, the outcome of which will depend on what has been fixed for that year.

The question remains in a world where loyalties do not extend beyond sovereign borders, why do countries extend the hand of generosity to others? In international relations theory, the phenomenon of aid giving has several explanations (Holsti, 1994). In the epistemology of international relations, Hollis and Smith (1991) insist there is a difference between “explaining” and “understanding” what happens in international affairs. While realist theory provides ample explanation for the games nations play, the moral or idealist approach is also valid for understanding why nations behave the way they do. Simply put, countries extend help to others on the basis of calculated self-interest. Such interest may be concealed, barely veiled, explicit, medium term, or long term. From this perspective, aid is one of the instruments in the kitty of economic Statecraft to be deployed in the pursuit of national ambitions. Related to this is the notion of aid as a form of imperialism. Hayter (1971) popularized the notion of ‘aid’ as “imperialism” during the heydays of the cold War when aid was used as part of the instrumentalities of informal empire, a mechanism for wooing friends and influencing allies, as well as cajoling satellite nations in the periphery of world capitalism.

In addition, States can and do give aid for altruistic purposes. Richer countries come to the aid of their lesser endowed neighbours for reasons of charity and generosity. Sometimes, this help is a blend of altruism and self-interest. However, during humanitarian emergencies, conflicts, or natural disasters, much of the assistance comes largely as altruistic aid. Another explanation for aid is its use as a vehicle of economic statecraft. Aid can be used to facilitate trade and investment. For example, trade financed facilitates are often used by industrialized countries to facilitate imports into developing countries. China provides assistance for infrastructure projects in many African countries as part of a package of its investment activities in oil and mining (Mailafia, 2010). Diplomatic insiders, estimate that Nigeria has spent over US \$60 billion in financial assistance to various African and Caribbean countries. The so-called rescue operations, consisting largely of grants, have been made to countries ranging from Benin Republic, Zimbabwe, Cape Verde, Guinea, Senegal, Niger, Togo, Liberia and Mali (Fayomi and Adejola, 2007).

It seems evident that much of the initial pre-occupation of the country’s foreign policy was the political liberation of Africa. As such, the economic aspect of foreign policy was initially geared towards serving these political objectives. A strong element of such assistance has been concessional oil resources, largely consisting of oil sales below world market prices (Aluko, 1976; Asobie, 1990; Ogwu and Olukoshi, 1991). In 1975, the government of Gowon articulated a clear policy on concessional petroleum sales to African countries with two conditions: First, the countries must have their own refineries for processing crude petroleum; and secondly they had to ensure that

products from the crude oil supplies were not to be re-exported to third countries (Fayomi and Adejola, 2007).

In 1986, Nigeria unilaterally established the Technical Aid Corps Scheme (TAC) as a foreign policy tool to promote goodwill and foster social and economic development in partner countries. It was structured to provide human capital assistance in all fields of social and economic development. It symbolizes the enduring values and practical demonstration of the crucial role of South-south cooperation (Mailafia, 2010). As it turned out to be, the amount that was expended on the programme remains shrouded in mystery. There is no evidence of any detailed and critical evaluations, to internalize any lessons learned. There is also no evidence that volunteers have been subject to any form of debriefing, so that the country can learn from their experiences and loop these into foreign policy actions. It is important to point out that the TAC only brought to the country immense goodwill, which she garnered from sending its experts to serve in other countries (Daura, 2006).

Nigeria has been a major contributor to multilateral institutions. Within the African context, the country has been a major contributor and/or dominant shareholder of such institutions as the African Development Bank Group, Shelter Afrique, Afrexim Bank and the ECOWAS fund for compensation and development, which was transformed into the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development. In most African regional institutions in which Nigeria has been involved, it has contributed as much as 40 percent to the operational costs of those institutions (Mailafia, 2010). There was a period when Nigeria virtually underwrote the entire operational budget of the former Organization of African Unity (now African Union), as a time of fiscal difficulties when most member countries were not forthcoming. Indeed, according to former OAU Secretary-General Salim Ahmed Salim, without Nigeria's help at crucial turning points, the secretariat in Addis Ababa would have grounded to a halt (Salim cited in Mailafia, 2010).

