

Nigeria's National Interest and Liberation Diplomacy in the Context of Africa

Sunny Mene PIATE¹, Dumle Callistus NEKABARI² and Bariledum KIA³

¹Department of Political Science, Akwa Ibom State University, Obio Akpa Campus, Obio Akpa, Akwa Ibom State NIGERIA

^{2,3}Department of History and International Diplomacy Rivers State University, Nkpolu-Oroworukwu, Port Harcourt NIGERIA.

Abstract

Liberation diplomacy is the diplomatic strategy used by countries or groups fighting for independence from colonialism, tyranny, or any other kind of dominance. Achieving political emancipation via diplomatic means is what it entails. Sanctions, embargoes, and the cutting of diplomatic links are significant instruments in the diplomatic isolation of the repressive government. Ultimately, liberation diplomacy boils down to promoting independence and self-determination via diplomatic channels. When it comes to the liberation of African nations from colonial domination, Nigeria has been a vital player. Knowing that liberation diplomacy from Nigeria was vital in the battle against apartheid in South Africa and across Africa is crucial to decolonisation efforts. But there have been complications and areas of contention about its success, as there are with any foreign strategy. With this background, the research endeavours to place liberation diplomacy, a thrust of Nigeria's foreign policy, inside the framework of Nigeria's national interest. In light of these factors, the research aims to determine how much liberation diplomacy impacted Nigeria's internal development objectives. Political realism provides the theoretical framework for understanding the conversation. Justice and rights arguments must be based on strategic considerations that are in line with the interests of state players in the international system, and here is where the theory comes in handy for the research. Study results showed that Nigeria, like any country based on a mechanical structure, would have weak national interests and, thus, would not be able to reap the rewards of sacrifice in its foreign relations. The fact that other players in the international system have heavily penetrated Africa and Nigeria's power standing are the reasons why the reciprocity dynamics seem to have worked havoc against Nigeria. According to the research, Nigeria should prioritise both its internal demands and its obligations on the continental level. That is, Nigeria need to direct its foreign policy efforts inward so that it might contribute to the country's prosperity.

Keywords: Apartheid, Colonialism, Foreign Policy, Liberation Diplomacy, National interest, Non-Alignment, Pan Africanism.

Introduction

Foreign policy refers to a country's strategy for its interactions with other countries. Assuring economic progress, security, and ideological goals may all be part of advancing national interest (Ukpe, 2024; Piate, 2014; Piate 2013; Ukpe, 1997). It is a nation's planned

behaviour with regard to its environment. That is how people in the house respond to events happening in the outside world. The structure and dynamics of the international system serve as catalysts, while domestic considerations, particularly the distinct viewpoints of policymakers, shape the reactions. According to Piate and Eminue (2022), states implement foreign policies when they seek to influence global affairs in a way that aligns with their perception of their own national interests. The declared aims of a nation in its dealings with other nations constitute its foreign policy. Statecraft refers to the methods by which a nation-state seeks and protects its own interests on the global stage. According to Piate (2017) and Piate, Sunday and Kia (2024), nations conduct foreign policy with the aim of achieving practical goals, such as promoting their own economic development and guaranteeing the socioeconomic welfare of their population. An interest, in its simplest form, is a country's evaluation of its needs and desires in relation to those of other countries that constitute its external environment. The phrase "national interest" is used in the context of foreign policy to denote the goals, values, and principles that a country wishes to advance and protect in its interactions with other countries and on the global stage. In the major literature on the topic, foreign policy goals are often grouped as main, secondary, or tertiary. No matter where you reside, the safety and security of the nation, its people, and its territory must always come first. To rephrase, the survival of the state and its citizens depends on the welfare of the general public. The government may be adamant about these interests and ready to resort to any measures necessary, including military action, to see them through to fruition. Secondary goals are interests that a state may pursue aggressively but that can also be accommodated to some extent. This list includes objectives for which the government would be prepared to make compromises rather than commit all of its resources. When nations seek to become more prominent on the international scene, they have tertiary goals (Aremu, 2010; Piate and Eminue, 2022).

It is often believed that, when practiced independently, diplomacy encompasses both the creation and execution of foreign policy. The practice of diplomatic relations entails the art and science of negotiating or using intelligence and subtlety to manage official ties between governments of independent states. The ultimate objective of several diplomatic initiatives and national movements is the emancipation from colonialism, oppression, or any kind of domination (Amanyie, Kia and Piate, 2018). What it involves is achieving political liberation via diplomatic methods. A typical component of this is seeking recognition and support from other nations, international institutions, and non-governmental organisations. The term "diplomacy" refers to a broad category that includes many different activities, such as forming alliances, putting pressure on repressive powers, organising public campaigns, obtaining material and logistical help, and lobbying governments. Diplomatic efforts are another tool used by liberation forces to legitimise their cause and get attention from across the world. Funds, weapons, and humanitarian supplies—all essential to the liberation struggle—may be obtained with its help. The authoritarian administration is being diplomatically isolated via the use of sanctions, embargoes, and the severed diplomatic ties. Promoting freedom and self-determination via diplomatic channels is the crux of liberation diplomacy. A number of factors, including Nigeria's commitment to Pan-Africanism, aspirations for regional leadership, and understanding of the interconnectedness of security and development in Africa, led to the nation's engagement in liberation diplomacy throughout the continent.

