

- Indexed at: EBSCO, ProQuest, J-Gate and Sabinet
- Accredited by IBSS

Volume 5, Number 2, August 2018

pp 43-65

Unlocking the ‘Black Box’ of Nigeria’s Hegemonic Foreign Policy

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31920/2056-5658/2018/v5n2a3>

Olusola Ogunnubi

*Faculty of Management Sciences,
Mangosuthu University of Technology,
Umlazi, South Africa
olusola.ogunnubi@yahoo.com*

Abstract

Does the foreign policy of the Nigerian state reveal a hegemonic interest? To answer this question, this paper turns to the philosophical foundations and domestic determinants of Nigeria’s foreign policy over five decades. The author examines how ideological currents and domestic contexts shape the design and execution of Nigeria’s foreign policy. By focusing on the impact of internal conditions on foreign policy making and implementation in Nigeria, the analysis demonstrates how the interaction of these factors reinforces the country’s national role conception particularly in terms of its perceived leadership status in Africa. The paper therefore highlights the critical role that domestic factors play in conditioning Nigeria’s foreign policy outlook as a putative regional hegemon. It concluded that the conduct of Abuja’s foreign policy priorities is guided by a variety of themes that collectively give form, focus and finesse to its external relations while at the same time impinging on the achievement of a muted hegemonic interest in Africa.

Keywords: *Foreign Policy, Hegemony, National Role Conception, Nigeria, Regional Power*

Introduction

Since its independence in 1960, Nigeria has considered it pertinent to engage itself with the socio-political and economic affairs of Africa (Okpokpo, 1999; Saliu and Oshewolo, 2018). On the political front, Nigeria is easily seen as the vanguard of leadership in the African continent, earning itself the perceptions and reputation as Africa's 'big brother' (Ogunnubi, 2014). From the First Republic (1960-1966), the then Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa on October 7, 1960, set the tune for the underlying principles of his government's foreign policy emphasizing, amongst others, the promotion of African unity and development in what is widely regarded as pan-Africanism (Dudley, 1982; Osaghae, 1998). As Otubanjo rightly notes, "the guiding principles of Nigeria's foreign policy were first articulated by the Balewa government and find their most explicit form in the address of the Prime Minister to the General Assembly of the United Nations on the occasion of Nigeria's admission as the ninety-ninth member of the organization on October 7, 1960". At the UN acceptance speech, Balewa declared that:

So far I have concentrated on the problems of Africa. Please do not think that we are not interested in the problems of the rest of the world; we are intensely interested in them and hope to be allowed to assist in finding solutions to them through this organization, but being human we are naturally concerned first with what affects our immediate neighborhoods (Balewa and Epelle, 1964).

Several decades since the articulation of the above foreign policy guideline, it has continued to remain the cornerstone and guiding principle of Nigeria's external relations with the rest of Africa and has fuelled the perception of Nigeria as a continental hegemon. The principle of pan-Africanism and Afrocentrism identity has featured prominently in Nigeria's engagements with many countries within Africa and, to a large extent, remained virtually the same in spite of various regime changes and oscillation between military and civilian administrations.

Examining the domestic constituents of Nigeria's foreign policy is therefore critical to our understanding of the country's external relations perspectives and its perceived status as a regional power. Nigeria's foreign policy has often been conceived by scholars in the context of four "concentric circles" of national interest that guide its diplomatic priorities (Gambari, 1989). The first circle represents the imperative of

the survival and sustenance of Nigeria's security, independence and prosperity which is indirectly hinged upon the stability of its immediate neighbours: Niger, Benin, Chad and Cameroon. The second circle focuses on Nigeria's external relations with countries within the West African sub-region while the third circle is extended to African issues of continental dimensions of peace, development and democratization. The fourth and final sphere encompasses Nigeria's relations with international organizations and institutions along with states outside the domain of the African continent (Gambari, 1989). There have been scholarly contestations about the foreign policy and national interest of Nigeria in Africa. While some scholars contest that Nigeria's foreign policy lacks any real strategic national interest (Amao and Okeke-Uzodike, 2015), others have pointed out, in fact, an altruistic motivation serves as a pretext for Abuja's hegemonic interest in Africa (Saliu and Oshewolo, 2018; Ogunnubi, 2014).

Specifically, the paper believes that by examining the domestic drivers of Nigeria's foreign policy interest, it is possible to gain a richer insight into any interest for regional hegemony. Unpacking the fundamental impetus behind the foreign policy initiatives over five decades, the study considers the theoretical underpinnings and practical aspects of Nigeria's foreign policy relations in Africa. With respect to the theoretical and practical aspects of Nigeria's foreign policy relations in Africa, this paper is concerned with two particular questions: Under what foreign policy guidelines is Nigeria's external relations with Africa rooted? What are the domestic (centrifugal) determinants of Nigeria's foreign policy and in what ways do these factors shape the contours of the country's hegemonic interest in Africa? Even with the back and forth from civilian to military dispensations, Nigeria's commitment to Africa remained unalloyed. It is, therefore, imperative to examine the factors that have shaped the conception and articulation of Nigeria's foreign policy in its strong pro-African context. The paper's focus is on the impact of domestic factors on Nigeria's hegemonic credentials. It aims to demonstrate how the interaction of these factors impact on the appreciation of Nigeria's foreign policy towards Africa, particularly in terms of reinforcing its leadership status within the continent. To what extent does Nigeria's foreign policy reflect a hegemonic intent? The paper answers this question by unravelling the critical role that domestic factors play in the conditioning of Nigeria's foreign policy. A major argument presented here is that these themes, in part, guide the foreign policy convictions of Nigeria's leadership interest in the continent and

are particularly relevant in understanding the nuance of Nigeria's foreign policy making.

