

Contemporary Challenges Confronting Nigeria's Foreign Policy

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[0162] Abstract

It was found that Nigeria's foreign policy is affected by a mix of domestic and international issues that make it less effective in achieving national goals. The way a nation-state handles its domestic and international affairs affects the direction of its foreign policy. In this context, the study looks at the current domestic and international problems facing Nigeria's foreign policy and suggests ways the Nigerian government could respond to them. The analysis of the subject matter was based on the concentric circle and linkage theories. The concentric circle theory helps explain how domestic and external issues affect and guide Nigeria's foreign policy. It points out that these spheres are connected and that a well-planned foreign policy is needed to handle challenges in each area and protect Nigeria's main interests. Linkage theory points out that the policies made in a country are affected by events happening outside the country. The study found that leadership traits, not institutions, have been the main factor in shaping Nigeria's foreign relations and this has led to some important questions about the country's foreign policy in the modern world. The study suggested that to address these challenges, Nigeria should have a clear and well-defined foreign policy that supports its national interests and development plans. This means looking again at various ideas and definitions about foreign policy, focusing on the nature of the Nigerian state to help unite the nation and ensure a strong national identity and a suitable environment for foreign policy decisions. The current system where foreign policy is created and carried out only by the official foreign policy body should be examined and Nigeria should aim to build new partnerships with emerging countries and regional groups.

Keywords: Boko Haram, Domestic Environment, Economic Resources, External Environment, Foreign Policy, Globalization and Political leadership

Introduction

Many scholars in international relations believe that conducting an independent foreign policy is a key sign of a state's independence in the world. They argue that a nation's foreign policy is how it makes itself known globally, forms its national identity and supports other national symbols. It is a tool that countries use to accomplish their goals, whether they are domestic or international (Sesay, Fawole, Adetula, Asiwaju and Rimdap, 2011). Like other social science concepts, foreign policy cannot be defined exactly since it is a result of human actions that cannot be set in stone. Since most of diplomacy is done in secret, it makes it difficult and uncertain for analysts to study foreign policy (Piate, 2013). The foreign policy of a nation is simply the government's official and legal way of expressing its national interests, following the rules set by the constitution. It is the system that allows nations to interact and support their own interests (Piate, 2017). It is the way in which officials in a country use their influence in the international arena to meet certain national goals (Handrieder, 1967). It refers to the deliberate actions a nation state takes in response to events happening outside its borders (Piate and Eminue, 2022). It involves the ways a country responds to events happening outside its borders. The structure and actions of the international system create the stimuli and the way countries respond is influenced by their domestic factors, especially the views of the policy-makers (Piate, Sunday and Kia, 2024). Therefore, the study considers foreign policy as the tool that

states use to shape events in the international arena to achieve their national interests (Piate, Kia and Obisung, 2025 and Piate, 2025).

The main aims of states in international relations that guide their foreign policy are security, improving social and economic well-being and gaining power. They are always described as being in the national interest (Rourke, 2005). Using national interest as the main guide for foreign policy is a major feature of how nations interact globally. For this reason, Northedge (1968) stated that foreign policy is how a country responds to what happens outside its borders and these responses are shaped by the environment. This means that the environment in which foreign policy operates, influenced by both domestic and international factors, has a major impact on state policies. The environment of foreign policy includes the various domestic and international factors, dynamics, structures and processes that an actor must deal with (Alli, 2010). This means that a country's foreign policy is influenced by several different factors. The national interest of the state, its domestic policy, the leadership style, the state's influence internationally and the structure of the international system, supported by the country's power indices, help determine how a country acts in the world (Okeke, 2021). The national interest and the main goals of foreign policy are shaped by factors within a country. The way a country is governed depends on its social, economic, political and cultural environment, the ethnic makeup of the state, its history under colonial rule, the views of the elite and the government's own priorities (Adefuge, 1992). The home environment plays a major role in shaping a country's foreign policy. It shapes the way a country acts in foreign affairs and helps decide its approach to other nations. It mainly depends on the state's unique features, factors and forces which determine what the state will or will not do in the international arena (Piate, 2013). The national interest that foreign policy aims to protect is shaped by domestic issues. Because the domestic economy is distorted, Nigeria has become very weak and open to many types of manipulation, so despite its potential and resources, the country has not been able to take part in global matters as much as it should. The way a nation engages with other countries and conducts its diplomacy is greatly affected by the external environment. They refer to the way power, politics and institutions are organized which helps determine what actions and policies actors can choose. It involves those external factors that affect the state's relationships with other nations such as the structure of the international system, the actions of international organizations it belongs to and international rules.

