

THE EVOLUTION OF NIGERIA'S FOREIGN POLICY: FROM THE PRE-INDEPENDENCE AND POST-INDEPENDENCE PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

Nigeria's foreign policy can be traced to periods of the country's existence. These periods are the colonial period and the post-colonial period. The colonial period, between 1914 and 1960 is when the entity called Nigeria came into existence as a united nation, even though the country was still under colonial rule. The post-colonial period is from independence in 1960 till date. This study will pay attention to the post-colonial period of Nigeria's foreign policy since it can be rightly said that Nigeria as a sovereign state started having interest from this period. The post-colonial period saw the formation of indigenous foreign policy that was truly called Nigerian foreign policy. This study will therefore examine the evolution of Nigeria's foreign policy before independence and review the country's foreign policy since independence in 1960. The study will also look at the principles and objectives of Nigeria's foreign policy; determinants of Nigeria's foreign policy; and, the afrocentric principles of Nigeria's foreign policy.

Keywords: Foreign policy, Afrocentric principles, Independence, Intervention, Commonwealth.

EVOLUTION OF NIGERIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

The evolution of Nigeria's foreign policy could be divided into two, namely colonial period and post-colonial period. The colonial period is when the entity called Nigeria came into existence i.e. 1914-1960, when the country was still under the colonial rule of the British government, while the post-colonial period is from independence till date. This paper will focus on the post-colonial period of Nigerian foreign policy because that is when it can be rightly said that Nigeria, as a sovereign state started having interest. From 1914 to the later part of 1960, the interest of the British was the interest of the entity called Nigeria.

Not just Nigeria, other countries of the Commonwealth were content to leave the diplomatic representation of their interests to Her Majesty's government in the United Kingdom. According to Ayah (1998: 27) "In these countries, the interests of all members of the Commonwealth are therefore watched over and protected by Her Majesty's Ambassador or Minister for the United Kingdom." Ray Ofoegbu succinctly pointed out also that Nigeria's foreign policy before independence was controlled by the British to serve their interest.

Nigeria's external affairs were fully in the hands of the British Governor-General of Nigeria. External Affairs were among the subjects reserved for the Governor-General, a Briton. The sessional paper on Foreign Policy (1956), which was the first serious foreign policy paper on Nigeria was a product of the joint efforts of the Governor-General, his Chief Secretary (also a Briton), and the British Colonial and Commonwealth Reactions Offices (Ofoegbu, 1998: 48).

The post-independence period saw the formation of a truly indigenous foreign policy that was truly called

Nigerian foreign policy. With the coming of successive governments since independence, the policy has been mortified. Even though there have been changes in foreign policy formulation by various governments since independence in 1960, the objective of the country's foreign policy still remains the same. Anyaele (2005) posits that the protection of national interest has remained permanent in Nigeria's foreign policy, but the strategy for such protection has varied from one regime to another. This means that all the governments from independence till date have pursued the same goal and objective using different instruments. From the administration of Sir Balewa in the First Republic to the present administration of Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, the objectives of Nigerian foreign policy have remained the same.

It is not wrong to state that the evolution of Nigeria's foreign policy can be traced to when the country got her independence as a sovereign state. Upon gaining independence in 1960, Nigeria made the liberation of Africa the centre-piece of her foreign policy and played a leading role in the fight against the apartheid regime in South Africa (Samora, 1979). Samora further stated that Nigeria's foreign policy was tested in the 1970s after the country emerged united from civil war and quickly committed herself to the liberation struggles going on in the Southern African sub- region.

As noted earlier, Nigeria's foreign policy before independence in 1960 was tied to the interest of the British. When the country got independence, the first major task the Balewa administration had to deal with was the shaping of Nigeria's foreign policy in alignment with Nigeria's national interest. Nigeria's post-independence foreign policy was centered around the Prime Minister who dominated the foreign policy machinery. He conducted a conservative foreign policy that was pro-West even though he professed a policy of non-alignment. While he maintained good relationship with the West represented by the United States of America and Britain, he was hostile to the Eastern bloc represented by the Soviet Union. It was observed that on most international issues like the Berlin crisis of 1962, the American nuclear test of 1962, the Vietnam conflict, the Prime Minister leaned towards the West. The only exception was Nigeria's decision to break diplomatic ties with France in protest of nuclear tests carried out by France in the Sahara.

