

A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF NIGERIA'S FOREIGN POLICY STRUCTURE AND DIPLOMATIC ENGAGEMENTS

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Abstract

The foreign policy of a state is incalculable and with no specific domestic or international limitations. Issues in foreign policy are unending, as there is no conscious design from any states' domicile in structuring its foreign policy objectives. The focus of any foreign policy structure is somewhat characterized on the events and happenings around the State and Nigeria is not excluded. In the international arena every foreign policy of state is totally geared towards enhancing its national interest; as it pioneers the states objectives through diplomatic engagements which includes negotiations, assistances or diplomatic missions and seeks to achieve its goals with other states in the global community. The use of diplomacy is an elementary key to building a vast tie in harmonizing international relations system. However, this paper critically appraises the Nigeria's foreign policy structure and diplomatic engagements. The paper adopted the doctrinal research methodology depending on both primary and secondary sources of law such as text books, journal articles and online sources. The paper found out that Nigeria's foreign policy principles is Afro-centric and Pan – Africanism, as it in turn place worth in preserving and supporting the continent but benefitted less the nation nor the life's of its citizens. The paper concludes that if Nigeria is to achieve development, then its foreign policy and international relations should be structured into considering the implicit and explicit bargaining process, so as to effect fundamental changes domestically and internationally. Consequently, the paper recommended amongst others the revisiting of the foreign policy structure in highly prioritizing citizens-centered, aimed at creating benefits for the betterment of the people; and improving the foreign policy structure on the quality of life's and the advancement of the domestic situation of the state should be initiated to take Nigeria's regional hegemonic claims seriously

Keyword(s): Foreign Policy, Diplomatic Engagements, National Interest,

1.0 Introduction

In the world today, states strategically draft a course of plan and actions in achieving a particular goal based on specific reasons in the international and domestic system. This course of plan is viewed as the foreign policy of a state in safeguarding a nation's national interest. Nigeria as a colonial state was brought into diplomatic world not as an independent state, however, diplomatic relations were established with the coming of colonial officers with such establishment like the Consular authority in 1847 and the famous amalgamation of 1914. Her

foreign policy structure didn't just start today, or at independence, it weighs back to the times of the Hausa Emirates, the Igbo Kingdom, the Benin Kingdom and the Oyo Empires.¹

The economic and citizen's diplomacy are the two main issues that have dominated the Nigerian foreign policy since the 1960. With little evidence of its effects on its people, Nigeria's foreign policy suggest the need to redeem the country's bastardize image by focusing on improving the domestic challenges of the country, which includes corruption, insecurity, poverty and illiteracy. All these as stated internal setbacks, threatens the Nigerians foreign policy and tends to challenge the country's self-acclaimed status as giants of Africa.²

In the formulation of foreign policy, all nations whether big or small put into consideration vital interest of value, which are categorically classified into three:³

- i. The interest of self-preservation, that has to do with national security and providing a stability to the system.
- ii. The interest of economic well –being, economic stability and prosperity, the fight against unemployment, inflation and unfavorable trade relations with other.
- iii. The interest in having a prestige and power, which implies that the weak and poor nations won't have some level of prestige amongst the comity of nations.

The practical diplomacy of Nigeria is inscribed in her foreign policy statement which is to live in peace and harmony with all countries of the world at large and ensuring equality among all state, this implies that Nigeria could align with any nation of the world regardless their ideology or policy in enhancing global peace, equity and harmony in the international relations system.

A state can achieve its foreign policy goals in several ways. It can be through the use of diplomacy, which may involve peaceful negotiations with countries. In this diplomatic stance, economic actions such as giving money or other aids to countries may be involved. The foreign policy structure deals with concepts and strategies used by governments to guide their actions in the international arena. The policy itself has a lot of instruments that helps enhance its realization. It must be noted that states take actions in international affairs for various reasons.

Diplomats are appointed to positions, and given instructions to foster the achievement of specific interest. These decisions in turn generally reflects the overall policies states have developed to govern relationships with other states. Today, diplomacy is the fundamental instrument of a nation's foreign policy structure which states adopt to achieve their foreign policy objectives.

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¹ S. O Idahosa and K.Adebayo, *An Analysis of the Nigerian Foreign Policy: A Narrative*, 2014
<<https://www.researchgate.net/publications/321034775>> accessed 27th July, 2022.