Nigeria in partnership with the African Development Bank Group in 1976 established the Nigeria Trust Fund (NTF) with the objective to assist the development efforts of the ADB's low-income regional member countries whose economic and social conditions and prospects require concessional financing (ADB, 2009). Nigeria also in 2004 established the Nigerian Technical Cooperation Fund (NTCF) as a grant window to complement the resources of the NTF. Its objectives are to pool the human capital of recipient countries from the African diaspora to assist in the rebuilding the war-torn countries and provide technical assistance grants for the identification and preparation of bankable projects.

From all indications, NTF outcomes have been at best a mixed blessing. Although its resources have been welcomed in recipient countries, it is doubtful whether this has translated into goodwill or even leverage for Nigeria. From the lessons of

experience, countries that contribute to the shareholdings of multilateral banks do so for reasons of altruism as well as national self-interest. Given that these institutions wield enormous influence in national development policies of recipient countries, donor countries often jealously guard their voting powers as a means of exerting policy influence on those institutions and, via those institutions on regional member countries.

Given the size of Nigeria as the legal shareholder in the ADB Group, one would expect the country to play the following roles: a) Assume a leadership role in policy making and strategic direction of the ADB. b) Use the NTF and NTCF resources to further both economic interest and foreign policy objectives of Nigeria as well as Africa. c) Maximize economic and other benefits from using technical and financial resources of the ADB. d) Wield effective influence and have full representation at the senior management level of the ADB. Experience has shown that, in practice, Nigeria has never fully exercised influence commensurate with its status and voting power. This is why Mailafia (2010), in examining Nigerian economic diplomacy from the view point of its bilateral and multilateral assistance to other African countries opines that the dissonance between Nigeria's promise of greatness and its mediocrity on most indices of economic development is reminiscent of the legend of the chained Prometheus.

One central theme that runs through Mailafia (2010), Daura (2006), Fayomi and Adejola (2007), Aluko (1976), Asobe (1990) and Ogwu and Olukoshi (1991) arguments is that Nigeria has been a major player in promoting South-south cooperation for development, committed enormous resources for promoting economic development in the developing countries of Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific and through TAC scheme, Nigeria has been a pacesetter and model for other relatively prosperous developing countries but the capacity to provide assistance directly correlate with the level of development and availability of resources. As with the case of Nigeria, it remains a mono - cultural dependent economy. A strong industrial base and a prosperous economy are prerequisite for achieving the leadership role that Nigeria intends to play on the continent.

Gambari (2008) argues that one major element of the political economy of Nigeria foreign policy is its structural incoherence. According to him:

The management of Nigeria's petroleum resources has been so inept and corrupt that the country's oil boom has almost become its economic and social doom. Throughout recent history, Nigeria's vast human resources have rarely been matched by entrepreneurship, unity, integrity, or vision on the part of the country's political leadership... it is now widely recognized that in Nigeria, there is a direct relationship between domestic politics and the making of

foreign policy. The domestic system and the conduct of political business invariably affect the conduct of external relations. Nigeria's foreign policy has never been directly related to the needs of the masses of its people. Rather, this policy has been formulated, articulated, and implemented in highly elitist circles, reflecting the needs and aspirations of national elite of political, business, bureaucratic, military and traditional ruling groups. Not very cohesive, Nigeria's national elite is deeply divided along ethnic, regional, religious and ideological lines (Gambari, 2008: 15).

In 1977, Ali Mazrui observed that with its vast resources and huge population, Nigeria was well on its way to being the first major black power in modern international politics. Ajulo predicted that the country was poised to overtake Britain and France as a world power by the end of the century (Ajulo, 2007). It is a profound irony that the first decade of the 21 century finds Nigeria in a far worse State than Mazrui had prophesized. A combination of factors such as poor economic management, weak leadership, massive corruption, and ethno-religious conflicts have destroyed Nigeria's prestige and weakened its influence on African affairs.

With respect to peace keeping, it has evolved from its traditional conception as a military operation to cover a plethora of activities, which include a wide range of police, civilian and humanitarian roles. Consequent upon these developments, peace support operation (PSO), a more encompassing term, is now commonly employed. According to Agwai (2010: 2) "the commitment to global peace has continued to define Nigeria's foreign policy since her independence in 1960. And nowhere is it more evident than in Africa which has remained the corner-stone of her foreign policy. Today, Nigeria is the leading peace-keeping nation in Africa and has shown tremendous leadership in all regional efforts in conflict management". The prestige accruing from such efforts has boosted the country's leadership credentials and is often cited in diplomatic circles as a qualifying factor for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council (Sanda, 2010).