When Tafawa Balewa assumed office as the first Prime Minister of independent Nigeria in 1960, he outlined what Asogwa (2009) called "broad principles" of Nigeria's foreign policy. The fundamental principles of Nigeria's foreign policy under Tafawa Balewa, according to Asogwa (2009) are:

- (i) Promotion of Nigeria's national interest and world peace
- (ii) Pursuance of the policy of neutrality and non-alignment
- (iii) Respect for the sovereign equality of all nations
- (iv) Promotion of friendship and cooperation among the various countries in the world
- (v) Maintenance of the principles of non-interference and non-aggression in other countries of the world
- (vi) Promotion of the rapid de-colonisation of Africa
- (vii) Maintaining a modest approach to the pursuit of Nigeria's foreign policy
- (viii) Support for a free and democratic world
- (ix) Promotion and support of cooperation and integration among African states (Asogwa, 2009: 78)

Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy under Prime Minister Balewa was not in doubt. Balewa was committed to the decolonisation of Africa and the wellbeing of Africans. Under Balewa, Nigeria played a leading role in the formation of the Organisation of African Unity (now African Union) and the Chad Basin Commission in 1964. Nigeria also contributed substantially to the special fund of the OAU liberation committee and played an active role in the expulsion of apartheid South Africa from the Commonwealth of Nations in 1961. Nigeria's African centered foreign policy was reiterated by Tafawa Balewa in his speech at the United Nations on October 8, 1960, few days after Nigeria's independence. In his speech, Balewa informed his audience thus:

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 organisation, but being human we are naturally concerned first with what affects our immediate neighbourhood (Tafawa Balewa's speech at the UN, Oct., 8, 1960).

He frowned at the West and East bloc nations using Africa as a battlefield for ideological wars. This came on the heels of the Congo crisis. He was of the opinion that African nations are capable of playing their required roles in the comity of nations only when the developed and industrialised nations stop fermenting crisis in African states on the basis of ideology (Asogwa, 2009).

It is instructive to note that the evolution of Nigeria's foreign policy as an independent sovereign nation dates back to Balewa's administration from 1960. It can therefore be stated that Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa set the principles of Nigeria's policy which has served as the compass for successive Nigerian governments, even though he recorded minimal success.

Overview of Nigeria's Foreign Policy since Independence

Since independence, Nigeria's foreign policy has been characterised by a focus on Africa and by attachment to several fundamental principles. These are: African unity and independence; peaceful settlement of disputes; non alignment and non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations; and regional economic cooperation and development (Ogoke, 1993). Nigeria hoped to achieve the above objective through her membership of, and participation in the United Nations Organisation (UNO), the Commonwealth of Nations, the Non-aligned Movement, the Organisation of African Unity (now AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Several issues have dominated Nigeria's foreign policy across various **governments** since independence in 1960 with each government having distinctive **priorities** and style. This **means** that the country's foreign policy has been pursued **within** broad conceptual framework since independence.

As earlier indicated, that framework situated Africa at the fulcrum of Nigeria's pre-occupation and around which rotate other spokes of its relation with other countries. In effect, Nigeria's **behaviour accorded due recognition to** the totality of Africa's needs and expectations in the formulation and implementation of her foreign policy in a framework that ensures that Africa remains a natural habitat in which Nigeria can exercise direct influence in the pursuit of her national goals and objectives.

It is therefore right to say that despite the vicissitudes of the political fortunes in Nigeria, successive governments from the Balewa administration have outlined the fundamental principles of Nigeria's foreign policy within the African agenda.

During the Tafawa Balewa's administration between **1960** and **1965**, Nigeria's foreign policy had non-alignment as one of its guiding principles, even though she maintained a special relationship with Britain and other western countries. Her economic relationship was more with the west as she maintained an unfriendly attitude with the Eastern bloc countries represented by the Soviet Union and China. The government laid emphasis on the maintenance of regional and international peace and security, and respect of sovereign equality of states. This is a factor that motivated her active role in the establishment of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). After the military coup of 1966 that saw the collapse of the first republic, critics argued that the government was too pro-west, and ignored to lay a strong framework for decolonisation and integration.

According to Alli-Balogun, there was a distinct break in Nigeria's foreign policy during the civil war of 1967-1970 as the primary concern of the government was to preserve the unity of the country. After the civil war, the country re-assessed her relationship with both eastern and western bloc countries. She maintained a more pro-East and less pro-West stance considering the support given to her by the Soviet Union after the West refused to provide arms to the country during the civil war. At the same time, Africa remained the centre-piece of the country's foreign policy as attention was focused on the liberation of Southern Africa, the integration of ECOWAS, and the need for complete economic independence throughout Africa. The establishment of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was one of the great achievements of Nigeria in regional policy.

This informed Onyisi's (2011: 18) position that "in the mid and late 1970s attention focused on the liberation of Southern Africa, on the integration of ECOWAS, and on the need for complete economic

independence throughout Africa.” During the period between 1976 and 1979, Nigeria’s foreign policy was reviewed. The country pursued an independent and non-aligned foreign policy dictated neither by the east nor by the west. This was as a result of pressure from Britain that Nigeria should follow the diplomatic vogue and continue a policy of non-alignment.

After reviewing Nigeria’s position on the Non-Aligned Movement, Ayah posits that a salient factor that influenced Nigeria to review her foreign policy and adopt the policy of non-alignment was the non-aligned movement itself. According to him, small and weak nations saw the goals and potentialities of the movement so attractive. Such goals as military disengagement, freedom from entangling alliances, peace in a polarised world, security of members and reduction of level of conflicts in East-West relations all were attractive to Nigeria (Ayah, 1998).

