

Principles, Objectives, And Socio-Political Realities Of Nigeria's Foreign Policy, 2019-2023

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Abstract

The goal of developing a country's foreign policy is to advance and safeguard the country's national objectives. Therefore, the essence of this study is to analyse the principles of Nigeria's foreign policy in the context of the country's present socio-political realities. The study engaged secondary data, while the theory of Manifest Destiny was adopted. Findings revealed that Nigeria has not reaped the rewards of all its sacrifices and dedication to the African course. This study recommends that there should be a reconstruction of Nigeria's foreign policy based on its current realities of tribal sectioning and religious interest by pursuing a foreign policy that is centred on the country and her citizens as a united entity.

Keywords: Foreign Policy, Nigeria, Principles, International, Africa.

Introduction

Adeniran (2007), stated that foreign policy is frequently regarded as the foundation of all international interactions. It is usually developed to fulfil the goals of the nation, which in a real sense refers to those interests that are essential to the development of the nation's politics, economy, and sociocultural (Adeniran, 2007). The how or norm that directs a state's or its government's choice and conduct in relation to other states in the international system is referred to as a foreign policy principle. A country's foreign policy

ideology, which directs that country's choices and actions in the service of its interests at home, is also included (Halidu, 2018).

For notably, the neutrality (Isolationism), the Monroe Doctrine, and the Open Door Policy served as the foundation for the United States' foreign policy (Khanna, 1996). Several of the guiding ideas have changed after the First World War. China, in contrast, has established her foreign policy in accordance with the five pillars of lasting peace, reciprocity and equality, mutual non-aggression, regard for sovereign and territorial integrity since 1954 (Panda, 2014). Despite having several distinct governments since becoming independent, Nigeria has consistently pursued a foreign policy. She bases her foreign policy on the following ideas: multilateralism, non-alignment, equality for all states, afrocentrism, and refraining from meddling in the domestic affairs of other countries. There has been respect for the idea of afrocentrism. "Africa was the centerpiece of Nigeria's foreign policy from the time of independence, with a focus on the liberation, advancement, and unity of Africans both at home and abroad" (Halidu, 2018).

In as much as Nigeria has contributed to the emancipation, development, and togetherness of Africans, it is almost impossible to say the same has been achieved within the country, in that Nigeria's current socio-political realities poses as a threat to its democracy and the country itself. The difficulties in the subregion, such as the Boko Haram insurgency is one major issue the country has been battling with (Duruji, Chidozie, Olanrewaju and Duruji-Moses, 2019). Hence, this paper analysed the five abovementioned Nigerian foreign policy principles and its objectives in light of the country's current socio-political realities.

Operationalization of concepts and Theoretical framework

The meaning of "foreign policy," like a lot of other concepts in international relations, has generated debate. This debate occasionally results from the various theoretical frameworks from which the concept is managed; it may also be related to the overall significance given to the state in directing or regulating international operations in the modern world (Ojo and Sesay, 2011). Foreign policy is a term that is frequently used to refer to the interactions between different nation states in the domains of political science, history, diplomacy, and the like. It is the

relationships between one actor and the other actors in the international system. No matter whatever social, cultural, or structural factors are involved, these other actors could be nations, international organizations, certain categories of people, or the system's environment (Ofoegbu, 1980). "A range of actions a government takes that relate to defense, security, political relations abroad, and economic global relations" is what is meant by foreign policy. It is the method through which a state communicates with other states, nongovernmental organizations, other nations, and specific individuals (Ezirim, 2010).

According to Legg and Morrison (1971:103), the term "foreign policy" may be described as a collection of clear goals for the region outside the boundaries of a certain social grouping and a set of techniques and methods to accomplish those goals. It suggests that there is a need to try to change how other nations or international organizations act. If the influencing state believes that such behaviour is helpful to the accomplishment of its own goals, the goal is to ensure that such states or international organizations continue to behave in the same manner. It may also mean implementing new policies, changing, or delaying the implementation of existing ones, or otherwise disrupting the current pattern. For instance, to support the Front-Line States in Southern Africa in maintaining their anti-apartheid policies, Nigeria provided them with financial, political, and diplomatic support. On the other hand, she might block Chad from the shore to pressure the N'djamena government into making peace with the other armed groups in the nation.

