

## **National Interest and Nigerian Foreign Policy: Problems and Prospects**

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### **Abstract**

Foreign and domestic policy issues are related products of the same political system and are designed to define and implement overall national purposes. Foreign and domestic policy must be mutually supporting if national policy aspirations are to be achieved in an atmosphere of political stability. This article is designed to examine Nigeria's national interest and her foreign policy thrust, its problems and prospects. The grand theory or realist approach was used as theoretical framework. The paper took a historical journey into Nigeria's foreign policy since independence. It analytically examined the contradictions that are firmly fixed in the country's foreign policy and their fundamental link to her national interest or image-building. It reveals that Nigeria's foreign policy over the years has been greatly sabotaged by succeeding governments. It observes that the Nigerian has not really been made the main focus of our policy, rather designed for the powerful elitist circles and African-centered. It sees corruption and internal political crisis as negatively affecting our foreign policy. It recommends that our foreign policy must be redirected towards our national security and welfare as well as encompasses economic, cultural technical and scientific cooperation with countries in the international arena.

## **Introduction**

In the words of Prince Matternich of Austria, one of the greatest practitioners of diplomacy, foreign policy is a contraction of domestic policies which to all intents and purposes, enables any nation's relevance and participation in the international system". In the light of the understanding of foreign policy as conceptualized above, sovereign nations set for themselves, and pursue, certain core objectives in their diplomatic interactions. These objectives are formed or dictated by national interests which are in turn a reflection of domestic policies, circumstances and prevailing values of the state. The national interest is also an image of a people's common outlook with respect to the wide range of issues confronting the world at large. It becomes the duty of respective administration or governments to strive to harmonize the yearnings of the people for security stability, development and prosperity and evolve policies to actualize them in diplomacy (Adeniji, 2005: 23-25). Thus, national interest is a fundamental and core feature of a country's foreign policy.

To Akindele (1996: 93), an effective foreign policy depends largely on the stability of the domestic political order, the strength, resilience and diversification of the national economy, the military might available for use if the situation arises, the level of industrialization of the economy and the quality of political and administrative leadership at home. Therefore, from the foregoing assertion, foreign policy must adequately pay absolute attention to domestic issues which are very essential for image-building.

Image-building form an essential element in the strategy for foreign policy formulation and implementation, in any country, when well focused, foreign policy initiatives help create and reinforce favourable images of a country to the external world.

Consequently, the image a country attempts to create and project, through its foreign policy, must conform to its national interest, and the image expectations of other members of the international community. Hence, a nation's attempt to have a meaningful impact on, and accordingly influence, the world around it will be guided by her foreign policy objectives and national interests and how effectively such disposition is transmitted or communicated to the world. (Alimi, 2005:335; Federal Ministry of Information, 2012:345). In other words, foreign policy objectives and national interests must be carried out according to the system or plan, in a thorough, efficient or determined way to achieve their aims.

Therefore, a country's standing in the international system although dependent on some other factors, is highly dependent on the perception of her image globally. Nigeria's image has been shaped by a number of factors since 1960. These factors include Nigeria's Afrocentric policy, Nigeria's big market for Euro- American finished products, Nigeria's oil boom, Nigeria's anti-apartheid policy, Nigeria's policy of technical assistance and several other factors that evolved over the years (Akinterinwa, 2004 cited in Boma- Lysa, Terfa & Tsegysu, 2015:3). Thus, it is the contention of this paper to analyze Nigeria's foreign policy, benefits to her domestic environment and articulates how well her foreign policy has adapted to changing scenes in the international system as well as explore some contending issues and prospects of our foreign policy.

### **Foreign Policy**

The concept of foreign policy like most concepts in social sciences has no universally accepted definition. It depends on the ideological inclination and background of the authors. As Aluko Olajide rightly observes, "nobody has really formulated a universally accepted definition of the concept of foreign