Another external pressure on Nigeria came from the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) which urged its members to join the non-aligned movement. In the movement African issues became dominant, especially issues like decolonisation, racial discrimination, neo-colonialism and imperialism.

Salau and Fawole contend that the principle of non-alignment formally characterised the foreign policy up to 1993, but in practice, it was rather the opposite. From their point of view, the Murtala-Obasanjo regime, despite the non-aligned posture, identified more with socialist states and openly confronted the capitalist world. The Shagari and Babangida administrations embraced western states, and Babangida even put up an economic diplomacy that would engage western investments in the domestic economy. The Abacha regime effectively ended the era of alignment with the west, as it began to show a bias for the isolated nations of the Middle East and socialist bloc from 1995 (Fawole, 2004).

However, Obasanjo’s administration identified with the course of non- alignment, but by this time there had been a momentous questioning surrounding the continued relevance of non-alignment in the face of globalisation orchestrated by the west and more controversial was whether the nation had ever been truly non-aligned. The nature of the capitalist economic development from the 1990s to date of some of the founding fathers of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), such as Indonesia and Egypt; and the socialist economic development of some of its founding members further raised the need for a refocusing of the Non-Aligned Movement (Ojo and Sessay, 2001).

From the 1990s to date, Nigeria’s foreign policy has been centered on Economic Diplomacy and Citizen Diplomacy.

Principles and Objectives of Nigeria’s Foreign Policy

The first principle of Nigerian foreign policy is the policy of non-alignment. It is a foreign policy principle which rejects formal military alliance with and routine political support for the West (capitalist) or the East (communist) in the post-World War II international System. The conscious rejection of any form of alliance, particularly formal military or political alliance, constituted an important feature of Nigeria’s foreign policy. Consequently, during the entire period of the Cold War, Nigeria successfully resisted joining either the Eastern or the Western bloc of nations in their ideological struggle for power and influence. This policy was adopted by Nigeria and other newly independent states of Africa and Asia to help promote international peace and security in view of the Cold War conflict between the two super power blocs of NATO and Warsaw Pact.

In Ray Ofoegbu’s view, Nigeria favours the principle of non-alignment because it makes her more assertive and boosts her foreign policy objective of being a regional power. The principle discourages dependency in foreign policy by asserting the right to define and exercise options in international affairs free from ideological impediments, and helps in the shattering of unhealthy colonial ties and orients the country, to develop new relations toward developing countries with whom Nigeria would likely share a wider scope of common concern (Ofoegbu, 1998).

However, scholars like Philip and Anglin perceive that Nigeria was not as non- aligned as it claimed on paper. The Balewa administration was considered to be pro- West and anti-East in its policies. These pro-West images were possibly a result of Nigeria’s colonial experience, during which educated Nigerians were socialized

into western values (Philips, 1964). In addition, Nigerians were nurtured in all aspects of western life, albeit primarily of the British variety during the colonial period. The policy actions commonly cited to substantiate the claim that Balewa was pro-West were summarized by Anglin (1964: 54) as

Delaying the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union; imposing restrictions on the size of the Soviet mission in Lagos, on travel to Soviet bloc countries (especially study), and on the importation of Soviet literature; discouraging Soviet bloc aid and trade; proposing a “two China” policy and supporting India in its dispute with China.

The reasons he outlined were Balewa’s conclusion of a defence pact with Britain, permitting the establishment of “secret NATO radio station” in the country, refusing to attend the Belgrade Conference of Non-Aligned Nations, adopting a policy of silence on Cuba and Berlin, and the resumption of U.S. nuclear tests. The other policies were collaborating with the neo-colonialists in the Congo and opposing the Union of African States (Anglin, 1964). Although the Balewa administration later reversed some of these policies, the initial anti-communist policies created doubts as to its sincerity in the espousal of a non-aligned policy on East-West issues.

The second principle is the legal equality of states. This principle is aimed at protecting the small and underdeveloped countries like Nigeria and other African countries, which are highly susceptible to control, domination and coercion by powerful and industrialised states. Nigeria also believes in this principle because of her conviction that a well-ordered and peaceful community at both regional and universal levels requires mutual and reciprocal respect for the views and interests of all national actors. Nigeria is highly committed to this principle.

The principle of legal equality of all states has been justified not simply in terms of the fear of underdeveloped countries like Nigeria being left in the periphery in the determination of world affairs, but also, and more importantly, in terms of allaying the fears of small and weaker African states. The principle underscores the assumption that all states are equal in the comity of nations with equal opportunity to advance their views and interests through the media of international organisations.

The third principle is the principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other states. Related to the principle of legal equality of states or respect for the independence and sovereignty of states was Nigeria’s avowed commitment to noninterference in the national affairs of other nations. This was particularly emphasised to draw attention, and distinguish Nigerian leaders as different from the leadership of those countries that are known for meddling in the affairs of other countries.