Philosophical and Ideological Foundations of Nigeria's Foreign Policy

To understand the dynamics of Nigeria's foreign policy, it is important to establish the institutional and ideological underpinnings that inspire the country's foreign policy. This is rooted essentially in the country's historical experience since independence. These fundamental principles and guiding frameworks invariably account for Nigeria's foreign policy incursion particularly in Africa over the past five decades. An acknowledgment of the huge politico-economic status of Nigeria in Africa is critical to any estimation of the expected role of the country in African affairs. Nnamdi Azikiwe, a former president, for instance, strongly championed the idea that, Nigeria should play a frontline leadership role in Africa. In what he referred to as "the historic mission and manifest destiny in the continent", his argument was that the Nigerian nation should take up the task of leading Africa through the path of recovery and development (Claude, 1964; Omotola, 2008; Saliu, 2006).

A major source of Nigeria's foreign policy prerogatives, which also serves as the guiding document for the conduct of its external relations, especially under civilian democratic rule, is the Nigerian Constitution. Successive constitutions of the Federal Republic of Nigeria clearly articulate the principles that should direct the conduct of Nigeria's foreign policy while also stating the roles each policy maker should play in the administration of these policies. For example, the 1979 Constitution of the Second Republic strengthened the legal basis of Nigeria's Afrocentric pre-occupation when it stated that:

[t]he state shall promote African Unity as well as the total political, economic, social and cultural liberation of Africa and all other forms of international co-operation conducive to the consolidation of universal peace and mutual respect and friendship among all peoples and states and shall combat racial discrimination in all its manifestation (Republic of Nigeria 1979).

Currently, Nigeria's foreign policy is guided by the provisions of the 1999 Constitution, which is apparently a slight amendment of its 1979 predecessor with the specific foreign policy provisions articulated in

Chapter II, Section 19 articulating that the foreign policy objectives shall be:

- (a) promotion and protection of the national interest;
- (b) promotion of African integration and support for African unity;
- (c) promotion of international co-operation for the consolidation of universal peace and mutual respect among all nations and elimination of discrimination in all its manifestations;
- (d) 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
- (e) promotion of a just world economic order.

While the Constitution sets the ideological direction of Nigeria's foreign policy, its execution has no doubt been largely determined by prevailing circumstances (both domestic and external). Often, its foreign policy imperatives and actions are in reaction to these factors. Consequently, any serious attempt to understand or analyse Nigeria's foreign policy must start with an examination of these prevailing factors and circumstances at any given historical period. After becoming a newly independent country in 1960, Nigeria opted to take on the status of an African 'knight in shining armour' in the face of the ruins of colonial and foreign domination (Adebajo, 2007).

In discussing the characteristics of foreign policy relations prior to independence, the passionate concern for world peace; the nonalignment policy; cooperation, respect for the sovereign equality of all nations; non-intervention in the internal affairs of other states and decolonization are policy positions that predated the emergence of independent Nigeria. In this section, I attempt to elucidate some of the principles that over the years can be summarized as the core ideological paradigms upon which Nigeria's foreign policy thrust is built. As I will argue, it is these ideological motivation that fuels Nigeria's subtle hegemonic interest in Africa.

Respect for independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of all states

This tripartite principle originates from the backdrop that states are at the heart and the primary actors of the international system; and that Nigeria's capacity to defend its own sovereignty is only justified on the

moral obligation of its respect for other state's territorial integrity (Folarin, 2010). Categorically, the criterion of territory is sacrosanct to any definition of a state. Jennings and Watts (1992:563) rightly observes that, "a state without a territory is not possible". Thus, the principle guaranteeing the protection of the territorial expression and integrity of sovereign and independent states within the international system is one that must not be contradicted. This is also aptly in line with the Charter of the United Nations (1945) which recognizes the principle of sovereign equality of all states while equally acknowledging that the respect for territorial integrity and independence of states are fundamental principles that must be guaranteed.

Furthermore, Nigeria recognizes that the territorial integrity of any state must be jealously guarded and not jeopardized. Through the instrumentality of its foreign policy initiatives, it strives to uphold these values by taking effective measures, either independently or through multilateral regional and international regimes, to collectively prevent the suppression of these rights in conformity with the principles of justice and international law. The extent to which successive Nigerian governments had adhered to these principles is, however, a subject of debate.

Non-interference in the internal affairs of other states

Even though this principle has been abused several times by successive Nigerian administrations, it nonetheless remains an important element of Nigeria's foreign policy thrust. Nigeria has over the years grappled with the difficulty of determining the circumstances under which intervention becomes necessary and, more importantly, in understanding the dividing line between interference and intervention. Interference may be seen to mean an unsolicited involvement in the internal affairs of a sovereign state while conversely, intervention can be understood from the spectrum of an internationally acceptable and recognized action premised for instance on humanitarian concern or that of restoring peace and stability to a nation ravaged by an internal crisis which has the potency of escalating to neighbouring states (Pogoso, 2006). Among the reasons often proposed for this trend is the protection of the nation's security interest. Nigeria's intervention in the Chadian internal crisis in the 1970s and 1980s and Liberia in the 1990s for example are justified under this platform. It was the belief of the Nigerian government that conflict in Chad, a neighbouring country, posed security problems for Nigeria. On

the other hand, Nigeria's intervention in the Liberian and Sierra-Leonean domestic crisis is essentially to justify its regional power status and fuel the perception of its leadership role in the sub-region.

