

## **Internal Governance Challenges and Nigeria's International Relations Goals**

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### **Abstract**

*Nations enhance their overall development and global standings through international relations. Nigeria's poor conditions of development and international image crisis worry scholars and other stakeholders of African politics considering its high participation status in foreign relations. Accusing fingers are directed at internal factors vis-a-vis foreign relations. The paper examines the complex interplay between Nigeria's internal governance challenges and the weakness in attaining international relations goals. The paper is a qualitative research. It used a mixed-method approach of data collection dwelling on in-depth interviews and published data from relevant sources. A purposive sampling technique was used to select interview respondents. The paper adopted the liberal institutionalism theory for explanation. As a critique of realist military power and state-centric perception of international relations, Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, Jr underscored the roles of international institutions, cooperation, and governance in attaining national and international goals. They argue that national governance composition considerably influences a country's capacity to pursue efficient international relations and achieve targeted goals. The theory posits that states are not only anxious about power, but they are also anxious about achieving mutually beneficial gains through cooperation. Findings show that Nigeria is a major socio-economic and political interest in Sub-Sahara Africa and has recorded enormous engagements in the global international system over the decades. However, its foreign relations are undermined by internal governance deficiencies that led to collaborated imperialism, fraud, and mismanagement of public resources; international image crisis, and stringent living conditions for Nigerians and the failure to exploit global interconnectivity and interdependence of economies, politics, and culture.*

**Keywords:** Nigeria, Governance, Internal Governance Challenges, International Relations, International Relations' Goals, Nigeria.

### **Introduction**

Nigeria is a major economic and political interest and partner of the superpowers in sub-Saharan Africa, but the poor living conditions of its citizens do not reflect this height. Perception of Nigeria's roles in the world is high-stakes but the results are a high regional burden, extortionist suspicion, and lack of strategic dynamics – roles motivated more by visibility and relevance and not much strategy for national development (Folari, 2001). Different Nigerian policy players attempt to push their policy preferences which often results in a lack of cohesion in policy execution (Nwosu, (1994). Nigeria bears most of the burden despite equal rights, duties and benefits provided in the ECOWAS treaty, yet it gains only 'prestige' as the 'big brother' at the expense of Nigerians and development

(Osondu, 2015). No doubt, Nigeria is an important actor on the African and global stage. Analysts often perceive Nigerian interests as operating within its immediate neighbours; West African neighbours; continental African issues; and entities outside Africa (McLoughlin, 2014). Its influence on the four partners is a matter of debate. Omode (2006) carried out a study on Nigeria's relations with her neighbours. Findings indicate that Nigerian neighbours exploit its resources and encroach on its territory. Despite perceiving these activities as a threat Nigeria continues to foster good relations with them. A study on borderless borders observed that security challenges in Nigeria, particularly the Boko Haram menace and other terrorist attacks and border crimes are alarming. Globalization and custom inefficient measures are underscored as the major causative factors (Osimen, & Anegbode, 2017). A study on Nigeria's national interest and conflict resolution intervention by Adams & Ebegebulem (2016) revealed that despite prominent military roles and financial support in West Africa, Nigeria has been instrumental in almost all conflict resolutions and peacekeeping missions in the region. Nigeria's emergence as a strong power in Africa did not start today. As a result of the political events in 1975 Angola and Nigeria's strong response, Akinyemi (1982) studied the emergence of Nigeria as a world power and saw her recognition and support of the MLPA against AU and USA position as firm and an indication of a potential world power. A study on Nigeria and West Africa highlighted a regional power without followers. Findings showed that while Nigeria demonstrated its dominance in West Africa and realized its objectives, it failed to gain broad-based regional support (Scholvin, 2014).

The interplay of international relations and governance is vital to how states navigate the complexities of the global system, implement national policies and achieve dominant international interests. A comprehensive understanding of international relations and governance involves a proper analysis of the interplay of the two variables – the workings of the international system or the way states behave and how they shape and are shaped by domestic policies which contribute to relations among nations. What developed as international relations spans through centuries and is deeply intertwined with the evolution of states, diplomacy, and global interactions. It can be traced back to God's emissaries to kings communicating messages and warnings from one political community to another. Serving as God's emissaries, the biblical Moses and Aaron executed such an errand to the Egyptian Pharaoh asking him to let the Israelites go from Egypt to hold a festival in the desert to honour God (America Bible Society, 1979). In ancient times, interstate relations of the Mesopotamia, Egyptian, Greek, and Chinese civilizations prevailed. Treaties, alliances, conquests and diplomatic envoys were vital instruments for interstate relations (Fernandez-Armesto, 1997). The Medieval period recorded interactions among feudal systems. The rise of monarchies resulted in rudimentary diplomatic practices and institutions.