As a result, foreign policy can be defined as the way a state interacts with the world around it. This means that the way forces from both inside and outside a country interact at any given moment which policy makers in any state, even the most powerful, cannot control. The way a nation-state handles its domestic and international situations affects the direction of its foreign policy. In this context, the study explores the current domestic and international problems facing Nigeria's foreign policy and suggests some strategies that the government could use to overcome them.

Theoretical Explication of the Discourse

The study used two theories, concentric circle theory and the linkage theory, to analyze the subject matter. According to the concentric circle theory, it is widely believed that when used in Nigeria's foreign policy, it means that a country's external relations can be arranged in order of importance, starting with its main national interests. The innermost circle stands for Nigeria's main national interests which are its sovereignty, the safety of its borders, political stability, economic prosperity and the security of its people. The next circle includes Nigeria's neighboring countries and the West Africa sub-region. Because of their shared borders and the risk of spillover, it is important for this region to be stable, secure and cooperative economically. The third circle that covers the rest of the African continent. Nigeria has long been involved in African matters, pushing for unity, independence from colonial rule and development. The outermost circle includes Nigeria's interactions with countries and international organizations all over the world. The main idea of the concentric circle school is that the interests of Nigeria and her people should be given priority over any other interest, whether regional or global (Teryima, 2014). According to Gambari and

other experts who use the concentric circle model, Nigeria's national interest is best safeguarded by applying this model in its foreign policy (Gambari, 1989; Okeke, 2021). Their point is that Nigeria's relationships with other countries should follow a four-layer structure. The first layer in this model focuses on the welfare of Nigerians and friendly ties with the country's immediate neighbors. After that, West Africa, Africa and the rest of the world are considered. The theory is useful for studying Nigeria's foreign policy because it explains how different domestic and international challenges interact and affect the country's foreign policy. It points out that these areas are linked and that a well-planned foreign policy should handle challenges in each area and protect Nigeria's main interests. If one circle is weak, it can negatively influence how Nigeria functions in the other circles.

James Rosenau was the person who first popularised the linkage theory. He explained it as any pattern of behavior that starts in one system and is responded to in another system (Rosenau, 1969). He believes that linkage tries to show how the international environment affects the political situation within a country. He believes that the linkage concept is the best way to study how international events affect domestic politics. In other words, the factors that shape a nation's foreign policy and guide its actions. Similarly, Northedge (1968) points out that the foreign policy of a country is influenced by both internal and external factors. Deutsch (1969) believes that the way states behave internally is affected by the amount and type of communication that occurs between the international system and the borders of nation states. He believes that if nations keep communicating with each other, the number of grey areas will decrease and the international system will become more stable. According to Stein, as cited in Akpan (2012), there are three types of linkage situations that determine the actions of actors and players in the international system. Coerced linkage happens when a dominant actor forces others to change, threat-induced linkage occurs when an actor acts without considering the others' actions and mutual linkage happens when all actors want to be linked and benefit from it. Even though states are concerned about their sovereignty, their national interests still involve matters related to other countries. This means that the results of policy in these states are influenced by factors from outside. This is the way domestic politics and international politics are related. Almond's view of the political system as a way for different groups to interact can be used to explain the relationship between domestic and international politics. Since nations are part of a larger system, the actions taken by one nation can influence the others and be influenced by them as well. So, nations tend to expect similar things from each other in their relationships. The theory is useful because it points out that the policies made in a country are affected by events happening outside the country.