This paper holds the same opinion with the theory of Manifest Destiny that God has granted some individuals the authority to rule over others. In the publication of John L. O. Sullivan, the Editor of the Democratic Party Organ Magazine in 1845 to encourage acquisition of Texas and Oregon by the United States (Heidler and Heigler, 1853). He claimed that "the privilege of our 'manifest destiny' to overspread and to acquire all of the regions which destiny has provided us for the advancement of the new frontier in freedom and federated self-government assigned to us" was stated in the New York Morning News on December 27, 1845 (Heidler and Heigler, 1853). Like Americans, Nigerian representatives came to believe that "it was the manifest destiny for Nigeria to ascend to prominence and assume the believable

voice of the continent" due to some "favourable" considerations like the country's enormous number, rich sociocultural diversity, historical riches, plenteous economic successes, and strong national defence (Folarin, 2011). With this, succeeding governments have developed a international cause for Nigeria to realize its own manifest destiny and elevate itself to the position of Africa's victor (Halidu, Nwokedi and Adie, 2018).

Historical Background of Nigerian Foreign Policy between 1960 and 2022

Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, who served as Nigeria's first prime minister and head of state from October 1960 to January 1966, was entirely in charge of setting the framework for the country's foreign policy (Fawole, 2003). The progression of the national interest of the federal, state and of its citizens is the primary objective of Nigeria's foreign policy, upon which other objectives are founded, as stated in Balewa's speeches to the House of Representatives on August 20, 1960, towards Independence Day of October 1, 1960, and in his admittance talk at the United Nations on October 8, 1960, in New York. This means that, like the foreign policies of all other countries, Nigeria's foreign policy is essentially swayed by its own interests. However, it was not clearly stated what the nation's national interest was.

According to Ajaebili (2011), scholars concur the following key ideas of Nigerian foreign policy may be inferred from the speeches:

- The Non-Alignment Principle
- Legal Equality of States
- Non-interference in all other states' domestic affairs
- The Principle of Multilateralism
- Africa as the Cornerstone of Nigeria's External Relations (Afrocentrism)

The principles were subsequently incorporated into Section 19 of the nation's 1960 constitution of independence and were subsequently revisited and upheld in the 1999 constitution. The First Republic was abruptly overthrown on January 15, 1966. A counter coup that took place on July 29, 1966, toppled Aguiyi Ironsi's six-month-old government, ending its short life as the military head of state (Gberevbie & Oni, 2021). As a result, Ironsi was unable to have any significant influence on the international system. A true embodiment of Nigeria's Africa policy occurred

between 1975 and 1979, when Murtala Mohammed's government provided a clear, concise, cogent, and unequivocal policy for the continent that was free of bias towards any group or nation (Ekenedirichukwu, 2010). The regime participated vigorously in every African nation's fight to end colonialism. (Damilola, 2011).

Under the Shehu Shagari administration, Nigeria's foreign policy experienced significant setbacks from 1979 to 1983, which caused the nation to lack legitimacy due to a lack of purpose, passivity, and ineptitude. Therefore, Nigeria's foreign policy took a break during his four years in office. The Buhari/Idiagbon regime toppled his administration and ruled over a deserted nation from 1983 to 1985. The regime encountered poor leadership, wasteful spending, a significant degree of political violence, and economic stagnation. To restore Nigeria's foreign policy to its former grandeur, challenges facing the Buhari administration included to restructure the country and infuse energy into the formation of foreign policy (Damilola, 2011). Babangida therefore overthrew Buhari in office. The Babangida dictatorship faced the country's existing realities and strived to realize the lofty goals of Nigeria's foreign policy as of 1985 to 1993. The dictatorship revealed the operating principles of its foreign policy strategy in this context. According to Babangida, Africa is at the centre of Nigeria's foreign policy, using a concentric strategy in which her citizens interest takes precedence over all other factors (Arowolo, 2008).