Recognition of self-determination and sovereign equality of all African states

Nigeria since independence has been at the forefront of the struggle for the self-determination and recognition of other states (Fawole, 2003; Folarin, 2010; Abegunrin, 2003; Bukarambe, 2000; Adebayo & Mustapha, 2008). To be clear, Nigeria's effective engagement with the international community in championing the cause towards the decolonization process and all forms of colonialism, racial discrimination and apartheid across the world was noteworthy. For instance, in December 1960, Nigeria joined many other countries in adopting the resolution on "The Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and People" (UNGA, 1960). It also participated by playing an active role in the support for the liberation movement particularly in southern Africa by extending strong financial support to political parties such as the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC) (Fawole, 2003). For these and many reasons, Nigeria was on several occasions dignified with the chairmanship of the United Nations Special Committee Against Apartheid. These included Leslie Harriman, Ibrahima Gambari, Joseph Garba, Yussuf Maitama, Edwin Ogbu, Akporode Clark among others (United Nations 2009).

Collective promotion of the values of cooperation and peaceful co-existence in Africa (Multilateralism)

Nigeria has demonstrated serious commitment to the membership of various international organizations like the United Nations (UN), African Union (AU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Commonwealth of Nations. This is no doubt a reflection of its firm belief that the problems that the world faces in general and the crisis in Africa in particular can only be solved via collective effort. It is for this reason that Nigeria proposes African solutions to African problems particularly through the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) and other international regimes (Landsberg, 2008). According to Amusan and Oyewole (2017), it is in recognition of an African Solution Strategy (ASS)

that Nigeria led the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) mission to Liberia in 1997. Also, as a result of Nigeria's strong belief and commitment to the pan-African principle, it participated in several collaborative arrangements and cooperative engagements with international governmental organizations and international non-governmental organizations alike across the continent and the world at large with a bid to collectively seek corporate solutions to global issues (See Table 1).

For instance, following the attainment of independence in 1960, the country did not hesitate in joining the United Nations Organization (UNO) while also playing formidable and active role both in the formation of the Organization of Africa Unity and its eventual transformation into African Union (AU). In fact, Nigeria contributed substantially to the drafting of the OAU charter and also its structural formation birthed in Lagos as well as being the frontrunner in the establishment of the ECOWAS.

Table 1: Some international cooperative arrangements with Nigeria's participation

Type	Regional Cooperative Arrangements
Institutional framework for the resolution of disputes	The ECOWAS <i>Mechanism for Conflict Prevention</i> , the <i>Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development</i> (PCASED, 2002), the <i>Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance of Defence</i> (1981), and the <i>Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance</i> (2001)
Specialized institutions	The Mediation and Security Council, Defence and Security Commission, ECOMOG, the Council of Elders, and the Office of Political Affairs, Defence and Security (PADS)
Economic regimes	Treaty establishing the African Economic Community
Security/Military regimes	New Agenda Coalition (NAC), African Nuclear Weapons Free Zone Treaty (ANWFZ), the Forum of Nuclear Regulatory Bodies in Africa (FNRBA).

Source: Author's compilation

Principle of non-alignment

The Cold War era was fundamentally one of subtle antagonism and competition between the two main socio-economic and political ideological positions of the time (USSR-led socialism and US-inspired capitalism). The rivalry that this period generated prompted Nigeria, alongside many African countries to adopt a neutralist position in response to pressure exerted by these rivalries. The principle of non-alignment was therefore a foreign policy posture of Nigeria that:

emphasized first, that Nigeria must avoid identifying with any of the power blocs in the then-prevailing world system, and second, that the country must maintain an independent posture and judgment on all issues which come before the United Nations and the world community, particularly, issues affecting human rights and freedoms (Okeke, 1981:203-204).¹

However, the extent to which Nigeria was non-aligned remained contentious as many concluded that Nigeria for instance in the early years of its independence under Balewa was particularly pro-West possibly as a result of its colonial ties (Anglin, 1964; Philips, 1964; Folarin, 2010).

Principle of reciprocity

As a longstanding value and principle of international relations, reciprocity is inherent in every foreign policy behaviour of every state. By implication, Nigeria's foreign policy and external relations with other states is nurtured by the accurate calculation of the (good or bad) intentions of the other states with which it interacts. Generally, the principle of reciprocity requires officials conducting foreign policies of nation-states to reciprocate gestures from other nation-states in their interactions in the international community. As such, it is possible for state A to determine its foreign policy towards other states by understanding the intentions of state B. By implication, reciprocity may be positive or negative when it is cooperative or retaliatory respectively. Nigeria's new foreign policy slogan of "citizen diplomacy" as espoused by the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ojo Maduekwe in 2007 is a good

¹ Prime Minister Balewa's address to Parliament (August and October 1960). See also Kalu Ezera, *Constitutional Developments of Nigeria* (2d ed. 1964).

illustration of a foreign policy based on reciprocity. For Nigeria, the fundamental interpretation of this principle is that the country would relate with nationals from other states exactly in the same manner that these states relates with its citizens. (Onyearu 2008). A more recent example would be the diplomatic faceoff between Nigeria and South Africa in 2012 over the deportation of over 125 Nigeria for allegedly possessing illegal vaccination cards (Ogunnubi 2014). Nigeria, informed by the principle of reciprocity acted promptly by deporting over 131 South African business executives thus denying them entry into Nigeria.