Domestic Challenges Confronting Nigeria's Foreign Policy

Foreign policy involves the way a country responds to new demands and supports at home and new situations abroad (Jega, 2003). International relations are affected by both what happens outside the country and by important domestic factors and policies that are shared with other nations. As a result, the main domestic factors in any country can either support or limit the foreign policy of the state (Agwu, 2013). The home environment can sometimes help or hinder a person's development. If domestic factors are used to the state's benefit, it will have more freedom in deciding its foreign policy. This means that a country's foreign policy works well when it can influence or impress other nations to follow its main goals. This happens since every actor in the international system seeks what it wants and uses its resources to achieve it. Some nations are able to achieve their national objectives, but others fail because they do not have the resources needed at that time (Leeds, 1981; Frankel, 1969 and Obiozor, 1987). Nigeria must follow this rule in international politics by matching its resources or abilities with its national goals to prevent constant failure, frustration or being limited (Piate, 2013). Based on the analysis, some clear facts can be seen about the domestic issues affecting Nigeria's foreign policy. The main issues today are the nature of the Nigerian state, what defines the national interest and how to protect it in international relations, the systems for making and carrying out foreign policy, the country's natural and economic resources, the

state of the economy, the population, political leadership, the conflict between Boko Haram and farmers and the image of Nigeria.

The fact that Nigeria was formed under British colonialism creates several difficulties for its foreign policy. The fact that Nigeria is made up of many ethnic and religious groups is a major challenge for its external relations. The borders set by the British during colonial times gathered various ethnic and cultural groups without thinking about their previous social and political systems. As a result, there are ongoing ethnic conflicts and a lack of unity among the people which may weaken the country's foreign policy. Dealing with internal issues and ethnic relations can take away focus and resources from foreign affairs. The British set up a centralized system to manage the country, but this led to most power and resources being held at the centre. As a result, Nigeria's political situation has become unstable which may affect how well its foreign policy is carried out. The British approach of using ethnic and religious differences to keep control resulted in lasting distrust and division. As a result, people often disagree on foreign policy matters within the country, making it difficult to unite on international issues. The reason is that the British colonial administration brought together various races and nationalities without much thought which caused tension after independence. Thus, the elites did not focus on developing a system that truly unites the ideas of all people under fair and just conditions which is essential for Nigeria's prosperity. All in all, British colonialism still influences Nigeria's foreign policy, so it is important for the country to deal with these structural, political and social challenges to create a strong and effective Foreign Policy that benefits the nation and supports its development.

It is also a challenge for Nigeria's foreign policy to determine what the national interest is and how to protect it when dealing with other countries. There are many ethnic, religious and cultural groups in Nigeria. Because there are many different interests, it is often tough to agree on what the main national interest should be. A region or group may consider something important, but another group might not agree. The national interest of Nigeria has sometimes been shaped by the interests of those in power, rather than by what the majority of people want. As a result, some people may gain advantages while others are left behind. Because Nigeria does not have a clear political ideology, it is difficult to define a national interest that can guide foreign policy decisions under different governments. Sometimes, political leaders use the idea of national interest to support actions that actually help them or a group, rather than the country as a whole. Nigeria is recognized for creating good foreign policy plans, but they are often criticized for not carrying them out. Nigeria's inability to protect its national interests in relations with other states is due to its heavy dependence on oil exports which makes it sensitive to changes in global oil prices and reduces its power in international economic talks. In addition, if government institutions, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, are not efficient, it can make it difficult to develop and carry out Foreign Policy strategies that protect the nation's interests. When governments change, it can be hard to keep a steady and lasting strategy for protecting the country's interests. Therefore, finding a single national interest that truly represents all Nigerians is not simple because of the country's diversity and past issues. Even if these interests are recognized, China struggles to protect them in its dealings with other nations due to economic problems, weak institutions and internal issues. To overcome these obstacles, the country should adopt a more inclusive way to set its national interests and be more consistent in carrying out its foreign policy. It is also a challenge for Nigeria's foreign policy to establish effective and dependable institutions that can successfully achieve its foreign policy goals and objectives at home. Saliu (2016) stated that after independence, Nigeria adopted a Foreign Service model that is based on the British diplomatic tradition. He saw Foreign Service as the main way to carry out a country's foreign policy. Nigeria has a single-tier foreign service which means that the staff serving in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and those posted abroad are all part of the same system. According to the integrated approach, officials can be assigned to work either at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or in the country's diplomatic missions abroad (Adeniji, 1990). The main task of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) is to handle a country's international relations and diplomacy. This means creating and carrying out foreign