Due to General Sani Abacha's unwarranted use of force to seize power in 1993, the world's steady shift toward liberal democracy at the period, and Chief Ernest Shonekan's Interim National Government's opposition to such a clear palace coup, Nigeria was usually unfriendly towards most other countries during this time and became an outcast in the international community. Therefore, this time period's foreign policy was "reactive and isolationist." He felt that the country needed to develop a new foreign policy direction because, in his opinion, the old attitude had become effective. The diplomatic corps of other countries were astonished by how brazenly the regime disregarded diplomatic customs and shown a blatant contempt for delicacy. Such despicable actions by Abacha as the unjustifiable death of the Ogoni campaigner, Ken Saro-Wiwa, and eight others despite a significant outcry and requests from the global community did not improve the matter. Traditional cronies such as the United Kingdom, the United States,

France, Germany, Canada, and South Africa briefly retracted their diplomatic delegations and support for Nigeria; in response to This estrangement from the Western world and its coalitions, Abacha "moved to Asia" (Arowolo, 2008).

Since Nigeria was in a condition of international isolationism from 1998 to 1999, after Abacha's sudden death, the subsequent government of General Abdulsalami Abubakar made a commitment not to extend its stay than was necessary as it became increasingly clear that the global community would not support any kind of protracted military presence in the country. Nigeria was successfully put back in its proper position under Abubakar's administration, and her reputation in the international community was improved (Arowolo, 2008).

Olusegun Obasanjo became president as a civilian during the General Abdulsalami Abubakar transition program, which spanned from 1999 to 2007. This administration declared that it would undertake a dynamic foreign policy to advance cordial relations with all countries and would keep up its positive participation in the Organization of African Unity, the United Nations, and other international organizations. President Obasanjo's foreign policy in Nigeria after the orderly transition to democratic rule was more of a shuttle diplomacy outside of Africa, an effort to earn over a world that had ignored Nigeria and would prefer to just not deal with her (Ekenedirichukwu, 2010). After eight years in office, Alhaji Musa Yar'adua was elected president (1999 – 2007). Throughout, his regime did not follow the dynamism or radical stance of Nigeria's foreign policy. Despite its lauded seven-point plan, the government appeared to be more of a continuity of the disastrous Obasanjo foreign policy stance. Unquestionably, the government saw a backwards turn in Nigeria's foreign policy as it slowed momentum of a vibrant and bold foreign policy posture left by certain previous governments.

President Yar'adua passed away in 2010, bringing the Jonathan government into power for the final two years of his four-year term. However, after competing in and having won the 2011 presidential election, Goodluck Jonathan was assigned the responsibility of leading the country. He had the opportunity to direct the nation's foreign strategy as a result. Under Jonathan, Nigeria's foreign policy was to maintain its predecessor's, partially through citizen diplomacy, despite attempts to implement a new

foreign policy that was expensive and required significant financial outlays. Unsettling changes have occurred in Nigeria's political landscape since President Muhammadu Buhari took office there in 2015 (Lewu, 2021). With the help of Nigeria's regional influence, President Buhari interfered in the civil turmoil in the Gambia, Mali, Cote d'Ivoire, and Guinea Bissau and helped restore some political order. It is important to recognize President Buhari's courageous moves in stopping Morocco from joining ECOWAS as its 17th member state (Lewu, 2021). President Buhari began his executive international trips by traveling to Niger and Chad first. He then went to Cameroun, Guinea, and the Benin Republic to strengthen his relations with these nations and to request their aid in battling international terrorism, which includes the Boko Haram uprising in Nigeria's northeast (Lewu, 2021).

Nigeria's current socio-political realities

According to the Congressional Research Service (CRS) (2020:1), the following are some of Nigeria's current socio-political realities:

- **Governance, National unity, and integration; Transition to the next government:** After years of military control, Nigeria has been a democracy with multiple parties since 1999. Although the state of governance has significantly evolved over the last 20 years, major issues still exist, including corruption, ethnic and religious conflict, misuse of security personnel, prejudice, and intimidation of journalists and political opponents by the government. When Muhammadu Buhari won the presidency in 2015, Nigeria had its first democratic transition of power between political parties because of a tsunami of unhappiness over corruption, the economy, and increased insecurity. In elections that saw unusually low turnout, rampant buying votes, extensive violence, and increased worries about Nigeria's democratic trajectory, Buhari was re-elected in 2019. Nigeria has a history of election-related violence and malpractices, there have been instances of voter intimidation, ballot box snatching, and rigging. These issues have often led to post-election violence and disputes, which have caused loss of lives and property, this was also evident in the just concluded 2023 general elections, despite efforts in the elections, more than ever before, recorded an elevated level of election-related violence, malpractices, and ethnic politics.