The Age of Discovery promoted interstate contacts motivated by the quest for economic gains as the underlying motive behind international relations of that era. Such contacts established trade routes across continents and initiated trades on materials, services, and slaves. In the 16th to 19th centuries, the European quest for economic gains led to colonial expansion and the establishment of colonies and trade networks across continents. It saw the European territorial annexations of fellow city-states and kingdoms in which the Roman Empire was one of the conquerors. The second face expanded beyond Europe. The expansion of empires played a role in connecting continents. Notably, the creation of states, the growth of international governmental and non-governmental organizations, multinational corporations and the spread of ideas and values expanded

relations among nations beyond expectations. The instrumentalities of diplomacy, treaties and military forces resulted in adventures to assert control over the territories and resources (Porter, 1994).

The Pre-Westphalia international relations existed before the Peace of Westphalia and showed aggressive use of power to achieve imperial interests across kingdoms and empires. The Peace of Westphalia began the modern state system and sovereignty. It abolished the incessant interference in the domestic affairs of nations (Croston, (1999). The Westphalia period covered 1648 - 1945 and marked the beginning of the treaty and the birth of the United Nations. The period expanded and consolidated the legal framework for interstate relations and experienced European domination of international order (Davenport, (1916). The 1648 Peace was a pivotal moment in the emergence of modern state-centric relations of states, establishing the principles of sovereignty and non-interference in the domestic affairs of states (Osiander, 2001). The Concert of Europe emerged in the 19th century through conferences and diplomatic negotiations to maintain stability and prevent conflicts among the major European powers following the Napoleonic Wars (Schroeder, 1994). The devastating experience of World War 1 prompted the need for a mechanism for preventing conflicts through international cooperation and collective security. The League of Nations was established in 1920 as an instrument for diplomacy, arbitration and sanctions to achieve global peace (MacMillan, 1990). The Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union culminated in the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Warsaw Pact and set the stage for politico-military rivalry and the development of nuclear weapons (Gaddis, 2005).

As international relations continued to evolve, the end of World War II and the birth of the United Nations marked the beginning of the post-Westphalia that extended to date. The birth of Non-state actors, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and multinational corporations emerged. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the surge of capitalist successes, globalization became a tool in the 20th century for renewed multilateral cooperation and strengthening of international institutions: the United Nations, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund (Baylis et al., 2017). The end of the Cold War experienced a shift in international order, with the emergence of states such as China and India as new powers (Waltz, 1979).

The contemporary time of international relations is a period of globalization where the rise of non-state actors, interconnectivity of people and economies and general interdependence of nations reigned supreme. Cross-border trade, movement of investment capital, and information and communication technology feature prominently. The era experiences unprecedented challenges in the form of cybercrime, climate change, terrorism, diseases, pockets of wars, and the development and proliferation of small and light weapons of mass destruction. The associated cross-pollination of ideas and culture and the later neo-colonial interactions continued to place Europe advantageously. More recent adventures in the relations of nations focused on conflict resolutions and the establishment of diplomatic and organizational structures and legal frameworks to sustain the emerging relations of nations. The increasing need for more advanced order, human security and social progress made the interplay between international relations and state governance most necessary.