It is however noted by Rosati (2006) that non-interference is not the same as non-intervention. According to the duo, interference itself literally means an unwelcome involvement of an external or a second party in the national affairs of a sovereign state. Intervention, however, is an acceptable development in international politics to help a state restore peace or to save a nation from an internal crisis that is becoming externalised or of a huge humanitarian concern. The global community and African Union’s presence in Sudan is, for instance, the case of intervention which the United Nations tacitly sanctions (UN Charter, 1945). The case of interference however has been the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 with the purported mandate to “free Iraq and establish a democratic government of the people. (Rosati, 2006: 78)

Nigeria upholds this principle of non-interference as it relates to its West African counterparts. It has not had a case of undue interference in the affairs of other African states, but has intervened at critical moments on many occasions. Among such instances were the unilateral and subsequent multilateral intervention in the Liberian crisis from 1990 to the restoration of democratic rule in 2005, and her intervention in the Sierra Leonean crisis. Other cases of Nigeria’s legitimate intervention were the resolution of the political crisis in Gambia by the Obasanjo administration, containment of the military attempt to dislodge the democratic government of Sao Tome and Principe, the solution of the Cote d’Ivoire conflict and the diplomatic resolution of the Togo and Congo crises in the early 2000s.

The fourth principle is that of multilateralism, that is membership of international organisations such as the United Nations, Commonwealth of Nations, African Union, Economic Community of West African States, etc. Nigeria was an ardent and active promoter and participant in multilateral diplomacy. This accounts for Nigeria

eagerly joining and belonging to several international organisations. Nigeria's policy makers believe that there is safety in number and thus had no reluctance in belonging and participating in these organisations. They also believe that membership of these international organisations will enable Nigeria pursue her interest and contribute to the common goals of the organisation.

The fifth principle is that Africa is the centre-piece of Nigerian foreign policy. This is an important principle that has guided Nigerian foreign policy since independence. The principle emphasised Nigeria's commitment to the decolonisation of Africa. Thus anti-apartheid and liberation groups found in Nigeria the most committed and faithful ally throughout their respective struggles for freedom and independence. Therefore, in the pursuit of this afro-centric foreign policy, Nigeria has assisted liberation movements in various parts of the continent, thereby dismantling the last vestiges of colonialism. Besides, Nigeria has shown commitment in the implementation of this policy through efforts at peaceful resolution of conflicts in the continent and the championing of the struggle to uplift the socio-economic wellbeing of the African people through continental programmes, such as the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) and African Development Bank (ADB) assisted sustainable economic development programme (Njoku and Nwafor, 2006).

Although some of these principles, such as decolonisation and non-alignment are no longer as relevant as they were in the 1960s and 1970s, quite a number of other principles remain both relevant and crucial for any nation that seeks to preserve and protect its sovereignty and independence and remain a respectable member of the international community.

In most analyses of Nigerian foreign policy, Nigeria's national interests have either not been clearly identified or have not been adequately looked at. This is because there is vague conception of successive political leaderships of the country about what constitutes Nigeria's national interests, or the leaders have not been careful enough to differentiate between articulation of Nigeria's national interests and the actualization of national interests. Foreign policy objectives are a comprehensive plan and goal values that, a country intends to achieve as it relates with other members of the world. Corroborating this, Obi (2006) said that foreign policy objectives concern the goal-values that a state aspires to attain in its external relations. The objectives are also referred to as the state's national interest. On their part, Russett and Stair (1992) categorized Foreign policy objectives into core, middle range and long range objectives. According to the duo,

Core values are the foreign policy aims that are related to the survival of the state and its citizens. The protection of the sovereign and territorial integrity of the nation and, the lives and property of Nigerians at home and abroad remain the cardinal values that constitute the national interest. Middle range objectives within the framework of Nigeria's foreign policy include such broad matters as economic development and social welfare, promotion of international cooperation, respect for fundamental rights and mutual respect among nations. On the other hand, long range objectives are the dreams and aspirations of the state in the international system (Russett & Stair, 1992: 84-85).

Nigeria's foreign policy objectives are a reflection of the country's national interest. Every foreign policy, is a dynamic process that is determined by the domestic needs and aspirations of the country, coupled with certain practical economic, political and socio-cultural forces in the international environment (Njoku and Nwafor, 2006). Therefore, the major goal of Nigeria's foreign policy is to protect and to promote the country's national interest. The objectives of Nigeria's foreign policy are enshrined in Chapter 2, Section 19 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria under the rubric of Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy. These objectives are:

promotion and protection of the National interest; promotion of African integration and support for African unity; promotion of international cooperation for the consolidation of universal peace and mutual respect among all nations and elimination of discrimination in all its ramifications; respect for international law and treaty obligations as well as the seeking of settlement of international disputes by negotiation, mediation, reconciliation and adjudication; and promotion of a just world economic order. (The 1999 Constitution)