While Nigeria's contributions have, to a large extent, been well received externally, on the domestic front, apart from the fact that Nigeria is facing a lot of security challenges at present as a result of activities of the Boko Haram in the North, Niger Delta militants in the South-South, MASSOB in South-East region, Odua People's Congress (OPC) in South-West, there has been growing criticisms or questioning of the rationale for such extraordinary human and materials investment, particularly when the benefit accruable do not seem commensurate with that investment. Moreover, there is a perception that Nigeria's generosity is increasingly being taken for granted.

Existing literature consists largely of personal accounts of individual peacekeeper (Ayuba, 2006), academic perspective on the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) (Vogt, 1992), historical accounts and military perspective dealing with operational matters (Oni, 2002; Ogomudia, 2007; Jonah and Zabadi, 2009) and others raising policy matters (Alli, 2009; Iliya, 2009). One common thread in the literature is a querying of the national or strategic interest served by pursuing an active peace keeping role globally. Nigeria's engagement in ECOMOG received vociferous criticism, given the magnitude of resources expended. Although actual financial expenditure in ECOMOG is controversial, Obasanjo suggested a figure of approximately US\$8 billion (Oluyemi-Kusa, 2007), while Brigadier-General Sani, the then director of peace keeping operations, Army headquarters, put it at US\$10 billion (Sani, 2009).

Nigeria, the backbone of the operation that lasted over a decade, provided 12 combat battalions, an air squadron. Apart from the loss of lives of officers and soldiers and equipment, it is estimated that over 800 soldiers lost their lives in that operation and were said to have been brought back and buried in the night to avoid public outcry and panic (Malu quoted in Oluyemi-Kusa, 2007). Abubakar (2009) admitted that over 70% of ECOWAS troops and 80% of funds were provided by Nigeria and that Nigeria lost economically by this. Agwai (2010: 5) sums it up thus:

In spite of our long years of participation in peace keeping, experience has shown that Nigeria has not capitalized on human and material contribution to the UN. Even though economic considerations have not been the motivation behind Nigeria's contributing... nothing stops her from benefiting from such efforts as some countries are known to be doing at the moment. In order to achieve these goals, Nigeria has to her ability to take part in Peace Support Operation (PSO) both in quality and level of participation.

In the words of Iliya (2009: 10,13):

Nigeria is known for its robust peace keeping capacity operations and its preparedness to sacrifice for Africa. We should not continue to partake in peace operations as we have in the past and are still doing without pausing to go into self-introspection in order to come up with firm standards, principles or procedures that would guide us in choosing to participate or not in future PSOs, based on our beliefs, culture, political expediency, our foreign policy thrust and our national and security interests and even our economic standing. ...Nigeria should stop any unilateral peace keeping activity and seek at all times the collective burden-sharing and unapproved and sponsored approach to

peace support operations. At the same time, Nigeria should ensure that standby force arrangements already decided upon by the AU and ECOWAS are operational and available for deployment for peace support operations.

One glaring area in which Nigeria has failed to maximize the gains of the PSO is in the area of logistics, specifically contingent owned equipment holdings. The UN reimburses contributing countries for providing equipment according to a specified table of equipment. Agwai, the former UNAMID force commander-general in *AfriqueenLigne* (2009: page 5), argues that:

If Nigeria has 10 APCs and they stay in Darfur for one month that is US\$60,000. Multiplied by one year, you get a total of US\$730,000 on the 10APC (Armoured Personnel Carriers) alone... when it comes to this, you are actually making money. I have evidence to prove that there are countries today that are virtually running their military, particularly the army based on their investment in the UN. All what you need to do is invest... if a battalion is equipped to meet UN standards, each battalion will fetch you a minimum of US\$1.2 million a month. But if you do not invest, you cannot get anything. And this is the problem we are having in the world, particularly in Nigeria.

The impact of Nigeria's regional leadership role has been the subject of contention. While some see nothing wrong in such commitment, others see it as having negative impact on Nigeria's national interest. Okpokpo (2002), in his article "The challenges facing Nigeria's foreign policy in the next millennium," argued that Africa alone should no longer be the one and only reason for the existence of a foreign policy in Nigeria. His argument is predicated on the fact that Nigeria has sacrificed a lot for African countries, without anything in return.