In order to break free of the oppressive alliance they formed during the imperialistic conquest of their continent by the West, Africans, like other peoples, want independence.

The belief was that Africans' involvement in the fight for self-determination was a key factor in their subsequent self-renaissance. As a result, African states that had previously won independence from colonial rule could legitimately exploit the cause of African liberation as a foreign policy instrument. According to Sanda (1987), Nigeria became one of many countries that had to incorporate the concept of liberation struggle into their foreign policy in 1987, when they began to take up the cause of those still entangled in colonial authority. For two reasons, Sanda, the emphasis on international relations was warranted: First, a determined effort must be made to promote Black dignity, as freedom and equality are the cherished objectives of all Africans, and they have been accomplished by Nigeria and other independent African states. And further consideration for Nigeria's participation in the liberation battles was the country's potential for leadership within Africa. Within the multilateral diplomatic framework provided by international institutions, Nigeria primarily pursued liberation diplomacy as a foreign policy priority. United Nations (UN), Group of 77, Commonwealth of Nations (CNO), Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Organisation of the African Unity (OAU), and African Union (AU) are among the most prominent international bodies (Akindele, 2007). A key role in the struggle against white minority rule and apartheid was played by Nigeria, a country with an abnormally large Black population. A second strategy that Nigeria used was the embracing and utilisation of religious extremism in order to bolster military resistance. Two such institutions that Nigeria helped form during the liberation struggle were the National Committee against Apartheid and the Southern Africa Relief Fund. Supporting liberation movements and formulating policies were the primary goals of the first group. Businesses, individuals, and the federal and state governments of Nigeria all contributed to the Southern African Relief Fund, which also received material and diplomatic help. When it came to organising military help to South African armed organisations fighting for political independence and liberation, this country performed an excellent job as a member of the Organisation of African Unity's liberation committee. Additionally, it does a great job of using the mechanisms of the OAU to elevate anti-apartheid and decolonisation efforts to the top of the agenda of the continental organisation. The ad hoc alliance of governments opposing apartheid South Africa's black majority rule included Nigeria as one of its frontline states, even though the two countries did not share borders. Collective self-defence involving the use of force to eliminate armed aggression or address a crime against humanity is legitimate and, thus, permissible according to international law, according to Akindele (2007), who argues that apartheid and colonialism are crimes against humanity and that armed struggle involving the use of force to combat them is an enduring form of aggression.

The inter- and intra-party strife in Nigeria had an effect on the country's political development and, more crucially, its international ties. What this means for the debate over how to define a valid national interest, one that goes beyond cultural and ideological boundaries, is substantial. To back up this claim, Yoroms (2007) posits that the way a country or nation-state is formed determines whether the national interests that bind a people are mechanical or organic. In his view, a nation based on a mechanical framework would have weak national interests. The fact that political and fundamental differences constantly put aside national considerations makes this a realistic possibility. Government policy should be based on people's and communities' basic needs rather than national interests. Considering this, it's difficult to see any constructive results for the country's foreign relations stemming from its sacrifices, except from abstract principles. Yoroms

continued by saying that an organic framework is the best way for a nation's interests to remain strong, as in the end, the interests of any person or group will be subsumed by the national interest. The national interests of the Nigerian state seem to have hardened into a rigid framework in the face of many political and social forces with their origins in long-standing differences. Under this guise, the state might pursue development-oriented policies and goals. Following its independence, every administration in Nigeria has committed significant funds to eradicating colonialism and racism throughout the African continent, with a focus on Southern Africa. The objectives and principles of Nigeria's economic and diplomatic policies, especially its dependence on oil for economic development, dictated these measures. Ultimately, Nigeria's foreign policy aimed at decolonising and freeing Africa from racism and colonialism. However, Nigeria failed to prove that its investments in the former colonies had any real benefits. Nigerians involved in foreign policy did not consider the issue of what the nation may benefit from this attempt. This is because every country has its own distinct set of national interests that influence its foreign policy and international relations strategies. These goals often centre on boosting economic growth and making people's lives better. Ajayi claims that rivalries between Nigerians and Nigerian companies existed even before they began to enter the post-colonial economy (2021). Several of these former colonial powers' histories and literature hardly touch on Nigeria or its importance to their struggle for independence. Looking at the political dividends in those Southern African states where investment has been greater, the economic dividends of attracting foreign investment, wealth creation, poverty reduction, and so on all point to the fact that Nigeria's foreign relations since 1960 have not been very fruitful or consequential on the well-being of the people. The foreign policy of Nigeria has always been at odds with what the Nigerian people want; rather, it is a reflection of the desires and ambitions of the country's elites and was conceived, articulated, and implemented inside highly restricted circles (Piate and Eminue, 2022). Thus, in agreement with Gambari (2008), the fundamental objective of Nigeria's foreign policy has always been to unite the nation in backing of its foreign policy's overall goals. As Mustapha (2008) argued, the cultural geography of colonialism plainly assumed a scattered indigenous population that was rescued and brought together by imperial generosity. He doesn't think it's about the existence of the Nigerian state per se, but rather about the fact that its members can't seem to put aside their divergent viewpoints and come to a consensus on important domestic and foreign policy issues. The official foreign policy machinery seeks to promote national interests in such an atmosphere, but home factors frequently undercut them (Piate and Eminue, 2022).

