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Nigerian Foreign Policy From 1960-2003 "Implications for Present and Future Leaders"

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Abstract: *We are in a world where states although independent but are interdependent as no state is an isolate, moreso, where no state could provide all her needs, yearnings and aspirations for her teeming population. The idea of foreign policy dates back to antiquity. The state is seen as the major actor in international politics and therefore all the relations of its people, agencies and institutions are reflections of its policy. However, it is interesting to note that people 's natural desire or impulse to travel, trade, do business and maintain religious links are made possible by the state but are sometimes independent of its policy hence sometimes policies are reframmed in line with these impulses. The writer looked at Nigerian foreign policy retrospectively taken into account the national interest based on the socio-political and economic environments at the time under consideration. The author found out that there is always no permanent enemy or friend, rather permanent interest, successive government reframmed our foreign policies accordingly. The researcher observed that foreign policy without crystal clear objectives informed by well defined national interest affects, contradicts and weakens the implementation of our foreign policy option at the time under reference. The author concluded that for our foreign policy to stand the test of time, it must be comprehensively considered in the light of our national interest taking into account the principles and determinants in the light of legal equality of states. This paper relied on secondary sources of materials, global, and national occurrence of events at the time.*

Key Words: *National interest, Foreign Policy Options, vassalism, Treaty obligations.*

I. Introduction

Historical antecedents upheld the fact that the idea of foreign policies is as old as humanity: One central attribute of foreign policy is its dynamic posture. Therefore, changes in the pattern of social, economic and political life due to development in science, technology and industrialization have created a more complex world in the 20th - 21St centuries than the centuries before. One of these changes was the force of self-determination that swept across previously colonial enclaves of Africa, Asia and Latin America. This introduced a new dimension into foreign policy options of both the Imperial powers and the emergent new states. Besides, the birth of new states into the international system, the multinational or transnational corporations, liberation movements, international organizations, terrorist groups and individuals with international legal personality further exercebated the complex nature of the international system.

As a matter of fact, the states as primary actors in international politics and relations in her pursuit of political, economic, social, cultural etc goals do not attain all of these in the global system within her territorial confine. This necessarily leads to the desire of that state to enter into active cooperation, colloboration and sometimes seek assistance of other states in the international system to maximally achieve their national objectives and aspirations. Due to these obvious facts, all international actors, including states must inevitably be in constant interaction with their external environments.

It is worthy of note therefore, that this interaction or communication implies the need to influence the external behaviour of other actors so as to facilitating the realization of states set goals. The intention is to see to it that such states or international organizations continue to maintain the existing patterns of relations, if the influencing state perceives them as aiding the realization of its goals. If no efforts are made to change the existing patterns by putting in place a new set of policies or by altering or halting the implementation of existing ones. Obviously, foreign policy becomes crucial to every state and this justifies the necessity of this work.

Therefore, this paper attempts to address Nigerian Foreign Policy from 1960 — 2003 as a basis for present and future leaders of government to rationalize so as to reframe our foreign policy to stand the test of time (Implications) by looking a the rationale for the study, Nigerian national Interest, the principles and determinants, the institutions for foreign policy formulation and execution, analysis of Nigerian foreign policy with summary, conclusion and recommendations.

The rationale for the work, although the definition of foreign policy has been variously perceived based on its complexities and scholars diverse cosmological components to the extent that some of its definitions lack universal concurrence yet it could be defined as the totality of a state communication and interaction among nations and other international actors. From the perspective, it is seen to be the first and foremost a national

policy. Its formulation and implementation therefore, must necessarily assume a character derived from national interest. For a state that is both internally and externally independent, its sovereign foreign policies are legally formalized principles concerning ways and means a state wishes to respond to the external community of nations given some determined goals and objectives predicated on laid down principles.

In doing this, nations accept limitations in their behaviour or foreign policy. This point was brilliantly articulated by Louis Herkins when he said:

To promote its own independence and security and the inviolability of its territory, to controlthe behaviour of other government a nation may have to accept corresponding limitations on its behaviour.

Therefore, foreign policy is implicit in the fact that nations formulate and execute their foreign policies with the ultimate aim of promoting and protecting their national interests which is always limited by treaty obligations, international law and responsibilities asumed under international organizations while the foreign policy of other states and the circumstances at hand are also considered.