On his path, Reuben Abati, the immediate past media chief to President Goodluck Jonathan, posits that Nigeria has been extraordinarily naïve by restricting its foreign policy to Africa as its cornerstone. For him, Nigeria has given so much to ensure the implementation of that policy. The implication, according to him, has been the sacrificing of the true national interest of Nigeria on the altar of regional leadership role. This position was corroborated by one time foreign affairs minister, Garba (1991: 10), when he argued that:

Now here was twenty million dollars in cash going to Angola without even a discussion of what Nigeria might gain, or even what uses it would be put to. Some might argue that to think of a quid proquo from a country fighting for

survival verges on the immoral, but two years later, no one could pin down a normal Angola to any form of bilateral economic agreement.

Oscar (in Olusanya and Akindele, 1986: 10) points out that “it was indeed, ironical for Nigeria to have spent a sum of \$59.8 million in multilateral peace keeping activities in Chad without indicating the interest for which such huge amount was spent”. Participants at the Oxford University Centre for International and African Studies on a seminar entitled “The domestic, regional and external dimensions of Nigeria’s foreign policy after the cold war”, held on 11-12 July, 2003, came out with this position:

While Nigeria has played a vital role in international peace keeping, both under the auspices of UN, as well as ECOWAS, Nigeria itself has been immersed in conflict, either at the level of intra-elite struggles for power of conflicts within the context of its troubled federal experiment. Thus, while Nigeria possesses the necessary potential as well as institutional structures needed for formulating a vibrant foreign policy, its constraints lie in domestic factors – namely the nature of the foreign policy elite and Nigeria’s economic dependence and vulnerability.

Chibundu (2002: 2) argues that Nigeria’s regional leadership role in Africa is in line with our national interest. For him:

It is of course obvious that Nigeria’s geopolitical, historical and demographic circumstances have trapped her in the African predicament. As already indicated, previous Federal Governments had cause to justify the continued relevance of Afrocentric policy in Nigeria’s foreign policy objectives. Consequently, this central philosophy that Nigeria should continue to champion the cause of black and African peoples cannot now be de-emphasized, dislodged or dismantled without doing grievous damage to the national psyche. Therefore, Nigerians, Africans and the world at large must continue to understand and appreciate that whatever the situation, the regional leadership is not negotiable.

The matrix of the international system has given to two separate and distinct goals: the system goals and the actor goals. The system goals are those goals that actors pursue in conjunction with one another, while the actor goals, on the other hand, are the arbitrarily defined goals arranged by every actor, as best suits its fancy and whims (Agwu, 2009). The actor goals were supposed to be the concern of every nation in its interaction be it bilateral or multilateral. For instance, it was for the sake

of oil that France parted ways with the United States in the use of the coalition of the willing to bring Saddam Hussein to his heels. This explains why the United State and the United Kingdom under Margaret Thatcher refused to impose sanction on the apartheid regime in South Africa but rather preferred the principle of constructive engagement. Great powers only involved themselves in peace keeping missions that are linked to their economic interest. It is financial or pecuniary interests that motivate their foreign policies. Just as the billions dollar contracts softened opposition against Saddam by France, so too is Iran's \$100 billion liquefied natural gas pipeline to China sway the Chinese vote and \$1 billion missile deal signed in December, 2005 has created Russian resistance to holding Iran accountable. Russia and China abstained from the vote that was held to merely considering having the Security Council deal with Iran's long history of violations of UN mandates (with respect to its nuclear weapons programme) (Shawn, 2006).

Until the Gulf of Guinea became an attraction because of its hydrocarbon potentials, Africa was remote from the United State interest agenda. The United State was pre-occupied with the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, and efforts to make North Korea and Iran rescind their nuclear weapons programmes failed. At best, according to Agwu (2009), the United State's interest in Africa was confined to the region (i.e. North Africa) that has geographical proximity with the Arabian Peninsula, its supplies of oil and critical connection to the Middle East conflict. The same is true of the United State's attitude to Africa's debts, the cancellation of which is directly needed for the continent's ability to actualize its badly needed socio-political and economic reconstruction. The United States perceive Africa as a source of costly conflicts, a drain on donor resources, continent of disease and non payable debts.

