

REPOSITIONING NIGERIA FOREIGN POLICY FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND POLICY OPTIONS

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined Nigeria's Foreign Service vis-à-vis its foreign policy implementation in the last fifty five years as a way of enhancing its national interest and overall growth which has been guided by basic objectives as enshrined in her constitution and which has remained consistent with the pursuit of Nigeria interests of Pan-Africanism, multi-literalism, desire for global peace and security. Also from 1960 till date, Nigeria foreign policy has been guided by its Afro-centric principles and aspirations of its African regional leadership role which has remained steadfast. However, it is largely under – appreciated within the context of African international relations. The paper posited that this under – valued nature of Nigeria internationally is not unconnected with lack of pragmatic and dynamic political leadership, widespread corruption, socio-economic related developmental crisis plaguing Nigeria and inability of her foreign policy actors to re-invent Nigeria foreign policy over the years for national development, the paper observed that persistent Afro - Centric focus of Nigeria foreign Policy is misguided and may not serve its national interests to the fullest and the need to overcome inherent developmental challenges confronting Nigeria as a major international player in the twenty first century. The paper therefore recommends the need to repositioning Nigeria foreign policy in line with her present realities as a means of achieving socio – economic development in Nigeria. In line with this, the paper suggested a combination of preventive and economic diplomacy as its foreign policy options.

Keywords; Nigeria, National Interest, Foreign Policy, Diplomacy

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a sovereign state that attained independence from the British on 1st October, 1960 and since then, it has engaged in external relations with other states in Africa and worldwide. It is a country that is strategically located in west Africa. According to Wikipedia (2015) Nigeria lies between latitude 4⁰ and 14⁰ North, Longitude 2⁰ and 15⁰ east and it covers a total area of 923,768 km² making it the world's 32nd – largest country in the world.

For over fifty five years, the country has been engaging in the practice of foreign policy and its foreign policy can be best assessed within the context of its regional and global aspirations. The history of Nigeria's foreign policy since 1960 till date and the principles guiding its has remained constant. Adigbuo (2013) observed that, these principles have found their way into the constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria which in no unmistakable manners spells out the keys foreign policy objectives the nation must pursue on the world stage.

Furthermore, certain factors that are basic influenced the shaping of Nigeria foreign policy and those products of factors that are internal and external to Nigeria. Among these factors, are the nature and structure of Nigerian economy and which is mono-cultural and oil driven, geo-political location in West Africa, the nature of political leadership, military capability, population and domestic political situation in Nigeria.

The objective of a nation's foreign policy is a derivation of its national interest and on it is anchored. In Nigeria, various successive administration had have tried to promote the goals of Nigeria's foreign policy. Nigeria's foreign policy is virtually Afro – centric in nature, Aniwofose and Enemu (1999) described these objectives as spelt out by section 20 of the 1989 constitution of Nigeria which is as follows; promotion and protection of national interest, promotion of the total liberation of Africa from colonial rule and support of African unity; promotion of international cooperation for the consolidation of universal peace and mutual respect among all nations and elimination of racial discrimination in all its manifestations. Respect for international law and treaty obligations as well as the seeking of settlement of international disputes by negotiation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration and adjudication, and promotion of a just world economic order.

In analyzing Nigeria foreign policy in the last fifty five years, one can rightly argue that Nigeria is a new comer on the foreign policy stage compared with United States, Britain, France and Germany. The reality is that Nigeria is still trying to master the ropes in its foreign policy which still exhibit imperfections in the formulation and implementation of its foreign policy.

Another serious limitations in Nigeria foreign policy is identifying what constitutes the national interest and how to secure it in relations with other States. Ogwu (1986) observed that national interest was not clearly expressed in specific terms.

Furthermore Asobie(2010) identified some challenges in regards of Nigeria foreign policy; how the changes in the last fifty years being perceived and interpreted by policy makers? Has Nigeria's national interest been defined in the context of those changes?