² A. O Idokwu and O.Ogunnubi, Nigeria's Soft Power and Economic Diplomacy in Africa, (2018) (5) (2)
Journal of African Foreign Affairs. <<https://www.researchgate.net/publication>> accessed 29th July, 2022.

³ J. C Ebegbulem, Nigeria's National Interest and Foreign Policy: A Critical Evaluation, (2019) (6) (10)
International Journal of Research in International and Social Studies pp49-50 ISSN 2394-6296 (Online)

2.0 Conceptual Clarification

The key concepts which are considered to be of utmost importance to this paper are as follows:

2.1 Foreign Policy

Decision making on foreign policy is agreed to be one of the greatest instrument of a state's disposal to pursue its national interest, which is widely considered as a full political activity of a state. It is the system of activities evolved by community for the changing of behaviors of other states and for adjusting of their own activities in the international environment.⁴

Foreign policy also includes the intentions, statements and actions of an actor often but not always is state directed towards the external world and the response of their actors to these intentions, statements, and actions.⁵ This is also concerned with the change and the status quo so far as they serve the national interest.⁶

According to Huge Gibsons, he acknowledged that foreign policy is a well-rounded comprehensive plan based on knowledge and experience for conducting the business of government with the rest of the world.⁷ This is aimed at promoting and protecting the interest of nations. While in view of Palelford and Lincoln, a states' foreign policy is totally with the dealings of external environment, as the overall results of the process by which a state translates broadly its conceived goals and interest into specific course of action in order to achieve its objectives and preserve its interest in a state is initiated⁸

2.1.1 National Interest

This deals with the general, long term and continuing purpose to which a state, and the government work towards. It could be an aspiration of a state, and also the utilization of operational execution of the actual policies and programs followed.⁹ The notion of national interest is central to any attempt at describing, explaining, prescribing, and understanding international behaviors.

To this regard, national interest is the goals, claims, objectives and demands which a nation tries to preserve, protect, defend, and secure on relations with other nations.¹⁰

2..2 Diplomatic Engagements

Over the years, the term engagement has be literally used and relied on by diplomatic circle to describe the means of diverse communications and public diplomacy.¹¹ It is a term established

⁴ A.S Bojang, *The Study of Foreign Policy in International Relations*, (2008)
<<https://www.researchgate.net/publication>> accessed 30th July, 2022.

⁵ *Ibid*

⁶ *Ibid*

⁷ A.S Bojang, (n4).

⁸ *Ibid*

⁹ National Interest, (2018) <<https://www.politicalscienceview.com>> accessed 30th July, 2022

¹⁰ (n9)

¹¹ C.W Freeman, *Diplomacy* <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/diplomacy>> accessed 30th July, 2022.

for the influencing of decisions and behaviors of foreign governments and peoples through dialogues, negotiations and other measures, short of war or violence.¹²

Historically, diplomacy means the conduct of official (usually bilateral) relations between sovereign states.¹³ During the 20th century, diplomatic engagements pioneered in Europe had been greatly adopted throughout the world at large and diplomacy had expanded to cover summit meetings, and other international conferences, parliamentary diplomacy, the international activities of supranational and subnational entities, unofficial diplomacy by nongovernmental elements and the work of international civil servants.¹⁴

Further on, this is the principal substitute for the use of force or underhanded, means in statecraft. It is how comprehensive national powers are applied to the peaceful adjustment of differences between states,¹⁵ as a primary role for international negotiation, primarily conducted by accredited envoys (meaning one who is sent as a representative or other political leaders).

3.0 The Guiding Structures of Nigeria's Foreign Policy

Nigeria's foreign policy reflects the country's national interest, following the country's independence, certain principles were put out to guide the country's foreign policy structures and pursuit of her national interest both in her bilateral and multilateral relations.

The structure declares the following, under the then Prime Minister, Tafawa Balewa, in his maiden address to the 15th session of the United Nations, General Assembly, (October 7, 1960), that the structures guiding the foreign policy of the nation's relations with other states globally are:¹⁶

- i. The maintenance of friendly relations with all nations and active participation in the work of the UN.
- ii. Placing respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of states and a peaceful co-existence with all states.
- iii. Development of cultural co-operation as a means of strengthening political ties with all African countries and;
- iv. Commitment to African peace; development and co-operation, de-colonialization and fight against racism and apartheid.