Thus, global governance developed, historically, in concomitant with international relations. It is a situation where structures, processes and legal frameworks constitute the means for organizing and regulating the behaviour of state and non-state actors for achieving global peace, security and resolution of conflicts. In the ancient civilizations of

Mesopotamia, Egypt, and China, treaties, and diplomatic relations facilitated cooperation and governance of different societies (Bull & Watson, 1984). In the classical era, the Roman Empire brought societies of diverse cultures and populations under one governance system or authority. The medieval period organized societies under the feudal system and so Europe saw a hierarchical governance structure in feudalism with narrow interstate coordination. In the Westphalia era, the principles of state sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of states were a crucial moment in the evolution of global governance. European exploration and colonial expansion extended imperial governance on conquerable societies, particularly Africa and Asia thereby expanding global governance to those regions. The Industrial Revolution resulted in the birth of new nation-states and international organizations as platforms for global governance. The International Telecommunication Union came into existence in that era. Such establishment expanded after World War 1 with the birth of the League of Nations expanding global governance. The occurrence and devastating effects of World War II further extended global governance by the founding of the United Nations Organization in 1945. The organization brought more nations together and continued to expand its membership up to 193 states with the admission of South Sudan on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July 2011 (United Nations, 2011). United States vs. Soviet Union's politico-military and economic rivalry shaped the global governance dynamics that led to the creation of NATO and the Warsaw Pact. The Post-Cold War era experienced globalization and the resultant interdependence, and integration of economies and peoples. Advancements in the development of ICT and technology played pivotal roles in the process. At that stage, global governance mechanisms faced global challenges of the time. The International Criminal Court and the World Bank played crucial roles in addressing the situation. (Klobucista & Ferragamo, 2024). 21st century faced new challenges like geopolitical tensions, cyber security threats, and diseases, the controls of which multilateral efforts played salient cooperation and governance roles.

The general conditions of the international system in the above relations, cooperation and coordination, particularly as they affected major world challenges, required a multilateral approach to comprehend, plan and implement control measures. As a matter of necessity, the national government became the available instrument for this cooperation as the domestication and fulfilment of international resolutions and laws to address such challenges at the grassroots became their paramount roles. National governance became the instrument for multilateral cooperation while international organizations coordinate relations among nations - thus the link between governance and international relations is a nexus of survival necessity and interdependent adventure.

### **The Situation in Nigeria**

The situation in Nigeria presents pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial governance structures shaped by diverse ethnic composition, colonial history, and complex post-colonial challenges undermining development, nation building and socio-economic and political stability. Earlier, governance had been perceived as a major challenge to economic development in Africa and setbacks in the late 1970s served as proof (Fosu, 2018). As far back as 1981, a report was commissioned by the Britton Woods Institution on development in Sub-Sahara Africa and poor governance was emphasized as a major factor responsible for Africa's poor economic conditions (Fosu, 2018). For Alence, (2004) nascent democracies in Africa have many shortcomings if accessed based on liberal democratic ideals. The point is specifically captured when (Daniel, & Iyoha, (2007) observed that Nigeria has great

potential undermined by corrupt practices and high cost of governance. Okoi, and Iwara, (2021) accept that the declining capacities of Nigerian leaders to acknowledge the dangers associated with incessant election fraud and police brutality, and put measures in place to check them are manifestations of failure of governance. In the financial sector, the situation is worse. The rate at which Nigerian leaders obtain international loans without achieving the project for which the loan was obtained is alarming. The associated debts and accumulating service charges resulting from there is clear evidence of poverty of governance. The case is worrisome considering the amount involved and the increasing rate of borrowing without effective utilization. Debt Management Office Nigeria showed that Nigeria's total public debt was N46.25 trillion in December 2022. Figure 4 of Nigeria's Public Debt Statistical Bulletin shows that FGN's Debt Service payment in Q2 2023 was N849.59 billion compared to N1,243.04 billion in Q1 2023 (Nigeria Debt Management Office, 2023). The above figures represent the actual payments made. The above financial conditions expose Nigeria to fluctuations in global interest and currency exchange rates. The high debt burden inhibits investment and economic growth and is a minus indicator for assessing governance. It heightens the vulnerability of the country to external shocks.

Consequently, Nigeria's international image encounters a crisis of confidence. Despite being the largest economy and population in Africa, Nigeria suffers high levels of poverty, inflation, and unemployment recently aggravated by the removal of fuel subsidies and the current economic instability. The country offers limited opportunities to most of its citizens (World Bank, 2024). From 1999 till the end of the administration, President Obasanjo made concerted efforts to improve the battered Nigeria's international image (Ajayi, 2015). Subsequent administrations were unable to sustain his achievement, rather regard for Nigeria abroad depreciated further due to massive corruption, reckless electoral malpractice, and judicial lack of confidence; insecurity, poverty, and departure of some business firms to other African countries due to the uncondusive nature of the Nigerian business environment. Other bad conditions include the devaluating status of the naira and general decay of the societal value system and poor foreign policy strategies and management. Deficient governance hinders Nigeria's interdependence benefits like international best practices, emulated production, education, and system management etcetera. The paper therefore examines some of these internal governance challenges to unveil the way they contributed to the undesirable conditions in Nigeria.