II. Nigerian National Interest

By National interest, we refer to a set of goals or objectives which a state intends to promote to achieve the greatest happiness for the majority of the people. These goals are those that a nation wants to achieve in its relationship with members of the international community. They are so critical to the continued existence of the state domestically and internationally to the extent that she may necessarily go to war to protect if all diplomatic efforts failed. National Interest as a concept therefore, could not be seen as important if it is considered in isolation. Its relevance lies in its relationships with those of other nations particularly in a world system that is characterized by conflicts and struggles for power and hegemony.

The national interest of any country could be classified according to the degree of importance attaches to it, thus, we have the core/vital interest, the secondary or variable interest as well as the general or complementary interest. The emphasis therefore, is on the resources that a nation places on these national interests which changes from time to time as circumstances changes both in the domestic and external environments as well as changes that take place in the leadership. Another cause of change in emphasis in the various classes of national interest is the over all capabilities of the state in relation to those of others. This implies that certain things that a country considered as its national interest may not be considered as such by another due to the limits imposed by resources of human materials. Due to this fact, states order their priorities, hierarchically and try to achieve them as they are so preferenced.

National Interest is also seen as a rationalization for policy; in this case, it is used to mean the presentation of an unpleasant situation in a way that makes it acceptable. It is a psychological function of the policy makers' perception of what should be. To this argument therefore, National Interest is a subjective concept that guide or rationalize state policies and behaviours in relation to other international actors. It is in this respect, that actions and inactions of actors such as the desire to go to war, remain neutral as well as other normative values of states are said to have explanations in national interest. The decision to oppose nuclear project by a neighbouring state could be rationalized by the claim of guaranting or preserving its national Securities as such acquisition by a hostile neighbour endanger or threaten its security.

As far as Nigeria is concerned the various regimes from independence has its national interest consists of;

- The defence of its territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence.
- The restoration of human dignity to blacks all over the world particularly the eradication of colonialism and white minority rule in South Africa and Africa in general as core national Interest.
- Also is the creation of the relevant political and economic conditions in Africa.
- The promotion and improvement of economic well-being of Nigerian citizens as secondary and
- The promotion of world Peace and Justice as general interest.

The decision to identify these as our national interest was informed as the country's potentials, which include her size, huge population and abundant natural resources. It was also informed by what is perceived as a manifest destiny and not just to be a leading voice in Africa but a major actor in global politics. The attainment of these national interests had been crippled by high level of illitracy, lack of continuity in regimes following frequent instability, disloyalty, poverty, greed and more importantly lack of commitment and political will on the part of leaders to steer the country to greater heights in the face of its dependent agrarian economy and excessive reliance on oil which renders Nigeria a rentier state.

From the above, it is clear that there is positive relationship between Nigeria's national interest and her foreign policy.

III. Principles of Nigeria's Foreign Policy

This consists of careful statements, pronouncements inrespect of our national interests.

*** Non-Alignment**

This is a foreign policy principle which rejects a formal military alliance with and routine political support for either the West or East as to bloc politics especially in the light of the post World War II ideological cold war between the West and the former Soviet Union.

*** Legal Equality of States**

This principle makes Nigeria to believe that a well ordered and peaceful community at the global and continental levels needs mutual and reciprocal respect for the views and interests of all peoples and as such she continue to re-assure the world that she has no intention of dominating or embarking on aggressive military policies against smaller and weaker nations despite her relative advantage in size, population and resources. Nigeria believes in playing a leadership role within the context of Africa but not an imperial type.

*** Non interference in the domestic affairs of other states**

Without prejudice to this principle experts argue that as dorminant power in West Africa, her security boundaries are not expected to be synonymous with her territorial boundaries but should extend to the territorial boundaries of her contagious neighbours with other states especially the Franchophone states in Africa who use this threat of domination and interference to further consolidate their economic and diplomatic dependence (vassalism) on France.

• The principle of multilateralism

This principle calls for Nigeria's membership of major international organizations at the sub-regional, regional and global levels and the need to initiate new ones. This is predicated on the fact that membership of such organizaions afford her the opportunities for multilateral negotiations and collaborations so as to moderate international political games as they are able to use such fora to articulate and aggregate their views and collectively give legitimacy to their foreign policy goals (diplomatic strategy).

