

Nigeria's External Relations: Dynamics And Challenges

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Abstract

This paper examines the development of Nigeria's external relations since independence and also identifies issues, strategies and constraints involved; the challenges within the period of its existence. Nigeria external relations since independence has witnessed ups and downs like most other nation states. Nigeria has been extraordinarily and consistently been guided by the same principles and objectives, especially the promotion of her national interest and the policy of afro-centricity vis-a-vis her capacity to exercise hegemonic influence in the region. Nigeria has been the chief architect and chief negotiator of peace throughout Africa consequently,

Nigeria became the main operator of the engine room of Africa external relations, especially after its own independence in 1960. After independence, Nigeria external relations has been characterized by a focus on Africa and the attachment to those fundamental principles and objectives of African Unity and independence, peaceful settlement of disputes, non-enlightenment and relational economic co-operation and development. Nigeria has been naive by restricting her external relations to Africa, which was laudable only before the 1990's but this evolution is required for her to meet the needs of contemporary diplomacy. It has been observed that from regime to regime, Nigeria has witnessed various adjustments and modifications depending on the orientation of the political leadership. Nigeria external relations commenced on a moderately low level and without a particular direction. It has witnessed a progressive upward and downward slide with successive regimes adopting different strategies in pursuit of afro-centricity. Its challenges include the non-focused on national interest which dictates the course of a country's external elections and indeed its very foundation. Nigeria's national interest has not been jealously guarded by all government in power irrespective of their political or ideological inclinations.

Keywords: Challenges; Dynamics, External, Nigeria, Relations.

Introduction

Nigeria's external relations has, like most other nations witnessed dynamics successes and challenges, The focus of the paper shall be on the issues, dynamics and challenges of Nigeria's external relations from independence to 2010. Since independence in 1960, Nigeria external relations has been characterized by a focus on Africa as a regional power and by the attachment to several fundamentals principles, which include African unity and independence; capability to exercise hegemonic influence in the region; non-alignment and non-interference in the internal affairs of member-states; economic cooperation and development through its participation in international organizations (Akinyemu, 1989). It follows that Nigeria's foreign relations trends since independence has consistence been guided by the same principles and objectives. It has been observed that while

the thrust of Nigeria's external relations is the promotion of her national interest and afro-centrism, the strategies for its execution varies from one regime to another, with various adjustments and modifications depending on the orientation of the political leadership. Also, the prevailing domestic and international milieu have been the sole determinants in the country's external relations over the period under focus.

Dynamics of Nigeria's External Relations.

At independence in 1960, the Nigerian state represented a contrived federal balanced between three ethnically and politically divided federal states. The political rivalry and tension between the three factions preclude the evolution of any specific Nigerian ideology or doctrine and the emergence of any single charismatic national leader who could be identified as the 'Voice of Nigeria'. Thus, the characteristics conservatism of Nigerian external relations policy, often interpreted as weakness or lack of sovereignty, is more realistically ascribed to the uncertainty of the Nigerian political leadership's domestic political footing. In formulating foreign policy relations the leadership elite was forced with the dilemma of internal disunity and a patently contrived and unstable federal political balance. In order to bridge the cleavage between internal divisiveness and the wider notion of 'Nigerianism', the political leadership sought to project Nigeria's external objectives into a wider pan-African framework (Adefolarin, 1981).

At independence the Nigerian political leadership elite was made up of an alliance of conservative political parties- The Northern People's Congress (NPC), The National Council of Nigeria (NCN) and the United People's Party (UPP) while there is no doubt as to the perception of the international role which the Nigerian leadership considered the country predestined and ably endowed to play, such perceptions were only asserted with any measure of conviction. Statements of foreign policy were vague and unspecific as to Nigeria's aspired role in the external environment and centred on the notion of "pursuit of the national interest" which, although repeatedly referred to as the sole parameter of Nigeria external relations, remained undefined and intangible (House of Representative, 1960).

