

## A Critical Evaluation of Nigeria's Foreign Policy at 53

Ikedinachi Ayodele Power Wogu<sup>1</sup>; Muiyiwa Adeniyi Sholarin<sup>2</sup>; Chidozie, Felix Chidozie<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,3</sup>. Department of Political Science & International Relations, School of Human Resource Development, College of Leadership Development Studies, Covenant University, Ota, Ogun State Nigeria.

<sup>1</sup>[ike.wogu@covenantuniversity.edu.ng](mailto:ike.wogu@covenantuniversity.edu.ng), [wogupower@yahoo.com](mailto:wogupower@yahoo.com), [wogupower@gmail.com](mailto:wogupower@gmail.com), +2348034956069.

<sup>3</sup>[felix.chidozie@covenantuniversity.edu.ng](mailto:felix.chidozie@covenantuniversity.edu.ng). Phone: +2348033815520

<sup>2</sup> Department of Psychology, School of Human Resource Development, College of Leadership Development Studies, Covenant University, Ota Ogun State, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup>[solarinadeniyi@gmail.com](mailto:solarinadeniyi@gmail.com), Phone: +2348055117583

\*E-mail of Corresponding Author: [ike.wogu@covenantuniversity.edu.ng](mailto:ike.wogu@covenantuniversity.edu.ng)

### Abstract

Recent studies by Aluko, Macridis, Anyaele and Akinboye depicts Nigeria's foreign policy as being chameleon in nature, a foreign policy constantly in a state of flux as a result of internal and external dynamics inherent in any given administration or regime. In the case of Nigeria, the formation of Nigeria's foreign policy has gone through 14 different administrations through the external affairs ministry in the past 53 years, out of which 35 years were during military regimes. Consequently, there has been a plethora of conceptual, ideological and psychological postulations of policies in Nigeria's foreign policy machinery, most of which were born out of a crave and selfish hunger for an identity that would leave a lasting impression about the various administrations or regimes in question. While adopting the traditional critical methods of analysis in philosophy to analyze relevant data, archival materials, texts and the major conceptual and ideological constructs proposed as foundations which upholds the main trusts of Nigeria's foreign policy, the paper shall strive to show via contextual and conceptual analysis of all the data collected for the study, the reason for policy failure and abandonment in Nigeria's foreign policy machinery. Aside the existence of a weak institution of leadership, the study identifies the continued insistence on an Afrocentric foreign policy by past administrations as one of the major negative influence on Nigeria's foreign policy trust. The ideological and psychological crave by each administration to formulate unique foreign policies are also identified as inimical to the policy formulations initiatives since they are not grounded in deep philosophical thought. The study recommends a strong paradigm shift and a positive transformation plan which will have the capacity to reverse the degeneration that presently looms the diplomatic practice in the face.

**Key Words:** Diplomatic Practice, Foreign Policy, Ideological Constructs, Paradigm Shift, Psychological Postulations, Transformation Plan

### 1. Introduction

A country's foreign policy consists of self-interest strategies chosen by the state to safeguard its national interests and to achieve its goals within the international relations milieu. It is the aggregate of a country's national interest which results from the interaction of internal and external forces as perceived by the foreign policy decision makers. The approaches used are strategically employed to interact with other countries. In recent times however, due to the deepening level of globalization and transnational activities, relations and interactions have been known to exist between state and non- state actors in the international political arena. These relations in their own way have influenced several foreign policies between nation states.

Nigeria's foreign policy since independence has been viewed from different perspectives (Aluko, 1981); Macridis (1985:xiii), Anyaele, (2005) in recent times. One of the most prevailing perspectives of her foreign policy is that "it is chameleon in nature", (Anyaele, 2005) a foreign policy constantly in a state of flux as a result of internal and external dynamics inherent in any given administration or regime. Some writers however maintained that irrespective of the frequent changes, the substance of Nigeria's foreign policy has remained the same. The later parts of this study will however argue otherwise. Buttressing the above point, (Anyaele, 2005:2) upholds the view that "the protection of our national interest has remained the permanent focus of Nigeria's foreign policy, but the strategies for such protection have varied from one regime / government to another".