Furthermore, Nigeria faces myriads of problems such as security challenges, insurgency, weak and mono- cultural economy, corruption ethno- religious crisis, leadership incompetence and all these problem undermines the attempt at achieving national integration and development. Thus, Oviasogie and Shodipo (2013) rightly pointed out that all these forces will have adverse effects on the conduct of Nigeria's foreign policy.

Methodology

The work relies on secondary source of data which is qualitative in nature. The study involves archival analysis to examine the relevant literatures on the various concepts dwelt on. Data for the analysis were sourced from newspapers, relevant books, journals, publication and from the internet.

Conceptual Clarification

In order to analyse how to repositioning Nigeria foreign policy for national development, it is appropriate to clarify concepts that are salient to this discourse. The following concepts are to be clarified such as foreign policy, National interest, diplomacy.

Foreign Policy

This is a concept that is central to international relations according to Northedge (1968) foreign policy is the inter play between the outside and inside. While Frankel, (1973), opined that foreign policy is a dynamic process of interaction between the changing domestic demands and the changing international environment. Furthermore, Rourke

(2008) opined that, foreign policy is the goal sought, values, set decisions made and actions taken by states and national societies and it constitutes an attempts to design, manage and control the foreign relations of national societies. On a general note, foreign policy is an instrument by which nations use to influence their relations with other states and to achieve their objectives within the global system.

National Interest

National interest is the sum total of the goals of sovereign state, it is the primary motivation for foreign policy formulation and implementation as a guide for actors and policy makers According to Ogwu (1986) national interest serves as a convenient base to encompass all strategies employed in the international interaction of states to ensure the preservation of the states and to ensure the preservation of the stated goals of society. Thus, National Interest represents those values, goals, means and beliefs that can ensure a nation's self – dignity and its security.

State

State is a central feature of modern society which is characterized by four main elements population, territory, government and sovereignty. Roberts, (1971) conceptualized state as territorial area in which a population is governed by a set of political authorities and which successfully claims the compliance of the citizenry for its laws and is able to secure such compliance by its monopolistic control of legitimate force.

Diplomacy

Diplomacy is a concept that is synonymous with international relations and it is the most effective instruments of conducting relations with other independent states. Anifowose and Enemu (1999) posited that, diplomacy is the conduct of interstate relations by means of negotiations.

Theoretical Framework

The personality model of foreign policy is the basis of analysis of the issue in this discourse. Scholars have the notion that there is no universal definition of personality. Ngara et al (2013) defines personality as the totality of an individual's behaviour and emotional characteristics. While, American Psychological Association (2011) viewed

personality as individual difference in characteristics patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving.

The course of history of a nation is determined by the decisions of political leaders. Leaders and the kind of leadership they exert shape the way in way in which foreign policies are made and the consequent behavior of state in world politics. Kegley and Wittkopf (1999) did a great deal of work on personality and foreign policy. They argue that state action is nothing but the preferences, actions and initiatives of the highest political office holder. This explains why name of past Nigerian leaders are attached to foreign policies that were initiated and implemented at the time they rule.

In the realm of foreign policy analysis, the influence and the impact of personality on decision making is contentious but also important in nature. The role of personality in foreign policy encompasses cognitive processes, background, personal characteristics, motives and beliefs and assumes that decision making is the result of individual, that is, it is individuals who make decisions and not states.

It is imperative to note that the success or failure of foreign policy is not usually a result of weakness of the nation, but more as a consequences of the far-or-short sightedness of the man or leader behind the foreign policy. Thus, Folarin (2013) opined that, a leader's personality is a decisive element in the making of foreign policy and that it matters very much who is there at a given moment.

Murtala/Obasanjos' foreign policy achieved overwhelming success for Nigeria due to dynamic, assertive, principle and pro-active nature of these military leaders. Their reign remained and marked the golden era of Nigeria foreign policy. A lot of milestones were set in terms of foreign policy articulation and implementation.