- **Economy:** Nigeria is equipped to take the lead in the global economy thanks to its enormous oil reserves, great ability in the agricultural and service sectors, and youthful, rapidly growing population. However, a lack of diversification away from the extraction of petroleum, infrastructure shortages, insecurity, and corruption have hampered economic development and progress. Since 1960, misappropriation of funds in Nigeria has cost the nation hundreds of billions financial and infrastructural resources. Economic hardship and deterioration of the built environment are the direct effects of this (Folarin, 2021). According to several metrics, Nigeria is already one of the least developed nations in the world: in fact, some estimates place Nigeria as having the world's biggest population of people suffering in abject poverty.
- **Security:** Nigeria faces numerous security challenges. Numerous hundreds have died over the past ten years, millions have been displaced, and a prolonged humanitarian catastrophe has resulted from fighting among the military and two U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) in the northeast: Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), a breakaway faction associated with the Islamic State. By the larger Lake Chad Basin territory, the conflict has also caused instability in neighbouring Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. The confrontation between farmers and pastoralists in the northwest of Nigeria recently worsened despite a gradual decline in security circumstances that included cattle rustle, abduction, ethnic cleansing, and emerging Islamist extremist activities. In the central Middle Belt, where alterations over resource availability exacerbate tensions between the Christian and Muslim populations, farmer-herder conflict has also grown. For many years, insurgency and illegal activity has characterized the southern, oil-rich Niger Delta have made the Gulf of Guinea's already unstable situation even worse.
- **Corruption:** Corruption is a pervasive problem in Nigeria. According to Transparency International's 2020 Corruption Perception Index, Nigeria ranks 146 out of 180 countries, with a score of 25 out of 100, indicating a "extremely high degree of corruption. The Nigerian government has taken steps to tackle this problem and has implemented several anti-corruption initiatives. In 2019, the government launched the

Open Government Partnership, a multi-stakeholder initiative aimed at increasing transparency and accountability in government. The government has also created the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), a specialized agency that investigates and prosecutes economic and financial crimes. The Nigerian people have also taken action to combat corruption (Akinyemi, Okoli & Chidozie, 2021). Civil society organizations such as Transparency International Nigeria, and the Coalition Against Corrupt Leaders (CACOL) are actively campaigning for greater transparency and accountability in government. Ultimately, combating corruption in Nigeria will require a multi-faceted approach that includes both government and civil society action. Corruption is, indeed, one of the worst afflictions of our day. The continent has made tremendous strides in combating corruption, putting in place legal and legislative frameworks, notably the African Union Convention on preventing and combating corruption (AUCPCC). However, the adoption of the legal and policy frameworks has not had the desired success in tackling this evil. Leadership in Africa at the 29th African union summit in Addis Ababa, universally recognised president Buhari to lead the cause this was in recognition of President Buhari's administration commitment of fighting corruption in Nigeria globally Buhari used this opportunity to call on nations where plundering took place funds has being kept in order to release them without the normal lengthy difficulties involved in the repatriation process. It is estimated that Nigeria has lost over \$400billion in corruption since its independence. In an international news platform BBC report that "a Nigerian saleswoman was dismissed after telling auditors that a snake had eaten 36 million naira, which is a value of \$100,000 or £72,250. Philomena Chieshe, the clerk, was employed by the Nigerian Examination Board, which collects exam money."

How these realities affect Nigeria's Foreign Policy Objectives

Nigeria's current socio-political realities are marked by increasing insecurity, a lack of accountability and transparency in the government, an economy that is struggling to provide jobs and meet the basic needs of the population, and a growing inequality between the wealthy and the poor. There is also growing discontent among the people with the government and a general

feeling of disillusionment with the political process. Despite these challenges, Nigeria continues to strive for greater progress and stability in the region. Though it is evident that the domestic situation of the country has seriously wounded all her decent work in the international community globally and within the continent (Anyaoku, 2012). The foreign policy objectives of Nigeria, strides and achievements has been heavily hindered in the following ways:

- **Undermines the leadership of Nigeria in the continent and weakening her stand in international politics:** Nigeria's economic downturn has undermined her leadership in the African continent. Even though it is Africa's most populous nation, Nigeria's economy has been in decline for some time, with its GDP growth rate falling from 7.4% in 2014 to 1.9% in 2017. This has had serious implications for her leadership role in the continent, as other African countries have become more attractive destinations for investment and trade. Nigeria's poor economic performance has weakened its standing in the African Union and other regional organizations. The country's economic decline has led to a reduction in its ability to contribute to regional initiatives and its influence on other African nations as a result, other countries have become more assertive in their regional leadership roles, such as South Africa, which has taken a larger position in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (Anyaoku, 2012). Additionally, Nigeria's weak economy has caused its currency, the Naira, to depreciate, making it more difficult to pay for imports, leading to a decrease in foreign investment in the country. Furthermore, the lack of economic growth has caused high unemployment and poverty levels, resulting in a lack of economic opportunities for many Nigerians. All these factors have inclined to a weakening of Nigeria's standing and influence in regional organizations. In the international play because of current socio-political state of the country we see leaders of world powers nation choosing to visit other African Nations over Nigeria including. After all Nigeria's contributions. This visits shades Nigeria's stance as the Giant of Africa (Arise, 2022).
- **Affecting her stance in earning the United Nations Security Council seat for Africa:** It is important note that in 2009, Nigeria was elected as a two-year non-permanent member of

the UN Security Council. beginning from January 1, 2010, to December 31st, 2011, Liberia, Serra Leone, and Togo voted for themselves even though they were neither candidates nor candidates on the ballot. This attitude of voting for oneself is another open undermining of Nigeria's leadership the continent. It is an attitude that is different from abstaining, which is more about neutrality. The act of voting for oneself, without being registered for election, is an elegant manner of protesting against Nigeria's candidature. In other words, how do we explain Nigeria's commitment to the political stability, growth, and economic integration of countries in West African region, on the one hand, and the voting against Nigeria's interests in different international for a, on the other? (Anyaoku, 2012). Also, if Nigeria remains unstable politically, with submerging democratic dearth's from insistent massive electoral malpractices and dwindling economy caused mostly from poor use of public funds and corruption, it will be hardly probable to get a seat. When other nations in Africa begin to show stronger will in democratic processes and economy. Nigeria might be required to primarily fix her Nation before attempting to fix the international community.

- **Affecting the reciprocity of her leadership and contributions to Africa since independence:** In Africa several African countries, like Gabon and Equatorial Guinea, have mistreated innocent Nigerians and South Africa are specific examples. It is useful to recall the experience of 1981 when five Nigerian naval officers were killed by Cameroonians during official patrol within Nigeria's maritime territory the public opinion favoured retaliating, but Shehu Shagari refused along with popular opinion (Anyaoku, 2012). Professor Ibrahim Gambari, the Chief of Staff to President Mohammadu Buhari, has criticized the absence of Nigeria's interests, values, and worldview in the country's foreign policy. "You see, you can't give abroad what you don't have at home, so this link between domestic politics, policy, and the conduct of external relations is very important," Gambari said about the connection between domestic politics and the conduct of a nation's external relations. "In this regard, Nigeria must continue to establish the philosophy that it is no longer sufficient to seek what your nation can do for others, but rather what we can do

together with others in the pursuit of our common interests," he said (Arise, 2022).

Analysing Nigeria's Foreign Policy Principle, in the context of the current socio-political realities in Nigeria

Nigeria is the most populous, wealthiest, and top oil-producing country in Africa. She also has a significant political and economic influence and regional organizations influence like the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), as is evident from her foreign policy principles. Nigeria also has significant socio-political, security, and economic difficulties. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicted in June 2020 that Nigeria's gross domestic product (GDP) would decrease by 5.4%. This prediction has repercussions for welfare programs, state finances, and the leadership structure, which is heavily dependent on the allocation of nationally gathered oil incomes (IMF, 2020).