The value and abstract nature of the stated policy objectives may be seen as an attempt to transpose the inherently conservative Nigerian nationalistic objectives-

sovereignty, self-reliance and equality-to the wider African and global plane and hereby formalize the image which the Nigerian leadership elite perceived as being rightfully Nigerian but lacked the ideological wherewithal to reinforce. This inability to create an ideological or doctrinal linkage between the Nigerian leadership's exceptions of the country's predestined leadership role in Africa and its perception of the external environment may be ascribed principally to the constraints of internal instability. However, on a secondary level, we argue first, that the leadership elite perceived determinism, which dictated a strong practical economy as psychological commitment to Britain and by extension, the West. In the post-independence 'Cold War' milieu, this fact compromised any doctrinaire devotion to non-alignment. Secondly, that newly independent Nigeria found itself curiously isolated in West African regional terms, in as much as its natural ally, Ghana, under Nkrumah was politically opposed to the Nigerian government and in collusion with opposition political faction (Adefore, 1979),

Moreover, the Nigerian leadership being a conservative alliance was ideologically opposed to, and resented the vociferous recalcitrance of Nkrumah. Kwame Nkrumah and to a lesser degree Mobida Keita of Mali and Sekou Toure of Guinea, by means of the Rhetoric of intransigence, had effectively usurped the political leadership in Africa and thus constrained Nigeria in its external relations policy options. Furthermore, Nigeria perceived itself to be surrounded by francophone states, which presented a threat to the leaderships perception of 'Nigeria's predestined leadership role is Africa'; first, in that these states formed a cohesive bloc in their close identification with France, and secondly, because France, under de Gaulle, was seeking to carve out a world role for itself free of Britain or American influence, and this conflict of interests between the metropolitan powers evoked a degree of polarization and antagonism between their African spheres of influence (Adefore, 1979)

Thus, it is clear that the policy operations for the post-independence Nigerian leadership were two-fold: (a) the need to exert Nigerian independence and thus maintain a modicum of credibility, with if not leadership of the emergent African states; and (b) the need to focus the national objective on an issue which would unite the support of all Nigerians and provide a distraction from the

domestic rivalry in a singular national purpose and commitment. The issues of southern Africa are general and apartheid in particular; dramatized by March 1960 Sharpeville shootings and the disintegration of the Central African Federation provided a propitious distraction. The apartheid issue presented Nigeria, and indeed the rest of Africa, with the opportunity to consolidate the concept of the national interest and the self-image (Terkaa, 2010) (Akinboye, 1999).

The issues of southern Africa and apartheid served to create a tangible focus for the diplomatic energies of those African states struggling to come to terms with the realities of their domestic and international post-colonial predicaments; it served to structure the African continental value hierarchy and continental objective, and to internationalize the African condition. The apartheid issue has permeated every facet of international intercourse and thoroughly the cumulative nature of diplomacy, has become the antithesis of accepted international morality. The African continent, as the collective victim of the stigma of apartheid, is able to pose as the world 'conscience', as the central focus of the international abhorrence at this moral deviance. The fact that racial policies in South Africa have been of such sustained international salience, as opposed to the relative disregard for other instances of repression around the world is due to the symbolism of the racially oppressive anti-libertarian, anti-African image of South Africa evoked everything which is contrary to African values and objectives in fact, the focus of apartheid provided a continental unity of values, objectives and purposes ever and above communal and nationalist interests (Imobighe, 1989; Anifowose and Enemuo, 2005). This degree of superficial cohesiveness has given the African-bloc states a degree of influence in international affairs largely in consonant with their de facto capabilities. Evidence would suggest that, while the southern African dilemma and the system of apartheid were initially perceived by the emergent African states as a threat to the African objective and the vision of new Africa, free and defiant, this perceived threat has come to offer some considerable opportunity for manifesting African unity and projecting the African condition into the forefront of international politics. Through this influence, Africa in general has gained a considerable degree of international leverage in the international system. Paradoxically

apartheid has in fact become the instrument of African freedom and deviance (Stremlau, 1971).

The above argument is of interest to an analysis of Nigerian external relations since Nigeria is the epitome or the African experience. Overtime, the linkage between threat and opportunity perceived in the southern Africa's apartheid issue has been established as the fundamental tenet of Nigeria's international role. The southern Africa apartheid issued is perceived as posing a sufficiently credible threat to the national objective as to provide the opportunity for direct linkage between the indignities of apartheid and on the imperative of national unity, and on the wider plain, African unity, the stability of which is historically, a real threat to national capability.