policy and probably nobody will ever succeed in doing so” According to Modelski George, foreign policy is a “system of activities evolved by communities for changing the behaviour of other states and for adjusting their own activities to the international environment”.<sup>2</sup> He further stressed that, it is a systematic and deliberately selected national interest. Anderson Roden viewed foreign policy as “involving the formulation and implementation of a group of principles which shape the behaviour pattern of other states while negotiating with other states to protect or further its vital interest”.<sup>3</sup> However, we must ever have it at the back of our mind that, it is not all international contacts and relations that amount to foreign policy. Only those matters, which originated with or are overtly or tacitly sponsored by the government of states, may be considered as belonging to its foreign policy. That is, only ‘official’ or government directed dealing between nations are included in the concept of foreign policy. Northedge conceptualizes foreign policy as ‘an interplay between the outside and the inside’.<sup>4</sup> He believes that foreign policy is the manifestation of domestic and external realities. Buttressing this view, Beared Charles said” foreign policy of a state usually refers to the general principles by which a state governs its reaction to their international environments”. To a large extent therefore, both Northedge and Beared C. believe that foreign policy is determined by internal and external realities. In the views of Frankel, foreign policy is a dynamic process of interactions between the changing domestic demands and supports and the changing external circumstances. Similarly, Plano and Olton in R. Anderson, stressed that, foreign policy is the formulation and implementation of a group of principles which shape the behavioural pattern of state while negotiating with other states to protect or further its vital interest.

### **Foreign Policy and Domestic Policy**

According to Graham Allison; we have portrayed the development of foreign policy as a relatively simple and orderly evolution from the definition of the national interest to the development of foreign policy goals and objectives, to the establishment of concrete programs and commitments. Were this process to occur in a vacuum, we would need proceed no further. Unfortunately, the real world of foreign policymaking exists within an environment that includes a host of pressures from both the domestic and international political systems. He said; the domestic environment includes political pressures that may emanate from within or without the government, and organizational influence stemming from the manner in which government agencies perform their functions. Graham further stressed that; foreign and domestic policy issues are related products of the same political system and are designed to define and implement overall national purposes. Foreign and domestic policy must be mutually supporting if national policy aspirations are to be achieved in an atmosphere of political stability. The development of national economies requires the assembling of resources from other states, and the expansion of markets across international borders. The ability of a nation to extent military strength in the pursuit of its foreign policy objectives in turn depends upon a diversified and sound domestic industrial structure or help from allies that possess such resources. Both sets of policies, foreign and domestic, are conditioned by the ideologies, popular attitudes, and balance of political power that exist within the national system at any given time.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Theories are of practical significance to the study of international relations because the framework of knowledge and experience within which theories are established make a

meaningful explanation of world phenomena reasonably possible. Generally, therefore, because, theories are utilized to measure the validity or invalidity of knowledge, they can be viewed as a set of verified systematized and relate statements with valid generalizations (Abia, 2000:26). Therefore, this study is anchored on grand theory or realist approach.

The realist approach is a paradigm based on the premise that world politics is essentially and unchangeably a struggle among self-interested states for power and position under anarchy, with each competing state pursuing its own national interests. Among the principal prophets of this new world view were E.H. Carr (1939), George F. Kennan (1951,1954), Hans J. Morgenthau (1948). Reinhold Niebuhr (1947) and Kenneth

W. Thompson (1960), within the realist paradigm, the purpose of statecraft is national survival in a hostile environment. To this end, no means are more important than the acquisition of power, and no principal is more important than self-help. In this conception, state sovereignty, a cornerstone that realist in the 17th century wrote into international law, gives Heads of State, the freedom and responsibility to do whatever is necessary to advance the state's interest and survival (Kegley, 2007:29).

According to Abia (2000:30) the realist approach considerably assessed the phenomena of nationalism, the influence of geography on a state's foreign policy, and particularly, the effect of power (or lack of it) on a nation's fate. Their central focus in the relations among states, according to this approach, is the utilization of endowed resources or national power in order to enhance or increase national capability power in order to enhance or increase national capability since international politics or relations is predominantly the pursuit of power that is, policy or status quo, imperialism or expansionism or influence or prestige. From the above, therefore, an effective

foreign policy must be systematically planned and projected to achieve their domestic aims or objectives for the benefits of her citizens in terms of stable socio-political and socio-economic development develop their military capabilities as well as enhance political interactions and foster economic gains in the international system at large.