Nigeria is like a thirsty horse at the river that offers water to anyone in need of it but will not quench its own thirst. What this implies is that Nigeria through her foreign policy principles have been able to free numerous African countries from its socio-political challenges but has done little to nothing in providing solutions to her challenges. Nigeria's national credo or guiding principles, which it steadfastly defends in its capacity as a sovereign state, serve as the foundation for its foreign policy objectives. These values are in line with the ideological framework that guides its policy (King, 1996). Thus, these essential principles or fundamentals are intricately linked to the understanding of national duties, the creation of policies, and the management of international relations. The guiding principles serve to advance and safeguard Nigeria's interest (Ezirim, 2010). Below, the principles of Nigeria foreign policy are discussed in greater depth considering Nigeria's current socio-political realities:

- **Principle of Non-Alignment**

This was the principal standard for guiding foreign policy just after independence. The idea that several states had during the Cold War to avoid siding with any of the rivalling ideological forces. It differs from a neutral stance in that it entails engagement in international affairs, although such engagement in the event of East-West conflict would not extend above levels of mediation and

reconciliation (Aliyu and Tindi, 2018). Nigeria prefers the non-alignment principle because it increases its assertiveness and advances its foreign policy objective of being a regional power. Nigeria has exhibited the non-alignment principle in some areas. These include Russia's occupation of Afghanistan and the United States' invasion of Panama (Morton, 2017). Nigeria did not offer any of them assistance in any situation. Nigeria also withdrew diplomatic ties with France, the country that conducted the atomic bomb test, in addition to denouncing it. Nigeria once more inaugurated diplomatic missions in both blocs. Additionally, the administration of Balewa outlawed all literature, including academic works from communist nations, but went ahead and signed the contentious Anglo-Nigerian Defence treaty with Britain (Morton, 2017). The Nigerian government swiftly learned its regular armament merchants, in the Nigerian civil war, Britain, and its allies, were unreliable since the US steadfastly refused to supply it with weapons during the conflict. By using an efficient propaganda tool, the "Biafrans" were able to convince the west that Nigeria was committing acts of genocide against them (Aliyu and Tindi, 2018).

The non-alignment concept explicitly outlined the foreign policies of the regimes up until 1993. It was more of the opposite. For instance, the Murtala-Obasanjo dictatorship openly contested the capitalist world while maintaining a non-aligned attitude and identifying more with socialist regimes. Both the Shagari and Babangida regimes accepted western nations, and the latter even launched an economic diplomacy program to attract foreign investments to the national economy. However, looking at Buhari's administration since his tenure began in 2015, he has no foreign policy focus, however, he has been aligned majorly with the United States, based on the needs of the country. For instance, Thousands of civilians, including thousands of children, have been kidnapped by Boko Haram and IS-WA. Significant United States (U.S) attention has been focused on two large-scale kidnappings: the abduction of 276 girls from Chibok (Borno State) in 2014 by Boko Haram and the 2018 kidnapping of 110 kids from Dapchi (Yobe State) by IS-WA (CRS, 2020).

Obama's Administration dispatched an interagency team to Nigeria in reaction to the 2014 Chibok kidnapping, which sparked the global "#BringBackOurGirls" awareness campaign.

To bolster recovery efforts through monitoring operations, President Obama also sent a drone and some 80 U.S. military soldiers to the neighbouring country of Chad (Bukola, 2018). In addition, the U.S.-Nigeria Binational Commission and other bilateral activities, significant business ties, and significant people-to-people contacts make up the relationship between the two countries, which is extensive by regional standards. President Buhari received the first phone call from President Trump to a sub-Saharan African leader in 2017, and in 2018, Buhari had the first meeting with President Trump in the White House. Relationships have occasionally been stretched by U.S. worries about the state of human rights in Nigeria; Some members of Congress have expressed concerns in recent years about military abuses against civilians, as well as declining press and religious freedoms (CRS, 2020). The State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) provided Nigeria with bilateral foreign aid of around \$450 million for the fiscal year 2020, supporting initiatives centred on agricultural production, law enforcement, and the boosting of the justice and health sectors (CRS, 2020).

- **Principle of Respect for the territorial integrity and political independence of nation- states**

The notion that when states respect one other's territorial integrity, Nigeria's capability to protect its own autonomy is enhanced on the basis for respect for the territorial integrity of sovereign states. To promote national and continental stability in Africa, where arbitrary and artificial boundaries have been formed, respect for territorial integrity is of particular importance (Aliyu and Tindi, 2018). Nigerian borders cut across cultural groups, or to put it another way, cultural groups in Nigeria are split into various geographic units by colonial design. For instance, the Yoruba in the southwest are split among Nigeria and the Benin Republic. The Efik-Ibibio, Ejagham, and Ogoja ethnic groups also reside along Nigeria's border with Cameroon, just as the Hausa-Fulani, Shuwa Arabs, and Kanuri in the north do. Since the OAU Cairo Resolution of 1964, Nigeria has maintained its commitment to "respecting the borders existing on their (states') accomplishment of territorial sovereignty" since utilizing ethnicity as the basis for self-government would be disastrous. Still, the promise to "respect the borders existing on their (states') accomplishment