Domestic determinants of Nigeria's foreign policy

As Ambe-Uva and Adegboyega (2007) appropriately note, "it has become an axiomatic truth that the foreign policy of a country is to a large extent determined by its domestic structures". Generally, the factors that determine the foreign policy thrust of any state can be broadly categorized into two contexts. These include:

1. The domestic setting
2. The external environment

Northedge (1968) accurately points out that the foreign policy of any country is a product of environmental factors both internal and external. While it is indeed true that these classifications are not in any way mutually exclusive, as in some cases, domestic factors inspiring a nation's foreign policy could as well be a reflection of an external factor. More so, particularly in today's globalized age, the distinction between the domestic and external settings that affect foreign policy construction is one that is increasingly becoming blurry, resulting in a conceptualization challenge that scholars of Nigeria's foreign policy have most often grappled with (See Otunbajo, 1989).

Aluko (1977) made a classification of the domestic and external factors that contribute to the shaping of the foreign policies of African states. He includes such factors as the nature of the economy; the internal political pressure; colonial heritage (historical traditions); and leadership character and the ideological orientation of the ruling elite. This paper focuses on some of these domestic constituents in relation to Nigeria and dwells on other factors omitted in Aluko's discourse which include the nature of the economy, internal political pressure, personality

of the leader, government agencies, officials and technocrats, national perception, and the ideological orientation of the ruling elites.

Since independence, Nigeria has overtly and covertly crafted a 'giant of Africa' image for itself with its Afrocentric foreign policy which is best contextualized within a regional and continental framework (Adebayo and Landsberg, 2003). Although debatable, the consequence of this self-styled foreign policy is a demonstrated conviction to be at the forefront of the struggle for Africa's political-economic redemption from the predicaments of underdevelopment and the entanglement of poverty and neo-colonialism. Its leaders have blazed the trail as the preordained 'leader and lender' of the African continent (Kolawole, 2004). This aspiration to continental leadership has been consistently expressed through its foreign policy over more than 50 years of its history (Adebajo and Mustapha, 2008). The attempt to understand Nigeria's dynamics of external relations must therefore begin with an appreciation of the nexus between domestic forces and foreign policy thrust. This is critical to understanding the myriad of factors that have influenced the country's foreign policy since independence. It is particularly crucial to examine the nexus between domestic issues and foreign policy in understanding the construction of the latter in Nigeria.

Government agencies, officials and technocrats

According to Mustapha (2008) in one of his accounts of the domestic constraints on Nigeria's foreign policy which he referred to as the first distinct 'face' that inspire Nigeria's external relations, the formal official space of governance is "the arena of formal and diplomatic negotiations and agreements, and the pursuit of sub-regional regional hegemonic ambitions" of Nigeria. A number of key institutions are directly or indirectly involved in Nigeria's foreign policy formulation and implementation. They include; the Presidency; Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA); Ministry of Defence; National Intelligence Agency (NIA); Ministry of Finance; Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA); National Assembly and its relevant committees; Presidential Advisory Council on International Relations etc.

Inamete (2001), in his examination of the 'Foreign Policy Decision-making Process in Nigeria', attempts to draw a link between the institutions, instruments, and processes and Nigeria's foreign policy formulations. He argues that institutions such as the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defence, Finance, Agriculture, etc. have been very

relevant and almost indispensable in the foreign policy making and construction of Nigerian foreign policy while also observing that the usefulness of these institutions have their direct linkage to the periodic significance that each leadership wishes to attach per time.

Constitutionally, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), under the leadership of the Minister of Foreign Affairs (as represented in Table 2), is responsible for conducting and managing external affairs of the country and staffed with highly trained officers with theoretical knowledge, practical expertise as well as a technical intelligence of foreign affairs. The MFA thus represents the core implementation organ of foreign policy with the Nigeria's High Commissions, embassies, and other diplomatic missions under its jurisdiction. In essence, the force of the country's foreign policy at any period in time has always been attributed to the command of the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Table 2: Nigeria's Foreign Affairs Ministers since independence

S/N	Names	Period Served
1	Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa	1960-1961
2	Dr. Jaja Anucha Wachukwu	1961-1965
3	Alhaji Nuhu Bamal	1965-1966
4	Dr. Akoi Arikpo	1967-1975
5	Major General Joseph Garba	1975-1978
6	Henry Adefope	1978-1979
7	Ishaya Audu	1979-1983
8	Chief Emeka Anyaoku	1983-1983
9	Prof. Ibrahim Gambari	1984-1985
10	Prof. Bolaji Akinyemi	1985-1987
11	General Ike Nwachukwu	1987-1989; 1990-1993
12	Dr. Rilwanu Lukman	1989-1990
13	Ambassador Matthew Mbu	1993-1993
14	Ambassador Babagana Kingibe	1993-1995
15	Chief Tom Ikimi	1995-1998
16	Ignatius Olisemeka	1998-1999
17	Alhaji Sule Lamido	1999-2003
18	Ambassador Oluyemi Adeniji	2003-2006
19	Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala	2006-2006
20	Prof. U. Joy Ogwu	2006-2007
21	Chief Ojo Maduekwe	2007-2010
22	Martin Ihoeghian Uhomoibhi (acting)	2010-2010
23	Henry Odein Ajumogobia (2010-2011)	2010-2011
22	Ambassador Olugbenga Ashiru	2011-2013
23	Aminu Bashir Wali	2014-2015
23	Geoffrey Onyema	2015- to date

Source: Author's compilation

The personality of the leader

The background and idiosyncrasies coupled with the psychological qualities of a leader give certain coloration to their perception of the world and the ideology, values and principles they uphold as the role of state. The International Peace Academy (2003), writing on the domestic, regional and external dimensions of Nigeria's foreign policy in the post-Cold War era, acknowledged the role of personalities in the foreign policy making process of Nigeria. They argue that the oscillation of leadership personalities have serious implication for the continuity of foreign policy because "each leader has implemented his own ideas, making it difficult to define Nigeria's national interest" (IPA 2003). In essence, while the leadership personalities of respective leaders may convey a vibrant and buoyant foreign policy, it may also evince inconsistency and discontinuity in the foreign policy implementation of the country as a result of differences in the foreign policy values and expectation of these leaders.