Looking back at Nigeria's foreign policy during its independence fight, we see that the country put less emphasis on primary objectives, which would have brought more economic opportunity and wealth to its people. This is the main reason why Nigeria's foreign policy has always been a colossal failure (Piate, 2025). In this section, the study tries to situate the liberation struggle within the framework of Nigeria's paramount national concern. In particular, the study seeks to answer the question of how liberation diplomacy—Nigerian foreign policy thrust from independence through the majority of Babangida's administration, which saw the end of colonialism in Africa—has aided the economic stability and well-being of the Nigerian state and its common people. The key assumption of this study is that for Nigeria's liberation diplomacy foreign policy to be credible and supported domestically, it must be seen by Nigerians as having advanced the domestic national development aim. This study intends to address these questions by

analysing the effect of liberation diplomacy on Nigeria's foreign policy focus on domestic development and drawing conclusions about the extent to which it contributed to these goals.

Theoretical Explication of the Discourse

The study used political realism, often known as the Power Approach, for its issue analysis. Many who hold the view known as the "Power Approach" believe that power dynamics provide the most useful framework for understanding IS. Hans Morgenthau, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Thucydides are classical philosophers whose ideas may be derived from the long-dominant realism traditions in international relations theory. According to their theory in international relations, politicians are motivated by a desire for power. Two basic premises—human fragility and the inherent anarchy of the international system—underpin its relevance. Every country is always striving to increase its influence due to the absence of effective enforcement mechanisms in the present global system. Its survival and capacity to defend national interests depend on its capacity to undergo frequent armament modernisation. Possession of power, in this perspective, may function as an actual deployment tool for safeguarding national interests or as a deterrent. Foreign policy is an outward manifestation of domestic politics. A country's foreign policy accomplishes this dual purpose of promoting and safeguarding its national interests. However, in order to protect their national interests to the best of their abilities, governments are always seeking to improve their position in relation to others. This is of the utmost importance since international relations are inherently biased towards the interests of one country at the expense of another. The strength of a nation's influence determines the efficacy of its manipulation. A nation's standing in global politics is defined by its strength and influence. Assembling its many strengths might lead to the achievement of its foreign policy objectives. When its foreign policy objectives are negatively impacting domestic matters, it is necessary to reassess and refocus its foreign policy aims. In this way, national interest guides foreign policy by requiring state action and exposing state inaction. Hans Morgenthau made the observation that no nation can rely on anything other than its own national interest as a compass in foreign policy problems in light of this knowledge. When dealing with other states within the international system, most countries behave in a way that serves their national interests; governments engage in conflict and work hard to accomplish their objectives. It outlines the aims of nations, explains why they're fighting, and identifies the consequences that matter. The theory's conceptualisation of power, interests, and morality in international relations is what makes it valuable for the study. Ethical, revolutionary, or ideological motivations for liberation diplomacy may be evaluated and strategically put into action via the realistic perspective of political realism, which emphasises power dynamics, state interests, and strategic calculations. On the other side, political realists make sure that liberation diplomats' demands for rights and justice are grounded on strategic considerations that benefit state actors in the global system.

Nigeria's National Interest and Liberation Diplomacy in Africa: The Missing Link

Under the Balewa administration, Nigeria's foreign policy shifted towards a focus on legal equality among states, non-interference in other states' domestic affairs, multilateralism, non-alignment, and Africa as the focal point of the policy. This concept eventually shaped Nigeria's behaviour among the international world. According to Ajayi (2021), the foreign

policy objectives of the Balewa administration were as follows: (1) safeguarding the nation's autonomy, territorial integrity, and independence; (2) reclaiming the humanity of Black people across the globe, particularly in Africa, by ending colonialism and white minority rule; (3) fostering international political and economic conditions that will assist in providing security for Africa and promoting national self-sufficiency in the continent; (4) enhancing the economic status of Nigerian citizens; and (5) striving for international justice and peace. The government of Balewa was hesitant to engage in liberation diplomacy since Balewa had grown up under Britain's indirect control regime. He thought that the most crucial elements in gaining independence were the competence of nationalists in formulating laws via parliament, the progressive Africanization of public services, and the expansion of local councils as testing grounds for administration. The Balewa administration's change in stance towards backing the liberation fight was fuelled by fanaticism upheld by internal pressures and animosity, rather than rationales inspired by national interests, as was previously believed. The Balewa government was ill-equipped to pursue an aggressive foreign policy, particularly in decolonising the African region, and its leaders lacked the necessary knowledge and experience, as well as foreign policy specialists, to navigate the uncertain domestic political climate that followed independence. Notwithstanding this, it is arguable that the government set the intellectual tone for the anti-colonial and anti-racial movements in Africa (Piate, 2013; Ajayi, 2021).