These structures of Nigeria's foreign policy remain largely intact, regardless regime changes. What is remarkable is that these structures founded their way into the Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria, which greatly spelt out the key foreign policy objectives for Nigerian state:

¹² *Ibid*

¹³ *Ibid*

¹⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁶ A. E Richard, Diplomatic and Military Co-operations in Nigeria's Foreign Policy, (2013) (13) *International Affairs and Global Strategy Journal* ISSN 2224-8951

- a. Promotion and protection of national interest
- b. Promotion of African integration and support for African Unity
- c. Promotion of international co-operation and support, consolidation of peace, and elimination of discrimination in all its form
- d. Respect for international law and treaty obligations, as well as seeking settlement of international disputes by negotiation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration and adjudication; and
- e. Promotion of a just world economic order

These principles and objectives are the vocal point of today's drive of Nigeria's foreign policy. The foreign policy structure accounts for the ostensible consistency and continuity that have characterized Nigeria's external relations since independence.

Any country with core values for peace, respect of territorial integrity of all nations and friendship amongst the entire world's people, has immensely set out a higher road, less travelled by other nations.¹⁷

With the above it is notable that Nigeria has determined to foster a common cultural ties with other states. Based on the structure of the nation's foreign policy, they have been able to embrace all the various strategies employed in states interaction in order to ensure their achievements and preservation of their goals.

The nation ever since independence have evolved a culture of having representation across the world in the categories of temporary and permanent missions. Their diplomatic engagements has been done to give effect to her desire for rapid development and hegemonic role on African continent.¹⁸

Within a space of twenty years and occasioned by the oil boom, that visited the country, a kind of explosion took place in the number of the diplomatic missions that she had. This increasingly, brought about two noticeable major developments; inadequacy in the number of foreign service personnel's and the urge to open more missions for more global recognition.¹⁹

3.1 Nigeria's Diplomatic Engagements

Since the joining of the UN in 1960, Nigeria has remained equivocally committed to the goals, principles and objectives of the organization. Her diplomatic engagements serve as a rule in the pursuit and preservation of their economic interest as well as the well-being of its citizens. The policy thrust of Nigeria's foreign policy structures are a constant variable in the country's diplomatic engagement, over the years as its foreign policy gravitated around Africa and issues affecting the region received a full attention ahead of matters outside the continent as

¹⁷ G.C Mbara, *Afrocentrism, National Interest and Citizen's Welfare in Nigeria's Foreign Policy Maneuvers*, <<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/article>> accessed 26th July, 2022.

¹⁸ H.A Saliu, *Contending Views in Nigeria's Diplomatic Mission*, (2014) *India Quality: A Journal of International Affairs* <<https://www.researchgate.net/publication>> accessed 27th July, 2022.

¹⁹ *Ibid*

exemplified in the formation of the Organization of the African Unity and in solving the 1960-1965 Congolese Crisis.²⁰

In rescue operations; it is estimated that Nigeria has spent over 60 billion US Dollar in financial assistance to countries in need in Africa and the Caribbean, not to mention the human cost. Although, there is no exact amount made on the humans cost of these operations.

As early as the 1960, Nigeria has been actively involved in the achieving of international peace and security in contributing to global and regional peacekeeping, making her one of the highest contributors to the United Nations peace operations.²¹

Among others operations Nigeria supplied troops to Dr Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, and Cote d'ivoire.²²

Although many years back, the nation's foreign policy thrust was unmistakably Afrocentric, becoming the back bone of arm struggle to finally ride the continent of the remnant of vestiges of colonialism and apartheid.

3.2 Liberation of Africa

Nigeria is referred to as the Giants of Africa, largely owing to its strong economy and large population amongst other African countries. The country has continued to maintain its position by demonstrating good and quality leadership aimed at fast-tracking progress for the entire continent at large.

Under the Murtala/Obasanjo Regime and Shagari Administration, Nigeria contributed to the National War of Liberation in some Africa territories under colonial rule and anti-apartheid struggle in south Africa.²³

The goal was and is not only to maintain and ensure peace and security within its territory but to ensure appropriate development and stability, especially in the African continent. Nigeria had always stood to be the largest contributors of military personnel and other forms of technical assistance in the affected countries to resolve and restore normalcy.²⁴

Upon gaining independence, Nigeria committed itself to improving and elevating the lives of the people of the country and in harnessing the resources that remained vital to the country and her neighbors. In achieving the above, Nigeria became one of the founding members of the Organization of the African Unity (OAU), which later became known as the African Union.