The formation and execution of Nigeria's foreign policy from independence has been carried out in no fewer than fourteen different administrations through the external affairs ministry. From Tafawa Balewa's administration in 1960 to President Obasanjo's administration in 2003; from the administration of President Musa Yar'Adua to the current administration of President Goodluck Jonathan. These various administrations -

including the different military regimes which took over administrative power in Nigeria for over a cumulative period of 35 years, of the entire 53 years of the existence of Nigeria's foreign policy- claimed to pursue the same national interest with regards to the nation's foreign policy.

The consequence of the fluxy nature of Nigeria's foreign policy, there has been a plethora of conceptual ideological transitions in Nigeria's foreign policy machinery (Pine, 2011). Studies (Aluko, 1981); (Vision 2020 Report, 2009); (Pine, 2011); (Akinboye, 2013); and indicate that past administrations strove towards an epistemological construction and definition of the thrust of Nigeria's foreign policy. These conceptualizations are often regime specific and born out of a psychological and selfish hunger of various administrations or regimes to carve an identity which will leave a lasting impression in the minds of Nigerians. To this end, (Pin, 2011) laments: "...these ideologies are not necessarily products of deep and profound philosophical reflections". This paper will argue that these ideologies are rather collections of selfish efforts by these various administrations to make a name or an identity for themselves and their regime or administration as the case may be. (Pin, 2011:1) strongly believes this factor was one of the major causative avenues / agencies of project abandonment and foreign policy failure in Nigeria. Concepts and ideologies that have been proposed over the years since independence include: *Africa as the center piece of Nigeria's foreign policy*, *Dynamic foreign policy*, *National consensus in foreign policy*, *Economic diplomacy*, *Citizen Diplomacy* and *The transformation agenda of Nigeria's foreign policy* are a few examples among many other ideologies which in many ways have not lived up to expectations.

While adopting the traditional critical and rationalist methods of analysis in philosophy, the study shall review and offer conceptual clarifications of relevant literature, arguments, texts, library and archival materials in the areas of the subject matter of the study, with the view to evaluate these conceptual mutations in Nigeria's foreign policy engineering. The paper will further show how such misdirected policies breeds operationally barren and philosophically vague policies which when applied resulted to more conceptual confusion and groping in the dark.

## 2. The Historical Evolution of Nigeria's Foreign Policy

The historical evolution of Nigerian's foreign policy could be divided into two distinctive eras, namely, the era before independence and the era after independence. While highlighting some specific events that shaped Nigerian foreign policy a couple of years before independence, this study shall focus more on the second era or stage of Nigerian's foreign policy because it was from this era that we can specifically say that Nigeria really had an interest that could clearly be called her own.

All through the period of 1914 to the later part of 1960, the interest of the British were the soul interests of the entity called Nigeria. A writer puts it this way, "the interest of Her Majesty's government in England was the interest of the then dependent state of Nigeria" (Ogo & Emakpo, 2005:2). The post-independent period saw the formation of a truly indigenous Nigerian foreign policy that could truly be called "a Nigerian's foreign policy". With the coming of successive governments in the following years after independence - the military and other subsequent civilian administrations - the foreign policy of Nigeria had, via various epistemological and ideological constructions, evolved to what we now have today. These policies have remained with some amendments to capture local, global, political and economic changes. (Olusanya, 1986); Oga, (1987) and Alli-Balogun, (1986). According to Aluko (1981), in 1960, these principles were the usual respect of sovereign equality of other countries, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries as well as commitment to cooperation as a means of promoting African unity. Section 19 of 1979 and 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic had gone further to set the foreign policy objectives of the Nigerian state thus:

The foreign policy shall be:

- Promotion and protection of national interest,
- Promotion of African integration and support of African unity
- Promotion of international cooperation for consolidation of universal peace and mutual respect among all nations and elimination in all its manifestation;
- Respect for international law and treaty. Obligations as well as the seeking of settlement of international disputes by negotiation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration and adjudication and
- Promotion of a just world economic order.

The above policies as contained in the 1979 and 1999 constitutions (Anyaele, 2005:2) Yusuf, (2004), & Akinboye, (2013), buttresses the point that "the protection of our national interest has remained the permanent

focus of Nigeria's foreign policy, but the strategies for such protection have varied from one regime / government to another". By this statement, he infers that various governments from independence to date have pursued the same goals and objectives of Nigeria's foreign policy but in deferent ways.