Following Balewa's death, General Ironsi did not launch any major foreign policy measures due to the brevity of his administration (which lasted just six months). It was a thirty-month civil war that even the triumphant Gowon had to endure. Foreign policy in Nigeria was influenced by the country's better economic status brought about by the oil boom and the petrodollar (Piate and Eminue, 2022). Omotosho (2004), Gowon (1971), and Aluko (1977) state that the following actions by the Gowon regime showed their commitment to the liberation struggle: (a) the provision of direct aid and material support to the freedom fighters; (b) the opposition to Britain's arms sales to South Africa; (c) the fierce opposition to any communication between African nations and the illegal South African regime; (d) the rallying and influencing of OAU members to take a united stance against dialogue; (e) the rejection of any form of accommodation or appeasement with South Africa, seeing it as incompatible with the principles of the OAU charter and the provisions of the Lusaka manifesto. Ajayi claims that the country's foreign policy became more anti-colonial and racist during the military regimes of Murtala Mohammed and Obasanjo. The position of Nigeria towards Africa is now crystal obvious as a result of this. "Never will any liberated African soil be colonised again," Murtala Mohammed said in his address to the people of Angola on December 2, 1975. We will continue to support your cause, both financially and morally, until you win Angola completely (Kolawole, 2004). Supporting African nation-states' right to self-determination and territorial integrity was central to this Afro-centric foreign policy approach. This commitment was driven by the clear acts of the colonial regimes that clung to African nations such as Angola, Mozambique, Southern Rhodesia, and apartheid South Africa. The dictatorship took over, providing financial and military assistance to national liberation organisations. When Ian Smith's unjust dictatorship was overthrown, the government of what is now Zimbabwe (then Southern Rhodesia) supported the armed liberation effort. The \$32,750 will go towards the African National Congress's (ANC) battle (Kolawole, 2004). Regarding South Africa, the fact that Black people are still marginalised and face the constant pressure to stand up for their dignity is something that both Nigeria and South Africa have in

common. The effects of colonialism on Nigerians and apartheid on South Africans shaped their worldviews.

Nigerians started calling for South Africa's independence after the Sharpeville massacre on March 21, 1960, when 72 Blacks were shot and wounded and 184 others wounded by the South African police (Agbu, 2010; Onuoha, 2008). The dispute between white South Africa and Nigeria began with this event, which occurred long before Nigeria achieved her independence. It accomplished this by making it illegal to import any goods made in South Africa. On top of that, Nigeria spearheaded the effort to force South Africa out of the Commonwealth. In 1975, when Nigeria recognised and backed the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), the situation in South Africa was already unstable. The National Liberation Front of Angola (FNLA) and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) formed a partnership, and at the same time, South Africa invaded Angola militarily to bolster them. Nigeria has given the MPLA twenty million dollars plus an extra hundred million dollars in aid (Onuoha, 2008). The root cause of apartheid in South Africa was the racist policies implemented by the minority white administration. Racial segregation in South Africa meant that Black people and white people could not be physically seen in many areas. This included residences, companies, and even recreational centres. Slums and rural areas became their new homes when they were forcefully displaced from their land. As part of their campaign, Nigerian officials and individuals donated money, and they also used political and economic pressure to target South Africa and its supporters. To help the Black Liberation Movements fight the apartheid regime, Nigeria established a South Africa Relief Fund internally. Public and private sector individuals who were concerned were asked to contribute freely to the fund. Cultural diplomacy was another tool in Nigeria's arsenal in the fight against the racist rule. It severed all links with Pretoria in the sporting world. Furthermore, it boycotted the 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal, Canada, and the 1978 Commonwealth Games in Edmonton, Canada, to demonstrate its dissatisfaction of apartheid South Africa's participation in both tournaments. The Shagari administration gave ten million naira to the 1980 independence celebration in Zimbabwe (Agagu, 2004). When General Babangida came to power in South Africa, almost every colonised African country had previously been decolonised, with the exception of Namibia and Apartheid South Africa. To aid in its preparations for Namibia's independence referendum, the present government subsidised SWAPO with N100 million, as part of its foreign policy, which includes maintaining its Pan-Africanist agenda (Ajayi, 2021).

After Nelson Mandela was freed from life imprisonment in February 1990 and the country's majority government took office in 1994, racism in South Africa came to an official end. Nigeria had to invest much in human and financial resources to assist these southern African states in achieving independence after apartheid South Africa returned the favour with hatred. Do you recall that 125 Nigerians were extradited from Johannesburg's Oliver Tambo Airport in 2012 due to the fact that their yellow fever immunisation certificates were counterfeit? The result was a tense diplomatic situation between Nigeria and South Africa. Deportations of eighty-four South Africans from Nigeria occurred within two days as a result. A Nigerian family allegedly lost about N84 million (4.6 million Rand) in the xenophobic attack in South Africa. Nearly sixty individuals were killed and countless more were displaced from their homes (Akubor, 2021; Alli, 2008; Nnoli, 1976). Post Apartheid South Africa and Nigeria's relationship is now in a precarious position. There is a clear lack of trust between them. Also, many people