### **Nigerian Governance**

Nigerian governance is shaped by complex dynamics of socio-economic and political history rooted in colonial legacy, ethnic diversity and struggle over the wealth of the nation. The above factors define the trends, development, patterns, opportunities and challenges that shape governance in Nigeria. British colonialism created Nigeria's governance framework and central administrative system that subjected different ethical entities to a single political authority – Nigeria (Falola & Heaton, 2008). The 1914 amalgamation of the protectorates of North and South Nigeria entrenched regional inequity that adversely shaped Nigerian governance to date (Ihonvhere, 1999). Governance in Nigeria has rotated between the military and civilian regimes considering numerous military incursions in the country's politics (Osaghae, 1998). Despite the 1999 return to civilian governance, over-centralization of power, political instability, fraud, corruption, and electoral malpractices remain major challenges facing governance in Nigeria (Suberu, 2001, Agbaje & Adejumobi, 2006). Ake 1996 identifies corruption, ethnic

politics and tension as profound hindrances to governance in Nigeria. Studies on the corruption perception index carried out by Transparency International consistently rank Nigeria low (Transparency International, 2023). The establishment of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission and Independent Corrupt Practices Commission in Nigeria could not tame corrupt practices in the country. The current situation of governance in Nigeria is converting public wealth to private hands in the form of privatization, official looting, budget and contract padding, and diversion of public revenue to private accounts.

### **Organs of Nigerian Governance**

*The Legislature:* This organ of government is fundamental in determining the legal framework for governance. It establishes laws upon which the government makes its domestic and foreign policies. Nigeria's Acts of the Parliament emanate from bills passed on the floors of the National Assembly. The Assembly makes and amends the constitution thereby establishing the legal framework for foreign affairs. The fundamental legal document upon which governance and international relations are based is the national constitution which is a product of the legislature. The legislature thus is the law-making body of a nation. Some Legislatures like in Nigeria and the USA are divided into lower and upper chambers which are further divided into House Committees responsible for issues in their terms of reference. Domestic and foreign interest groups attempt to influence the legislature to make laws and pass bills that serve their interests. The legislature also amends laws, does an oversight function, and represents constituents and the nation among a comity of parliaments. Defence of the constitution and human rights are responsibilities of the legislature in the course of law-making. The functions if executed properly can raise internal capacity for achieving international goals.

*The Executive:* The executive arm of government has enormous responsibility of implementing the laws of the land through public policies and actions. Such laws and policies determine the foreign policy actions of the nation and the nature of foreign relations – these are parts of governance. They are major determinants of the achievement of foreign objectives.

*The Judiciary:* Adjudication and general determination of law and cases are primary functions of governance performed by the judiciary. The body works in hierarchical and consistent levels of administration of justice using court systems comprising the supreme, appeal, high, industrial, sharia, customary, and magistrate courts as in Nigeria. Such courts determine domestic and foreign cases as part of governance. Aspects of the cases that involve foreign nationals, businesses, institutions, originations and bodies form part of international relations. The competence of the judiciary in this obligation should benefit Nigeria if well harnessed.

The entire workings of government in international relations are aimed at achieving national interests. The above organs serve as vital tools for achieving these interests. Such interests are development-based. Nations tap from interconnectivity and interdependence with other nations to achieve one form of development or the other. For instance, Nigeria's benefits from foreign investment and economic development are undermined by internal weakness. Nigeria is unable to attract adequate foreign direct investment and the ones attracted are not utilized well for economic development. Corruption, lack of transparency, and bureaucratic inefficiency discourage investors. Some investors have departed Nigeria. Internal governance challenges have created unpredictable negative environments for businesses.