• Africa as the centre piece of Nigeria's foreign policy

This implies that in all issues of foreign relations, those involving Africa would always take precedence. This Afro-centric position makes Nigeria to initiate policy choices and antagonises Nigeria to subordinate any extra African powers for the attainment of her national interest (Pan Africanism). This position demonstrates her absolute support for OAU, AU,OPEC which she has frequently used as a diplomatic strategy to drive African interest in the United Nations (UN). You can now recall why the organization of African Unity (OAU) stood steadfast with Nigeria during the civil war and facilitated her victory. Nigeria has relatively and consistently antagonised African enemies and support African through the initiation of policy choices and options to drive home African demands as was the case of the struggle and dismantle of apartheid in South Africa before 1994.

IV. Determinants, processes of formulating and executing foreign policy in Nigeria

Foreign policies are not made by any state in isolation of the prevailing situations in the international system. Therefore, determinants are the factors both internal and external that have conditioning effects on the foreign policy of a country. To this end, a nation in formulating her foreign policy does not consider the goals she wants to achieve alone but takes cognizance to certain basic facts within the international scene that affects its existence. These special consideration and cognisance are:

Geographic strategic factor

A nation's physical environment as well as its political military position makes serious implications on its foreign policy as to whether it is landlock, numerous borders, its topography — mountain, rivers, forest, desert etc are always considered although recent development in chemical weaponry has reduced this strength. For examples, Soviet Spunik I on 4/10/57, and U.S moon landing on 24/7/69 and other inter-continental Ballistic Missiles suffice.

• Population Factor

Densely populated society, level of education, technical skill, level of industrialization determines the effectiveness of the use of manpower fashions a country's foreign policy.

• Economic Factor

This relates to effective use of land, capital and entrepreneur for production, distribution and consumption of goods and services have serious implications on foreign policy.

• Public Factor

Also important in the determination and processing of foreign policy is the factor of public as nations listen to opinions of her citizens on crucial issues as it was the case when Nigeria intended to go to war with

cameroun, the students association of the Cross River State cried out opting for diplomatic measure as against the war as they would be adversely affected. Truly, the students and other opinions were heard.

• Others include:

Membership of International organizations and collective security arrangement such as UN, NATO, War Saw pact moderates behaviour of member states as to whether or not certain policy decisions or actions should be taken.

Further to the determinations above, in making foreign policy, the following processes of its formulation and execution are always considered:

• Information and intelligent gathering,
• Data analysis and
• Planning

All these end up in the translation of information into alternative courses of action followed by decision-making resulting in the adoption of policy guide lines even though there is no strict uniformity among nations on the institutions for the processes of formulating and executing foreign policy. We can identify clear characteristics of governmental practice and structure in this regard thus,

• Ministry of external affairs: This ministry is collectively responsible to the parliament for whatever decision it takes. The president therefore depends on heads of major ministries as External Affairs, Defence, Petroleum resources, trade etc for advice on foreign Policy related issues. The Ministry of External Affairs is a highly hierarchical administrative structure which assists the Executive in the foreign policy planning and execution in Nigeria. The minister of External Affairs is the primary person who relates to the president or senate committee on foreign affairs. Apart from administering his ministry, he supervises the diplomatic and consular services of the country.

• The Legislature

The National Assembly is the body with constutional powers to support, modify or defeat proposal of the executive including foreign policy proposals. In a democratic society like Nigeria, the legislature assumes the role of shaping policy through its committee on foreign affairs as the Assembly gathers information, listens to the views of specialized interest groups and carefully weigh alternative course of action. Besides, the legislature through the power of approval of appropriation could increase or decrease or eliminate executive proposals to enable it implement foreign policy programme.

• Foreign Service

This refers to the embassy that conducts diplomatic relations between the sending and receiving states. Every Embassy performs the dual function of representing the state in its relation with the foreign government to which it is accredited. It also provides constant stream of information on the vital statistics of the host country's economic, political and socio-cultural life.

• The Political Party

More often than not, the general public are not always informed about issues of foreign policy or contribute to its formulation, execution and choice. By virtue of its role, political parties often sensitise and mobilize the public towards certain foreign policy choices by exerting pressure on the decision makers especially in a democratic system.

• Public Opinion

Holding the fact that awareness in a free society is the expectation of both the ruler and the ruled to always have intimacy and connection between the wishes of the people and the policies adopted by the leaders.