of national independence" stood. This has given Nigeria the trust of its smaller neighbors that it has no expansionist intentions, apart from Cameroon, whose actions from the 1980s to the 2000s strongly signalled that Nigeria meant to expand militarily and politically (King, 1996). This impression has increased because of the conflict over sovereignty of the oil rich Bakassi Peninsula, the diplomatic and military conflict with Equatorial Guinea, and the covert and underground French agitation against Nigeria's unruly behavior in its neighborhood.

Principle of Non-Interference in the Domestic Affairs of Other States

Nigeria has struggled to fully uphold the ideal of non-interference in the face of the big countries' overwhelming interests, particularly when African states cynically ask the powers for assistance in resolving internal problems. For instance, Hissene Habre deflated the Kano Accord of 1979, which established a Transitional Government of National Unity in Chad amid a national crisis, when he left the peace accord to pursue a cause of overthrowing the entire state (Aliyu and Tindi, 2018). France possessed military bases in Cameroon and Niger, both of which turned to that colonial authority for guidance on all their domestic issues. However, when it comes to its African peers, Nigeria respects this non-interference approach. It has not engaged in any overt meddling in the internal affairs of other African nations. But it has frequently stepped in during pivotal periods. One such example was the initial unilateral and later multilateral intervention in the Liberian crisis from 1990 until the restoration of democracy in that country in 2005, as well as the involvement of the warlords in Sierra Leone from 1994 until the final strengthening of that country's previously unsteady democracy in 1999 (Aliyu and Tindi, 2018). However, in Nigeria's internal crises, Nigeria has failed in bringing it to a stable state, they were able to make Sierra Leone unstable democracy stable, but in Nigeria, democracy is being trampled upon, there is the high rate of human violence, lack of freedom of expression and freedom of the press. For instance, the EndSars movement in 2020, that happened because of police brutality, two years later, police brutality has not been dealt with. On the 25th of December 2023, the lawyer, who was seven months pregnant, was murdered

and shot by ASP Drambi Vandi of the Ajiwe Police Station in Ajah, Lagos, while she and relatives were on their way to buy pizza. She died in the passenger seat of the car her husband was driving (Vanguard, 2022).

- **Principle of Multilateralism or Multilateral Diplomacy**

This entails the assembly of states, usually in conferences of three or more, to discuss issues of shared interest. Globally significant topics like climate change, ecology, and nuclear weapons can be discussed on a multilateral scale with the cooperation of other states (Dauda, Adie and Nwokedi, 2018). Consequently, Nigeria has over the years shown its dedication to and assistance for a few international organizations, including but not limited to the United Nations (UN), the Commonwealth of Nations, Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), the African Union (AU), and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (Halidu, 2018). Nigeria, a strong proponent of multilateralism, has increased its membership on various channels since becoming the 99th member of the United Nations on October 7, 1960. As a result, the country's image in terms of membership in international organizations is impressively high at the present time. The nation has projected its foreign policy (national interests) to the outside world using this principle (Halidu, 2018).

Nigeria specifically assisted in the formation of ECOWAS and the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and these organizations were formed when the problem confronting Africa was colonialism (Joshua and Olanrewaju, 2017). When it came time for the OAU to change, Professor Adele Jinadu, a Nigerian, was one of the six specialists enlisted to develop the AU Constituent Act. Nigeria has also maintained to provide funding for the AU's and other organizations' activities. For example, it was estimated that Nigeria spent a total of \$15 million on AU operating expenses in 2012 (Ashiru, 2013; Dauda, Adie and Nwokedi, 2018). Presently, under President Muhammadu Buhari, multilateral ties between Nigeria and its neighbours, principally Ghana and the Benin Republic, suffered a setback because of the border restriction, which Ghana used as reprisal against Nigeria.