As evidenced in the case of Nigeria's foreign policy rhetoric, the ideological orientation of the ruling elites represents an important constraint and influence on Nigeria's foreign policy making. The foreign policy capacity of a nation is usually affected by the decision making aptitude of its leader. It can, therefore, be argued that foreign relations of a state is intrinsically tied to the preferences and prerogative of the serving president or head of state as well as the minister in charge of foreign affairs. As such, a change in government would no doubt mean reciprocal change in the external behaviour of the state (Aluko, 1981; Ogunnubi, 2014). The foreign policy of a state is largely influenced by the principles, ideology and convictions of the leader and as Adeyemo (2002) notes, one can expect a radical foreign policy position from a militant leader like it was under the leadership of Murtala Mohammed (Folarin, 2010).

This is because the perceptions, idiosyncrasies and personality of the leader at different points highlight pertinent discordant tunes of various leadership particularly in the conduct of foreign policy. Practically, Nigeria's leadership models show, to a certain degree, how the personality feature of its leaders extensively influence the country's foreign policy posture (Fawole, 2000). Consequently, it is not surprising that the moderate, conservative, religious and moralistic posture of Balewa, the quiet 'gentlemanly' attitude of Gowon, the timidity and lack of self-confidence of Shagari and the radical and 'aggressive' disposition of Murtala-Obasanjo were brought to bear on their approach to and

pursuit of foreign policy issues (Gambari, 1989). Similarly, Babangida's courage and ideas, as well as Abacha's reclusive instinct and 'tit-for-tat' diplomacy and Abdulsalam's quiet diplomacy etc., all added up to influence the operation of Nigeria's foreign policy (Ajetunmobi *et al*, 2011).

Comparative reference can also be made of the personality of the former Presidents of Nigeria (Obasanjo and Yar Adua). While Yar Adua is referred to as slow and incapable of a functional foreign policy, Obasanjo was seen as assertive and bold in presenting the foreign policy posture of the country during his leadership. In the case of the former, there was a passive and general lack of interest in the foreign policy making of the country at the time thus impacting directly on the quality of Nigeria's diplomatic interactions during this period. On the contrary, Obasanjo's active role in the transformation of the OAU into the AU as well as Nigeria's instrumental role in the establishment of NEPAD was largely instructed by his dominant and progressive personality (Onunaiju, 2009; Ajetunmobi *et al*, 2011).

To corroborate this position, Ajetunmobi *et al* (2011) established that "while President Olusegun Obasanjo had his shortcomings in foreign policy implementation, the nation has achieved significant gains through the regime's shuttle diplomacy". Nigeria's role in Africa and world affairs determine to a great extent the type of policies pursued and the strategy or posture adopted to achieve the policies. A typical example is the argument that, in the analysis of the personality and leadership style of President Obasanjo, an appreciation of Nigeria's foreign policy posture can be contextualized. By implication, there have been a degree of inconsistencies and lack of continuity in Nigeria's foreign policy construction and pattern due largely to the varied personality profile and traits of its different leaders. This reality has created a situation where each leader often implements his own ideas based on his understanding and nuances of the context of specific event thereby complicating a thorough definition of what is Nigeria's national interest. And as Ajetunmobi *et al* (2011: 308) observes "the history of Nigerian foreign policy since 1960 has constantly been changing though, the principle guiding her foreign relations remain the same".

Ideological orientation of the ruling elite

Ideology is defined as the belief system that explains and justifies a preferred political order for society, either existing or proposed and offers a strategy for its attainment. Ideology engenders political unity and

minimizes potential social incohesion. Ideologies “constructs a psychological and social bond that would make a nation unshakeable in the face of external threat or divisive influences” (Folarin, 2010). King (1996) views ideology as “a major instrument for coping with the stranger element within and among nations”. Closely related to the issue of personality of the leader is also the ideology of the ruling elite. It is possible to predict the behavioural pattern of a state’s action, inactions or reactions as a result of its dominant ideology (Northedge, 1976). By extension, this reflects on what is conceived as national roles or otherwise. According to Aluko (1981), the ruling elite in Africa wield enormous influence and power over the foreign relations of their countries and are able to convert their personal or group interest into the national interest of those states (Folarin, 2010).

Nevertheless, it may be difficult to intelligently ascertain Nigeria’s specific guiding ideology of its foreign policy due partly to highly sensitive multi-ethnic and multi-faith identities and differences. In essence, Nigeria’s foreign policy ideology is rooted in its ethnic and religious heterogeneity and evinces different dimension of ideological standpoint in its international posture in global affairs. These ideologies have combined to provide a focused foreign policy posture (King 1996:33-51).

Nigerian foreign policy making has always been configured by the ideological and cultural orientations of policy makers or the political elites or group(s) in power per time. Idang (1973) in his contribution describes the role of foreign policy elites as the “constitutionally designated individuals ‘who determine the political destiny of the nation’ and set foreign policy goals”. He submits further that an in-depth examination of Nigeria’s foreign policy formulation since independence suggests that it is elitist and government-driven and this has significantly been complicated by the prolonged military rule (Idang, 1973). His argument follows therefore that the foreign policy decision making process in Nigeria cannot be divulged from the character and view perspective of its ruling elite per time.