Worthy of note here also is the fact that the formation and execution of Nigeria's foreign policy from independence, has been carried out in no fewer than fourteen different administrations through the external affairs ministry. From Tafawa Balewa's administration in 1960 to President Obasanjo's administration in 2003. From the administration of President Musa Yar'Adua to the current administration of President Goodluck Jonathan. These various administrations - including the different military regimes which took over administrative power in Nigeria for over a cumulative period of 35 years, of the entire 53 years of the existence of Nigeria's foreign policy- claim to pursue the same national interest with regards to the nation's foreign policy.

### 3. Conceptualising Nigeria's Foreign Policy Initiatives

We had in the introductory section, highlighted some of the ideological constructs adopted by various leaders in Nigeria since independence as part of Nigeria's foreign policy initiatives which directs the formulations and implementation of policy relations with both the internal and the external context. This section shall evaluate these ideologies with the view showing how it has influenced foreign policy formulations and implementation in Nigeria. These ideologies include: Africa as the center piece of Nigeria's foreign policy, Dynamic foreign policy, National consensus in foreign policy, Economic diplomacy, Citizen Diplomacy and The transformation agenda of Nigeria's foreign policy. We shall discuss a few here.

#### 3.1. Africa as the Centre Piece of Nigeria's Foreign Policy

The idea of Africa as the center piece of Nigeria's foreign policy is premised on the understanding that Nigeria's engagement in the international system will be looked at through the binoculars of Africa. As Hon. Jaja Nwachukwu averred on the imperative an Afrocentric policy, argued that since 'charity begins at home, any Nigerian foreign policy which does not take into consideration, the peculiar position of Africa and Africans is unrealistic'. This enunciation is the philosophical origins of *Afrocentrism* in Nigeria's foreign policy. Studies however revealed that it is the *Adedeji Report* that coined the concept: 'Africa as center-piece' Adedeji, (1976). Previously in an official statement just before independence, on August 20, 1960, Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa at the Federal House of Assembly stated that Nigeria was "adopting clear and practical policies with regard to Africa; it will be our aim to assist any country to find solution to its problem". Similarly, one significant event that took place under late General Ironsi's regime was the June 1966 Ambassadors' Conference held in Lagos to re-examine the premises and directions of Nigeria's foreign policy. Among many other things, the conference re-dedicated Nigeria to the total emancipation of all African territories still under colonial tutelage and racial discrimination. This position was further reinforced when General Ironsi stated that "in the whole sphere of external relations, the Government attaches greatest importance to our African policy" (Adedeji, 1976).

Under the framework of an Africa-centered foreign policy, studies such as Alli-Balogun (1986) & Okoye (1997) further demonstrated how Nigeria got involved deeply in the decolonization struggles in Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, and anti-apartheid struggles in South Africa and in the process, earned for itself, the appellation a 'frontline nation', even though she is geographically far removed from the theater of the struggles which is in the Southern African region. To this end, Nigeria is central to the formation of ECOWAS and ECOMOG bodies (Okoye, 1997), through which Nigerians spearheaded the containment and the restoration of peace and order in war torn countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, etc. In terms of proactive engagement with major socio-political and economic issues of continental importance (Onyeisi, 2011:226) through institutions such as the African Development Bank (ADB) ECOWAS and NEPAD in the last fifty two /three years, Nigeria towers far above any other African country.

Since this phraseology appeared on Nigeria's foreign policy scene, it has continued to reproduce itself, in many different ways in various administrations. The foreign policy elite and political leadership of successive governments seems to be carried away by its philosophical allure rather than its rational ideation. In this sense, therefore, the considerations of the economic benefits, continental political leadership, national interests, and military partnerships and strategic engagements are sacrificed on the altar of good neighborliness and psychological gratification (Pin, 2011). This policy so far tends to accounts for the huge financial expenditures and massive loss of human and material resources in the Liberian and Sierra Leone wars. Nigeria has not been able to reap any economic benefits from these countries. To date, one cannot identify a single Nigerian company involved in the post-conflict reconstruction activities going on in these two countries. This paper cannot

therefore help but ask this pertinent question: What major economic niche has Nigeria carved for herself in these post-conflicts countries while pursuing an African centered foreign policy?