Although the Balewa regime adopted a conservative and a pro-Western policy of external relations for Nigeria, it espoused the policy of non-alignment and showed relative commitment towards it. He had laid the foundation of Nigeria's afro-centric policy or the principle of Africa as the centre-piece of Nigeria foreign policy and on the basis of the principle that Nigeria's independence would be incomplete and meaningless if it does not translate to the total liberation of all African states (Adefolarin, 1981). Since then, successive Nigerian regimes military and civilian have premised the broad strands of Nigeria's foreign policy as Nigeria's historic mission.

Nonetheless, from the foregoing, it is admirable that the Balewa regime also had its low water mark, evident in signing of the Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact in 1961, under which Nigeria granted Britain unrestricted overflying and air struggling facilities and the federation (Akinboyes, 1999) and the Rhodesian Fresco of 1965, in which Nigeria failed to abide by the OAU Addis Ababa resolution of December 3, 1965 on Rhodesian rebellion (Chine, 1987). Other such manifestations of Balewa's regime to lack of commitment to the non-alignment policy were the granting of funds to western missions in Lagos while Communist countries were prevented from obtaining even accommodating for same, and the rejection of Communist literature and scholarship awards from Eastern Europe (Anifowose and Enemu, 2005; Akinboye, 1999). The pro-Western policy continued unabated under Balewa because of the imported constructs and institutions, bequeathed to them by colonialism thereby barred the Nigerian leadership from radically

extricating itself from the apron strings of colonialism, not even in its foreign relations as a post-colonial state.

In spite of the problem of Nigeria's systematic linkage to Britain and the West, educationally, politically, judicially, and economically posed which Balewa regime inherited, the adoption of a weak and lopsided federal system of government that was inherently unstable made the government to contend with very strong fissiparous tendencies. This represented a major constraint on Nigeria's external relations policy formulation (Iyanya, 2010). With this non-national consensus on foreign policy, Balewa regime had to trade consciously for fear of alienating any of the major regions in Nigeria, thereby making it inevitable for the government to be restricted to domestic affairs and in no position to play an active role in African Politics.

Nonetheless, the Balewa's regime however must be credited with the commitment to the liberation struggles in Southern sub-region of Africa, by offering more than rhetoric to the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa in taking a committed tough line with regard to the racist regime and their incursion in South Africa. Another commendation is the Congo crisis of 1960 where the regime demonstrated its commitment, by making diplomatic efforts to organize the African group at the UN and sent a contingent of Nigerian troops as part of the UN forces in the Congo (Chime, 1987). Again, the Tanganyika army rebellion in 1964 against the Nyerere regime was another case in time. The Balewa government, acting on the February 1964 Resolution of the OAU Council of Ministers, dispatched Nigerian troops who consequently bailed Tanganyika out of the army rebellions. Also, between 1962-1965, under the watch of Balewa Nigerian government intervened successfully in many conflicts in Africa.

Following the above, Nigeria's external relations under Balewa achieved three remarkable prizes viz:

- (a) Demonstration of its willingness and capability to sustain the authority of the OAU.
- (b) Assisted member-states of OAU in danger of civil war and disintegrations.
- (c) Demonstrated Nigeria's commitment to the fight for the eradications of neo-colonialism in Africa.

These principles have remained in the saddle of variables that form Nigerian's external relation.

Prior to the Nigerian Civil War in 1967, no appreciable change was witnessed in Nigeria's external relations as the leadership was pre-occupied with the resolving of domestic challenges precipitated by the Balewa administration (Iganga, 2010) and as corroborated by Ihundu (2004) observed that the leadership was foisted on Ironsi as he was disinterested in politics and had particular aversion for the burden of leadership made him unprepared for the herculean task. Nonetheless, it is remarkable that the regime hosted in June 1966 the Ambassadors' Conference in Lagos, where Nigeria's external relations policy was rededicated to the total emancipation of African territories still under colonial tutelage and radical discrimination. However, the counter coup of July, 1966 threw up Gowon as the man at the helm of affairs of the Nigerian state.