Although guided by the same general principles, Otubanjo (1989) observed that the various regimes that have governed Nigeria since independence have not necessarily shared the same perception of the international system or conceptualisation of Nigeria's role in it, nor of the strategies for attaining her foreign policy objectives. In spite of their declaration of non-partisanship in the ideological conflict between East and West, successive Nigerian governments have shown a clear preference for relation with the western powers and an antipathy towards the Eastern bloc. According to Otubanjo, "all have professed non-alignment, although most have tilted more to the West than to the East and all declare aspirations for a just international economic order and global peace." (Otubanjo, 1989: 10). It is instructive to note here that Nigeria's foreign policy objectives have since been reinforced by the recommendations of the military-appointed Adedeji Committee on the Review of Nigeria's Foreign Policy. These objectives not only served Nigeria's national interest, but were also a guideline which Nigeria's foreign policy actors conformed to and regarded as principles guiding Nigeria's leadership role in Africa. It is however uncertain whether Nigeria appreciates to be an effective leader in Africa.

Determinants of Nigeria's Foreign Policy

Looking at the history of Nigeria's foreign policy, there is no doubt that we can recognize two major important determinants or factors that have consistently influenced Nigeria's foreign policy orientations. These are internal and external factors, both of which have played some considerable roles in the determination of Nigeria's relations with the international community. This agrees with Northedge's (1968) argument that the foreign policy of any state is a product of environmental factors both internal and external to it. Northedge argues that every state has these two factors conditioning her foreign policy from conception to formulation and implementation.

Domestic factors

Ibrahim Gambari has argued that there is direct relationship between domestic politics and foreign policy formulation in Nigeria. According to him, the conduct of political business invariably affects the conduct of foreign policy (Gambari, 1981). The domestic factors which include the country's economy, the personality and character of her leaders, geography, pressure groups and the country's constitution has great influence on the perception, formulation and implementation of Nigeria's foreign policy. The economic fortune of Nigeria, especially in the 1970s, influenced the tempo of her foreign adventures. The oil boom of the 1970s motivated Nigeria's commitment to the decolonization and liberation struggles in Africa. This is in line with Soremekun's assertion that oil is the major driving force of Nigeria's foreign policy (Soremekun, 2003). Okoro (2002) was also quick to point out the relevance of oil in Nigeria's foreign policy. According to him, "by the end of the Nigerian civil war in 1970, the boom in the country's oil industry not only accelerated the economic growth rate, but also greatly enhanced its potential standing on the international arena" (Okoro, 2002: 14). By 1975, Nigeria had a strong economic base for development and political leverage in her external relations. This was as a result of the increase in the price of oil in the world oil market during this period.

This informs Okoro's position that:

The sudden increase in the prices of oil in the world market in the 1970s gave Nigeria a leverage which it did not possess in the first decade of independence. More importantly, Nigeria was able to determine its own foreign policy independent of external influences. Put differently, the growth of the country's economy arising from the oil boom strengthened its position in relation with developed countries. For instance, Nigeria's foreign policy in Angola and the subsequent recognition of the MPLA as the legitimate government of Angola, the nationalization of Barclays Bank and the British Petroleum because of the British support of the apartheid policy in South Africa, Nigeria's role in the Chadian conflict as well as the strong material and moral support to the Liberation Movements Southern Africa, were influenced by Nigeria's improved economy, largely occasioned by the oil boom (Okoro, 2002: 15).

It can therefore be clearly stated that the role of oil in Nigeria's foreign policy cannot be underestimated. However, faced with weak economy after the oil boom in the 1970s, Nigeria was unable to meet her domestic and

international obligations. Okoro (2002) gives a clearer picture of the implication of this on Nigeria's foreign policy. He argues thus:

Nigeria's economic downturn and the heavy debt burden from the 1980s to present have two major implications on Nigeria's foreign policy. First, Nigeria's foreign policy is limited in scope because of limited financial resources needed for the implementation of foreign policy decisions; second is Nigeria's lack of freedom to formulate independent foreign policy, especially one that is at variance with the interest of foreign investors (Okoro, 2002: 16)

As a result of this weak economic situation, Nigeria was forced to rely on World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) thereby exposing Nigeria to indebtedness. In his paper, *Economic Factors in Nigeria's Foreign Policy*, Fafowora clearly underscores the implications of Nigeria's reliance on the *World Bank* and IMF for economic turnaround. He points out that:

The direct intervention of the World Bank and IMF in the Nigerian economy also has serious implications for the conduct of Nigeria's external relations. Severe limitations are inherently placed on the conduct of Nigeria's relations by our massive foreign debt owed largely to the Western bloc countries. How can Nigeria now truly pursue an independent and non-aligned policy when its economy is also closely tied to the Western bloc countries, how can it confront those Western bloc nations to which it is so deeply indebted? (Fafowora, 1990: 477)

Ake (1983) attributed Nigeria's economic decline which resulted in her reliance on the western financial institutions for economic development to pandemic corruption, mismanagement of the Country's resources, political instability and poor economic policies. This made Nigeria to become hugely indebted and emerge as a rentier state which Western countries exploited the situation to their advantage.