Conversely, Jonathan's foreign policy marked a low – down turn in Nigeria external relations, he was a passive leader and this passitive nature reflected in Nigeria's foreign policy posture. Thus Nigeria was not accorded the kind of status it deserved due to lack of action internationally by Jonathan's administration.

The personality in foreign policy decision – making is a useful model and highly relevant as a basis of theoretical analysis of international relations and decisions taken by foreign policy actors. Furthermore, it will enrich the knowledge of students, scholars and practitioners of international relations bearing in mind that in analyzing a social

phenomenon, theoretical model serves as lenses through which all the issues involved in particular social phenomenon can be analyzed.

Summary of Nigeria Foreign Policy 1960 – 2015

In order to analyze the difference facets of Nigeria's foreign policy, cognizance must be taken of the fact the guiding principles of Nigeria foreign policy remain the same, room exists for adjustment and change in line with domestic, external realities and variables. For a proper understanding the historical periods have been summarized as follows;

- i. The Balewa's administration (1960-1970)
- ii. The civil war era (1966-1970)
- iii. The post civil war era (1981-1983)
- iv. Period of prolonged military interregnum (1983-1999)
- v. President Obasanjo's civilian administration (1999-2007)
- vi. Late president Musa Yaradua's administration (2007-2009)
- vii. President Goodluck Jonathan's administration (2009-2015)

Tafawa Balewa's regime that spanned 1960 – 1965 was mainly pro-western in nature. It marked the foundation of Nigeria foreign policy and participation as an actor in the international system. It ushered Nigeria's presence in notable international organization such as, United Nations, Organization of African Unity, and Commonwealth of nations. The aims and objectives of Nigeria foreign policy was broad and afro-centric in nature.

Ogwu (1986) observed that the national interest was not clearly expressed in specific terms. Tafawa Balewa's regime was anti-east which made Nigeria to be averred to communist orientations; thus it was a foreign policy that was totally pro-west in nature.

According to Pogoso (2011), it was a foreign policy that was not dynamic but controversial in nature signing of the Nigeria defense pact in 1961 which was later abrogated in 1962.

Foreign policy under general Ironsi was not too prominent and could not made effect in the global system because it lasted for six months and very short-lived in nature. In addition, Nigeria had problem of internal strife and due to this, Ironsi administration could not made any noticeable effect on the global scene.

General Yakubu Gowon administration that lasted from 1966 to 1975 was turbulent in nature due to the civil war that erupted in Nigeria thus, the pre – occupation of Nigerian government was on how to keep Nigeria as one through winning the civil war and maintaining the territorial integrity of Nigerian.

The Yakubu Gowon's administration era was the period of oil boom which enhances the government to embrace pan – African policies in Africa. Ogwu (1986) observed that General Gowon advocated morality in the treatment of black people under the banner of respect for human dignity.

Murtala/Obasanjo regime that lasted between 1975 to 1979 marked the golden era of Nigeria's foreign policy. It was a period devoted to the promotion of respect for black man and liberation movement in Africa. Thus, Pogson (2010) acknowledge the fact that, the proactive policies and actions against colonialism in Africa had a positive outcome in the decolonization of Angola, and later Zimbabwe. Also, the administration of duo embarked on enhancing African culture through the hosting of the second world black and Africa festival of arts and culture held in Lagos, Nigeria in 1977. It was an event that show-cased to the entire world the cultural beauty of Africa. The Murtala/Obasanjo administrations also worked towards other pan Africanist –related policy in Africa, the regime mid-wifed the establishment of the economic community of west African states as a multilateral measures at enhancing the integration of west African economy.

In addition, Murtala/ Obasanjo's administration embarked on indigenization economic policy which led to the transfer of ownership and control of business enterprises from foreigners to Nigerians which would ensure greater participation of indigenes in the ownership, control and management of business enterprises nationalized. However, the policy of indigenization created unfriendly international relations between Nigeria and these countries that the policy affected negatively. Also, the policy discouraged the inflow of foreign direct investment (FDI) into Nigerian economy.