The right of self-determination does not apply, in Nigeria's view to the ethnic groups within member states of the OAU, but only to insurgents against colonial or white minority rule. Prior to the outbreak of the 1967-1970 Civil War over Biafran Secession, Nigerian Leaders were careful not to interfere in the domestic affairs of other African states; there was no effort to establish regional hegemony. It is therefore not surprising that Nigeria's role in the external affairs prior to the civil war has been projected as one of diplomatic correctness. Besides the fact that the Nigerian political leadership was politically conservative several other factors delimited the option-historically determined links with Britain, and by extension, the West; internal political instability, a perception of regional isolation and Ghanaian hostility, and significantly, the fact that Nigeria had considerable apparent economic potential, it remained economically potential, it remained economically, and military underdeveloped and depended on the export of agricultural products, primarily to the British market. Furthermore, Nigeria lacked characteristic, dynamic leadership and at a time when leadership in Africa was measured in terms of personalized extrovert recalcitrance, the apparent conservatism in Nigeria's pre-civil war external relations policy is understandable.

On the other hand, under Gowon, Nigeria was committed to support all people engaged in the struggle to rid their land of colonialism and racism especially in such parts of Africa as Angola, Namibia (Nigerian Mission of Friendship to the Soviet Union, 1970). The Nigerian civil war marked the end of the euphoric post-independence phase

in African politics. During this time international prestige was measured in degrees of diplomatic intransigence and strong expression of sentiments of doctrinaire pan-African Unity. The bitter rivalry evoked by the Nigerian civil war dispelled illusions of pan-African Unity and the amicable settlement of disputes, thus ushering in a more pragmatic phase in African politics.

During this phase the primacy of national interests, personal diplomacy and the manifest continental leadership vacuum were to be the salient parameters of policy. The authority and credibility of the OAU had been severely tarnished. Similarly, Nigerian military rulers were faced with a crisis of political confidence and authority both internally and in the external milieu. Nigerian leaders have been alarmed by the recognition accorded the Biafran secessionists by Gabon, Tanzania, Ivory Coast and Zambia, and perceived the internalization of the issue as a manifestation of neo-colonialist designs aimed at disruption African Unity (Foreign Meddlers, 1970).

In order to consolidate the tenuous national unity and to regenerate the credibility and cohesiveness of the OAU, the Nigerian leadership embarked on an assertive foreign policy drive, with Gowon visiting 20 African states between 1970-1973, including the four deviant states earlier mentioned. In a reconciliatory gesture to Zambia, which had led the bid in the OAU to recognize the Biafran secession, Nigeria sent \$750,000 to compensate that state for the closing of its border with Rhodesia (Herskovitz, 1975). Gowon warned: ...the enemies of African freedom fighters, particularly Portugal, and racist minority regimes in South Africa, and Rhodesia... that Nigeria planned to take the offensive (Gowon, 1970). Besides, the domestic rationale for seeking to externalize Nigerian Political objectives, the Nigerian leadership recognized that the perceived threat of African disunity would damage Africa's credibility in international affairs and Nigerian's role as leader of the continent. Thus Nigerian rulers indulged in forceful rhetoric, the perennial substance of which was southern Africa apartheid.

In reviewing Nigeria's continental role it is evident that the linkage between the domestic constituency and the desire to extent a leadership role within Africa, predetermines policy action. However, Nigeria is more likely to take idiosyncratic initiatives when the issue proffers a greater opportunity to maximize the mistakes of the former. When the opportunity to consolidate the

domestic constituency is less great Nigeria has consistently preferred to universalize the perceived threat in an endeavour to orchestrate and consolidate the continental reaction and to act in concert with a wider, more abstract constituency. For instance, the first opportunity after the civil war for Nigeria to galvanize the tenuous African Unity and to dramatize the threat of new-colonialism, was the alleged invasion during December 1970 of Guinea by Portuguese armed forces, which was short-lived. At the initiative of Nigeria, an extra-ordinary session of the OAU Council of Ministers was convened in Lagos. Simultaneously, the defense Commission convened in Addis Ababa and Nigeria renewed the call for the establishment of an African High Command to defend African states in the front-line of the liberation offensives. Similarly, in 1971 Nigeria determined to secure, from the OAU Council of Ministers, a declaration condemning South Africa's dialogue policy and forbidding member-states from taking up the southern African dialogue initiative so as to maintain a united OAU opposition. So too, Nigerian led initiatives to reconcile the OAU member-states who were in favour of those against the seating of the representatives of the Amin region at OAU conference during the half of 1971.