Again, Agwu (2013) opines that the centerpiece policy in foreign policy denotes it or used to designate an exclusive area of vital interest that a country emphasizes and on which it brooks no challenges from external powers or interests. But the extent to which a country delineates and successfully enforces this exclusive perimeter zone of influence is, however, a function of its national power. This is because it is the extent to which a country successfully asserts itself in this perimeter of influence that determines the seriousness with which it is perceived in the zone and beyond. Where the State fails to live up to expectation in providing protection, support, and leadership for the countries in the region, it thereby, creates (in the language of Agwu) an aperture for external intervention or involvement that may undermine its perceived and actual interest in the place.

At a point its military campaigns in Iraq at the wake of the unilateral invasion to unseat Saddam Hussien, the United State's foreign policy "establishment" declared that Iraq is a centerpiece of American foreign policy, influencing how the United States is viewed in the region and around the world, suggesting that the centerpiece

doctrine is not limited to a country's immediate neighbourhood. Again, in January 5, 2012 when Obama unveiled in the Pentagon, a new United States military strategy that emphasizes a lean, agile, and flexible armed forces that would be more mobile (with quick deployment and quick reaction), innovative, and technologically more advanced, its region or emphasis was Southeast Asia (China and Iran), having successfully carried out a regime change in Iraq and Afghanistan for their role in September 11, terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon. Again, the United States had also began to strategically and drastically de-emphasize Europe (i.e. reducing its presence in Europe with drastic reduction in the size of its military pressure, since Europe began to stabilize with the European Union (EU) project) as it was in the height of the Cold War. The new defence doctrine or military strategy under the Obama administration is that the United States de-emphasize Europe and emphasizes Southeast Asia, suggesting that the centerpiece doctrine is dynamic and revolves with the interest of the nation.

Since the conception of the Africa centerpiece foreign policy by Nigeria, the country has expected so much with little or no return at all. The consensus among scholars is that Nigeria's Africa centerpiece policy has remained essentially altruistic. Some scholars even argued that it has essentially been a fruitless exercise in charity, from the technical aid crops programme to the peace keeping operations and other numerous aids in cash and kind. To sum it up, Nigeria's avuncular policies and programmes in Africa were (and are) never requited. However, according to Agwu (2013), it may well be argued that this altruistic policy was imposed on Nigeria by historical circumstance, the very philosophy of the African policy; for having attained nationhood in the thick of the humiliation and deprivation of Africans by the incidences of racial discrimination that bred the civil rights movements, the colonial syndrome that rise to the anti-colonial or decolonization movements, and the apartheid regime in South Africa that resulted in the anti-apartheid struggle, Nigeria considered it a duty to assist in financing the attendant radical or "revolutionary" momentum all over the continent.

But some of these exertions by Nigeria go unrequited, both materially and sometimes in terms of ordinary appreciation, even at the organizational level of OAU, (now AU). For instance, at the height of Nigeria's dispute with Cameroon over the Bakassi peninsular in May, 1981, the OAU exhibited a rather lackadaisical and indifferent posture, shamelessly (indulging) in the pastime of settling a quarrel over a football match from another region of Africa (between Cameroon and Gabon), when Nigeria had always played a key role in the settlement of other African disputes that had contributed to the peace and stability of the continent (Shagari, 2001).

Writing in the *New Nigerian* newspaper of September 28, 1986, Mohammed Haruna attributed Nigeria's unrequited favours in Angola and Zimbabwe to the

country's conservative and Anglophile policies (Akinyemi, 2002). Haruna, in explaining what might have informed the MPLA-government in Angola's failure to acknowledge Nigeria's assistance in getting its independence and the frosty reception that Joe Garba got in Luanda, averred that in the initial days of the struggle, Nigeria, through Garba, was hardly enamoured of the MPLA, preferring instead a so-called government of national unity, and the Angolans knew it. A semblance of an ideological position was only taken by Nigeria when apartheid South Africa moved into Angola, prompting Nigeria's recognition of the MPLA.