policy, representing the country's interests in other nations and helping citizens who are living abroad. On their own, diplomatic missions such as embassies, are responsible for representing their country in the host country, safeguarding its interests and citizens, negotiating deals, reporting on the situation and fostering friendly ties. They also act as a link between citizens and the government, offering help with passports and visas. Basically, a diplomatic mission helps two countries communicate, cooperate and understand each other, while looking after the interests of its home country and its people. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nigeria is not well-equipped to help the Chief Executive with foreign policy because it lacks enough qualified and motivated staff and is not given enough funds. Nigeria does not follow international standards when choosing its diplomats and providing facilities at its embassies, mainly because of a lack of funding (Piate and Ukere, 2024). There is no real way to reward those who dedicate themselves to the country's foreign policy. Improving professionalism would involve giving more importance to merit and reducing political influence in the selection and recruitment of staff at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The availability of enough funds is a key factor that helps diplomatic missions succeed everywhere and its absence is what hinders Nigeria's diplomatic mission. The amount of money given to foreign affairs has never been enough to provide the expected services. There are many reports about Nigerian missions abroad failing to pay rents and Nigerian diplomats not receiving their salaries and allowances. The Nigerian diplomatic missions have been experiencing unnecessary and unpleasant embarrassment due to utility disconnections, staff being kicked out of rented apartments and late payments of salaries to diplomatic staff. This condition greatly reduces the productivity of Nigerian foreign missions. In such a situation, the diplomats will not be able to perform their duties with the necessary energy, focus and effectiveness (Amanyie, Kia and Piate, 2018). The problem of not having enough money for foreign missions is made worse by the lack of proper training for Nigerian diplomats. This is true because diplomacy is a principled job that requires proper training, a wide range of academic qualifications and knowledge of international matters. Currently, many Nigerian diplomats do not seem to have the necessary training and orientation to handle the challenges and realities of today's international diplomacy. The Nigerian government valued the recruitment and training of staff to maintain a strong Foreign Service, but this is not happening now as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has not provided further training for its employees for a long time. The foreign service academic began in 1980, but it mainly focused on training new staff and did not offer regular courses for their further development. For this reason, Nigerian diplomats are becoming less competent. It is also concerning when people who are not trained diplomats are included in diplomatic work. The decision to replace experienced diplomats with inexperienced political appointees could seriously threaten the success of Nigeria's Foreign Policy. The use of Federal character in selecting people for important diplomatic roles has weakened the importance of merits and competence. While the idea was to help Nigerian Federalism work well, it has led to negative results for diplomatic service. In the past and even today, Nigerians have shown that they do not like to visit their country's embassies or consulates in other countries. It is believed that these missions do not support Nigerians very much. Their efforts to help Nigerians in court are not impressive and fall short of what is expected. Nigerian Foreign Service is the main part of Nigerian Foreign Policy and is crucial for its effective implementation. A country's Foreign policy cannot succeed if its Foreign Service is not ready to handle its challenges. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has made it clear that the purpose of citizen diplomacy is not to defend Nigerians who break the law in other countries. The reason for having Nigerian missions abroad is to represent all things Nigerian. The country's neighbour, Ghana's neighbour, follows the global standard of proving innocence for its citizens until all fair hearing options are used (Piate, Kia and Obisung, 2025).

When it comes to Natural or Economic resources, some countries are more fortunate than others because of the natural distribution of economic resources. Although Nigeria is rich in oil, its power depends on how well it uses these resources for the country's growth. In this context, Nigeria does not perform well since its economic resources have not been well integrated with other parts of the economy