There is hardly anything one can point finger to. Yet, the Africa-centeredness framework has continued to maintain a stronghold on foreign policy thinking in Nigeria. *The theories of concentric cycles and concert of medium powers all take their bearing from this perspective.* In sum, the concept of Africa as a center-piece of Nigeria's foreign policy is not grounded in considerations of economic growth and national development, as such, no matter how conceptually lush it may be, it remains substantially empty.

### 3.2. *Dynamic Foreign Policy*

The concept of a 'dynamic foreign policy' first crept into intellectual discourse on Nigerian foreign policy in the first republic. It was on the occasion of the parliamentary debates of Nigeria foreign policy, wherein the then Foreign Minister, Hon. Jaja Nwachukwu moved a motion that:

...this honorable house reaffirms the foreign policy of the Federal Government as declared by the Right Hon. Prime Minister and approved on the 20th August, 1960 by this honorable house and hereby declares its approval of the government's interpretation and conduct thereof, and congratulates the government on its achievement in the international field since the independence of this country (Boyd, 1979).

In his response to the motion, the then shadow Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hon. Anthony Enahoro, moved an amendment to this motion to read that:

The honorable House is of the opinion that the foreign policy of the Federal Government as declared by the Prime Minister and approved on 20th August, 1960 by this Honorable House, lacks dynamism and regrets that the Government's interpretation and conduct thereof is out of step with progressive opinion in Africa (Pin, 2011).

In retort, the Foreign Affairs Minister, Hon. Jaja Nwachukwu, went on to reel out the foreign policy engagements of Nigeria and how these engagements were dynamic and that if these measures were not dynamic, then he doesn't know what else the word dynamic constitutes. By putting the concept of dynamism at the center of this discourse, particularly making it appear as a core requirement of any foreign policy endeavour, the streak of dynamism gained currency as a fundamental basis of foreign policy making and evaluation in Nigeria. The debate failed to operationalize the concept of dynamism and its utility and importance in the foreign policy process. The closest statement that pointed towards a conceptual operationalization was Anthony Enahoro's radical rhetoric that subaltern groups in the country 'represent the true voice and true temper of the people of the country' and that as such, any foreign policy measure outside of their sympathies is 'lacking in inspiration, it is therefore not dynamic'.

Precisely what dynamism entails in foreign policy making in Nigeria has not been vigorously outlined. However, the opposition and radical rhetoric of Anthony Enahoro and his interpretation of dynamism has left a lasting impression on the conceptualization of Nigeria's foreign policy. As it is, there is the case that foreign policies of successive administration are seen as either being conservative or dynamic. While the Balewa, Gowon and Shagari administrations were deemed conservative, that of Murtala / Obasanjo, Obasanjo / Yaradua were deemed dynamic. Because of the public appeal of the appellation of radicalism / dynamism, it is politically faddish for successive regimes since independence, to tag their foreign policies as being dynamic. It need be stated however that, a nation's national interests, not the effusions of dynamism or its lack thereof, is the barometer of measuring its foreign policy.

### 3.3. *Economic Diplomacy*

The concept of economic diplomacy as a foreign policy plank was introduced in Nigeria's foreign policy during the Ibrahim Babangida administration. The government conceptualized economic diplomacy policy as, 'the promotion of export trade, investment and increased financial assistance from friendly countries. Building on this, the then Foreign Affairs Minister, Ike Nwachukwu in his June 1988 speech entitled: *The Dynamics of Nigeria's Foreign Policy*, provided the policy direction when he stated that, "it is the responsibility of our foreign policy apparatus to advance the course of our national economic recovery' (Pine, 2011:5-7).

The imperative of an economic diplomacy foreign policy framework was inspired by the economic pressures that were exerted on the Nigerian economy as a result of the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). The focus was on export promotion, encouragement of direct foreign investment, debt rescheduling,

embracing of neo-liberal economic measures and deep involvement in the interplay of the capitalist international political economy. The political wing of economic diplomacy agenda was that Nigeria will ingratiate itself and cultivate the goodwill and friendship of the leading countries of Europe, North America and Japan. There is absolutely nothing new about the economy being used as a major component of a nation's foreign policy endeavours.