In Zimbabwe, it was Nigeria's Anglophile tendencies, for the country under General Obasanjo was for a long time hostile to Mugabe and supportive of Nkomo, presumably on account that the British preferred him. What this means is that Nigeria's policies in these countries were marred by the country's initial lack of decisiveness in its actions or positions, the nebulousness and cloven-hoof nature of its initial positions which, according to Agwu, might have angered the so-called beneficiaries of its assistance. This policy ineptness was also what made Nigeria overreach itself in Chad during its 1978/79 operation "Harmony 1", intended to assist that country to restore normalcy from a debilitating conflict (Agwu, 2009) which France capitalized on to successfully blackmail the country and present the operation as an occupation force to help enthrone Hissein Habre against Libya's sponsor Goukouni Quedde. Thus, not being consistent to follow through a single policy position has been the albatross of Nigeria's African centerpiece policy.

The same scenario can be used to explain the antagonistic relationship between Nigeria and South Africa. The then Libyan leader, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, was very supportive of African National Congress (ANC) the same way that Nigeria was during the anti-apartheid struggle, but the post-apartheid South Africa remained grateful and supported Gaddafi till the bitter end (independent (London), August 26, 2011) but broke ranks and became mortal rivals with Nigeria soon after the fall of apartheid. The rivalry between them, led to Nigeria losing the position of AU chairman in the rescheduled election held in Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian capital and headquarters of the AU on July, 2012 to Ms Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma (former wife of President Jacob Zuma of South Africa) against Dr. Jean Ping from Gabon who was supported by Nigeria. The most worrisome dimension is that this defeat of the Nigerian candidate was a dramatization of Nigeria's powerlessness in any confrontation with South Africa. What made this more tragic is the fact that it happened at a time that Nigeria was extremely boastful of being the national leader in the West African sub-region and that all the constituent countries of the region are *ipso facto* obliged to tow Nigeria's prescribed line by voting for Nigeria's preferred candidate (*The Guardian*, July 14, 2012).

The chronic inability on the part of the country's leadership to foster a dividend yielding foreign policy that is sufficiently people-oriented or citizen-centric suggests that Nigerian leaders are yet to appreciate the fact that the articulation of the national interest of any nation is inexorably dualist in character in the sense that it involves first, the resolution of the conceptual problem and second, the consideration of the strategy for its attainment – that is the distinction between the substantive national interest, on one hand, and the procedure or approach for its realization on the other. Nigeria's foreign policy has been misguided by lack of a precise conception or definition of what the national interest is, and the means towards its accomplishment. This confusion over what constitutes Nigeria's national interest and the procedure for its realization vividly explains why Nigeria's foreign policy, since independence, has witnessed enormous costs without any corresponding dividends.

Scholars have argued that the Federal Military government under Generals Babangida and Abacha administrations did not have a clear cut idea of the nature of the national interest in its decision to intervene in Liberia and Sierra Leone. For instance, Nigeria has been a party to many peacekeeping operations at the sub-regional, continental, and global levels, with so many sacrifices, yet no explicit or implicit post policy dividend has ever been derived from such military exertions. When the United States of America led its “coalition of the willing” to invade Iraq and topple Saddam Hussein, American companies like Halliburton and the entire defence sector were positioned for the post-conflict reconstructions in that country. In the case of Nigeria in Liberia and Sierra Leone under the ECOMOG, no such post-conflict reconstruction engagement ensued to the benefit of the Nigerian State, the private sector or any segment of the civil society. This is a clear example of the fruitlessness of the Nigeria's foreign policy within the context of the national interest.

Agwu (2009) maintains that, Nigeria's inability to take advantage of the post-conflict reconstructions in the arenas it has exerted its military and other resources in peace support operations is, however, found in the under-developed nature of its institutions – especially the economic institutions as compared to the United States, that possesses vibrant economy. The Nigerian economy at both the public and the private sectors is completely bereft of such. Without the appropriate platforms to harness the opportunities offered by the post-conflict reconstructions, Nigeria is completely excluded, leaving the field to the developed and independent economies, which have the wherewithal. This suggests that our national interest may not be exclusively located abroad but is rather primarily at home.