The border was opened in early January 2021, and this has helped to promote the necessary reconciliation and improve ties between

Nigeria and the ECOWAS member states (Lewu, 2021). With how much financial assistance Nigeria has provide to the region through the formation of ECOWAS and OAU, numerous evaluations indicate that Nigeria's economy is still performing poorly. Productivity has been hindered by a lack of infrastructure, policy uncertainty, ongoing power outages, and years of underfunding of education (Page, 2019). Widespread corruption depletes state funds and deters private investment. Government interventions like as fuel subsidies, currency restrictions, import quotas, and tax benefits have long skewed the economy, damaged state finances, and facilitated corruption. Nigeria has one of the world's lowest tax receipts-to-GDP ratios due to weak non-oil tax administration and widespread noncompliance (IMF, 2020).

- **Africa as the Cornerstone of Nigeria's External Relations (Principle of Afrocentrism)**

The Afrocentrism foreign policy principle states that Nigeria must be concerned about everything that affects Africa. This idea was initially accepted under Tafawa Balewa, and it has since been reinforced by succeeding administrations. The president of Nigeria during the 1980s, Shehu Shagari, firmly asserted that "Africa remains the cornerstone of Nigeria's foreign policy priority (Ibrahim and Ogbeidi, 2010). By providing moral, financial, and material support, Nigeria has devoted countless hours to making sure that everything that affects Africa, including colonialism and apartheid, was dealt with swiftly and decisively. During their battles for Black majority rule, the country stood firmly with the people of South Africa, Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), Namibia, and other nations (Dauda, Adie and Nwokedi, 2018).

Nigeria dispatched troops to African nations that were in conflict, such as the Congo, Chad, Sudan, Somalia, Mali, Sierra Leone, Liberia, etc., to assist in bringing about peace. Nigeria funded the Economic Community Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) mission to Liberia on its own during the 1989-present violence there to assist in establishing a ceasefire, establishing an interim administration, and repairing damaged infrastructure (Ikong, 2015).

The current socio-political realities happening in Nigeria, shows how active and effective the Nigerian troops are in helping African countries end their upheavals, but the same cannot be said within the country. For example, the violence between stationary farmers

and traveling cattle herders has increased recently in Nigeria's Middle Belt, a loosely defined area that includes sections of the Northeast and Northwest and the country's North Central geopolitical zone. Although exact numbers are lacking and death toll estimates are debatable, professional research indicated that between 2011 and 2016, farmer-herder clashes in the Middle Belt killed 2,000 Nigerians annually. Conflicts between farmers and herders in the Middle Belt and Islamic radicalism in the north have increased. Also, on the 12th of May 2022, Deborah Yakubu was assassinated in horrific ways by some Islamic religion fanatics for declaring her beliefs in connection to her educational prowess, clearly undermining the secularity of the state, right to life, and freedom of expression guaranteed by the current Nigerian constitution (Punch newspaper, 2022). Still in the northern part of the country, Boko Haram's, and its Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP) counterpart's rampages have proceeded for more than ten years. According to certain estimates, their deadly campaigns have caused 37,000 deaths. Its toolbox of terror now includes kidnapping for extortion (Attahiru, 2022).

Conclusion and Recommendations

As Nigeria took the lead in the furtherance of Africa's integration, democracy, peace, and prosperity, it is past time Nigeria begins to ensure that her national interests become the focal point of her foreign policy. The present circumstances of the power tussle between Nigeria and some rising African nations are a clear indication that Nigeria cannot continue in the usual way in which aid and assistance is being delivered. Nigeria is still capable of aiding its African neighbours when needed, but in a more strategic way that enables some salient gains for Nigeria's nation interests. It is on this backdrop that this paper recommends the following:

- Rather than continuing to serve as Africa's big brother, the country should concentrate on itself. Isolationism is impossible to follow in a globalized society. However, both Nigeria's domestic and foreign policies should put the country's interests first.
- Nigeria has made Africa the focal point of its foreign strategy, it must not neglect the domestic front. The political economy must be solid as well; this is the only indication that it is ready to be a world leader.

- To lift the nation out of socio-political and economic pessimism, insecurity, ignorance, poverty, and corruption, resources and energy must be deployed. The government should also be wise to invest partnerships in countries that have good intentions for Nigeria and her citizens.
- And lastly, a shift of focus on how Nigerian foreign policy is conceptualized is necessary, with an emphasis on Nigeria, Nigeria, and Nigeria.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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