Under the personality and character of her leaders, it is believed that whatever a regime does in terms of domestic or external relations is more or less a reflection of the Chief Executive of the State. The field of foreign affairs is often regarded as the special preserve of the President (Coleman, 1963). The foreign policy of Nigeria from independence till date can be said to have reflected to a very large extent the character of her leaders. In foreign policy formulation, "decision makers in most cases allow their personal backgrounds, experiences, motivations, learning, values, prejudices, positions, privileges, interpersonal relations and perceptions to influence the making and conduct of foreign policy" (Okoro, 2002: 25). The ideology of these leaders has tremendous influence on the foreign policies of their states. "For example, where rulers are militants, one can expect a radical foreign policy stance from their states. Murtala Mohammed of Nigeria is a typical example. But where the rulers are conservative with aristocratic background like Balewa, a moderate and cautious foreign policy can be expected." (Adeyemo, 2002: 69)

Geography is another determining factor in Nigeria's foreign policy. Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and the most populous black state in the world. As the most populous country in the continent of Africa, "Nigeria's foreign policy makers have been consistently passive and cautious about African political unity partly because many African states may not be willing to surrender their hard-won sovereignty and partly because Nigeria as 'giant' in size and population would not want to get all these lost in a political union" (Adeyemo, 2002: 59).

The role of pressure groups in the formulation of Nigeria's foreign policy cannot be underestimated. Pressure groups are organized associations with numerical and financial strength that operate to obtain favourable policies from the government (Opere, 1983). They exert influence on government and affect foreign policy formulation in Nigeria.

In the first republic administration of Tafawa Balewa, some pressure groups attempted to exert some influence on Prime Minister Balewa's foreign policy. Okoro (2002: 18) states that:

Their interests and demands were as varied in scope and in intensity. In the Congo crisis, for example, (which was the first foreign policy issue of the Balewa administration) the remarkable divergence of the views of the political parties, notably the three major parties - NCNC, AG and NPC reflected ethnic divisions and interests within the Nigerian society. Other interest groups, such as the trade unions, student organisations, academics, etc who were

critical of government's Congo policy, based their criticisms on their perceptions and interpretation of the problem.

Okoro cited one notable pressure group that always tried to influence government economic policies, the Manufacturers' Association of Nigeria (MAN). Their foreign policy position, according to him, has been based on the belief in self-reliance which was aimed at influencing government decisions on imports that could hinder the growth of their infant industries. It is pertinent to say here that the efficacy of pressure groups is not quite clear, but because their belief and interests are generally shared by the national interest of self-reliance as a condition for economic development, the policy decisions on foreign economic issues may appear to reflect their views. However, a closer study of pressure groups as a factor in foreign policy formulation indicates that pressure groups do not have much influence on foreign policy like they do in domestic policies because foreign policy decisions are made in secrecy. Foreign policy decisions do not result in one group within the population gaining at the expense of others.

Nigeria's constitution is also a visible factor that has influenced foreign policy formulation since independence in 1960. A constitution is a body of rules, regulations, customs and principles, which states how a nation should be governed. It gives power to the government and places limitation on the power. The Nigerian constitution states in clear terms what the country's foreign policy behaviour should be. It sets a broad outline of Nigeria's foreign relations. Under the Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy, the Nigerian constitution specifies the foreign policy objectives of Nigeria. Nigeria is also a signatory to many international treaties which are automatically part of the country's municipal law. These treaties also shape her foreign policy formulation and implementation.

External Factors

The external factors are those factors from outside the domestic environment which affects the formulation of Nigeria's foreign policy. They include Nigeria's colonial heritage, the Cold War and Non-Alignment and Multilateral Relations.

The country's colonial heritage has affected, to a large extent, her relationship with other countries in the international community. The government of Sir Tafawa Balewa in the first republic was very friendly with the West due to Nigeria's colonial relationship with Britain, even though the government declared a foreign policy of non-alignment. This pro-West foreign policy posture lasted until after the Nigerian civil war when the Soviet Union made a positive impact on Nigeria-Soviet relations after agreeing to supply arms to Nigeria for the prosecution of the war. On the continental level, Nigeria maintains a robust relationship with countries that share common colonial heritage with the Anglophone countries. There are some writers who have argued that the colonial history of any state is the major determinant of her foreign policy. Thus, Okunu (1971) asserts quite conclusively that the foreign policy of any state in the continent of Africa is the function of her colonial history. Even though Nigeria maintains cordial bilateral relations with countries of the East bloc, she has maintained a more robust relationship with the West than the East due to her capitalist orientation which is part of her colonial heritage.