Ironically, Nigeria which itself had been so reluctant to accept OAU mediation endeavours has, since the civil war, actively encouraged continental belligerents to submit to OAU mediation in: the Guinea-Senegal border dispute; the 1971 Arab-Israeli conflict; the civil war in Sudan; tribal massacres in Burundi; recurring border clashes between Tanzania and Uganda; conflict between Equatorial Guinea and Gabon; and the conflict between Morocco and Mauritania over the Spanish Sahara. As Nigeria economic prosperity, based on the fortunes of crude oil began to improve, the country sought to assert African economic co-operation. By mid 1972 Nigeria had bilateral trade agreements with 25 African countries and was severely critical of the terms of the Yaounde Convention governing terms of trade between Africa and the European Economic Community (EEC). Nigeria perceived in the reverse preference granted EEC countries and tariff and non-tariff barriers restrictions on African economic co-operation and development.

Thus, prompted by the projected accessions of Britain, Denmark and Eire to the EEC in 1973, Nigeria brought together trade ministers from all African, Caribbean and

Pacific Island states (ACP), during 1973, to forge a unified position on their relationship with the EEC. Negotiation between the ACP and EEC were protracted over a two-year period and cumulated in the signing of the so-called Lome Convention in February 1975. The main objective of the convention was to promote trade between the contracting parties, so as to accelerate the rate of growth of their trade and improve the conditions of access of their products to the market of the EEC (Articles 2-4 and Article 7 (29) of Lome Convention, 1976).

Furthermore, Gowon regime lifted the ban on the importation of Communist literature, modified its restrictions on the acceptance of Soviet Union bloc scholarships and allowed the establishment of both the East and West Embassies in Nigeria (Adefolarin, 1981). In conjunction with other West African Countries, Nigeria coordinated resources which were pooled to make possible the establishment of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Aid was given to neighbouring drought-stricken countries like Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, Sierra Leone, as well as assistance to OAU Liberation Fund and African Freedom fighters as was in Guinea Bissau, Mozambique and Angola (Chime and Jimoh in Imobighe, 2005). That Gowon should be deposed while attaining the summit of the OAU Heads of State at Kampala in July, 1975, is more than coincidental and reflects the leaderships' ever greater concern with external affairs as the internal political situation became more unsettled and unmanageable.

The Deposition of the Gowon regime ushered in the Murtala administration. Nigeria was once again thrown into a state of political crisis. Fortuitously, however, a dramatic turn of events presented the Nigerian leadership with an opportunity to consolidate domestic political unity and to reassert her position in African politics.

The Murtala regime brought activism and dynamism into Nigeria's external relations, as the country moved from a position of mute indifference and timid disposition as a relatively passive role to a radical and pro-active position. This was made possible by the setting up of the Adedeji Commission which over hauled the nation's foreign policy machinery and led to redefinition of Nigerian foreign policy objectives and her external relations (Akinboye 1999).

The height of the Murtala regime radical and proactive disposition in external relations is reflected in the Angola conundrum. The Nigerian government had to refused to

recognize any one of the three contending forces (UNITA, FNLA and MPLA) liberation movements engaged in the civil war in Angola in the wake of the withdrawal of the Portuguese colonial authority during the later part of 1975, southern Angola was invaded by South Africa armed forces, as surrogates of the United States, in support of the UNITA/FNLA forces against the MPLA forces, which were receiving large-scale assistance from Cuba and the USSR. The Nigerian government almost immediately recognized the MPLA as the governing authority in Angola and embarked on a concerted diplomatic effort among OAU member-states to evince African support for an MPLA governmental and the Nigerian stand. The domestic linkage in the Nigerian stand on the Angolan issues is clearly discernible from the recalcitrance utterances of Nigerian leadership in the unreserved determination in the total liberation of Africa from decolonization by the racist and imperialists

The Angolan crisis marked the end of the general dearth of diplomatic initiative characteristic of African politics during the early 1970s. In mustering majority support for the Nigerian initiative, the OAU had been seen to act decisively and abide by its decision in the face of considerable international pressure, particularly from US; it made a significant shift from the display of continental disunity and organizational incapacity in the Nigeria civil war crisis, and Nigeria took full advantages of the high level of national and continental unity which the Angolan issue evoked (Adefore, 1979). Nigeria subsequently has consciously sought to project an image of reliability and high political and diplomatic morality verging on the notion of 'continental match maker' or 'honest-broker, as exemplified by the intrusion of Nigeria 'good offices' in sundry continental mediation endeavours; most notably between Angola and Zaire during the invasion of the Shaba Province of Zaire by Katangese rebels in 1977; the Lancaster House negotiations on independence for Zimbabwe, the conflict in the Western Sahara and the civil war in Chad.