For students of foreign policy, the linkage theory is an elementary explanation of how internal factors help in shaping and giving definition to the quality and direction of foreign policy. Secondly, Nigeria lacked the economic infrastructure to use economy as a major instrument of diplomatic engagement. This is so because the productive forces in the economy are grossly underdeveloped, there is the dearth of capital, a lack of entrepreneurial ingenuity; the economy is mono-culturally dependent on oil, politicized, corrupt and rent oriented. It is part of this problem that has caused Nigerians not to be able to make economic gains from her foreign policy adventures, particularly in the sub-region. Again, no foreign policy agenda can succeed on the basis of reliance on a single factor, such as the economy. Foreign policy is borne out of a multiplicity of factors, such as; culture, politics, history, patriotism, geography, military power, Macridis (1985), etc. indeed, the very basis of embarking on economic diplomacy in the first place was the inability of the Nigerian economy to withstand pressures of the international political economy in the first place.

#### 3.4. Citizen Diplomacy

Citizen diplomacy is the foreign policy thrust that has been embarked upon since the advent of democratic governance in 1999. It was spearheaded by President Olusegun Obasanjo and has since been in place all through the administrations of Musa Yar'Adua and Jonathan Goodluck. Basically, citizen diplomacy contends that the citizens, that is, Nigerians are the centre piece of Nigeria's foreign policy. Commenting on what the concept is all about, Ozoemenam Mbachui, posits that, 'the basic thrust revolve around concern for the basic needs, human rights and socio-economic welfare of Nigerian citizens in conducting bilateral and multilateral engagements with other countries'.

Through the instrumentality of the citizen diplomacy, it is envisaged that Nigeria will harness the resources and potentials of her diaspora, mainstream the doctrine of reciprocity, and create an enabling environment for her citizens to prosper and engage in broad issues of human importance at both the national and international levels. In the event too, it will enhance Nigeria's export portfolio and attract foreign direct investments. According to Mbachui, there are critical issues that have been left unanswered by the citizen diplomacy policy thrust, where clear answers are not provided, could endanger it. Questions in this class include: (a.) what are the objectives of Nigeria's bilateral and multilateral economic and political cooperation based on the framework of citizen diplomacy? (b.)What should be the benefits of citizen diplomacy as a functional framework for bilateral and multilateral cooperation? (c.)Who would aggregate the inputs of Nigerians in the diaspora? (d.) How would the success or failure of citizen diplomacy be measured and by whom? Other questions worthy of note here include: (e) Is the social responsibility of the state not primarily targeted at creating a conducive atmosphere for the citizens' fulfilment of their potentials, and realization of their yearnings and aspirations? This is the philosophical foundations of the state as encapsulated in the doctrine of social *contractarianism*. Accepted that this is so, (f) what is then special about citizen diplomacy as a conceptual framework of foreign policy? (g) What are the identifiable benefit(s) of citizen diplomacy since 1999? Again, the answer is nothing.

#### 4. Nigeria's Foreign Policy Today

The foreign policy of any nation is the external projection of some of the domestic policies of that country that may have relevance in such arena. Both domestic and foreign policies of a country are interrelated, or perhaps more accurately stated, are more inter-penetrated. It is thus appropriately defined as:

... a country's response to the world outside or beyond its own frontiers or boundaries. That response may be friendly or aggressive, causal or intense, simple or complex, but it is always there. It comprises many elements – Diplomatic, Military, Trade, Economics, Social, Cultural, Educational, Sporting etc, and it varies in form and focus according to the circumstance. Some countries can at different times be friends or enemies or valued allies, with a relatively long or short period of time. For example Nigeria broke diplomatic relations with Cote d' Ivoire, Gabon, Tanzania and Zambia, during the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970), because they recognized and traded with Biafra –The Break way Eastern Region of Nigerian. But the relationship was restored at the end of the war. Besides, the policy of non-recognition of the apartheid regime of South Africa by Nigeria, changed with the installation of a black majority rule by the African National Congress (ANC) country. The point to keep in mind is that whatever forms it takes, some response to the outside world is always there. In effect, every country must have a foreign policy in order to live and survive as an independent body in the complex, sometime dangerous, world we live in today (Chibundu, 2003:1).

Essentially therefore, countries all over the world design and implement foreign policies in order to guide their external relations as well as protect, promote and defend their vital national interests. This could be in areas like defense of territorial integrity, the promotion of economic, military, strategic and diplomatic interests and whatever a country might consider as its vital national interest. It is therefore naturally expected that Nigeria's foreign policy ought to be fundamentally guided by her national interest which should ordinarily serve to either justify or repudiate the nation's action or inaction in international relations.