Nigeria's foreign Policy under Shagari administration that lasted between 1979 – 1983 was devoted to lack of pro-active action and foreign policy direction. The pattern was pro-west in nature. Nevertheless his administration was also committed towards the liberation movements and total eradication of apartheid in.

Muhammed Buhari's foreign policy had an agenda for Nigeria to be peaceful with her neighbour and more peace in Africa. Thus, Nigeria entered into agreement with Benin republic, Togo and Ghana in regards of peace and sub- regional

Furthermore, Buhari's government maintained consistency in regard of Nigeria's concentric circle –nature of her foreign policy. Gambari (1989) buttressed this foreign policy orientation. The pattern of concentric circle may be discernible in our attitude and response to foreign policy issues within the Africa continent and in the world at large.

However, Buhari's foreign policy had a major challenge in regards of the diplomatic faux pas committed by his regime in the abortive attempt at abducted Alhaji Umaru Dikko from London at all cost. The singular unconventional act caused diplomatic row between Nigeria and Britain. Thus, it one of the lowest point of Buhari's regime foreign policy.

Nigeria's foreign policy under Ibrahim Babagida's administration was hinged on economic diplomacy as foreign policy instrument and giant strides were made to re-energize Nigeria's hegemony tendency and leadership in Africa. The policy of economic diplomacy was aimed at achieving economic development and growth for Nigeria. also, the regime played prominent role at achieving conflict resolution and management in West Africa especially Liberia and Sierra lone with the spearheading the establishment of economic community of west African states monitoring group ECOMOG in 1989. The regime was responsible for the formation of technical aids corps (TAC) programme which still stand till date.

However, Ibrahim Babangida's foreign policy was controversial in nature through the attainment the membership of Islamic conference (OIC) in 1986 which was in contrast with the secular nature of Nigerian constitution. In addition the restoration of diplomatic ties with Israel in 1992 raised out cry from the Muslim community in Nigeria.

Foreign policy under Sanni Abacha's regime between 1993 – 1998 was basically anti – west marred with the ex-tra judicial killing of ken Saro Wiwal and other eight environmentalist of the Ogoni tribe in Nigeria and which resulted in the suspension of Nigeria from the Common

Wealth of nation in 1995. Furthermore, Nigeria under this regime attained a pariah status which made Nigeria to dwell in the international wilderness. In summary, the Abachas's

foreign policy years were setback to Nigeria in terms of international relations because of its isolationist, tendency which made the regime to be un-popular.

This negative tendency made Osaghae to opined that “Nigeria’s era of foreign policy isolationism” a feat made possible due to the totalitarian nature of the Abacha’s regime.

General Abdulasalami Abuakar’s regime was very brief in terms of Nigeria external elations. He had a notion of a new policy agenda that would take Nigeria out of his problems internationally. According to Folarin (2013) quoting Abdulasami, this administration will continue to pursue policy of constructive engagement with other members of the international community. We are committed to ensuring that Nigeria takes it rightful place among the comity of nations based on the principles of mutual respect and protection of our national interest.

Oluwasegun Obasanjo’s administration that lasted between 1999 – 2007 sought efforts at re-integrating Nigeria back into the international system. It was a foreign policy that transformed Nigeria from a pariah status to a nation given international recognition by other sovereign states globally. Nigeria spearheads the transformation of organization of Africa unity to African Union in 2001. In a nutshell, Nigeria relationship within the international system was robust, steady and friendly in nature.

Yaradua’s foreign policy that lasted between 2007 – 2009 was short -lived as a result of his demise and it was not too commendable due to his passive foreign policy posture. This passivity may be adduced to the ailing nature of Yaradua’s health which resulted into foreign policy of in – action on the part of his administration. In retrospect of six years of Goodluck Jonathan’s foreign policy that spanned 2009 – 2015, it was a foreign policy that had nothing remarkable to reckoned with. It could be regarded as period of international hiatus for Nigeria. it was a period of lull or in – action as a result of lukewarm nature of Jonathan’s government and which reflected on Nigeria’s foreign policy outlook.