²⁰ G.C Mbara, (n17)

²¹ *Ibid*

²² *Ibid*

²³ O.V.O Sunday, Citizen-Centric Diplomacy: The Challenges for Nigeria's Defence and Security in 21st Century, (2014) (27) *Journal of International Affairs and Global Strategy*, ISSN 2224-774 (online)

<<https://www.iiste.org>> accessed 27th July, 2022.

²⁴ *Ibid*

African political unity checks were established for the stability of any African Colonies and encourages them to be upholders of the Union by having regional meetings for the union. Nigeria back the African National Congress (ANC) by taking committed responsibility in line with regard to south Africa's government and their military action in south Africa.

3.3 West Africa

In pursuing the goals of the regional economic co-operation and development, Nigeria has helped created ECOWA, under the Gowon's Regime (1985-1975), which is today known to seek a harmonized trade and investments practices for its sixteen (16) West African Member States, ultimately in achieving and attaining a full custom union amongst all and an established single currency for co-existence. The policy of the African centeredness was to utilized and geared towards regional integration in West Africa.

Beyond the above, Nigeria took the lead in articulating and expanding the views of developing countries on the need for modification of the existing international economic order.

Nigeria played a vital and central roles in administering efforts in ECOWAS to put an end to civil war crisis in Liberia and contributed the bulk of the ECOWAS Peacekeeping forces sent there respectively in 1990.²⁵

The country has enjoyed generally a good co-existing relationship with her immediate neighbors. As they have actively played a leading role in West Africa with enormous military power.²⁶

Also, the country has been perpetual in its aim of promoting peace and stability in Africa's most prosperous region for over more than three decades.²⁷

4.0 Economic Diplomacy

The development and constructive measures placed with a core obligation of foreign policy is depended on modern states. For many years it has been debated by international relations scholars about the nature and forms of Nigeria's economic diplomacy. It has been observed that Nigeria uses forces of international economic policies to advance its national interest globally.

The worsening state of the economy from the early 1980s necessitated the intervention of a new foreign policy approach rooted in the economic diplomacy. This economic diplomacy became an indispensable thrust for Nigeria's foreign policy, in improving her reputation, secure respect and relevancy in the international community as direct benefits of her diplomatic interactions and engagements.

²⁵ Foreign Relations of Nigeria, <<https://www.britannica.com>> accessed 27th July, 2022.

²⁶ *Ibid*

²⁷ *Ibid*

In decrying the lacuna between Nigeria's foreign policy forays in Africa and the lack of its benevolence. The concept of economic diplomacy as a foreign policy structure is introduced into Nigeria's foreign policy during the Ibrahim Babangida Administration 1986-1993).²⁸ This is important to note that Nigeria has always used its economic resources to project a diplomatic course for itself especial among its immediate neighbors.

In essence, the economic diplomacy remains a major component of Nigeria's foreign policy endeavors. The government conceptualized economic diplomacy policy as the promotion of export trade, investments and increased financial assistance from friendly countries.

The focus of the country's economic diplomacy is on export promotion, encouragement of direct foreign invest, debts rescheduling, embracing of neo-liberal economic measures and deep involvement in the interplay of the capitalist international political economy.²⁹

The political wing of economic diplomacy agenda was anchored on the idea that Nigeria will ingratiate itself and cultivate the goodwill and friendship of the leading countries of Europe, North America and Japan.

Today competing states in the global arena realizes the pivotal roles of food security as an instrument of national power which the nation Nigeria must pursue in order to meet its forging policy goals. The global challenge of food security and the Nigeria's economic diplomatic engagement in the new world order is the reliance on a monolithic oil-based economy as well as the failure to maximize the country's tremendous human and natural resources leaving its people agriculturally deprived.³⁰ Examining the enormous potential of the agriculture in Nigeria, she will continue to be recognized a merely a country with great potentials to transform into a major economy in the future until it direct its economic diplomacy to address domestic problems of food security.³¹

The prioritization of agricultural self-sufficiency with an emphasis on economic diversification, id crucial to a successful foreign policy.

In attaining the above results, it would require the mobilization of diplomatic resource through various collaborative efforts with international organization and development partners to reposition Africa that addresses the country's food crisis.