• Pressure Group

These groups are otherwise known as interest groups. The main thrust of their activities is to reach and influence decision-making agencies of the government towards pre-determined goals. We frequently see various categories of interest groups clusters around areas of public policy. They are usually organized around economic groups, religious, socio-cultural, academic and other professional groups. They include Nigerian Manufacturing Association, churches and mosques, Nigerian Bar Association, Academic Staff Unions of Universities and Polytechnics etc. The attribute of public opinion is that it is not static as they response to occurrence of events at hand.

V. An analysis of Nigerian's Foreign policy from 1960 —2003

Having known what foreign policies are all about, it is necessary to concretize or periodise her foreign policy so as to appreciate the environment that necessitated a sustained modified or disarticulated and defeated policies over the years so as to enable us appreciate and move forward.

On the attainment of political independence, the prime minister — Abubaka Tafawa Balewa in his inaugural address on 7th October 1960 to the plenary of the 15th regular session of the United Nations General Assembly in Newyork on acceptance as the 99th Member of the body stated thus:

1. Firstly, it is the desire of Nigeria to remain on friendly terms with all nations and participate actively in the work of the United Nations Organization.
2. Secondly, Nigeria, a large and populous country over 35 million in (1960) now 150 million has no territorial or sub-territorial expansionist intention.
3. Thirdly, we shall not forget our old friend and we are proud to have been accepted as member of the British Common Wealth. Nevertheless, we do not intend to allay ourselves as a matter of routine with any of the power blocs. We are committed to uphold the principles upon which the United Nations is formed.
4. Fourthly, Nigeria hopes to work with other African States for the Progress of Africa and assist in bringing all African territories to a state of responsible independence.

Please note that the Prime Minister receives a standing Ovation at the end of the policy statement. Also, note that this policy was subjected to another debate in the House of Representative on 4th September, 1961 .Also, in a study Commissioned by major- General 'Nwachukwu (rtd) minister of External Affairs, summarised the principles and objectives of Nigeria's foreign policy as well as during the Murtala/Obasanjo administration (1975-1979), President Shehu Shagari (1979-1983), General Buhari and Idiagbor (1983-1985)until Ibrahim Babangida's administration came on stream in 1985 as follows:

1. The strengthening of African solidarity by the use of O.A.U and ECOWAS
2. The Promotion of Peace and Stability as well as security in African continent as demonstrated through its commitment to the principles of and respect for the OAU charter
3. Active participation and respect for international organizations such as the United Nations.
4. Support for the right of peoples for self determination and freedom from colonial and self subjugation and for all liberation movements in their legitimate struggle for national independence.
5. An unwavering support for all efforts to destroy the obnoxious system of apartheid in southern Africa and all forms of racial discrimination and prejudice anywhere in the world.
6. Furtherance of Nigeria's economic interests by among other things, the active promotion of trade and investment both bilaterally and multilaterally. This economic diplomacy featured prominently during General Babangida's regime.
7. The strengthening of regional economic cooperation- ECO WAS
8. Finding African solutions to African problems.
9. Promotion of human rights in all its ramifications. In pursuant to this, Nigeria consistently advocated respect for economic and social rights in addition to civil and political rights.
10. Encouragement of political pluralism by advocating the adoption of democratic systems of government in Africa.

This report emphasized that from 1960-1991 Nigeria had demonstrated strong commitments to the guiding principles of Nigeria's, foreign policy objectives. The report also indicated that General Babangida added two new principles of:

- Environmental issues relative to dumping of toxic radioactive waste on Africa and other developing countries
- Establishment of the ECU WAS Monitoring Group. (ECOMOG)

This demonstrates Nigeria's unflinching commitments to regional peace and security. Indeed,
It is on record that (ECOMOG put an end to the Liberian War in 1997. He also re-installed
the democratically elected president of sierra-Leone when the rebels took over Preetown in 1988 and the peace agreement signed in Lome-Togo in July 1999.
Similarly, the interim National Government (ING) headed by chief Shonekon in 1994 did not depart from previous regimes.
Furthermore, when General Sani Abacha took over government in 1995, he declared in his 1996 Budget speech that;

Recent developments on the international scene had led to the growing anxiety of our people to review our foreign policy such anxiety should be understood within the context of recent hostilities against Nigeria, Let me restate that Nigeria 's foreign policy is dynamic and responsive to c4fferent situations in accordance with our sovereign national interest. We are very well aware that what we are presently witnessing in our relations with countries of the world did not arise from our foreign policy. This policy speech arose from the world condemnation of his wanton execution Ken Saro Wiwa and the of 'Ogoni 9' and consequently ostracization of Nigeria from the international community in 1995. It is interesting to note that the death of Abacha and the

appearance of Abubaka with a democratic zeal tend to redeem the battered image of Nigeria under late Genera! Abacha.