have the wrong impression about Nigeria and its people. The South African media perpetuates racist stereotypes about Nigerians as violent criminals and drug lords by showing them in a negative way. Of all things, Nigerian criminals capitalised on the public's belief, borne out of the government's passivity, that the police would not properly (or at all) pursue crimes committed against Nigerians (Okolo, 2006). South Africa provided help to Black South Africans and other freedom fighters, but many Nigerians were mistreated or died while in South Africa, making them distrustful of the nation. Another problem was the procedure for obtaining a visa, which required a down payment from first-time passengers from Nigeria to South Africa. The goal was to ensure that they could leave South Africa free of any financial obligations. Competition for one of the fifteen permanent seats on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and for increased UN involvement were other issues of concern. Nigeria is certain that it deserves a seat on an enlarged United Nations Security Council since it is the largest Black African country and a leading force in global peacekeeping operations. However, South Africa thinks that, given its economic might and skills, it deserves a say on the council. How liberation diplomacy influenced Nigeria's foreign policy is an issue of contention. While some may not see anything wrong with this commitment, others are concerned that it might harm Nigeria's national interest. The protagonist of the school of thought that rejects such commitment argues that liberation diplomacy was beneficial to Nigeria. These scholars argue that Nigeria has sacrificed too much for other African states, and that this has affected Nigeria's national interest. According to their reasoning, this meant that Nigeria had to give up its true national interest in order to gain greater prominence in the area. The argument here is that the Africa-centredness syndrome has been institutionalised in the Nigerian government due to its preoccupation with regional issues including political emancipation, peacekeeping operations, and conflict resolution. The administration has neglected to thoroughly assess the many avenues by which its foreign policy choices may contribute to the growth of Nigeria's economy. The inadequacy of home economic capacity and the need of a national economic reform were never seen as major roadblocks to foreign policy initiatives, to restate (Piate and Eminue, 2022).

A remarkable commitment to the total liberation of Africa was a hallmark of Nigeria's foreign policy during this period. Colonialism and apartheid were fought against and eventually overthrown. The liberation movement was swiftly affected by Nigeria's actions. It seemed as if the "kit and kin" sentiment confounded the British perspective on the subject after rebel leader Ian Smith's unilateral declaration of independence in southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), which forced the British government to confront the nationalisation of British petroleum.

Denationalisation might start once Rhodesia achieved independence (Eze, 2011). The Angolan conflict, according to Eze's same argument, dragged on needlessly because the OAU was disorganised and the MPLA was pitted against FLNA and UNITA, with various groups of governments supporting different factions. When Nigeria accepted Augustino Neto's MPLA, it marked a turning moment for UNITA. As leader of the UN committee on apartheid, Nigeria's unfaltering support expedited the collapse of South Africa's colonial racist minority rule. Two organisations established to support the independence cause helped Nigeria achieve this. South African Relief Fund in collaboration with the National Committee Against Apartheid. The first group's mission was to come up with ideas and gather support for the liberation movement, while the second group was to raise money from the Nigerian government, businesses, and citizens.

To put this plan into action, the government relied heavily on the aid program it has maintained since achieving independence. The humanitarian endeavour was facilitated by the funds from the oil. Nigeria has provided help to almost every African nation. Main beneficiaries of the aid program were liberation fighters, neighbouring countries of Nigeria, nations fighting in the West African subregion, victims of national disasters, and other parts of Africa. When the economy was doing well, this was the sight that Adebayo (1983) described.

In a world where loyalties do not cross national lines, the riddle of why countries are so kind to one other remains. A number of international relations theories make an effort to explain the phenomenon of aid provision (Holsti, 1994). In the epistemology of international relations, Hollis and Smith (1991) assert unequivocally that "explaining" and "understanding" the developing global events are separate notions. While realist theory provides a good explanation for the games nations play, moral and idealist theories provide equally good explanations for why nations behave the way they do. It is, very simply, in the self-interest of individual countries to help out other countries. While the Cold War was at its height, Hayler (1971) popularised the word "imperialism" to characterise the use of "aid" as an informal imperial weapon to win over friends and allies, influence allies, and seduce satellite governments on the periphery of global capitalism. China supports infrastructure projects in many African states, in addition to its oil and mining interests (Mailafia, 2010).