(Piate, 2013). Having economic resources gives a nation-state an edge in power calculus, as it helps them earn money and provides much-needed resources to those with little or none (Saliu, 2009). Due to their natural resources, some countries have gained power and influence in the world. Nigeria is fortunate because it has a lot of oil and gas, rich mineral resources and plenty of land for farming and food supply. Her crude is valued highly because it is easy to turn into petrol and her growing gas reserves are already helping the world move toward natural gas (Peel, 2009). However, depending too much on oil can make Nigeria vulnerable to the demands of its buyers. Moreover, the oil industry has led to strong protests and uprisings that have kept threatening the country's peace and security, making it more vulnerable (Alli, 2010, Piate, 2014). As a result of its oil and large population, Nigeria is important to many world powers and can therefore take part in global matters. For this reason, Osaghae (1998) referred to Nigeria as a nation with great potential but also as a crippled giant and Mustapha (2009) called it a nation with broken unity and a poor reputation worldwide. This may be the reason Mazrui (2006) believed that Africa was turning into the world's Lilliputian. The oil industry has suffered a lot due to the resource-related agitation and insurgency in the Niger Delta, mainly because of the militants' actions such as pipeline vandalism, kidnapping of oil workers, sabotage of oil production and oil bunkering (Piate, 2014). Alli believes that the danger to the oil industry in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea was a key reason why the US established AFRICOM in 2007 to secure American investments in the Niger Delta, the oil industry in the Gulf of Guinea and protect its interests across Africa. Nigeria's role in Africa and the West-African Sub-region has decreased as its economy and politics have weakened. In reality, Nigeria's oil is a major resource that she is proud of and that makes her seem like a big brother and regional power. Today, almost all West-African countries have oil, but Nigeria still imports refined oil since most of her refineries are not functioning. Most of these countries that did not produce oil before have more refining and energy generating facilities than Nigeria (Omole, 2010). This argument can be made stronger by comparing Nigeria's relationship with Britain. When Britain depended on Nigeria for some of its supplies, the relationship between the two countries was very friendly, but after North oil sea and Britain's increased self-sufficiency in crude petroleum, Britain could afford to ignore Nigerian opinion if it suited her (Piate, 2013). The state of Nigeria's economy is another challenge for its Foreign Policy. It is well known that economic capacity is a major part of power. After the cold war ended, many scholars have suggested that economic strength and capacity are the main factors that determine power in the modern world. It seems clear because the most powerful countries in the world today are also the most economically developed. Many experts agree that the collapse of the Soviet Union was mainly due to its weak domestic economy. The wealth of a nation comes from economic activity. When the economy is strong, the nation becomes wealthy and the benefits of this wealth are expected to reach all areas of society. Saliu suggests that the health of a nation's economy can be measured by looking at per capital income and the rate of inflation. If inflation is high and continues for a long period, it shows that the economy is not in good condition. Many investors are not fond of inflation, as it means people will have less money to spend on other goods and services. If poverty is high or unemployment is high in a country, it usually means that the economy is not doing well. It was the strong Nigerian economy from the oil boom that allowed her to stand up to the United States and Britain and support the MPLA, a cause that other African states also supported. It is a paradox that many countries with strong economies do not have much in the way of raw materials and minerals, while some African countries have a lot of these resources but weak economies (Oche, 2009). In reality, international trends are making the divide worse, as most countries in Africa and other developing regions are not able to use their resources, so they remain economically weak. The population of a country is the total number of people living there. A nation benefits from having a large population. If a large part of the population is educated and skilled, it can drive growth and development and also serve as a useful tool in diplomatic negotiations. In Nigeria, a large group of people live in poverty and do not have much education, so they do not contribute much to the economy or serve as valuable diplomats. The large number of people in Nigeria is held back by politics that are based on religion and ethnicity which are

negatives for the power market. Another point of view is that the greater the population density in a country, the more likely it is that people will be poor. Such ideas suggest that when the population grows too large, people consume more and save less which leads to less investment and less production. Due to her large population and rich resources, Nigeria should already be a major regional power and on the way to becoming a world power. It demonstrates that the potential of population size is not always reflected in its actual role in international political economy.

The political structure and the type of ruling elites in a country largely decide the direction and implementation of national policies and also help shape the country's foreign policy. This element is crucial since all the other elements depend on it. If all other factors are positive, but the national leadership is negative, the country cannot be powerful. The national leadership is the main force behind all other aspects, so any country that gets it right will easily manage the rest. It is believed that elites help drive social, economic and political progress in their communities. It is usually achieved by starting and carrying out development-focused programmes. Lipset and Solari (1961) argue that a key factor for development is having a capable elite who want to modernize their society. For this reason, Stoessinger (1979) stated that a nation's leadership must use all its resources effectively in the world arena to make the country powerful. If the body of power is made up of tangible resources and its soul is the national character, leadership is its brain. It is the government that decides how to use the resources available in the country (Saliu, 2009). The main reason for the Nigerian economy's poor state is the leadership problems that have affected the country since it gained independence. In a groundbreaking study, Lewis (2007) compared the development policies of Indonesia and Nigeria and found that the ruling elites in Indonesia chose strategies that helped the country grow, while those in Nigeria chose policies that prevented long-term growth. Therefore, the country's industrial sector is still not fully developed. The environment for business in Nigeria does not help create wealth, as the ruling elites seem to care more about spending than about making the country more productive. Since gaining independence, Nigeria has been forming governments and participating in politics, but none of these governments has ever shown any sign of strategic leadership; instead, they have acted like imperial administrators. Strategic governance means the state uses its resources to accomplish its goals and follow its vision, whereas imperial administration is about the leadership controlling people to satisfy its own desires and weaknesses.