### **Nigeria's International Relations Question**

Despite Nigeria's involvement in the multitudes of transnational, sub-regional, regional, and global cooperation and partnerships, its international connectivity, and interdependence over some decades failed to provide a meaningful improvement in citizens' conditions of life and their internal and international image status. There is poverty, a high unemployment rate, a low literacy level, a high level of insecurity, bad governance and a general state of hopelessness in the land. Nigeria is a high-level debtor tormented by heavy debt service commitments. Foreign partners do not have regard for the country but have vested economic interest in their economic interests. Citizens express their lack of confidence in the government and some question their continuous membership of the state. A study on Nigeria's international image crisis, by Agbaenyi & Owuamanam (2021) reveals that Nigeria's image is enveloped in the poor international perception of the business environment and the high rate of official corruption in the country. Kalu, Ude, & Kalu (2020), a study on globalization and Nigeria's international image finds that Nigeria's governance structure does not encourage development in the country not striving to secure its citizens abroad and that foreign direct investment has been on the decline over the years.

International relations as a practice encompass diplomatic treaties, alliances, and negotiations among international actors (Goldstein, 2017). It includes the use of strategies and foreign policy plans to address international problems like global health pandemics, terrorism, and cybercrime (Cooper et al., 2013).

### **Internal Governance Challenges Affecting Nigeria's International Goals**

Some of the Nigeria's international goals that constitute its foreign policy priorities include: Engagement of the Diaspora, climate and environmental issues, promotion of democracy, promotion of human rights, South-South cooperation, African integration/unity, penetration of the United Nations, resolution of conflict, economic diversification, economic growth, national security, wage making etcetera. Let us examine how internal government challenges affect the above priorities.

*Insecurity:* Insecurity in Nigeria is characterized by kidnapping, banditry, youth restiveness, cybercrime, human trafficking, communal crisis, armed robbery etcetera. These indicators constitute a major threat to business and people. They make Nigeria non-conducive for business, tourism, and general development. International businesses frown at such an environment. Many foreigners have been kidnapped in Nigeria and many expatriates departed from Nigeria. A report on the ordeals of foreigners in the kidnapers' dens identified rampant kidnapping of business owners and employees which has become a persistent dilemma deterring foreign investors and stifling the inflow of foreign direct investment amidst the economic hardship in Nigeria (Punch, 14 September, 2024). Insecurity prevented the achievement of a good international image for Nigeria and deters foreign direct investment. Interview correspondent B argued that insecurity is a major threat to Nigeria's image abroad and needs serious government attention to check the ugly menace. Insecurity is a threat to human rights in Nigeria. The right to life is not guaranteed. Many Nigerians are killed daily. Human organ harvest by ritualists is rampant.

*Collaborated Imperialism:* Colonial administration in Nigeria left legacies that characterize the post-colonial era. Imperialism is its system of operation with economic exploitation as the underlying motive. It left men who developed the same colonial character even in the post-independence era based on the alliance with foreign partners. The men constitute what (Marx and Engels 1848) call the comprador of the bourgeoisie.

They have formed partnerships with foreign captains of industries and politicians to convert Nigeria’s public businesses and wealth to private ownership. The act presents itself in the form of fraudulent privatization and deregulation of the economy. The combined interests of Nigerian elites and their foreign partners have significant involvement in the exploitation and corruption in the country. They promote private interests at the expense of the public good. Such fraudulent collaboration hinders economic growth in Nigeria. Loans from China are major victims of this aspect of fraud.

NIGERIA'S TOTAL DEBTS TO CHINA AS OF THE YEAR 2023			
2020	2021	2022	2023
\$3.12 billion	\$3.48 billion	\$4.03 billion	\$4.29 billion

*Source: Debt Management Office of Nigeria*

*Poor foreign policy strategies:* Foreign policy is targeted at achieving the national interest of a state. However, when business or political interests of individuals occupying government offices or those who financed their election override government priority, public policy strategy suffers a setback. The situation in Nigeria features the interests of political party leaders, private businesses of connected captains of industries and ethnic preferences. Those who bulldozed themselves to power usually have a lot of side interests to settle based on agreements reached to secure political support at the expense of the public good. Nigeria has played major roles in the establishment of ECOWAS, its peacekeeping operations, leadership, and financing. However, it has not benefited much from the organization or their members in terms of loyalty, respect, policy support, and the pursuit of its other national interests abroad. Nigeria is supposed to stand as a real giant of Africa in the comity of global nations but poor foreign policy strategy is a major obstacle. Poverty prevents it from working with ECOWAS countries for respect and loyalty and inability to influence Francophone West African countries.