In Namibia, too, Nigeria's support to South Western African Peoples' Organization (SWAPO) led by Sam Nujoma against such other forces sponsored by South Africa the Western bloc stalled the apartheid South-African installed government in Namibia and led to its victory the regime aided the liberation movements, especially, Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) and Robert

Sobukwe's Pan African Congress (PAC). Also, under the Murtla-Obasanjo regime South African relief fund was launched. The SWAPO and Patriotic Front of Zimbabwe received support. Also, of fundamental significance of the regime in the pursuit of Nigerian external relations policy objectives, after the war, was the consolidation of a regional base, which depended on Nigerian suspicion of neo-colonialists complicity in seeking to undermine the allegiance of Nigeria's neighbours and, thereby, Nigerian national sovereignty. Nigerian attitudes among other factors, to regional interception were influenced by the perceived need for Nigeria to re-establish its credibility within the continental system, and entry of Britain into the EEC.

Regional relations were thus characterized by both economic and political imperatives and were conducted on both levels of unilateral personal diplomacy and Nigeria's attempt to woo West African states into a regional agreement. In this maneuvering Nigeria nurtured the notion of 'leader among equal' rather than offensively preponderant. The successful ACP/EEC initiative set a precedent for negotiation and co-operation between Francophone and Anglophone states which influenced a measure of confidence in the proposal for west African regional grouping. The concept was eventually formalized in the so-called Lagos Treaty, thus bringing also into being the Economic Community of West African. State (ECOWAS) in May, 1975 with its primary objectives and *raison d'être* of clearly regional development or advancement (Article 12 of ECOWAS Treaty, 1975). The Murtala/Obasanjo regimes were witnessed so far as the most radical and pragmatic demonstration of Nigeria's afro-centric and non-aligned policies, and could be said that it was indeed the golden era of Nigeria's external relations.

On mounting the saddle after the regime of Obasanjo in 1979, October 1, Shagari summed up his Administration's external relations policy objectives for the 1980s to include that "African remains the corner-stone of Nigeria's foreign policy." (Shagari 1980). Through the cumulative process of diplomatic and political precedent, the notion of Nigeria the 'honest-broker' in African politics has become virtually inseparable from Nigeria the 'continental leader'. The Shagari regime reversed Nigeria's external relations to confined conservative and pro-West policy like the Balewa regime. It was a departure from the commitment and

aggressiveness of the preceding military regimes in relation to African matters (Chime and Jimoh (in Imobighe, 1992).

The regimes adoption of afro-centric and non-alignment policies and also the support for decolonization were largely rhetorical and historical, rather Nigeria's foreign relations policy was diversionary and escapist. The second Republic lacked indefensible lack of interest and support for both regional and continental organizations (Akinboye, 1999), as these are instances of proof. For example in 1983, Nigeria's economic austerity measure produced strains with the neighbouring states, including Ghana, Chad and Niger. Several thousands alien workers were expelled from Nigeria's industries. Chime and Jimoh (1992) observed that the domestic scene of the Second Republic, from which foreign policy emanated, was inhibited by factional dispersions, religious disturbances, a depressed economy and constitutional problems. The regimes prodigal approach to Nigeria's external relations policy was not left out for its ineptitude.

At the overthrow of Shagari regime in December 31, 1983 Buhari military government came on board and reverted Nigeria's external relations policy to the dynamics of the Murtala/Obasanjo regime. The regime in December 1983 announced Nigeria's non-affordability of anti-colonial role in Africa and consequently in 1985, reminiscent of the Shagari regime another 300,000 Ghanaian immigrants were expelled from Nigeria. This occurred at a period Ghana was experiencing economic depression. An action that further strained bilateral relations between the two countries (<http://en.or/wikipedia.org/wiki/foreign>) Relations of Nigeria.

In August 1985, Babangida ascended to the Nigerian throne as self-styled Military president, and launched the country back to the fore front of foreign relations. The regime made bold in restructuring the nations external relations policy in consonance with the recommendations of the All Nigerian Conference on Foreign Policy which was constituted by his government. The regime adopted Economic Diplomacy as the thrust of external relations, which critics argued to here merely, succeeded in opening the nation's economy to external control (Anifowose and Enemu, 2005).