Nigeria established the Technical Aid Corps Scheme (TAC) in 1986 on its own volition to foster international cooperation and aid member states in their economic and social development. Spending on the effort remains shrouded in obscurity, as expected. The contributions that Nigeria has made to multilateral organisations have been very beneficial. Shelter Afrique, Afrexim Bank, the African Development Bank Group, and the ECOWAS Fund for Compensation and Development are just a few of the African groups that have received substantial funding or have been controlled by the government. According to Salim, cited in Mailafia (2010), there was a period when Nigeria was responsible for covering the whole operational budget of the then-OAU, now-AU. With the help of the African Development Bank Group, Nigeria and other African countries formed the Nigeria Trust Fund (NTP) in 1976. Because of their unique social and economic circumstances, the low-income member countries of the ADB's regional bloc need concessional finance for their development projects (ADB, 2009). Also, to augment the NTF's funding, Nigeria established the Nigerian Technical Co-operation Fund (NTCF) in 2004. In order to help rebuild after a conflict, countries in the African diaspora would combine their human capital, and private technical assistance money would be used to identify and plan projects that might be funded. It seems like these outcomes will be, at best, a mixed bag of blessings. Even if receiving countries have been generous with Nigeria's resources, it's unclear whether this has brought goodwill or even influence to Nigeria. Multilateral bank investors are motivated by a mix of compassion and national self-interest, according to past experience. The ability to vote on important issues is highly valued by donor nations since it allows them to shape the policy of regional organisations (Mailafia, 2010; Daura, 2006). Evidence suggests that Nigeria has underutilised its political clout and voting strength. By analysing Nigeria's economic diplomacy in terms of its help to other African states, both bilateral and multilateral, Mailafia looks at the country's claims to grandeur and relative economic mediocrity through the prism of the myth of chained Prometheus. Ali Mazrui astutely noted in 1977 that Nigeria was quickly becoming

the first modern world power due to its large population and plenty of natural resources. The prediction that the country would become a more powerful global force than Britain and France by the end of this century was backed up by Ajulo. The irony is tremendous that Nigeria's situation is far worse now than it was in the predictions of Mazrui and Ajulo when the new century began. As a result of ethno-religious strife, extensive corruption, incompetent leadership, and sloppy economic management, Nigeria's influence and standing on the African scene have diminished.

A matrix representing the international system has shown two distinct goals: one for the system overall and another for the many entities that comprise it. In contrast to system objectives, which are shared by all participants, actor goals are defined as those that each participant chooses for himself, taking into account their own preferences and whims (Agwu, 2009). In all of their bilateral and multilateral dealings, every nation should have kept the actor's goals in mind. As an example: In the coalition of the willing to depose Saddam Hussein, France severed ties with the United States due to oil concerns. This explains why the United States and the United Kingdom chose constructive engagement rather than punishing the apartheid regime in South Africa when Margaret Thatcher was president. Great countries were primarily concerned with issues that impacted their economies. In other words, economic and monetary considerations dictate its foreign policy. French opposition to Saddam was weakened by the billions of dollars in contracts, similar to how Russia and China were swayed to consider having the UN Security Council address Iran's history of nuclear weapons program violations by its liquefied natural gas pipeline to China and missile deal with Russia (Shawn, 2006). In addition, the United States was primarily concerned with North Africa—the continent's closeness to the Arabian Peninsula, its oil riches, and its role in the Middle East conflict—until the Gulf of Guinea's hydrocarbon potentials made it an attractive prospect. At the time, Africa was not a priority for the United States. A nation's "centrepiece policy" is its one objective in international affairs, the one arena in which it will not budge no matter how much pressure other nations or organisations apply. The extent to which a nation may establish and vigorously defend its EEZ is, however, within the purview of that nation's government (Agwu, 2013). The US foreign policy "establishment" has since claimed that Iraq is the US's top foreign policy priority after the 2003 war and removal of Saddam Hussein, calling into question the assumption that core doctrine remains unchanged and is only dependent on a country's regional interests. The United States was already well into its military war in Iraq when this announcement was made. Since coming out with the Africa centrepiece foreign policy, Nigeria has spent a lot of money with little any result. Academics have reached a consensus: Nigeria's "African centrepiece policy" has mostly been an altruistic act. Some have argued that peacekeeping missions, the technical assistance corps program, and other types of cash and in-kind aid are pointless gestures of kindness. In the end, Nigeria's humanitarian policies and outreach efforts throughout Africa were and are undervalued.

In an article published in a new Nigerian daily on September 28, 1986, Mohammed Haruna said that the country's unwarranted favours from Angola and Zimbabwe were due to conservative and Anglophile policies in Nigeria (Akinyemi, 2002). According to Haruna, the Angolans knew that Nigeria, represented by Garba, did not particularly like the MPLA but preferred the so-called government of national unity in the early days of the struggle. This is why the MPLA government in Angola did not acknowledge Nigeria's assistance in obtaining independence, and Joe Garba was received with such a frigid

reception in Luanda. After apartheid South Africa invaded Angola, Nigeria recognised the MPLA and took a nebulous ideological stance. The same occurrence took place in Zimbabwe. The country's overwhelming support for Nkomo and vehement opposition to Mugabe during General Obasanjo's tenure reflected the country's Anglophilia, which may have been influenced by the British preference for Nkomo. That is to say, Nigeria's policies in these countries were muddled by its initial hesitance and lack of clarity in its actions and postures, which may have annoyed the so-called assistance recipients. Also stemming from this strategic ineptitude was Nigeria's 1978–1979 operation "Harmony 1" in Chad, which was meant to assist that nation in returning to normality after a crippling war (Agwu, 2009). France used this to manipulate Nigeria into labelling the operation as an occupying force, which aided in the overthrow of Hissein Habre and the removal of Goukouni Quedde, the Libyan backer. One big problem with Nigeria's African centrepiece strategy is that it doesn't consistently put any one policy position into action.