Nevertheless, Yaradua’s foreign policy tried to shift focus from economic diplomacy to citizenship democracy, the trust of this foreign policy focus to identify with Nigerian citizens and it was hinged on the protection and welfare of Nigerian citizens both at home and in diaspora. However, it was un-accomplished policy objectives. According to Teniola (2013) in his scholarly article titled “Lost in the global radar” in the global scene,

Nigeria have become very inept and supine. Furthermore, Nigeria have now been emerged with internal contradictions.

President Goodluck Jonathan's Administration (2010-2015) Foreign Policy

Nigeria's foreign policy under President Jonathan's administration had nothing much remarkable to reckon with. It could be regarded as a period of international hiatus for Nigeria. It was a period of lull or in-action as a result of passive nature of Jonathan's administration and which reflected on Nigeria's foreign policy outlook.

Also, Nigeria faces security challenges, terrorism, leadership incompetence, corruption, economic stagnation, ethnic crisis, religion division, inter-communal violence, democratic consolidation and national integration of the Nigerian state is at risk which have adverse effects on the conduct of Nigeria's foreign policy (Oviasogie et al:2013).

In regard of current president Buhari's civilian administration, it is too early to make a meaningful critical assessment of his foreign policy due to his emergent nature of his administration. However, his posture and emergence as a change agent invokes hopes of reviving back to life a dynamic foreign policy for Nigeria.

Nigeria Peace Keeping Role Globally

Nigeria is remarkably noted internationally for maintenance of peace, mediation and resolution of conflicts especially in African, Sub-region. According to Mclean and McMillian (2009) peace keeping is intervention by a third party to separate and pacify participants in a conflict.

Nigeria's afro-centric and peace-loving natures have engendered its peacekeeping initiatives and transcend it beyond Africa. From 1960 till date, Nigeria has contributed significantly towards attainment of peacekeeping and enforcement in conflict prone areas such as Congo, Chad Angola, Liberia, Somalia, Rwanda, South Sudan, Bosnia and Herzegovinian etc.

However, it is pertinent to note that Nigeria is noted for peacekeeping but is confronted with herculean challenges of tackling Boko-Haram insurgency in the last six years. Furthermore, militia groups and ethno –religious conflicts is sporadic especially in north – central and south eastern geo-political zones of Nigeria. Imoukhuede (2013) acknowledged that violence and instability are not desired catalyst for peace and

economic development. Thus, the question begging an answer is, who will rescue, the rescuer?

Nigeria Participation in United Nations Peace Keeping Operations

YEAR	LOCATION AND NATURE OF PEACE KEEPING OPERATIONS
1960 – 1964	United Operations In Congo (ONUG)
1962 – 1963	United Nations Security Force in West New Guinea (UNSF)
1992 – 1993	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTA)
1992 - 1994	United Nations Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ)
1992 – 1995	United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFR)
1994	United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT)
1993 – 1996	United Nations Assistance Mission of Rwanda (UNAMIR)
1994	United Nations AOZOU Strip Observer Group (UNASOG)
1989 – 1990	United Nations Transition Assurance Assistance Group in Namibia (UNTAG)
1978	United Nations Interterm Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL)
1988 – 1991	United Nations Iran – Iraq military Observer group
1991	United Nations Iraq –Kuwait Observer Mission (UNIKOM)
1991 – 1995	United Nations Angola Verification Mission II (UNAVEM II)
1991	United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO)
1995	United Nations Preventive Deployment force in Macedonia (UNPREDEP)
1995	United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH)
1995 – 1997	United Nations Angola Verification of Eastern Slovenia, Baraja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES)
1996	United Nations Mission of Obsnervers in Prevlaka (UMOP)
1998	United Nations Civilian Police Support Group in Crotatia
1999	United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in Serra leone

Source: Teniola E.: Lost in the Global Radar, the Guadian, May 3, 2013, P. 5

Inherent Challenges Affecting Nigeria Foreign Policy

Foreign policies are systematic way that a sovereign nation can use to deal with matters that may arise with its interactions with other independent states and other non- states actors. It is pertinent to note that Nigeria has not fared better in the conduct of its foreign policy for the larger part of its fifty five years of existence as sovereign state. In retrospect Teniola (2013) addressed Nigeria’s foreign policy succinctly that a bold foreign policy has become major mishap in the face of grave internal problems confronting Nigeria today, in the global scene, Nigeria has become very inactive.