From the quotation above, it should be understood that a country's foreign policy should be dynamic enough to respond to the challenges that might be taking place in the world which are outside its territorial confines. Indeed the dictum in international relations is summed up by the saying that, "*there is no permanent friend but permanent interest*" (Yaqub, 2004:125). Thus, it is the interest of a country and its relation with the other states that should dictate from time to time, who the "friend" or the "enemy" is or should be. Put differently, a country that defines a particular countries or a group of countries to be its permanent friend(s) or enemy(s) may actually be jeopardizing its vital interest, as such, countries can easily take it for granted that they (it) can do what they (it) like(s) regardless of the adverse effect of the action taken on the so called friend. The morality of his point is that a country defined as friends can find it convenient to act adversely on its friend's best interest in a certain circumstance and therefore, should never be accorded such a preeminent treatment, no matter the ideology and or cultural affinity or political compatibility existing between them.

However, a cursory look at the various engagements made by Nigeria towards an African agenda in areas such peace keeping missions (Okoye, (1997), decolonization of the continent as well as other bilateral and multilateral aid she rendered in the continent Onyeisi, (2011:226), would to a very large extent, show that the omnibus nature of the principle of African centeredness in Nigerian foreign policy does not appear to be well aligned to the country's national interests or has not served the national interest in a commensurate measure.

Nigeria has been in the fore front in the establishment and sustaining various continental and regional organizations. For instance, Organization of African Unity (OAU) established in May 25, 1963, was primarily aimed at achieving two important objectives, namely: to ensure the quick decolonization of the remaining colonies in Africa and secondly to facilitate the rapid socio-economic growth and development of the African states. In this respect, Nigeria did a lot in ensuring the implementation of the primary objectives upon which OAU was founded. For instance, in 1975, Nigeria granted the sum of ₦13.5 million and military assistance to Angola's MPLA and also enlisted diplomatic support to the Angolan government within the O.A.U.; this had greatly accorded recognition to the Angolan government by many African states who were hitherto, unwilling to give such recognition (Onyeisi, 2011:226).

In addition to this, Nigeria contributed enormously to several liberation movements in the continent, this had therefore greatly contributed towards the political independence of most African countries. For instance, on February 13, 1976, Nigeria donated the sum of two million Dollars (\$2m) to South Africa's ANC and 500,000 dollars to Namibia's SWAPO. SWAPO was later granted permission to open office in Lagos. At about the same time, the Federal Ministry of Information inaugurated a committee for dissemination of information about the evils of Apartheid. Nigeria's deep involvement in African affairs, a pursuit that had cost the country huge financial and human resources, could be seen from other endeavors undertaken by the country in other African states. Let's take for example; Nigeria's involvement in the ECOMOG (Okoye, 1997). As desirable as it was to bring peace and stability to the West African sub-region, the venture had cost the nation enormous financial recourses and unspecified number of troops who lost their lives. The above scenario was succinctly captured by Ambassador F. George who stated that:

The historic contributions of Nigeria to regional peace missions in Liberia and Sierra Leon which cost the country the whopping sum US\$ 10 billion, not to mention the gallant men and women of Nigerian Armed Forces who paid the supreme sacrifice in the cause of peace, are hardly acknowledged by the international community (Okoye, 1997).

He further emphasized that

...this does include the sum of about US\$ 90 billion that Nigeria single handedly incurred in the OAU Peace Keeping Force that was deployed to Chad in 1980s. This is in addition to the sum of US\$ 800 million Nigeria Trust Fund established under ADB to assist African countries obtain soft loan to execute vital projects. Surprisingly, it is with connivance of some of these African states that Nigeria was denied the presidency of ABD. What a back-stab (Okoye, 1997).