Following the successful return to civil rule in 1999 which ushered in president Olusegun Obasanjo as the elected president he made an address outpouring the goodwill and reproachment of harmonious relations with the international community in his inaugural address thus;

Nigeria, once a well respected and key player on the international Community became a Pariah nation. We shall pursue a dynamic foreign policy to promote friendly relations with all nations, and will continue to play a constructive role in the United Nations Organization (UNO), The Organization of African Unity (OA U) and Other International bodies. We shall continue to honour existing agreements between Nigeria and other countries3 it is our firm resolve to restore Nigeria fully to the prestigious position of eminence in the comity of nations. Right off president Obasanjo and Aihaji Side Lamido - Hon. Minister of External Affairs have continued to travel extensively to Africa, Europe, Asia and the American Countries to promote Nigeria's bilateral and multilateral relations.

This bold step was taken by the Obasanjo administration, to restore the image and confidence that was dashed as a result of Late Abacha's brutal/authoritarian and despotic regime.

In view of the above, circumstantial actions were taken and achieved following the virile state of the economy, the contribution of the public- press, individuals and organizations were considered.

VI. Summary

A corollary to the above discussion analytically reveals that Nigeria's foreign policy is relatively dynamic and responsive to situations and its changes are often by its principle, national interest and the prevailing socio politico-economic global interactions.

Despite some measure of consistency among the various leaders in terms of its principles, it is apparent that each leader tend to project foreign policy from self propelled background as the case with Late Sani Abacha, it is also crystal clear that Nigerian Political Leaders from 1960 to 2003 have taken definite successful measures to project, realize or redeem Nigerian foreign policy image in the following cases; recognition and support to the tune of N13.5m and military supplies to the MPLA in Angola despite United States protest leading to a confrontation between Lagos and Washington under Murtala/Obasanjo regime.

Also, Nigeria shared keen interest in Zimbawe crisis to the extent that patriotic front was allowed to open office in Lagos and other liberation movements like SWAPO, ANC and the PAC. All these actions proved absolutely to the principle of Africa as the centre piece of Nigerian foreign policy and also project her as the Mecca, for Liberation fighters in Africa.

Again, as regards the independence of Zimbawe, Nigeria nationalized the British Petroleum on the eve of Lusaka talks because Britain recognized the Muzorewa government.

As if that was not enough, Nigeria pulled out of that Year's Olympic Games held at Montreal in Canada because of New Zealand participation in the game for having obvious sporting link withsouth Africa.

VII. Conclusion

Without prejudice to the giant steps evident above, yet some past leaders of Nigeria lack the maturity, objectivity and sagacity required of a leader with the political-will and commitments to uphold Africa as the centre piece for Nigeria's foreign policy. Others were not colossus enough to adopt the technique and skill of implementing foreign policy. For example, President Shehu Shagari rhetoric in 1980 on the Southern African issues stated emphatically that Nigeria would not hesitate to use the oil weapon at our disposal to secure freedom of oppressed peoples in Africa. Unfortunately, this threat defied credibility as oil glut ensued.

Similarly, Nigeria's inconsistency for the admission of Sarawei, Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) in OAU, constituted a major crack in her foreign policy pursuits. This Shagari's Posture on Western Sahara made the Late Dele Giwa to describe him as a bundle of contradictions stressing that;

Every one of the points stands against each other; a power cannot remain neutral on an issue that touches the life of the Organization in which as a power it must provide leadership. You cannot be neutral f you are so openly opposed to the very issue that is at the heart of the crisis. Also, General Gowon is diplomatic relations blunder with Ahijo of Cameroun caused us disownership of Bakasi.

VIII. Recommendations

This recommendation is timely as Nigeria in her OAUAU charter/constitutive Act on principles and purposes Continue to uphold Africa as the centre piece of Nigeria's foreign policy. We must strife hard and harder to promote and defend this resolute. Present leaders and future leaders especially in democratic dispensation must as matter of necessity explore, exploit and consolidate all diplomatic strategies in ensuring that Africa is not only politically but economically free from exploitation and underdevelopment to allay fear of

periphery — dependency syndrome, so as to attain the status of industrialized and developed nation in the near future as this is the only solution to future generation of Africa and Nigeria in particular.

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