As a leading state in the sub-region, Nigeria coordinated the establishment of ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in 1990 for the purpose of peace-keeping in

West Africa. The cordiality with her immediate neighbours was not undermined by the Babangida regime, as it ensured and took deliberate steps towards it, especially Ghana that has been bruised. In an attempt to restructure the nation's economy, the regime introduced the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), critics commented that it failed in restructuring the Nigerian economy. (Akinboye, 2005), as could not reduce the nation's dependence on the West, rather exacerbated its dependence on the West.

The straw that broke the camel's back was the annulment of the June 12 presidential election, which was acclaimed to be the freest and fairest in the annals of Nigerian democratic experience allegedly won by M.K. O. Abiola. Though he was post-humously declared winner in 2018 by the Buhari led All Progressives Congress (APC) government. A situation that threw Nigeria into the dark experience of external relations, as it protracted political crisis in the country and strained the nation's external relations.

As a result of the crisis that engulfed Nigeria, Babangida regime hurriedly set up an Interim National Government (ING) headed by Shonekan. The government barely settled when it was toppled by Abacha on November 7, 1993. The regime toed the line of Babangida regime but was more assertive, independent-minded and well projected towards protecting Nigeria's sovereignty.

The regime should be applauded for restoring peace in Liberia under the aegis of ECOWAS ECOMOG and the emergence of democracy. The regime excelled in the reinstatement of the ousted regime of Ahmed Tejan Kabba of Sierra Leone through the EOMOG then flushed out the dissident forces of Major Jonny Koroma.

Conversely, Abacha regime's external relations policy was highly confrontational and its human rights records were sordid and questionable. A situation that led to the suspension of Nigeria from the Commonwealth of Nations, after the imposition of stiff sanctions. For example, the UAS imposition of Section 212 (8) of the Immigration and National Act, which refused into US any senior government official and suspension of military officials assistance; and the ban on the sale of and repair of military wares and refinery services to Nigeria.

Given the impending consequences of the recalcitrant posture of the Abacha regime, Abubakar on mounting the reign of power as Nigerian Head of State after the demise

of Abacha in June 1998, not only declined to contribute troops to the ECOWAS mission in Guinea Bissau but began the withdrawal of troops from Sierra Leone. The regime endeavoured to restore Nigeria's black-listed image abroad and foreign policy. Thereto, a transition time table was drawn and adhered to by handing over power to a democratically elected government on May, 29, 1999, after about 27 years of military interaction in Nigerian politics.

Coincidentally, Obasanjo who was the first military ruler to hand over power to a democratically elected government in October 1979, was the first beneficiary of Abubakar's benevolence when he returned power to the civilians on May 29, 1999. Having faced with the pile-up of issues both domestically and externally, the regime was involved in a series of diplomatic shuttle to place Nigeria back on track of international relations. The regime witnessed an improvement in bilateral relations as evident in regional peace-keeping, diplomatic support to the US government counter-terrorism efforts in the face of the September 11, 2001 attacks, and a leading role in forging an anti-terrorism consensus among states in the sub-Saharan Africa.

Though Obasanjo government foreign policy posture was devoid of radicalism and dynamism, Nigeria was heard in the international community. It succeeded in securing a debt relief concession from the Paris Club, where \$30 billion of Nigeria's \$37 billion external debt was cancelled. Nigeria enjoyed bilateral relations with China and India during this regime. Nigeria also opposed the American-led invasion of Iraq irrespective of the anti-terrorism consensus in Africa which the US has sought. Since 2005, Nigeria has been a partner in US Department-funded Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism initiative (TSCTI), which operates with support from the Department of Defence's Operation Enduring Freedom-Trans Saharan (OEF-TS).

Though commended for its effort toward Nigeria's external relations, Obasanjo regime met a brick wall when it reluctantly attempted a third term agenda before handing over to another democratically elected government on May 29, 2007. A novel experience in the post-colonial Nigeria.

In 2007-2010 Nigeria witnessed the Yar'Adua-Jonathan regimes. The regime seemed to follow the footsteps of the Obasanjo regime of 1999-2007. The regime witnessed a retrogressive posture in Nigeria's external relations policy because the government dampened the momentum of

dynamism and radical external relations policy. Nigeria's sovereignty reverted to the conservative pro-Western policy that was reminiscent of the Shagari and Balewa regimes (Agbase, 2009).