The Cold War and Non-Alignment played a significant role as a factor that influenced Nigeria's foreign policy at the foundation of Nigeria's foreign policy. During the period of Nigeria's independence in 1960, the international community was polarized between two political ideologies in the West and the East. In order not to be caught in the web of any political confusion, Nigeria adopted a foreign policy principle of non-alignment, that is, the country was neither pro-West nor pro-East.

As a principle of foreign policy of states, members of the Non-Aligned! Movement (NAM) like Nigeria believed in a policy of independence based on peaceful co-existence, non-participation in military alliances such as the North-Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and Warsaw Treaty Organisation (Warsaw Pact), support for liberation movements and refusal to the Great Powers of facilities for the establishment of military bases on the soil of the NAM" (Idang 1973: 231).

During the Cold War of the 1960s and 70s, these principles were exhibited in Nigeria's foreign policy behaviour,

even though they were ignored at some points. The Nigerian government under Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa maintained a closer relationship with the West, even to the point of signing the Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact in 1960 (Aluko, 1981). Balewa's government was thus considered to be pro-West and anti-East policies. Philips (1964) believes that these pro-West images were possibly as a result of Nigeria's colonial experience, during which educated Nigerians were socialized into Western values. The policy actions commonly cited to substantiate the claim that Balewa was pro-West were summarized by Anglin (1964) as:

delaying the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union; imposing restrictions on the size of the Soviet mission in Lagos, on travel to East bloc countries (especially for study), and **on the importation** of communist literature: discouraging Soviet bloc aid and trade; proposing a "two China" policy and supporting India in its dispute with China; Balewa's conclusion of a defence pact with Britain, permitting the establishment of "secret NATO radio station in the country; refusing to attend the Belgrade Conference of Non-Aligned Nations; adopting a policy of silence on Cuba and Berlin and the resumption of US nuclear tests (Anglin. 1964: 248).

We can therefore, argue in this paper that Nigeria's legacy as a former British colony, combined with her energy-producing role in the global economy, predisposed Nigeria to be pro-Western on most issues of her foreign policy, despite the desire to maintain a non-aligned status.

Finally, Nigeria's multilateral relations has a prominent position in Nigeria's foreign policy. The country's membership in, and commitment to, several international organisations such as the United Nations, the African Union, the Commonwealth of Nations etc. affected her foreign policy position.

Afrocentric Principle and Nigeria's Foreign Policy

Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy is as old as the Nigerian state itself. The notion that Nigeria was destined to lead the African continent and champion the cause of black people all over the world actually predates her independence in 1960. This conviction has remained strong almost fifty four years after independence. Perhaps the explanation for this tenacity is to be found in the leadership role conception which most Nigerians, including the political elite, have about the country. The sources of this conception are obvious enough and relate to the country's often-repeated demographic preponderance, her economic and natural endowments, and her staggering human resources (Obadare. 2001).

Prior to Nigeria's independence in 1960, Nigeria's African leadership potential was anticipated internationally and locally. Foremost Nigerian nationalist and first president, Nnamdi Azikiwe, referred to Nigeria as "Nigeria-Africa," a symbolism of Nigeria's inseparability from African interest, and in January 1960, Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa noted Nigeria's aspirations: "Nigeria will have a wonderful opportunity to speak for the continent of Africa." (Wayas 1979: 76)

The idea of Afrocentrism in Nigeria's foreign policy is premised on the understanding that Nigeria's engagement in the international system will be looked at through the binoculars of Africa. As Hon. Aja Wachukwu averred on the imperative of an Afrocentric policy, "charity begins at home and therefore any Nigerian foreign policy that does not take into consideration the peculiar position of Africa is unrealistic." This enunciation is the philosophical origins of Afrocentrism in Nigeria's foreign policy thought. The issues that gave practical expression to this African-centeredness were the remnants of colonialism on the African continent, apartheid in South Africa, liberation wars, ideological and proxy conflicts among others. Outside these politically pressing factors, the issue of shared racial universe, of cultural neighbourhood, of shared historical experiences and the ideas of pan-Africanism further lubricated the wheels of this foreign policy conceptualization.

Under the framework of an African-centered foreign policy, Nigeria got involved in the decolonization struggles of Angola, Mozambique, Namibia and antiapartheid struggles in South Africa and in the process earning for her the appellation a "frontline nation", even though she was geographically far removed from the theatre of the struggles which was in the Southern African region. Nigeria is central to the formation of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975. Nigeria has contained the breakdown of social order in

many West African States through her world acknowledged peacekeeping expertise, and provided economic life wire to less economically resourceful countries.

As indicated earlier, the belief that Nigeria would play a crucial leadership role in Africa through her Afrocentric foreign policy principle had predated independence. National and anti-colonial leaders such as Nnamdi Azikiwe who later emerged as the first Nigerian President, had contended that “it should be the manifest destiny of Nigeria to join hands with other progressive forces in the world to emancipate not only the people of Africa but also other peoples, of African descent from the scourge of colonialism” (Azikiwe, 1961).