The nature of the economy

The nature of Nigeria’s economy has continued to shape its foreign policy context in both negative and positive terms. Since the 1960s, Nigeria’s economic position particularly comparative to other African economies has afforded it the material resources to pursue a very broad and extensive foreign policy posture within Africa. Nigeria’s economy is

richly endowed particularly in the agricultural and mineral sectors. Prior to the discovery and exploration of oil, Nigeria's economy had thrived on the agricultural sector with vibrant export markets in groundnut, oil palm, cocoa, etc. Today, Nigeria's economy is one that is hugely dependent on oil revenue. Between 1974 and 2010, oil accounted for over ninety percent of Nigeria's overall earnings and has continued to be the dominant export product of the country even till date (Pham 2007). Oil revenue has over the years therefore been seen as a major foreign policy tool and a crucial determinant of Nigeria's foreign policy. Currently, oil income accounts for over 90% of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings and, more importantly, oil is critical in how other countries perceive and evaluate Nigeria strategic significance in the global calculus (Pham 2007). Aside the fact that oil has become a major propelling force of Nigeria's foreign policy today, it is also a critical factor in the foreign policies of many other states with or without oil in the international system today (Soremekun, 2003; Folarin 2010).

Armed with its membership of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Nigeria has been able to position itself at the centre of global politics using oil as its dominant foreign policy instrument. Kalu (2000) in his contributory text on 'Economic Development and Nigerian Foreign Policy' addresses the issue of internal economic contradiction and Nigerian foreign policy construction focusing on how the nation's foreign policy is affected and influenced by the national economy. In his theoretical assessment of the external constraints on Nigeria's economic policy, he draws the conclusion that a healthy and robust domestic economy is an important and crucial element in determining Nigeria's national interest. Ultimately the character of its foreign policy and a proper estimation of this is critical to nuanced understanding of the range of choices that political elites have at their disposal.

Udogu (2002:144) in his review captured Kalu's arguments succinctly by noting that "the centrality of a healthy economy in determining the range and scope of the foreign policy of a nation-state is a *sine qua non*" evidenced for example in the aggressive manner in which Nigeria pursued its foreign policy in the 1970s and late 1980s when the country's oil wealth increased greatly. According to him, Nigeria's bold and assertive foreign policy during these period was a testament of the influence of economic opulence and development on the foreign policy construction of any country. It is on record that during this period, Nigeria threatened to withhold the sale of its oil to some of the Western

powers who failed to retract their support for apartheid South Africa (Kalu, 2000; Udogu, 2002).

States that are endowed with oil have earned a respectable image as a result of the universal importance attached to petroleum. By corollary, states that are without oil need oil and thus their survival is hinged on their relationship with oil-producing states. As Folarin (2010) notes, this circumstance affords the former with a lot of bargaining power and leverage to influence global political decisions. Of course, Nigeria is a privileged member of this group and coupled with its huge market potentials for the world, “Nigeria possesses the economic power to run an ambitious foreign policy” (Folarin, 2010). Nevertheless, it has been argued that despite the vibrancy that oil exposed to the Nigerian foreign policy, it also poses serious dilemma and thus serves as a constraining factor to its foreign policy. There is the view that Nigeria’s oil “is a divisive and disintegrating force particularly in throwing up centrifugal subnational forces and separatist groups within the country” (IPA 2003).

Another constraining factor of the nature of Nigeria’s economy would be its economic dependence and susceptibility which limits its capacity to effectively call the shots in an international economic system that is asymmetrically skewed to its disadvantage.

The internal political pressure

Aluko’s (1977) reference to internal political pressure as a domestic factor affecting a nation’s foreign policy appears apt especially in the case of Nigeria. According to him, the structure of the federation, the governmental setting, role of political parties, pressure groups and public opinion all add up to provide the character of the internal setting of the Nigerian political space. For instance, in the context of the federal structure, it can be said that at some point in Nigeria’s political history since independence, regional governments enjoyed a certain amount of autonomy based on the federal structure that was practiced and this had serious implications for the country’s foreign policy formulation.

The huge youth population of Nigeria, consisting of university students, school leavers, professionals (lecturers, lawyers, physicians, teachers), and businesspeople provide a large pool of youth groups which, when aggregated, have an impact on the foreign policy construction in the country (Claude 1964). Historically, youth associations such as the Nigerian Youth Movement, Zikist Movement etc. have played critical roles in nation building. The clamour for the

appointment of an ambassador to all independent African states; that a population census be held, the creation of a separate ministry of Foreign Affairs and Commonwealth Relations; a republican form of government; sending of an ambassador to Russia and the lifting of the ban on Communist literature and the call for a stronger central government, the creation of more states and a more vigorous and neutral foreign policy are a number of the issues that have been put forward by different youth movements at different periods of Nigeria's history (Claude, 1964).

In the expression of their opinions, pressure groups such as the labour unions and students association go a long way in influencing the eventual outcome of certain foreign policy positions of the country. The influence that these groups command cannot be underestimated and there have been several instances where the Nigerian government had adopted some foreign policy positions on international issues as a result of campaigns mounted by the civil society representing the masses. For instance, the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) played a formidable role in reinforcing Nigeria's anti-apartheid foreign policy position in its fight against the apartheid government in South Africa. Examples of this include the protest at Nsukka and Lagos by Nigerian students following the 1976 Soweto uprising and also financial contribution to the anti-apartheid movement.