4.1 Citizens Diplomacy

The citizen diplomacy as Nigeria's policy thrust foreign policy was initiated and engaged in 2007³² to help interrogate and reconstruct the country's dwindling image in the international

²⁸ A.O Idowu, (n2)

²⁹ (n28)

³⁰ *Ibid*

³¹ *Ibid*

³² E. Ujara and J. Ibieta, *Citizens Diplomacy and Nigeria's International Image: Social Constructivist Explanations*, 2014, <<https://www.researchgate.net/publication>> accessed 29th July, 2022.

system. This diplomatic engagement was geared towards protecting the image and integrity of Nigeria and retaliates against countries who are hostile and who continues to brand only the “corrupt” practices in Nigeria.

The basic thrust of the citizen’s diplomacy requires a conscious effort from the state to calculi the basic needs, human rights and socio-economic welfare of the citizens in conducting a bilateral and multilateral engagements with other states. The adoption of citizen diplomacy by the state was to correct anomalies of Nigeria’s foreign policy since independence. this was to propagate the foreign policy structure in achieving its national interest that was undermined under the Afro-centric philosophy of Nigeria’s foreign policy and economic diplomacy. This adoption arose from the realization that the progress, prosperity and survival of the nationals must be concerned of every Nigerian at home and in diaspora.³³

This means that Nigerian citizens abroad is the center of Nigeria’s national interest and therefore the country’s diplomatic machinery must and should be towards its citizens in protecting his/her interests as economic welfare, which implies that any diplomacy that does not take this into consideration will not be appropriate for diplomatic missions abroad.

Prior to this time, Nigeria have been subjected to great deal of suffering in South Africa apart from loss of properties and reinstitution segregation and discrimination against Nigerians in the country more often than not, most Nigerians are sexually abused, maimed killed in many cases, in mysterious and extrajudicial circumstances for example the death of Ikechukwu Volakor in Lindela Detention Camp in Johannesburg while waiting for reparation³⁴ and Ekele Mbakwe who was shot in his shop by South African police patrol team also in Johannesburg³⁵ are among over 84 Nigerians who have been killed in south Africa between January 2007 and April 2010.³⁶

Also, in the immediate sub-region of ECOWAS whose institution Nigeria is hosting and substantially friendly, Nigeria are not even employed into better position but as drivers. And to think that Nigeria did not only donate substantially towards ECOWAS set up costs calculating secretariat, it regularly pays it annual contributions of approximately 32.5% of community’s budget.³⁷

The citizen diplomacy as conceive by chief Ojo Maduekwe, former Minister of Foreign Affairs is totally about protecting Nigerians wherever they may find themselves. It is highly about giving Nigerians the accordence with the rules and regulations of their host countries that the basis is about Nigerian life’s and also about creating a responsible citizenship in Nigeria.

³³ O.V.C Sunday, (n23)

³⁴ *Ibid*

³⁵ *Ibid*

³⁶ *Ibid*

³⁷ O.V.C Sunday (n36)

To this regard Nigerians attitudinal disposition is to be guided by the policy of reciprocity or what the former Minister of Foreign Affairs called diplomacy consequences.³⁸

Nigerians owes it as a responsibility to ensure that the Nigerian prisoners in Togo are not necessarily mistreated. It is all about achieving the foreign policy objectives contained in the section 19 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Therefore, the citizen diplomacy demands that from the standpoint of a renewed national stance the search for image of pride which is correspondingly moved around, the new foreign policy thrust that Nigerians should reciprocate, develop and impose on themselves the carriage for self-worth in the conduct of their affairs in and outside the shores of the country, if they must be defended or respected accordingly.

5.0 Conclusion

The foreign policy structures in Nigeria reveals that she has contributed more to the continent relating to human capital, finance and military resources. Despite the presence of a strong Afro0-centrric and Pan-African foreign policy, the state has sustained leadership and assistant roles in the continent, though in spite of all her efficient roles in the continent, she has benefited less,

Today, some African countries still subject Nigerians living in their country to hostility and humiliation. The country has gained very little from her foreign policy interest in Africa compared to its numerous investments in the continent.

If Nigeria is to achieve development, then its foreign policy and international relations should be structured into considering the implicit and explicit bargaining process, so as to effect fundamental changes domestically and internationally.

6.0 Recommendations

1. The state should improve its foreign policy structure on the quality of life's and the advancement of the domestic situation of the state should be initiated to take Nigerians' regional hegemonic claims seriously.
2. The States' foreign policy should be revisited and highly prioritize as citizen-centered, aimed at creating benefits for the betterment of the people
3. Adequate need to reform the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the state in implementing the citizen diplomacy in bringing about conformity of states towards constituting the foreign policy objectives laid out.

³⁸ A.O Idowu, (n38)