*Fraudulent Elections:* Electoral fraud involves a lot of intrigues, manoeuvring and associated commitments. It places unqualified and self-appointed leaders in power. The drive for fraud in this sense is usually instigated by greed. Such greed drives most election contestants in Nigeria. The December 25, 2023, presidential election was a major event characterized by greed for power and reckless use of money to emerge victorious. It contributed to the failure to upload presidential election results to the server. The same server uploaded results for the National Assembly elections on the same day. The Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) was unable to convince the general public why presidential election results could not be uploaded. The Nigerian judiciary made the situation worse as it was unable to entertain the cases associated with the presidential election. Instead of handling the case under Nigerian electoral law, the Supreme Court shied away from its primary responsibility. Most Nigerians were disappointed when the Supreme Court of Nigeria demonstrated its incompetence to stand by the law against all pressure. It shamefully declared valid evidence provided by complainants as inadmissible because it could not have faulted the overwhelming evidence showing manipulations of the process in favour of complainants. That fraud damages Nigeria’s democratic image globally. It produces government officials incapable of conducting profitable international relations.

*Mismanagement of Resources and Corruption:* There is a high level of misallocation of resources and official corruption in Nigeria. These issues undermine Nigeria’s strength to



utilize diplomatic, economic and strategic opportunities available in international partnerships. Foreign trust and business confidence among foreign partners are undercut. Respondent C opined that this Nigeria situation creates a loss of confidence and credibility in Nigeria’s foreign relations particularly in terms of efficient management of joint enterprises and devotion to agreements. It led to doubt from organizations and governments and breached diplomatic trust. It has done great harm to Nigeria’s international reputation. For instance, Nigeria is regularly rated poorly by Transparency International. Its highest score in percentage since 2012 is 28% in 2016 which is very poor. In 2023 Nigeria ranked 145 in the corruption perception index of 180 countries (Transparency International, 2023). See the table below. A country with such image status will find it difficult to achieve its foreign policy goals and enjoy international opportunities.

**2012- 2023 TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL CORRUPTION PERCEPTION INDEX FOR NIGERIA**

General Score for 2023: 145/180 Countries Rated

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Score (%)	27	25	27	26	28	27	27	26	25	24	24	25

*Source: Constructed from the 2023 Transparency International Corruption Perception Index*

*Dependent Economy* Nigeria’s dependency syndrome transcends economic and political boundaries. The integration of the country into the Western capitalist system and the current Chinese economy, which uses multinational businesses, superior foreign policy strategy, and other bargaining capacities, place Nigeria in a dependent position. It has a monoculture economy that depends on the export of crude oil. Production in the major manufacturing sector in Nigeria is dominated by Multinational Corporations resulting in profit flight. As a major debtor Nigeria depends on China, USA, Paris Club etcetera for loans it finds difficult to pay. It suffers a debt crisis without much to show as the dividends of the loans. Nigeria depends on foreign corporations to do the crude oil business. Nigeria depends so much on the importation of manufactured goods and suffers trade deficit on different fronts. It lacks local refining capacity and imports refined petroleum products, electronics, pharmaceuticals, food etcetera. Nigeria depends on foreign aid and loans to fund infrastructure and annual budgets. The above position breeds underdevelopment and economic vulnerability. It neither secures a good international image nor offers international opportunities for the achievement of foreign policy goals. Respondent B argued that the situation made Nigeria vulnerable to international exploitation. Nigerian debt charges are enormous:

**BREAKDOWN OF NIGERIA DEBT SERVICE CHARGES TO CHINA**

2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023 (up to mid-year)
\$63.96m	\$69.73m	\$74.85m	\$79.60m	\$81.41m	\$96.96m	\$119.49m	\$62m

Total service charge between 2016 to 2023 mid-year approximately \$547.92m

*Source: Debt management office (DMO) and central bank of Nigeria (CBN)*

*High-Level Inequality:* Distributive governance in Nigeria is very poor. The wealth of the Nigerian nation is largely in the hands of a few individuals and groups while many Nigerians are wallowing in poverty. World Macro Poverty Outlook Shows that Approximately 40% of Nigerians live below the national poverty line. Nigeria's headline inflation rate was 33.40% in July 2024. This can undermine household purchasing power and the poverty line. This is a result of a fraudulent monopoly of wealth by a few. People in power embezzle government funds at the expense of public good. Unemployment placed many Nigerians below the poverty level.