National perception

Perhaps this determinant has more influence on Nigeria's foreign policy than any other factor. Credited to be the most populous nation (both in Africa and the entire black race), Nigeria and Nigerians have over the years built a perception of the 'giant', 'redeemer' and 'natural leader' of Africa and 'leader' of the black world. According to Metz (1991), "Nigerian external relations have emphasized African issues, which have become the avowed cornerstone of foreign policy". Since independence, Nigeria has sought to continue to play the role of a benevolent leader where its foreign policy is not particularly concerned about improving the quality of life of its people but more importantly tied to advancing the cause of other countries within the African continent. At the root of the above argument in what Uzodike *et al* 2015 termed the "prestige school of thought" is the claim that Nigeria has an ancestrally ordained mandate to lead the quest for continental peace while at the same time championing Africa's socio-economic and political development as:

Playing such a noble role in the economic construction and reconstruction of the region presents Nigeria with an opportunity to assert her dominant position in the region as a matter of prestige. Analysts argue that if Nigeria fails to do so, other credible and contending regional challengers such as Ghana, Egypt, Cote d' Ivoire (formerly Ivory Coast) and South Africa would take on such responsibilities.

The implication of this is that the country's over 50 years of foreign policy incursion has been cemented in an aspiration to continental leadership and hegemonic ambitions. Nigeria's overwhelming human, financial and material contribution to Africa is clear evidence of its ambition to be recognized as a regional power since according to Folarin (2010) "its natural and historical endowments coupled with the intense contributions and sacrifices for Africa's progress since independence have naturally earned Nigeria honour and its leadership position in the continent".

Conclusion

This paper examined the principles of Nigeria's foreign policy as ideological guidelines that inspire its external relations particularly with Africa. It concludes that the dispensation of Nigeria's foreign policy over the years has been rooted in such principles as: respect for independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of all states, reciprocity, non-alignment, multilateralism, recognition of self-determination and sovereign equality of all African states, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states etc. Furthermore, the paper accounts for the motivation and determinants of Nigeria's foreign policy behaviour and extrapolates how these factors have configured Nigeria's external relations. A number of deductions can be drawn from the above discussion. First is the evidence that the foreign policy of a country is ultimately shaped not only by a single factor but by multiple factors which could serve both a facilitating and constraining role in the foreign policy practice of that nation. In the case of Nigeria, its foreign policy is influenced by a host of factors, conditions and forces that collectively give form, focus and finesse to its external relations while at the same time impinging on the achievement of its foreign policy goals. By implication, Nigeria's foreign policy is influenced by both formal structures of foreign policy making: diplomats, technocrats, presidency,

military, ministries, national institutions etc. as well as informal structures including pressure groups, academics, and its historical experiences.

Secondly, there is also the difficulty in accounting for the precise impact of these conditions or factors on the actual foreign policy of the country as it is sometimes problematic to effectively estimate the impact of some of the determinants (for example oil) on Nigeria's foreign policy. For instance, the end of the Cold War dramatically changed the foreign policy dynamics and configurations particularly of developing countries like Nigeria. This reality is acknowledged in the IPA report (2003) that "the end of the Cold War resulted in a fundamental change in the dynamics of contemporary international relations".

Furthermore, going from the above, it is clear that there is a deep correlation between the role that Nigeria plays in Africa and the factor that influence its foreign policy. In other words, there is a connection and significant relationship between Nigeria's capacity to play a leading or dominant role within its geopolitical sphere and the ideological constructs of its foreign policy as well as the factors that determine or constrain its foreign policy. Aided by the lack of interest and reduced strategic significance of Africa for major external powers as a result of the end of the Cold War, Nigeria's massive oil wealth, economic growth, large army strength has afforded it the opportunity to develop an Afrocentric foreign policy. As a result, flowing from this stream is its national perception of the country as the "natural leader" and "redeemer" of the African continent; a role it has continued to play since its independence in 1960.

Nevertheless, some domestic factors serve as major constraints to the effective articulation and implementation of Nigeria's foreign policy. In examining the domestic factors influencing Nigeria's foreign policy, the paper concludes that multiple factors collectively shape the direction and nuance of Nigeria's foreign policy.

References

- Abegunrin, O. (2003), *Nigerian foreign policy under military rule, 1966-1999*. Praeger: Greenwood Press.
- Adebajo, A. (2007), 'South Africa and Nigeria in Africa: An axis of virtue?', in Adebajo, A., and Landsberg, C. (eds.), *South Africa in Africa: The post-apartheid era*, Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.