The Boko Haram insurgency, banditry and farmer-herder conflicts have influenced Nigeria's foreign policy and the way it is seen by other countries. This has caused resources and attention to be taken away from foreign policy goals. As a result of these issues, Nigeria's reputation abroad has suffered and it is less attractive to foreign investors. In the global system, countries are careful about their image because important decisions are made about them based on how they appear to others. The climate of insecurity in Nigeria has influenced how the country is viewed by other nations and its relationships with them. As mentioned before, the state's attempts to attract foreign investment are being hindered by the sense of insecurity in Nigeria. Investors from other countries look for security and stability before making their investments. Saliu pointed out that Nigeria sends out goods it does not have and brings in goods it has in large quantities. He believes that her involvement in security matters worldwide is notable, but the country is still struggling with insecurity and is asking for help from other nations. This means that the positive reputation of Nigeria as a peacekeeper is now being challenged by the ongoing Boko Haram issue in the country (Piate, 2025). Nigeria appears to be softening her stance against the African command which was created by the USA to protect its interests in Africa, as the Nigerian government is now turning to the command to fight Boko Haram. The reliance on foreign help to fight Boko Haram's terrorism is gradually reducing Nigeria's role in protecting African interests worldwide. The migration of investors to Ghana and South Africa is due to the activities of Boko Haram and other sects which make the security situation in these countries suitable for business growth (Piate, 2025). This is due to the fact that some expatriates employed by companies and international agencies have been avoiding living in certain regions of Northern Nigeria. They usually spend some days in the North and then return to Abuja and a few other

safe places in the region. Because of this, Nigeria's foreign policy will be affected and will continue to be affected, as news about such events is more widely shared today (Saliu, 2016).

The external environment includes matters such as the international system, West Africa/sub-region, the Gulf of Guinea, the new scramble for Africa and its resources, the exit of a few West Africa countries from ECOWAS and globalization. The way the international system works creates several important challenges for Nigeria's foreign policy. Such challenges are caused by the way global politics, economies and world connections are organized. When power is shared by several states and non-state actors, instead of being held by just one or two, it leads to a complicated and flexible environment. This means Nigeria must deal with many powerful countries, each with its own goals and plans that might not match Nigeria's. Therefore, Nigeria should have a flexible and well-balanced foreign policy to avoid being involved in great power conflicts or depending too much on one external partner. Once more, the international economic systems are marked by differences in wealth between developed and developing countries. Nigeria, being a developing nation, regularly encounters issues with trade imbalances, debt and reliance on foreign aid and investment. If globalization is not handled properly, it can actually make these inequalities worse. There is a risk that Nigeria will be pushed to choose economic policies that favor other countries and harm its own progress. If the countries or regions around Nigeria become unstable, it can greatly affect their foreign policy and security. The presence of transnational criminal organizations and the spread of small arms and light weapons create more security issues. Although Nigeria is active in many international organizations, especially in Africa (African Union and ECOWAS), these organizations have their own issues such as not having enough funds, inefficient bureaucracy and disagreements among member states. As a result, multilateral actions may not be as effective and it becomes harder for Nigeria to accomplish its foreign policy goals through these platforms. In short, the present international system is marked by unequal distribution of political, economic, social and technological power among states. Leadership and respect in the world of nations are always earned, not given. Nations should therefore find a unique place in the world to make a positive difference and add value to matters important to their national interest in foreign policy. This is due to the fact that, despite major changes in international relations, the international system is still divided by political, economic and technological power and marked by states competing for power, as Hans Margenthau pointed out. Therefore, the amount of respect and obedience a state receives from other countries is largely influenced by how much power and influence it can use in support of its foreign policy. A niche policy can only be successful if the country has a strong economy and a stable democracy. Since the international system is always changing and has many aspects, Nigeria must have a flexible and well-planned foreign policy to address its problems and support its interests in the global arena. It means creating strong regional alliances, expanding international partnerships and improving the domestic economy.