Furthermore, Asobie (2010) came up with questions that are challenging in nature such as how the changes in the international system in the last fifty year been perceived and interpreted by policy makers? How has Nigeria's national interest been defined, in the contexts of those changes? What specific policies have been formulated and implemented to respond to the changes? What has been impact of the changes and Nigeria's responses on Nigeria's national development ? The posers raised by Asobie Assisi are part of the challenges inherent in Nigeria Foreign policy

In addition, the appointment of non career officers as diplomats especially political appointees to serves as ambassadors and high commissioners is counter-productive at implementing effectively foreign policy objectives of Nigerian government outside its shores due to misplacement of government priorities by these set of ambassadors. In addition, it affects negatively the morales of career officers in the ministry of external affairs.

Persistent economic hardship and downslide of oil price globally is an impeding factor in the implementation of foreign policy objectives by Nigerian government due to the mono-cultural and oil driven nature of Nigerian economy. Nigeria attained a dynamic and pragmatic foreign policy during the period of oil boom in the 1970s. Thus, if the structure of states economy is strong, diversify and stable, it will serve as a major determinants of states behavior vis-à-vis its relations within the international system.

Recommendations and Conclusion

The paper has examined the issue of the objectives of Nigeria foreign policy and its implementations and the inherent challenges facing it in the last fifty five years. It is obvious that Nigeria foreign policy is afro-centric in nature, very broad in its goals and it is being determined by socio-political factors that are both internal and external to Nigerian environment.

It is imperative that Nigerian government must address the underlying causes and provides realistic ideas and solutions that will tackle the inherent socio-political contradictions in Nigeria as way of enhancing the image of the country within the international system.

Furthermore, it is imperative that foreign affairs institutions and missions abroad should make it imperative to advance Nigeria's foreign policy objectives with consistency in line with stipulated constitutional goals of Nigeria vis-a-vis international system.

In this light, foreign policy institutions and diplomats should key into the assertion of Uhomoibhi and Iweriebor (2015) the need to dedicate to the realization through the vigorous pursuit of the vital national interests of the federal republic of Nigeria through the formulation, articulation and implementation of Nigeria's foreign policy objectives for the benefits of Nigeria and its citizens by building the capacity to be a major role player in world affairs and earning the respect of the people of Africa and the larger international community. On a final note Nigeria foreign policy objectives and its implementation should inculcate the adoption of combination of economic diplomacy and preventive diplomacy as foreign policy instruments as a means or tools of repositioning Nigerian foreign policy to cope with the developmental challenges of the twenty first century.s

The inability of Nigeria foreign policy makers and actors to key into the globally acknowledged preventive diplomacy in the realization of de-escalation of violence especially in northern Eastern Nigeria bearing the contiguous nature of the zone with Cameroon, Chad and Niger republic is a reflection of lack of pro-active policies and measures by Nigerian government thus it should embrace preventive diplomacy bearing in mind realities of time. Albert (2012) acknowledged that, preventive diplomacy means an action to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur.

In conclusion, there is the need to link Nigeria national interest in line with our foreign policy objectives, our national interests should supercede other external considerations and remain imperatives, the focus should be on the gains or the advantages that Nigeria will derive as a nation in its foreign policy implementation. Thus, in the comments of Obadiah, M. quoting from the study of Wogu et, al (2015) the centerpiece of any country's foreign policy ought to be that country itself if it seriously considers itself a rational actor on the world stage...

Every single action shall be adjudged by how much it advances our national power and influence and how much it advances our interest and objectives

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