Every Nigerian dictatorship that came to power via a coup, rather than an election, tried to show its legitimacy by enacting more radical populist policies related to the fight for independence. Consequently, Nigeria's foreign policy leaned heavily on the liberation movement's policies. Expending significant resources was necessary for the rapid liberation of territories that were under racial and colonial rule. Nigeria had to forego a lot of its economic development in order to liberate Southern Africa. A former Nigerian minister of foreign affairs named Bolaji Akinyemi estimates that the government lost \$9 billion as a result of the decline in crude oil exports and the deterioration of business relations with South Africa (Yoromas, 1992). Because liberation diplomacy as a foreign policy thrust did not develop naturally, the result was a foreign policy that was all over the place and confused. After that, when the Nigerian government realised how much money could be made off of the assisted countries, they felt helpless and scared of South Africa's apparent development edge. The present situation in Nigeria is a direct result of the foreign policy's lack of a clear definition based on organic national interests, which has allowed both internal and external forces to irresponsibly exploit it.

Conclusion

Nigeria has played a significant role in the fight to liberate African countries from settler nations' racial domination and colonial rule. Nigeria was an active participant in the Liberation Committee's activities, in addition to making official commitments via organisations like the United Nations (whose charter laid the groundwork for modern legislation on self-determination) and the Old African Union (now the African Union). The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) offered material, military, and diplomatic support via its liberation committee in the fight for independence. It is imperative that the role of Nigeria's liberation diplomacy in the fight against apartheid in South Africa and the decolonisation of Africa as a whole be acknowledged. As with any foreign policy, however, there have been challenges and points of dispute over its efficacy. Countries like Nigeria, which are highly structured but also riven by internal strife and deep divisions within and between political factions, are not likely to have a strong national interest, according to this study. Consequently, their sacrifices will not be rewarded in terms of their international relations. If it wants to go forward, Nigeria has to take care of its own problems as well as its responsibilities on the African continent. It would be to Nigeria's advantage if the government's foreign policy was more inward-looking and helped the country thrive. In other words, for the sake of the Nigerian people, Nigeria's foreign policy

should prioritise boosting the domestic economy, creating jobs, and reducing unemployment rates generally.

References

- Adebayo, A. (1983). *South-South Aid: A Survey of Nigeria's Financial Assistance to African Countries in the 1980s*. Lagos: Nigerian Institute of International Affairs.
- Agagu, A. A. (2004). "Docility and Inaction: Nigeria's Foreign Policy under Shagari". In Kolawole, D. (ed) *Nigeria's Foreign Policy since independence: Trends, Phases and Challenges*. Lagos: Julius & Julius.
- Agbu, O. (2010). "Nigeria and South Africa: The future of strategic Partnership". In Eze, O. C. (ed) *Beyond 50 years of Nigeria's Foreign Policy: Issues, Challenges and Prospects*. Lagos: Nigerian Institute of International Affairs.
- Agwu, F. A. (2009). *National Interest, International Law and our Shared Destiny*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books
- Agwu, P. A. (2013). *Themes and Perspective on Africa's International Relations*. Ibadan: University of Ibadan Press Plc.
- Ajay, K. (2021). "Nigeria and Liberation Diplomacy in Africa, 1960-1990s: A Reflection." In Akinboye, S. O. and Basisu, A. S. (eds) *Six Decades of Nigeria's Foreign Policy: Old Visions, New Issues*. Lagos: University of Lagos Press and Bookshops Ltd.
- Akindele, R. A. (2007). "Nigeria's National Interests and her diplomatic relations with South Africa". In Akinterinwa, B. A. (ed) *Nigeria's National Interests in a globalizing world: Further Reflection on Constructive and Beneficial Concentricism*. Ibadan: Bolytag International Publishers.
- Akinyemi, A. B. (2002). *International Politics: Foreign and Domestic Affairs*. Lagos: Macmillan Nigeria Publishers Ltd.
- Akubor, E. O. (2021). "Nigeria's Afrocentric Policy since independence: A Cost-Benefit Analysis". In Akinboye, S. O. and Basisu, A. S. (eds) *Six Decades of Nigeria's Foreign Policy: Old Visions, New Issue*. Lagos: University of Lagos Press and Bookshop Ltd
- Alli, Y. (2008). South Africa to Nigeria: We're sorry for Attacks. *The Nation*, June.
- Aluko, O. (1977). *Foreign Policies of African States*. Kent: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Amanyie, N. S., Kia, B. and Piate, S. M. (2018). "Embassy and Democratic Sustainability in Africa: The Gambia Experience". *Social Scientia, Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 3(1): 11 – 20.
- Aremu, F. A. (2010). *Myths, Ends and means prestige and the management of Nigeria's External Relations*. Lagos: Nigerian Institute of International Affairs.
- Daura, M. (2006). "The Technical Aid Corps Scheme: Background and the Journey so far." in: Daura, M. (ed). *Nigerian's Technical Aid Corps: Issue and Perspective*. Ibadan: Dokun Publishing.
- Eze, O. C. (2011). "Nigeria's Contribution to the Liberation Movement in Africa", in: Esita, A. and Ogaba, O. (eds) *Nigeria in the Global Arena: Past, Present and Future*. Lagos: Fola Ventures.
- Gambari, A. (2008). "From Balewa to Obasanjo: The Theory and Practice of Nigeria's Foreign Policy". In Adebayo, A and Mustapha, A. R. (eds) *Gullivers Troubles: Nigeria's Foreign Policy after the cold war*. South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.
- Gowon, Y. (1971). Address delivered at the opening ceremony of the 18th OAU Assembly of Head of State and Government on the 21st June at Addis Ababa.
- Hollis, M. and Smith, S. (1991). *Explaining and Understanding International Relations*. London: Oxford Clarendon Press.
- Holsti, K. I. (1999). *International Politics: A Framework of Analysis*. New York: Prentice Hall Englewood Cliffs.
- Kolawole, D. (2004). "Years of Alertness: Foreign Policy under Mohammed/Obasanjo". In Kolawole, D. (ed) *Nigeria's Foreign Policy since independence: Trends, Phases and Challenges*. Lagos: Julius & Julius.
- Mailafia, O. (2010). Prometheus Good Samaritan: "Nigeria's Bilateral and Multilateral Assistance since Independence". In: Jega, A. M. and Farris, J.W. (eds). *Nigeria at Fifty: Contribution to Peace, Democracy and Development*. Abuja: Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Foundation.