### **Nigeria's Foreign Policy Since Independence**

Nigeria gained her independence on October 1, 1960 and was admitted as the 99th member of the United Nation (UN) on October 7, 1960 at the plenary of the 15th Regular Session of the UN General Assembly in New York where the country's Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa acknowledged that peace and security are very vital to Nigeria's foreign policy. His address further asserts; (a) It is the desire of Nigeria to remain on friendly terms with all nations and participate actively in the work of the UN; (b) Nigeria a large and populous country of over 35 million has absolutely no territorial or expansionist intention; (c) We shall not forget our old friends and we are proud to have been accepted as a member of the British Commonwealth. Nevertheless, we do not intend to ally ourselves as a matter of routine with any of the power blocs. We are committed to uphold the principles upon which the UN is founded; (d) Nigeria hopes to work with other African States for the Progress of Africa and assist in brining all African territories to a state of responsible independence (Abagen and Tyona, 2018).

The foregoing assertion laid the foundation of Nigeria's foreign policy thrust pursued by successive governments (military or civilian) from the inception of her independence in 1960 till date. Nigeria's commitment to further promote the central tenets of her foreign policy objectives of peace and security was in the forefront of the establishment of a continental body,

i.e, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) formed in May, 1963 (Abagen and Tyona, 2018). Equally, the Balewa Administration became a key player in the international system. In 1961, she broke diplomatic ties with France, over the testing of nuclear weapons in the Sahara desert. It also supported the expulsion of South Africa from the Commonwealth in 1961. Thus, the Balewa's government centered her foreign policy on Africa.

The coup d etat of 15t January, 1966 swept from power politicians and parties that were extremely favourable disposed to the British. Those that came to power as a result of the first coup were as pro-British as Balewa and his cabinet. Indeed in May 1966, following the anti-Ibo riots in the North, the head of the military Junta, General Ironsi in a nationwide broadcast had implicitly accused Britain of inciting Northerners against the Ibos. This was the first time since independence that the federal government made any open criticism of Britian. Although the Sandhurst-trained officers who came to power after the second coup on 29 July, 1966 were as conservative as the former Nigerian leaders, events soon took things out of their control (Aluko, 1981:44-45).

The July 29, 1966 coup ushered in General Yakubu Gowon as Nigeria's new Head of State. Then erupted serious internal conflicts which brought the nation to be a near state of disintegration. This had a serious impact on Nigeria's external relations as the country could not play any active role in foreign policy except that officials were merely junketing round the globe to explain the circumstances of the fratricidal civil war which raged uninterruptedly for 30 months (Gubak, 2015:635). The civil war began on July 6, 1967 and ended in 1970 (Aluko, 1981:45). Again, Gubak avers that;



The pro-Western posture of Nigeria's foreign policy continued unabated and government had thought that by turning to her traditional friends in the West for assistance, the war would be expeditiously prosecuted (Gubak, 2015:635).

However, the decision of the British government to remain neutral at the outset of the war was regarded in Nigeria as a betrayal of a former friend. But more agonizing to the Nigerian leaders was the British government's refusal to grant licence for the purchase of jet fighters and bombs, or even to allow the shipments of large quantities of light arms and ammunition to Nigeria, until a military aid agreement had been concluded with the Soviet Union early in August, 1967 (Aluko, 1981:45).

The experience acquired in prosecuting the war and eventually restoring peace brought dividends in terms of lessons which affected the country's foreign policy. For instance, the ambivalence and uncomplimentary role played by Britain and some Western countries, especially France, in supporting the Biafran Secessionists re-affirmed the need for self-reliance and continued and unabashed neutrality or non-alignment. In fact, the support of the Soviet Union and her allies for the Federal Government's war-time efforts obliterated the fear and suspicious that had hindered closer relations with the Eastern Bloc countries, and ushered in an era of cooperation and assistance agreements with the countries (Adeniji, 2005:29). Following the end of the civil war in 1970, Nigeria's economy became buoyant as oil resources boomed. By 1974, the oil sector had accounted for about 90 percent of the total revenue, and the country took dynamic steps to assert her leadership role in Africa (Gubak, 2015:635). In addition, the Nigerian Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon and his Togolese counterpart, Gnassingbe Eyadema toured the sub-region in support of the integration idea. Thanks to the drafts that emanated from their efforts as they formed the basis for the emergence of the Treaty

of Lagos, Nigeria on May 28, 1975 which birthed the Economic Community of West African States [ECOWAS] (Tyona, 2015a).