As highlighted earlier, the paper notes that transformation which the Babangida's administration tried to introduce into Nigeria's foreign policy, really amounted to nothing. Not too long ago, the regime of President Obasanjo, intending to refocus Nigeria's foreign policy with the view to de-emphasize the overly African bias, announced to the newly appointed ambassadors in 1999 that "Nigeria's foreign policy today extend, far beyond our concern for the wellbeing of our continent, Africa" (Hassa, 2010). The above statement spurred great expectations from various foreign policy experts, hoping that Nigeria would now enunciate and articulate more global vision in her foreign policy pursuit. Paradoxically, the nation became more involved in the African agenda. It could therefore be noted that Nigeria's role and initiative in drawing up the Constitutive Act of African Union (AU), The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) have greatly engrossed the country even more deeply into African Affairs. Also under NEPAD, Nigeria initiated Joint Africa / G8 plan to enhance Africa's capability to undertake peace support operations. In addition to the above endeavors, Nigeria's high profile engagement in the continent continued with several summits and conferences such as the Roll-Back Malaria Summit held in Abuja on 24<sup>th</sup> August, 2000; which was closely followed by the HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Infectious Diseases Summit also held in Abuja in 2001. While these engagements are worthy undertakings, they however tend to suck Nigeria intimately into the un-ending African problems.

Nigeria's enviable commitment towards solving African problems could also be seen in various peace and mediation talks she hosted; these include hosting of mediation talks between Sudanese government and Darfuri rebel factions. She also mediated severally between various rebel factions in the Liberian crisis and eventually granted asylum to the former Liberian President Charles Taylor in order to end crisis in that country. Further to this, the restoration to power of the President of Sao Tome and Principe, Mr. Fradique Menezes, after a military takeover in July 2003 was largely credited to Nigeria under the leadership of President Obasanjo. In a similar vein, Nigeria succeeded in ensuring that due constitutional process was followed in installing democratically elected government in Togo after the death of President Gnassingbe Eyadema in February 2005.

Taking into cognizance the contributions made by Nigeria towards African's peace and development, one fundamental question that needs to be raised is this; upon all these enviable roles and contributions which Nigeria made in the continent, could the nation afford to continue to pursuing an African agenda at such a monumental cost without visible tangible benefits to the country's national interest?

## 5. The Problem With Nigeria's Foreign Policy

It seems that there is an apparent disconnect between national interest and Nigeria-African relations. It is apparent that the nation is doing too much in the African continent without corresponding positive outcome. This phenomenon had attracted several comments by commentators on Nigeria's external relations. For instance, a policy and economic affairs analyst, Dr. Obadijah Mailafiya, while commenting on Nigerian's foreign policy framework, graphically captures the above scenario when he noted that:

the centerpiece of any country's foreign policy ought to be that country itself if it seriously considers itself a rational actor on the world stage...Every single action shall be adjudged by how much it advances our national power and influence and how much it advances our interests, objectives, and purposes.

Similarly, another international relations expert, Professor Inno Ukaeje, while commenting on Nigerian foreign policy noted that "Our false generosity abroad and penury at home are proof that we are pretending to be what we are not,... in reality, we have been overstretching ourselves". Akinboye, (2013) in his *Beautiful Abroad but Ugly at Home* also emphasized and corroborated Ukaeje's fears. One seem to agree with the above assertions taking into consideration the enormous funds the nation expend in trying to solve various problems in Africa while internally, almost all the sectors in the country are yearning for massive injection of funds. The standard of living on the other hand has been grossly low. Although Nigeria is rich in strategic mineral resources, through which the nation earned excessive wealth with which it fund several activities towards solving other African problems, the scale of such expenditure greatly hurts our domestic aspirations. It is obvious that the various leaders in the different administrations and regimes have not been able to set their priorities right.

### 5.1. Leadership and Nigerian Foreign Policy

At this juncture, the parts played by the poor or nonexistent institutions of leadership in the various administrations, in most cases, have been identified as one of the reasons for the inconsistencies in policy formulations and implementation in Nigeria. (Okpokpo, 1999); Abati (1999) and others like Akinboye (2013: 39-42) gives an interesting and complete overview of the influence of a weak and corrupt institution of

leadership and the part it plays in influencing Nigeria's foreign policy image abroad and in the process of formulating and implementing the same in Nigeria. They rightly noted that Nigerian leaders have been extraordinarily naive by restricting its foreign policy to Africa as its cornerstone (Guardian Newspaper, 1999). It was a laudable goal before the 1990s, but its evolution is needed for Nigeria to meet the needs of today's diplomacy as we move into the next millennium. 'Africa as the centrepiece of Nigeria's foreign policy' no longer suffices; a broader perspective is necessary. Nigerian leader's needs to endeavour to take current trends in international relations, diplomacy, globalization, human rights, and democracy into consideration in determining what her foreign policies should be.