Nigeria's Foreign Policy in the West African sub-region is affected by many challenges which come from historical, political, economic and security factors. It is a key area that Nigeria's foreign policy must address right away. Since Nigeria cannot decide who its neighbors are, it is clear that its foreign policy must start with its borders which makes the sub-region very important for the country's overall interest, security, politics, economy and survival. Security, stability and peace in West Africa are important matters that concern everyone. The security issues that affect the countries in the sub-region are not much different from those experienced by other countries, including frequent coups d'état, problems with constitutions, weak government, undemocratic rule, crimes that cross borders, terrorism, migration, open borders, human trafficking, narcotics trafficking, smuggling and so on. Such situations usually lead to instability and make it necessary for Nigeria to focus on diplomacy, mediation and sometimes peacekeeping, taking away resources and attention from other foreign policy matters (Piate, 2025). One thing that makes the sub-region different in this respect is that the governments in these countries are not strong enough to address these issues (Piate, 2025). The establishment of effective and useful state institutions to address

common issues in the sub-region is hindered by a lack of real commitment from leaders, who only talk about working together (Piate 2025).

The Gulf of Guinea is a major challenge for Nigeria's foreign policy. This area contains a lot of hydrocarbon deposits and Nigeria has offshore oil and gas reserves that share borders with some of the neighboring countries. A country like Nigeria which depends on hydrocarbons for most of its foreign exchange, should have strong policies to protect its investments. Currently, the Gulf of Guinea is a major area for piracy, putting shipping, seafarers and offshore oil and gas installations at risk. As a result, insurance fees have gone up, trade routes have been disrupted and Nigeria's maritime economy and reputation have suffered. The area is troubled by a lot of oil theft and illegal bunkering which leads to financial losses for Nigeria and also damages the environment and causes instability in the Niger Delta. The region is also used for illegal activities such as drug trafficking, smuggling weapons and human trafficking which create security problems that affect more than one country (Sunday and Piate, 2024). The lack of security in the Gulf of Guinea leads to fewer trade activities, higher shipping costs and less investment which negatively affects Nigeria's economy. Theft of oil is making it harder for the country to collect revenue. Illegal bunkering and attacks on oil infrastructure lead to oil spills that seriously harm the environment and the lives of people living near the coast. Because there are not enough regulations and enforcement, pollution and other environmental crimes are common in the Gulf of Guinea.

Nigeria's foreign policy should deal with the new scramble for Africa and its resources in a strong and innovative manner. The first scramble was about gaining colonies, but the current one is about getting resources. Rather than taking over and ruling colonies, today's foreign powers are trying to influence and control the governments of resource-rich countries to gain access to their energy resources. Now, China is a major player in the region that used to be dominated by western powers for centuries. Sesay et al. (2011) pointed out that China's efforts to become a leading economic and technological nation are leading to a new and dangerous competition for power. Nigeria imports much more from China than it exports to the country. The use of Chinese goods can slow down the growth of Nigeria's own industries, as is the case with the textile industry. China is once more a major source of funding for infrastructure projects in Nigeria. Even though these projects are important for development, there are worries about the loan terms and the risk of debt distress if Nigeria fails to pay back what it owes. When cheap Chinese goods are imported, it can make it difficult for local Nigerian businesses to compete which may result in their closure and people losing their jobs. China and Russia provide African countries with a new option which could lessen the impact of traditional Western partners such as the United States and the European Union. Nigeria should be cautious as it tries to maintain good ties with all major global powers, as these alliances are always shifting. The growing involvement of major powers in Africa's resources and key locations may cause more rivalry which could destabilize the region and make it harder for Nigeria to lead. Russia is a major arms supplier to Africa and China is now supplying more weapons to Nigeria. While this helps Nigeria with security, it also leads to more weapons in the region which could cause more instability. The most serious aspect is that, unlike what western nations claim, the Chinese are much more determined to get resources and pay little attention to morality, democracy, human rights and good governance. Besides helping the African Union, China also shows interest in the well-being of African people. The way it ignored the suffering and destruction in Darfur is a clear example. As long as China can get its oil from Sudan, it does not care about the country's problems. These facts should be considered carefully when designing Nigerian policies to deal with the growing competition for resources and influence in the Gulf of Guinea. Nigeria's foreign policy faces several challenges due to the withdrawal of Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso from ECOWAS. Nigeria has always been a key player in ECOWAS, contributing both politically and economically. The departure of three founding members, including Nigeria, makes the bloc weaker and reduces Nigeria's influence in the region. When the regional body is not united, Nigeria's influence in West Africa is reduced. This may reduce Nigeria's ability to guide regional security, economic unification and democracy. In addition, Mali and Burkina Faso are currently dealing with major