The dynamic and pro-active government of Generals Murtala/Obasanjo brought vigour and vitality into the realization of our foreign policy objectives. A lot of attention was focused on African. In the area of decolonization, not only was Nigeria recognized as the credible voice of African internationally, she devoted enormous resources to assist freedom fighters in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), South-West Africa (Namibia), Mozambique, Angola and apartheid South Africa until freedom was achieved. Then, Nigeria was conferred with an honorary membership of the Frontline States, even though she was located almost four thousand miles away from the then apartheid enclave of South Africa (Adeniji, 2005, Abagen & Tyona, 2018). At the UN, she served as Chairman of the UN's Committee Against Apartheid. This period has been recorded by observers as the most eventful in Nigeria's foreign relations. She laid the foundation for the formation, much later, of the Lagos Plan of Action in 1980. These initiatives, in line with the consistent tilt in our foreign Policy perspectives, were aimed at accelerating the peace, and broaden the scope, of economic cooperation between African States. The hosting in 1977 of the 2nd Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) was a manifest expression of Nigeria's commitment to promoting and advancing the cause of blacks in Diaspora (Adeniji, 2005:30).

On October, 1979 the civilian led government of Shehu Shagari came into being. The era witnessed a retrogressive reversal in Nigeria's foreign policy as the government dampened the momentum of dynamic and radical foreign posture bequeathed to it. Nigeria once again reverted to the conservative, pro-western policy that was reminiscent of the Balewa era. In 1980

and 1982, the northern cities of Kano and Kaduna witnessed religious riots. In January 1983, the Nigerian government responded to the economic downturn by expelling illegal immigrants. This was the state's "worst International crisis since the civil war". It antagonized Nigeria's neighbours and further underfunded sub-regional integration (Anyaele, 2003; Akinboye, 1999, Dibia, 2008; Abegunrin, 2003; Gambari, 1989 cited in Gubak, 2015). Due to corruption and deteriorating economic crisis, the Shagari government was overthrown in 1983 by a military coup.

General Muhammadu Buhari came to power in 1983 strove to give clearer form to the country's foreign policy orientation. Africa was to constitute the area of primary concern to the country. It was also emphasized that Nigeria's national security and economic well-being would constitute the axis around which revolved its foreign policy, with a promise to put on a more constructive footing in relation with Nigeria's immediate neighbours. The Buhari administration believed that the old conception of Africa being the policy center-piece would be properly defined. Under Buhari's regime, relations with ECOWAS member-states reached an all time low. Not only were the nation's borders permanently closed against its neighbours, thus badly hurting their economies, the regime did not heed all the appeals, for them to be re-opened. The position of the Buhari regime's foreign policy toward its neighbours has been justified in literature as promised on the basic rationale behind the coup itself, which was to arrest the country's rapidly deteriorating economic situation, eliminate corruption and improve the well-being of the generality of Nigerians (Gambari, 1986, Akinnade, 1992, Fawole, 2002, Adeniji, 2003, 2004, Akinboye, 2013 Osaghae, 2002, Folarin, 2010) cited in Fayomi, Chidozie & Ajayi, 2015). Thus, the Buhari military government was toppled in a coup which brought in General Ibrahim Babangida as the new head of government.

General Babangida took over power from General Buhari on August 27, 1985. And become the sixth military Head of State in Nigeria. In fact, studies have that he declared himself “Military President”, hence became the first military President in Africa and probably the world. According to Adeniji (2005:31) there was assertiveness and much activism in foreign policy during this period. Another oil windfall during the Babangida Administration provided funds to finance what some have termed the ‘adventurist’ foreign policy initiatives of the era. The tenure of Bolaji Akinyemi witnessed the introduction of the “Concert of Medium Powers’ the convening of the All Nigerian Conference on Foreign Policy and the establishment of the Technical Aid Corps (TAC) programme all these earned Nigeria the place of a key international actor when emphasis on South-South Cooperation, while the restatement of the theory of concentric circles as defining the conduct of our foreign policy brought it the front burner the issues of decolonization and struggle against apartheid.

Furthermore, the General Babangida regime played a pivotal role by been main provider of funds, manpower and logistics to ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) an interventionist mediation force to end the Liberian civil war (Abagen & Tyona, 2018). Following the country’s debilitating transition programme by the Babangida government, it became evident when the June 12, 1993 presidential election was annulled. To stem the ugly tide, he hurriedly put in a place an interim national government, headed by Ernest Shonekan who lasted for about three months.