- Mustapha, A. R. (2008). "The three faces of Nigeria's Foreign Policy". In Adebayo, A and Mustapha, R. A. (eds), *Gulliver's Troubles: Nigeria's Foreign Policy after the cold war*. South Africa: University of Kwazulu-Natal Press.
- Nnoli, O. (1976). "Nigerian Policy towards South Africa". *Nigerian Journal of International Affairs*, 2:1 – 2.
- Okolo, B. (2006). *Love/Hate Relationship between Nigeria and South Africa*. Johannesburg: Africa's International Relation University.
- Omotosho, F. (2004). "The Civil war years: Nigeria's Foreign Policy under Gowon". In Kolawole, D. (ed) *Nigeria's Foreign Policy since independence: Trends, Phases and Challenges*. Lagos: Julius & Julius.
- Onuoha, T. (2008). *Beyond Diplomacy: Contemporary Issues in International Relations*. Nsukka: Great A. P. Express Publishers.
- Piate, S. M. (2013). "Domestic challenges confronting Nigeria's Foreign Policy". *ABSU Journal of Arts, Management, Education, Law and Social Sciences*, 3:91 – 116.
- Piate, S. M. (2014). "The Impact of Globalization on Public Policy in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects". *University Of Uyo Journal of Politics and Administration*, 1(1): 131 – 149.
- Piate, S. M. (2017). "Nigeria's Foreign Policy, Regional Leadership and the Crisis of Neo-Colonial Development, 1960 – 2016". *Social Scientia Journal of the Social Sciences and Humanities*, 2(1).
- Piate, S. M. (2025). "Nigeria's Foreign Policy of Peacekeeping Operations in Africa: The Missing Links. *IORS Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*.
- Piate, S. M. and Eminile, E. O. (2022). "Nigeria's Foreign Policy, 1960 – 2015: An Appraisal". *Social Scientia Journal of the Social Sciences and Humanities*, 7(1).
- Piate, S. M.; Sunday, E. and Kia, B (2024). "An Appraise of Nigeria's Foreign Policy Thrust from 1960-2023," *Wukari International Studies Journal*, 8(8).
- Sanda, T. G. (1987). *Nigeria's Policy towards African liberation struggle: Case study of the Western Sahara*. Msc Thesis, Department of Political Science, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria.
- Shawn, E. (2006). *The UN Exposed: How the United Nation Sabotages. American's Security and Fails the World*. New York: Sentinel Plc.
- Ukpe, E. (1997). *Collective security: The United Nations experience*. Uyo: Afangide Brothers Printing and Publishing Company Ltd.
- Ukpe, E. (2024). *Relics of colonialism: An introduction to African politics*. Uyo: Robertminder International Limited.
- Yoromas, G. (1992). "Post-Apartheid South Africa and Nigeria's Continental Power Influence: The Post Cold Was Dilemma". *Indian Journal of Politics*, xxxvi: 3 – 4.
- Yoroms, G. (2007). "After Nigeria's Assistant to the Liberation struggle in South Africa: What next?" in Akinterinwa, B. A. (ed) *Nigeria's National Interest in a globalizing World*. Ibadan: International Publishers.

Biographical Note

Sunny Mene PIATE *PhD* is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Political Science, Akwa Ibom State University, Obio Akpa Campus, Obio Akpa NIGERIA. Email: sunnypiate@aksu.edu.ng, sunnymenepiate@gmail.com

Dumle Callistus NEKABARI is a Lecturer in the Department of History and International Diplomacy Rivers State University Nkpolu-Oroworukwu, Port Harcourt NIGERIA Emails: dumle.callistus@rsu.edu.ng

Bariledum KIA, *PhD* is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of History and International Diplomacy, Rivers State University, Nkpolu-Oroworukwu, Port Harcourt NIGERIA Email: bariledum.kia@ust.edu.ng