insurgency issues caused by groups such as AL-Qaeda and ISIS in the Sahel. If they leave ECOWAS, it could reduce the region's ability to cooperate on intelligence, fight terrorism and secure borders. The borders in the north of Nigeria are already weak and are threatened by the same insurgent groups and the Boko Haram insurgency which has connections to regional terrorism. If there is no common approach among countries in the region, it could lead to more cross-border terrorism and instability, forcing Nigeria to act alone and spend more on border security. Again, if these nations build stronger bonds with Russia, it could add to the security challenges in the region and bring new geopolitical issues for Nigeria to handle. The formation of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) could lead to rival blocs, making it harder for Nigeria to unite West Africa.

When it comes to globalization, globalization means universalization because its influence, practices and values are not limited by borders, reach into countries and shape the beliefs and values of people. On a larger scale, globalization has challenged the main reason for the state's existence in international relations. The main and distinctive aspect of today's globalization is the globalization of national policies and the way they are made. Until recently, national policies were managed by the state and people within a country, but now they are being influenced more by international agencies and big private companies (Piate, 2014). As a result, countries have less control over their own affairs and people have fewer choices in economic, social, political and cultural matters. Many developing countries now rely on policies made by others which can be harmful to their interests. The main economic activity takes place in the developed countries. Those who control international economic agencies can also keep control over their own national policies and decide on the policies and practices of international institutions and systems. The Westphalia model of state system is now being challenged by globalization. Even though the states remain, using their power and authority in some ways, the main idea of Westphalia, sovereignty, has been greatly weakened by globalization. Sovereignty refers to a particular area where the government has complete control. However, globalization has made the traditional territorial unit less useful. In other words, countries or sovereignties are no longer tied to specific territories. In a globalized world, the state has to cooperate with forces that are not within its power. In short, globalization creates major problems for Nigeria's Foreign Policy by affecting its economy, increasing internal conflicts and changing its position in the world. Some of these challenges are greater inequality, less value added in manufacturing and the risk of ethnic and religious conflicts. In addition, globalization means that Africa's foreign policy should focus on the world as a whole, not just on Africa.

A review of Nigeria's foreign policy since independence reveals that Africa is always at the heart of how Nigeria deals with other countries. Nevertheless, the way Nigeria conducts its diplomacy has changed with each new government, often guided by the leaders of government business. For this reason, Sesay et al. believe that leadership personality, not institutions, has been the main factor in shaping Nigeria's foreign relations. Even though the African-centred approach was adopted by different regimes, there have been several efforts to rethink Nigeria's Foreign Policy, for example, the concert of medium power project, economic diplomacy and citizen diplomacy. As a result of these developments, people are questioning the main goals and path of Nigeria's Foreign Policy in the present international system. While recognizing these efforts, it is necessary to rethink Nigeria's Foreign Policy so that it mainly focuses on the country's development. It means looking again at several conceptual, theoretical and definitional issues related to Foreign Policy. The Nigerian state should be addressed through a constitutional process that will unite the nation, create a strong national identity, solve the citizenship issue, ensure that all groups expect more benefits and ensure that the basic needs of each group are in line with the national needs. As a result, the country will have a safe and supportive environment at home to help with its foreign policy. The current system where foreign policy is made and carried out only by the official foreign policy institutions should be examined.

Conclusion

The research found that Nigeria's Foreign Policy is affected by both domestic and international issues that make it less effective in achieving its national goals. To deal with these, we need to use a variety of methods. The way a nation-state handles its internal and external situations decides the stance of its foreign policy. In this context, the study looks at the current domestic and international problems facing Nigeria's Foreign Policy and suggests some strategies that the government could use to address them.

The study found that the personality of leaders has been more important than institutions in shaping Nigeria's foreign relations. As a result of these developments, people are questioning the main goals and strategies of Nigeria's Foreign Policy in the current world order. To move ahead, Nigeria should have a clear and well-defined foreign policy that supports its national interests and development plans.

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