*Weak Governance Institutions* Recruitment of unqualified occupants of government institutions and the prevailing influences and fraudulent practices in Nigerian institutions of governance weakens the quality and output of the institutions. International institutions and state cooperation can foster development, but the national institutions must be up and doing to guarantee relational benefits from such connectivity and interdependence. Government ministries and agencies lack the capacity for sustainable and beneficial international relations. Despite the high human development capacities, the country acquired from institutions of learning across the world, the phenomena of unqualified staff, ghost workers, godfathers, and political and money influences constitute a major setback to the performance of the institutions particularly. Performances of the Nigerian Presidency and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in policies and actions, have not placed Nigeria in a good international standing nor did they achieve for it the expected foreign affairs gains expected of them.

*Human Rights Violations* Violation of human rights is a major factor that dent Nigeria's image abroad and undermines the government's and people's opportunities to achieve their interests. Governance in Nigeria is illiberal. It presents very tight socio-economic and political spaces for the citizen to achieve their life ambitions. Some of these violations are presented in the forms of police brutality, suppression of the right of expression in disguise of hate speech protection, arrest without warrant, official extortion of money, detention without timely bail, official rigging of elections, over-taxation etcetera.

### **Why the Internal Governance Challenges?**

The colonial establishment and organization of the Nigerian State was faulty and instead of restructuring the polity, the post-independent regimes corrupted the state the more. They inherited a faulty political system and since independence, have failed to carry out any fundamental restructuring of the faulty system. They weaken the system and it becomes incapable of sustaining its growing population. Thus, the internal governance challenges and the inability to exploit the global interconnectivity and interdependence of economies, politics, peoples and cultures become major obstacles to the attainment of international goals.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

International relations and governance are accompaniments of each other particularly in the current interdependent and widely connected global society. They work for the organization and regulation of the behaviour of state and non-state actors in the international system. They provide peace and security and resolve conflicts in the system. The processes occur at different levels of authority hierarchical in descending or ascending orders. The stability and progress of the world depend on the effective functioning of each

and their interdependence in addressing global challenges. Internal governance challenges are the major obstacles to the achievement of international goals in Nigeria.

High-level insecurity is a major threat to Nigeria's international image and collaborated imperialism plays a role in making Nigeria a dependent nation vulnerable to exploitation and relational deficit. Poor foreign policy strategy undermines its respect, prestige, and loyalty from other West African countries. Fraudulent elections in Nigeria produce leaders who are incapable of conducting beneficial foreign relations. Besides, mismanagement of resources and official corruption hinder international trust, confidence and profitable partnership between Nigeria and its foreign partners. Economic dependency makes Nigeria vulnerable and unable to achieve targeted goals in the community of nations. Weak governance institutions in Nigeria are unable to guarantee relational benefits for Nigeria. Violation of human rights is a major factor undermining Nigeria's image abroad.

A pathway to liberate Nigeria from the above governance challenges and enable it to benefit profitably from international relations, global interconnectivity and interdependence is to restructure power, politics and economy to embrace the best international practices with indigenous backgrounds and uniqueness playing important roles. These will include to: (a) Write a new and people-oriented constitution for the country through popular participation, transparency, discussion and respect for the people's rights. (b) Decentralize state power to the three former regional blocs. This has to be covered by the new constitution. (c) Engage in a massive mechanized agricultural production and diversify industrial production to other areas of the economy. (d) Invest in education and encourage skill acquisition while ensuring that every adult citizen has a career capable of service to society. (e) Focus on the knowledge economy, and national productivity movement, and use natural resources as an important component to foster internal productivity. (f) To achieve the above recommendations, Nigerians must stand united to elect quality leaders at all levels of governance.

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