General Sani Abacha toppled the interim national government on November 17, 1993 and became Nigeria’s new Head of State. The administration should be credited for using ECOMOG led by Nigeria to restore democracy in Sierra Leone in 1997. In the final analysis according to Adeniji (2005:32) the

serious human rights abuses of the Abacha regime render Nigeria's domestic policy between 1993-1998 a virtual embarrassment and fell short of the standard expectation of the international community. In addition, Tyona (2015b: 57) notes that even military training or exchange, and sales of arms and equipments to Nigeria's were suspended. The junior world cup schedule to hold in Nigeria was cancelled in 1998. Nigeria could not borrow money from the World Bank and other international financial organizations and foreigners could not invest in Nigeria. These situations, coupled with other fallouts from the despotic rule of General Abacha, exposed the country to sanctions from other international bodies, with the most prominent being the suspension of Nigeria from the Commonwealth of Nations. This gave a negative/bad international image on the Nigerian state.

Following General Abacha's death on June 8, 1998, General Abdulsalami Abubakar emerged as Nigeria's Head of State. He initiated a ten months transition programme which brought on board, Olusegun Obasanjo as Nigeria's President on May 29, 1999. In order to redeem Nigeria's image and re-integrate her in the international system, President Obasanjo embarked on shuttle diplomacy. This approach to foreign policy saw Nigeria re-admitted into the community of nations. His shuttle diplomacy equally brought high profile return state visits from countries like, Russia, United States of America, Canada, South Africa, France, Japan among others.

Subsequently, Nigeria assumed leadership of several multilateral organizations, like Chairman of the African Union (AU), elected Chairman of the G-77 in 2000. She was elected into the eight-member Commonwealth ministerial. Action Group (CMAG) for the first time as well as hosted the Commonwealth Heads of Government summit in December, 2003 in Abuja, Nigeria. The Obasanjo democratic rule also

played a prominent role in transforming the Organization of African Unity (OAU) into AU as well as leading force in the creation of the New Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD). Equally, the administration brought on board the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). The policy thrust of NEEDS was aimed at moving Nigeria's economic fortunes forward through capacity building for sustainable development in building/creating a competitive private sector that can take advantage of the abundant opportunities in the domestic, continent and global markets. Thus, the Global System of Mobile (GSM) came into being in Nigeria under Obasanjo's democratic era.

Therefore, in essence, constructive and beneficial foreign policy direction of the Obasanjo administration was intended to address and redress the perceived inadequacy inherent in concentricism: which was the fact that concentricism was not at all an objective but a means, it was more or less a foreign policy tactic that had not been fully taken advantages of; and as a means to an end, concentricism had to have focus (Akinrinwa, 2004 cited in Fayomi, Chidozie & Ajayi, 2015). Text have it that the above philosophy largely shaped Obasanjo's foreign policy.

President Obasanjo was succeeded by the late Umaru Musa Yar' Adua who was reputed to have introduced the concept of "citizen diplomacy" as the thrust of Nigeria's foreign policy. Citizen diplomacy is a political concept depicting the involvement of average citizens engaging representatives of another country or cause either inadvertently or by design. The concept sometimes refers to "Track Two Diplomacy" which cannotes unofficial contacts between people of different nations, as differentiated from official contacts between governmental representatives. The concept was construed by Nigeria under President Yar' Adua to mean that Nigeria's

foreign policy would henceforth be focused on the Nigerian citizens at home and in the Diaspora (Ogunsanwo, 2009, Agbu, 2009, cited in Fayomi, Chidozie & Ajayi, 2015).

Furthermore, the foreign policy position of the Goodluck Jonathan administration who succeeded the late Yar'Adua was generally perceived as a continuation of the foreign policy thrust of his predecessor. Many commentators and scholars agree that there is no radical departure in terms of Nigeria's foreign policy transactions to warrant serious reflections. However, it will suffice to mention that the spate and direction of Nigeria's domestic insecurity intensified debates on the country's national image (Fayoemi, Chidozie & Ajayi, 2015).