In November, 2004, an effort was made by the Obasanjo's administration to address this economic gap through the creation of the Transnational Corporation of Nigeria Plc (TRANSCORP), as a pool of local entrepreneurs for a central and collective mobilization of capital. Its core interest was in oil and gas, agriculture, information

technology, power, and international trade. It was to be a mega corporation like Daewoo, Ssangyong, Hyundai that nurtured South Korea into a developed economy in less than half a century. It was to break the domination of foreign-owned and controlled firms in the Nigerian economy. TRANSCORP was to expand the frontiers of Nigeria's trade all over Africa, especially with those nations that have benefited from Nigeria's peace keeping and other intervention efforts, as they embark on post-conflict reconstruction. But again, and quite tragically, TRANSCORP failed to deliver. Just as the corporation was beginning to use the nation's rising continental profile to establish its presence in major countries of the continent, political bickering, malice and victimization started to dog its heels. Whosoever did not support President Obasanjo's third term agenda, including the Pioneer Group Managing Director of TRANSCORP, Fola Adeola, was thrown out of the corporation. The point above explains why, despite all Nigeria's exertions in South Africa, Angola and Zimbabwe, the end of apartheid in South Africa and the independence of Angola and Zimbabwe dramatically marked the end of the platform for Abuja's meaningful engagement with these countries at the level of mutual benefits or better put, at the level of securing of Nigeria's national interest.

Nigeria's foreign policy has been unable to successfully create a compatible synergy between the country's domestic politics and its involvement in international politics, especially against the backdrop of the imperative of geo-political realism (which is at the core of the national interest). This problem has been particularly observed in the country's loss of the Bakassi Peninsula. This failure of Nigeria's foreign policy in the realization of the national interest in both domestic and international politics is a serious derogation from its leadership pretensions in Africa. The loss of the Bakassi Peninsula to neighbouring Cameroon was a clear case of the subordination of the national interest to the regime and even personal interest of the leader. President Obasanjo's handing over of the Bakassi Peninsula to Cameroon was to ingratiate his government to the international community and earn himself qualification for the Nobel Peace Prize, likewise the handing over of Charles Taylor to be tried by the Special Court on war crime in Sierra Leone to please the West enough to endorse his third term bid for the country's presidency.

The absence of post-policy dividends has re-enforced or swollen the ranks of those advocating Nigeria's review of the Africa-centerpiece doctrine in its foreign policy for reasons of not being appreciated or advancing the national interest of the country. This was evident in the advocacy that particularly noted:

The global economic meltdown in 2008, the end of the cold war, globalization and its attendant consequences, as well as the disappearance of the issues that once engaged Nigeria's attention from the 1960s to the late 1980s, have

brought entirely new domestic and global realities and challenges, which are fast questioning the very basis of the Afro-centric policy (Agwu, 2013: 88).

The central premise in this position is that the dominant concern of foreign policy at all times should be the national interest, except when that interest, perforce, has to give way to an international interest, in which case that international interest must be considered to be the national interest. What this means is that Nigeria should never hold fast to any doctrine, but should always change as every policy exigency demands. Since foreign policies are by implication naturally amoral, incoherent, and inconsistent, it should unambiguously serve the national interest. Nigeria should, for instance, not be fixated on the whole of Africa as the centerpiece of its foreign policy, particularly where there are no ostensible gains. The success of any country's foreign policy is gauged or determined by its concrete and necessarily psychological relation to the national interest. Nigeria has made enormous sacrifices with its Africa centerpiece policy to the rest of Africa and Africans, both on the African soil and of the African blood, but this has not concretely addressed the country's national interest beyond the realm of psychological satisfaction and international prestige.

Conclusion

The study examines the interface between Foreign Policy interests and regional leadership ambition with particular reference to Nigeria in Africa. Put differently, was there any nexus between Nigeria's leadership role in Africa and the advancement of the government domestic national development agenda? The study concluded by demonstrating that Nigeria and its past leaders have consistently been pursuing her domestic development goals independently of its Foreign Policy, so that the nation's foreign policy has not been translated into a source of national domestic development; consequently the nation suffered serious development challenges. The consensus here is that Nigeria allowed the system goals to take precedence over actors' goals that would reverberate in greater economic opportunity and prosperity for the people. Given this position, it is apparent that there will be a clash between the assumed primary aim of foreign policy, vis-à-vis external roles and domestic livelihood.

The way forward is that although Nigeria's foreign policy remains basically Africa-centered, it should, however, be more inward focused, aimed at adding value to Nigeria's development. That is, the Nigerian people should be the focus of Nigeria's foreign policy, which should be tailored towards energizing the domestic economy, creating jobs and generally reducing unemployment.

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