The regime recorded no remarkable feat in external relations, as certain variables inhibited its success- the observation of the international and domestic observers that the general elections were marred with cross irregularities and wantonly flawed with brazen violent (Pham, 2007), The degenerating situation in the Niger Delta, which is not uncommented to Obama's exclusion of Nigeria and preference for Ghana and South Africa in his visit to Africa in July, 2009; the legion of high-level corruption experienced in Nigeria, and the variant postures of the foreign policy makers with the nation's national interests.

Be that as it may, the administration deserves commendation on its policy of strict compliance to the rule of law and the regime's acknowledgement of a credible electoral system as a sine qua non for gaming international acceptance and respect (Kalie, 2010). Also, the careful handling of the issue of African High Command is a credit to its adherence to the principles of non-alignment and afro-centricity. Payment of two months salaries arrears in June, 2009 to Guinea Bissau and the mobilization of ECOWAS member states to bear the electoral budget expenses that depict or re-enacts Nigeria's big brother role in West Africa. Again, Nigeria election to the UN Security Council on September 15, 2009 as non-permanent member is worthy of note. It enhanced the country's relevance in world affairs and locates her under more intense global watch with the highest member of votes. Nigeria polled 186 votes out of the 192 voting member states at the General Assembly (Iganga, 2010).

Challenges of Nigeria's External Relations

Nigeria faces certain challenges in its pursuit of external relations, among which include:

- (1) Political rivalry between the three ethically factors (North, East and West) precludes the evolution of any specific Nigerian Ideology or doctrine and the emergence of any simple charismatic national leader.
- (2) Pursuit of undefined and intangible national interest due to conservative leadership posture at independence.

- (3) Vague and abstract nature of state policy objectives which lacked the ideological wherewithal to reinforce.
- (4) Constraint of internal political instability.
- (5) Isolation from West African regional terms, as its ally opposed Nigerian government and in collusion opposition political factors.
- (6) Usurpation of political leadership in Africa by Ghana, Guinea and Mali due to rhetoric intransigence.
- (7) Nigeria is surrounded by Francophone states, this presented a threat to Nigeria's leadership perception in Africa.

Conclusion

Nigeria's external relations policy is largely predetermined by the linkage between the domestic constituency, in the maintenance of national unity and stability; and the predestined right to exert a leadership role in Africa. Paradoxically, the more imperiled is domestic stability the greater the need for assertive external action and consequently, the more forceful the projection of Nigerian leadership. These elements are fundamental to Nigerian policy in Africa and in relation with the rest of the international community.

Nigerian leadership has, since independence been afflicted with a perception of regional insecurity and insularity. Perceived in its regional environment, Nigeria is a threat to its national sovereignty, inspired by a desire among its regional neighbours to undermine Nigerian actual and potential influence, both regionally and continentally. The linkage between Nigeria's primary objectives and its perceived regional insecurity has characterized Nigeria regional interaction since independence and both this linkage, and the need to consolidate the Nigerian regional support and interest base, became increasingly more profound, until they react crisis proportions.

It has been observed that Nigerian respective regimes have witnessed various adjustments and modifications in their foreign policy relations, depending on the orientation of the political leadership. The country external relations have without particularity in focus, rather have, and witnessed a progressive upward and downward slide with successive regimes adopting various strategies in pursuit of external relations. No focus on national interest which is the

thrust of external relations of any state. And so it has not been admirably guarded by all.

Recommendations

From the foregoing therefore we make the following suggestions:

- (1) Nigeria National interests should be admirably guarded and guided by foreign policy machinery.
- (2) Clear foreign policy thrust with focus on national interest should be articulated.
- (3) Nigeria's economic base requires re-structuring and realignment to a realistic foreign policy future.
- (4) A stable domestic environment should be maintained to devoid military incursion, ethnic crisis, electoral irregularities, corruption and abuse of national ethnics.
- (5) Linkage between domestic stability and foreign policy action should not be underestimated or underscored.
- (6) Nigeria should sought a manifest perceptual image of national unity that concurrently shields the domestic stability from external demands and maximizes the country's importance in world affairs
- (7) Nigerian leadership should cultivate the characteristics, of dynamism personalized extrovert recalcitrance, and pro-activism.

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