Internationally, the pervasive corruption in Nigeria had tarnished the image of the country and has resulted in foreign nationals exercising extreme caution in entering into business transactions with Nigerians, thereby weakening the economic sector (Chukwuemeka et al 2012, cited in Boma-Lysa Terfa & Tsegay, 2015). Again, President Goodluck Jonathan did not actually succeed in implementing foreign policy as evidenced from USA government refusing to sell weapons to Nigeria, and South African government also seizing Nigeria money meant to purchase weapons to fight Boko Haram among other diplomatic skirmishes globally. Similarly, many Nigerians were executed in countries like Indonesia, Philippines, Australia and unprovoked attacks on Nigerian national and massive deportation of Nigerians across the globe. Therefore, Nigerian foreign policy under Jonathan's administration failed to have meaningful impact on the global community (Boma-Lysa, Terfa & Tsegay, 2015).

**Muhammadu Buhari succeeded Goodluck Jonathan on May 29, 2015 as the fifth Nigeria's Executive President. In his maiden speech, President Buhari asserts:**

“I belong to everyone and I belong to no one”. His agenda includes: uniting the nation, adherence to the rule of law, no settling of old scores, liberation of the chibok girls, continuation of the fight against Boko Haram, cross-border terrorism, financial crime, cyber crime, curtailing insecurity especially kidnappings, armed robbery, cattle rustling and fight against corruption. Others are: ending fuel and power shortages, independence of the legislature and judiciary reformation of the public sector, prevention of abuse of the local government joint account, heavy investment in projects in the Niger Delta, judicial cleansing, fight against unemployment, and a robust foreign policy (Alli, Ehikioya & Akowe, 2015:4).

On foreign policy, Buhari said his administration is ready to play any role that Africa accepts of it. He assured the international community of readiness to cooperate to address the challenges in the 21st century (Alli, Ehikioya, & Akowe, 2015:5). It is worthy to mention that President Buhari’s democratic rule has successfully brought into being domestic security in Nigeria. He has tackled to a splendid level the Boko Haram insurgency, fighting the corruption malady and has collaborated with other nations to recover and retrieve Nigeria’s stolen funds stocked abroad. There is now more military training or exchange and sales of arms and equipments to Nigeria.

In pursuit of her foreign policy objective of promoting Africa integration and support for African unity, President Muhammadu Buhari played a pivotal role in bringing lasting peace in the political crisis in the Gambia when her longtime President, Yahaya Jammeh who was in power for 22 years (from 1994-2016) refused to step down after the December 2016 elections in which opposition leader, Adama Barrow was declared winner. Nigeria stationed her Naval warship on



standby at a coast near Gambian's boundary as well as sent military peacekeeping troops to oust Jammeh if he failed to step aside (Abagen & Tyona, 2018). The administration has dwindled down her membership of international organizations to reduce unnecessary cost.

### **Some Problems and Prospects of Nigeria's Foreign Policy.**

Since Nigeria's independence in 1960, her foreign policy like that of most nations has experienced some successes and failures. In the words of Ambassador Olu Adeniji, former Nigeria's Foreign Affairs Minister, "The Nigerian has not really been made the main focus of our policy. Emphasis is placed on law, but not on the man himself.... the law cannot be more important than the man who made it and defending and protecting a nation whose people are valueless is at best also meaningless. In the same vein, Africa as cornerstone or centerpiece of our foreign policy is also meaningless without the Nigerians. Foreign policy successes in which Nigerians are not direct beneficiaries are not likely to impact on, or enjoy the support of, the people.... constructive and beneficial concentricism therefore, fills gap in foreign policy thrust" (Adeniji, 2004:423).

Thus, Nigeria's foreign policy has never been directly related to the needs of the masses or the people, rather it is formulated, articulated and implemented in highly elitist circles. Hence, the country's foreign policy relations have reflected the needs and aspirations of a national super elite of business, bureaucratic, military and traditional ruling group (cited in Fayomi, Chidozie & Ajayi, 2015).