Beyond the rhetoric of connectedness of Nigeria’s identity and position of influence to the destiny and importance of Africa in global matters, section 19 of the 1979 Constitution mandated Nigeria to “promote African unity, as well as the total social and cultural liberation of Africa and people of African birth Upscent throughout the world.” The current 1999 Constitution reaffirms such commitment. Analysts like Ibrahim Gambari and Kenneth Meagher have however seen this Afrocentric foreign policy posture of Nigeria as a wake-up call to the continent to accept the nation’s benevolent hegemony (Gambara, 2008; Meagher, 2008).

Among the leadership role envisaged for Nigeria’s adoption of Afrocentric foreign policy were the liberation of the African continent from imperialism of all kinds, fighting apartheid and racism in Southern Africa and in the Diaspora, uniting Africans to make their voice loud enough in global politics and using enormous resources of the country to: assist needy African states (Ojiako, 1981, Saliu, 1999). In addition, studies conducted by Akinbobola, Nweke and others have discussed the demands and expectations emerging for Nigeria in Africa as a result of her Afrocentric foreign policy. These demands include regional security, combating increasing poverty, diseases and underdevelopment (Akinbobola, 2000; Nweke, 2000), neo-colonialism (Akindele, 1998) growing indebtedness to the West (Saliu, 1991; Olusanya, 1989).

This informs Aluko’s, rationalization of Africa as the centre-piece of Nigeria’s foreign policy. He maintains that:

Using Africa as the centre-piece of Nigeria is rationalized on the basis that Nigeria is better positioned in Africa to identify with and defend the legitimate interest of Africa than any other nation. The assumption has been that the independence of Nigeria would be meaningless if it does not lead to the total liberation of all African states. Nigeria had wished to use her population, size and resources as advantage to contribute and facilitate the collective interest of Africa and this mandate was consummated as Nigeria’s historic mission (Aluko, 1981, 265).

With this therefore, Nigeria arrogates to herself the responsibility of catering for the well-being of Africans wherever they may be. Saliu (1999) states that it is acknowledged that the well-being of the African continent is intricately tied to Nigeria’s. He justifies it with references to Nigeria’s swift response to the Congo crises in 1960-62, a few; months after independence; her intervention in Chad, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Uganda etc.

The country also led various campaigns against racist regimes and their western sponsors, notably offering technical, financial, material and general diplomatic support to anti-racist movements. These initiatives helped in the establishment of majority rule in South Africa and Zimbabwe, decolonization of Angola, Namibia, Mozambique, Sao Tome and Principe (Akinterinwa, 2005)

Nigeria believes that her independence would be incomplete as long as any other African state was under colonialism. Nigeria supported revolutionary struggles for independence, fought apartheid to a standstill and was relentless in distributing financial assistance to needy African states. Akinyemi (2005) and other scholars including Saliu (1999), however, contend, that going by her pedigree in African politics, much is yet expected of Nigeria today by African states.

In summary, it can be rightly argued that Nigeria’s Afrocentric foreign policy evolved as an extension of Pan-Africanism which aimed at promoting and defending an African agenda to end colonialism and racist regimes, achieve unity, stability and sustainable development in Africa.

CONCLUSION

The discussion on the evolution of Nigeria's foreign policy was divided into two, namely. The pre-independence (colonial) and post-independence (post-colonial) periods. During the pre-independence period i.e. (1914-1960), Nigeria was still under the colonial rule of the British government, and the interest of the British was the interest of Nigeria. In other words, Nigeria's pre-independence foreign policy was controlled by the British to serve their interest.

The post-independence Nigeria witnessed the formation of a truly indigenous foreign policy that was truly called Nigerian foreign policy. It is not wrong, therefore, to state that the evolution of Nigeria's foreign policy can be traced to when the country got her independence as a sovereign state. Nigeria's foreign policy since independence has been pursued within the framework that ensures that Africa remains the natural habitat in which Nigeria can exercise direct influence in the pursuit of her national goals and objectives.

It is evident that since independence, Nigeria has aspired to occupy the centre stage of African affairs, using her resources, influence and power to achieve this aspiration and further her national interest, especially in the West African sub-region. In Nigeria's existence as a sovereign state, the influence the country wields through the instrumentality of foreign policy which seeks to promote and protect her national interest can better be assessed within the context of regional and continental leadership aspiration.

In the implementation of her foreign policy, Nigeria adopted five principles. These principles are: (i) the policy of non-alignment which rejects formal military alliance with the capitalist West or the communist East; (ii) the principle of legal equality of states which is aimed at protecting the small and underdeveloped states; (iii) the principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other states; (iv) the principle of multilateralism, i.e. membership of international organisations; (v) Africa as the centre-piece of Nigeria's foreign policy. Both internal and external factors have consistently influenced Nigeria's foreign policy. These factors have played some considerable roles in the determination of Nigeria's relations with the international community.

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