- Adebajo, A., and Landsberg, C. (2003), 'Nigeria and South Africa as regional hegemony', in Baregu, M., & Landsberg, C. (eds.), *From Cape to Congo: Southern Africa's evolving security*, Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner publishers.
- Adebajo, A and Mustapha, R. (eds.). (2008), *Gulliver's troubles: Nigeria's foreign policy after the Cold War*. Scottsville, RSA: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.
- Adeyemo, F.O. (1993), *Government made simple for Senior Secondary Schools*. Lagos: Franco-Soba Nig. Ltd.
- Ajetunmbi, R.O., Osunkoya, O.A. and Omotere, T.F. (2011), 'Impact of president Olusegun Obasanjo's personality on Nigerian foreign policy, 1999-2007', *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences*, 8: 308-315.
- Aluko, O. (1977), *The determinant of the foreign policies of African states*. London. Hodder and Stoughton.
- Aluko. O. (1981), 'Nigeria and the super power', in George, A. (ed.), *Essays in Nigerian foreign policy*, London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.
- Amao, O.B. and Okeke-Uzodike, U. (2015), 'Nigeria, Afrocentrism, and Conflict Resolution: After Five Decades—How Far, How Well?', *African Studies Quarterly*, 15(4): 1-24.
- Ambe-Uva, T.N. and Adegboyega, K.M. (2007), 'The impact of domestic factors on foreign policy: Nigerian/Israeli Relations'. *Alternative Turkish Journal of International Relations*, 6(3-4): 44-59.
- Anglin, D.G. (1977), 'Nigeria: Political non-alignment and economic alignment', *Journal of International Relations*, 34(4): 247-263.
- Amusan, L. and Oyewole, S. (2017), 'The Quest for Hegemony and the Future of African Solutions to African Development Problems: Lessons from Headways in the African Security Sector', *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 52(1): 21-33.
- Balewa, A.T. and Epelle, S. (1964), *Nigeria Speaks*, Lagos: Longman.
- Claude, S.P. Jnr. (1964), *The development of Nigerian foreign policy*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. (1979), Lagos: Government Printer.
- Dudley, B.J. (1982), *An introduction to Nigerian government and politics*. London: Macmillan Press.
- Fawole, A. (2000), 'The psychological foundation of Nigeria's African diplomacy', *African Journal of International Affairs and Development (AJIAD)*, 5(2): 20-41.
- Fawole, A. (2003), *Nigeria's external relations and foreign policy under military rule 1966-1999*. Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press.

- Folarin, S.F. (2010), 'National role conceptions and Nigeria's African policy, 1985- 2007', Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Covenant University, Otta.
- Gambari, A. I. (1989), *Theory and reality in foreign policy making: Nigeria after the second republic*. Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press International.
- Idang, G. J. (1973), *Nigeria: Internal political and foreign policy. 1960-1966*. Ibadan: University Press.
- Inamete, U.B. (2001), *Foreign policy decision making in Nigeria*. Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press.
- International Peace Academy (2003). *Nigeria's foreign policy after the Cold War: Domestic, Regional and External Influences*. Oxford: University of Oxford.
- Jennings R.Y., & Watts A.D. (eds.), (1992), *Oppenheim's international law*, 9th ed. London: Longmans.
- Kalu, K. (2000), *Economic development and Nigerian foreign policy*. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press.
- Kolawole, D. (2004), *Nigeria's foreign policy since independence: Trends, phases and changes*. Lagos: Johnmof Printers Ltd.
- Landsberg, C. (2008), 'An African "concert of powers? Nigeria and South Africa's construction of the AU and NEPAD', in Adebajo, A., Mustapha, A. (eds.), *Gulliver's troubles: Nigeria's foreign policy after the Cold War*, Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.
- Metz Helen. C. (1991), (ed), *Nigeria: A country study*. Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress.
- Mustapha, R.A. (2008), 'The Three faces of Nigeria's foreign policy: Nationhood, identity and external relations', in Adebajo, A., and Mustapha, R.A. (eds.), *Gulliver's troubles: Nigeria's foreign policy after the Cold War*, Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.
- Northedge, F.S. (1968), *The foreign policies of the powers*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Ogunnubi, O. (2014), 'Hegemonic Order and Regional Stability in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Comparative Study of Nigeria and South Africa', Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, School of Social Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg.
- Okeke, C.N. (1981), *Nigerian Foreign Policy Under the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1979)*. Golden Gate University School of Law GGU Law Digital Commons.
- Okpokpo, E. (2000), 'The challenges facing Nigeria's foreign policy in the next millennium', *African Studies Quarterly*, 3(3): 31-36.

- Omotola, J.S. (2008), 'From importer to exporter: The changing role of Nigeria in promoting democratic values in Africa', *Political Perspectives*, 2(1), 1-28.
- Onunaiju, C. (2009, 2 June). Yar'adua and Foreign policy: 2 years after. Daily Trust.
- Onyearu, A.O. (2008), 'Citizen-Centred Diplomacy: The Paradigm of Change in Nigerian Foreign Policy' Retrieved 25 June 2012 from <http://nigeriaworld.com/articles/2007/oct/102.html>.
- Osaghae, E. (1998), *Crippled giant: Nigeria since independence*. India: Hurst.
- Otunbajo, F. (1989), 'Introduction: Phases and changes in Nigeria's foreign policy', in Akinyemi, A.B. (ed.), *Nigeria since independence: The first 25 years Vol. X 'International Relations'*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational books Ltd.
- Pham, J. P. (2007), 'The E.U. and Africa: Looking for strategic partnership. An inquiry into sources and prospects', Presentation Prepared for VFLAD-IPRI International Conference, Lisbon, Portugal.
- Pogoson, A.I. (2006), 'The United Nations and the politics of humanitarianism', *African Journal of International Affairs and Development*, 11(1): 34-56.
- Saliu, H. (2006), *Essays on Nigerian foreign policy, Vol. 2*. Ibadan: Vantage Publishers.
- Saliu, H.A. and Oshewolo, S. (2018), 'Nigeria in African Affairs: Hegemonic and Altruistic Considerations', *The Round Table*, 107(3): 291-305.
- Soremekun, K. (2003), 'Foreign Policy', in Ayeni, V., and Soremekun, K. (eds.), *Nigerian second republic*, Lagos: Daily Times Publication.
- United Nations (2009), UN News & Media Photo. Retrieved from <http://www.unmultimedia.org/photo>

Copyright of Journal of African Foreign Affairs is the property of Adonis & Abbey Publishers Ltd. and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.