Supporting the above analysis, Gubak (2015:633-634) notes that, Nigeria's foreign policy thrust over the past years anchored on African countries, thereby playing the "big brother" role in her international relations posture. The country

had overwhelmingly given both solicited and unsolicited supports to African neighbours, intervened positively in their internal crisis, provided humanitarian services, doled out billions of dollars as charity, sent technical aid corps, sent military supports, and so on. In most cases the flamboyant gesture were defiantly done against home interest and survival. Despite such, the economy underperforms and the great majority of citizens have benefited little. In the same vein, there has been continuous frustrations by Nigerians over the failure of the potentially wealthy nation to provide basic human needs, such as education, food, potable and drinkable water, reliable transportation, policies free of rampant corruption employment and poverty reduction. Therefore, Meierding (2010) cited in Gubak (2015) the more powerful a state is, the greater its capacity to influence other states, that is to say, the greater is its ability to achieve the objectives of its foreign policy.

Again, internal political events usually have a lot of impact on foreign policy. Nigeria should henceforth cultivate the idea, recognize and accept that military coup d etat are not solutions to internal political problems. If such were the case, governments in industrialized countries would have been toppled very often because of political crisis. The solution is a culture of political dialogue and debate between opponents and Nigerians are up to that task. Encouraging political dialogue as the principal mechanism for the resolution of crisis situations would show the international community that Nigerians are mature people worthy of a respectable place within the community of nations. When Ruben Abati mentioned that the Babangida regime gave a lethal blow to Nigeria's image abroad and its foreign policy in particular, he gave as examples the financial waste, but omitted human rights abuses and the cancellation of the June 12, 1993 presidential elections at a time when every country, in particular the G-7 and most Organization for Economic Cooperation Development

(OECD) countries had democracy, good governance, and human rights essential determining elements in international politics and in their relations with developing countries (Shitta, 2010).

The foreign policy under Babangida nevertheless, suffered great confusion and incoherence resulting in the arbitrary change in the Ministers of External Affairs (Osaghae, 2002). The confusion was greatly reflected in the regime's bid to elevate religion as a conscious guide to Nigeria's foreign policy. This was demonstrated by the circumstance that surrounded Nigeria's membership of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in 1987. The regime decided to change Nigeria's status from that of an observer status to a full-fledged member without due consideration of both domestic and international concerns. The direct result of this was a serious and lasting dent on the regime credibility. For instance, Fawole, (2012) cited in Fayomi, Chidozie and Ajayi (2015) argued that the decision by Babangida to make Nigeria a full member of a largely Islamic grouping of states generated considerable opposition at home and remains one of the most highly contentious and unresolved issues in the country till date.

Furthermore, under General Abacha, foreign policy was crudely mishandled. Records show that Nigeria was like a country without a foreign minister and a foreign policy during that period. The regime was incapable of foreseeing the devastating effects of the hanging of the "Ogoni nine" including Ken Saro Wiwa. There was no government official capable of making the regime to shift the horrible decision to hang the Ogoni activists until the end of the Commonwealth summit. The regime unjustly imprisoned many people, and hung Ken Saro Wiwa when all Commonwealth Heads of State and Government were meeting in Australia. These were all

terrible acts and diplomatic blunders, because they underrated the importance of internal policy including democratic reforms and the place of human right in international relations and diplomacy (Shitta, 2010).

In addition, several factors conditioned Nigeria's foreign policy positions, Shitta (2010) mentioned the following:

1. The ethnic and religious mix of the country required cautious positions on some issues, such as the policy towards Israel. Nigeria found it difficult to restore diplomatic ties, with Israel and had not done so as of 1990, because Muslim opposition and sympathy with the rest of the Arab Muslim world.
2. Nigeria's legacy as an ex-British colony, combined with its energy-producing role in the global economy, predisposed Nigeria to be pro-Western on most issues despite the desire to maintain a non-aligned status to avoid neocolonialism. In 1990 this pro-western posture was reinforced by Nigeria's "economic diplomacy" which involved negotiating trade concessions, attracting foreign investors, and rescheduling debt repayment to Western creditors.
3. The country's membership in and commitment to several international organizations, such as the UN and other bodies, also affected her foreign policy positions.
4. Most importantly, as the most populous country in Africa and the entire black world, Nigeria perceived itself as the "giant" of Africa and the potential leader of the black race. Thus, Nigerian external relations have emphasized African issues, which have become the avowed cornerstone of her foreign policy. These factors have caused certain issues to dominate Nigerian foreign policy across various governments, but each government has had distinctive priorities and style.

With the emergence of President Obasanjo in 1999 there was a paradigm shift from an African-centered to a global-focused foreign policy. Nigeria's foreign policy still remained essentially African-focused at the political level, while it was global-centered at the economic level. The poor situation of the Nigerian economy inherited by Obasanjo, coupled with political vulnerability at the time, demanded new tactics and strategies and indeed, prompted the need to focus greater attention on extra-African actors, without necessarily implying any form of neglect of Africa. Thus, Nigeria emphasized the economic factor to the detriment of political considerations. This dramatic shift was explicated by President Obasanjo, that Nigeria's foreign policy interest extend beyond our concern for the well-being of our continent. The debt burden is not an exclusively African predicament. Many countries in Asia, the Caribbean and South-America are facing similar problems with its. It is imperative therefore that the countries of these regions harmonize their efforts in their search for a fairer deal from the industrialized nations of the world and this requires of us a more global approach to world affairs than was previously the case (Akinterinwa, 2004 cited in Fayomi, Chidozie and Ajayi, 2015).

The Obasanjo's Foreign Affairs Minister (2003 – 2006), Ambassador Oluyemi Adeniji expounded on this shift in Nigeria's foreign policy thrust from the original "cornerstone" and "centre-piece" trajectory that had informed it since independence. He avers that Nigeria's foreign policy direction had to lead to where there are development funds and technical assistance particularly in the light of the weakness in intra-African cooperation, crisis and conflicts in Africa, as well as Africa's inability to bail Nigeria out of her economic doldrums. He maintained that Africa as cornerstone of Nigeria's foreign policy was geo-culturally and proximity factor-in-duced, while

the global setting was issue and economic reality-compelled (Adeniji, 2003 cited in Fayomi, Chidozie & Ajayi, 2015).

In the same light, a number of major trends are clearly discernible in Nigeria's foreign policy since 1999. Perhaps the most important of these is the desire to establish and maintain friendships with countries that have historically shaped global diplomacy, while cultivating deep alliances with emerging powers featured in recent global economic developments. Nigeria has also sought to align its diplomacy with domestic developments, especially as these relate to the consolidation of its new democracy. Consequently, the country's diplomacy from 1999 to 2011 has been a cautious balance of devotion to traditional obligations towards West Africa and African concerns, and the desire to ensure that external relations, especially with global powers, also assist in domestic concerns. In fact, the logical explanation for the shift in Nigeria's foreign policy in 1999 can be located within the forceful and seemingly irresistible influence of globalization, which continued to encroach on national borders and by implication redefining the scope of sovereignty. In essence, the doctrines of capitalism and democratization had been elevated to the supreme standards of international relations by the key players in the international system (Alao, 2011, Ayam, 2004, Okolie, 2010) cited in (Fayomi, Chidozie & Ajayi, 2015).

Therefore, the relevant point in Obasanjo's administration's fundamental shift of Nigeria's foreign policy thrust in a globalizing international environment is that Nigeria and more importantly, the Nigerian person, stood to benefit from globalization as thrust of Nigeria's foreign Policy (Fayomi, Chidozie & Ajayi, 2015). Equally, Moquluwa & Achor (2013) cited in Gubak (2015:633) notes that in recent times, due to deepening level of globalization and transactional activities, Nigeria interacts with non-state actors or non – African

countries, particularly developing economies. This invariably, has led Nigeria to rethinking her foreign policy thrust to accommodate global realities. But, more importantly, this interaction is evaluated and monitored in an attempt to maximize benefits of multilateral international cooperation.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

This paper takes a bird's eye view on Nigeria's national interest and her foreign policy thrust through a rigorous analysis of the country's foreign policy since independence in 1960 to present times. The country's foreign policy since her independence has been guided by almost the same principles and objectives by succeeding military and democratic governments in international engagements. Basically, the contending issues to Nigeria's foreign policy have remained the same. As a weak nation faced with socio-political and socio-economic developmental challenges as the result of corruption and bad leadership, coupled with so many political crisis has negatively affected Nigeria's foreign policy. The study reveals that Nigeria's foreign policy over the years has been more Afrocentric in nature and less domestically oriented. Therefore, it recommends that our foreign policy must be reoriented on the premise mainly on her national interest with emphasis on well-being and national security and with the pursuit and protection of her economic interest as well as a robust bi-lateral and multi-lateral diplomacy geared towards profitable and strategic partnership with nations in the global world.

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