The point being discussed here perhaps explains why successive military dictators (leaders) in Nigeria, in the opinion of Okpokpo:

...used the Africa cornerstone slogan to lure compliant like-minded African regimes to support their unpopular regimes. This was the price Nigerians had to pay for the support of dictatorial African states. Now, we are a democracy and we have to speak out and stand tall within the international community. We no longer have to beg for support from other military dictatorships for limited gains within African diplomatic circles (Okpokpo, 1999).

Africa alone should no longer be the one and only reason for the existence of a foreign policy in Nigeria. None of the important international diplomatic actors, such as the USA, France and Great Britain built their foreign policy only on one pillar. Nigeria shouldn't be an exception if it wants to play a role in current high level diplomatic circles.

Another example worthy of note is the lethal blow which the Babangida's administration gave to the image of Nigerians abroad and its foreign policy in particular - in an era when every country, in particular the G7 and most OECD countries had made democracy, good governance, and human rights essential determining elements in international politics and in their relations with developing countries - when he annulled that June 12<sup>th</sup> elections without any cogent reasons. This era was known to have heralded the beginning of Nigeria's misunderstanding with the international community - notably the USA, Canada, the Commonwealth countries, and the European Union.

The issue of June 12 had not been resolved when General Sani Abacha pushed the transition president Chief Ernest Shonekan out and took his seat without any agenda on how to improve relations between Nigeria and the international community, outside its traditional African brother countries. That *coup d'état* worsened the international image of Nigeria. No creditworthy transition programme was published; instead General Abacha embarked upon a self-aggrandising effort that led Nigeria to the brink of war because of the most flagrant human rights abuses any military regime had ever committed in the country since independence. It is important to add that under General Abacha, foreign policy was crudely mishandled. Records: (Ogunseye, 1996) show that Nigeria was like a country without a foreign minister and a foreign policy during those periods. The regime, from the other actions that followed, intentionally or unintentionally declared an aimless intentional tug-of-war against the international community when the regime carried forward, the death sentencing by hanging, the "Ogoni nine", including Ken Saro Wiwa (Okpokpo, 1999:3). Why was there no government official capable of making the regime to shift the horrible decision to hang the Ogoni activist's until the end of the Commonwealth summit? These acts by the Sani Abacher's administration were all terrible acts and diplomatic blunders which underrated the importance of internal policy including democratic reforms and the place of human rights in international relations and diplomacy. It is on record that the annulment of the June 12 presidential elections and the hanging of the "Ogoni Nine" were two lethal blows that those regimes gave to Nigeria's image abroad. Nigeria's bad image has not really been repaired ever since. The need therefore arise to give a second look at the personalities of the persons acting as foreign policy actors.

### 5.2. Actors in Nigeria's Foreign Policy

The policy actors in this immense task are both internal and external to the foreign ministry. Although it is primarily a foreign ministry affair, it should be mentioned that internal actors such as the president, the foreign minister, ambassadors and embassies abroad, the press and the business community are all active players in the foreign policy formulation process. The role and place of our embassies should be redefined. A dynamic and performance-oriented foreign policy leaves no room for amateurism as was the case in the past. Our ambassadors and embassies should sit up and live up to national expectations. Nigeria's foreign policy has to produce results for the country and its citizens. The training programme for our diplomats should be reviewed to give them the

necessary knowledge to practise the art and science of diplomacy because they are at the frontline of our foreign policy.

Our vital national interests have to be redefined. Does Africa still represent the cornerstone of our foreign policy when we have more respect from other countries than we get from African nations despite our whole-hearted commitment to them? If the answer to the question is yes, what are the benefits we get from this Afrocentric choice? If the response is no, then we should reorient our foreign policy towards more profitable ventures like economic, scientific, cultural and technical cooperation with more advanced countries including Asia.

The economic development and well-being of Nigerians should henceforth be the mainstay of our foreign policy. We should revive and reinforce what was termed economic diplomacy by General Ike Nwachukwu. For instance, why would we continue to sit aloof and see Cameroun lay claim on Nigeria's territory? In the name of African unity and good neighborhood, Nigeria has sacrificed a lot and continues to sacrifice for our continent. This act, this paper agrees, is praiseworthy but most southern African countries have forgotten the policies and sacrifices made by Nigeria to bring them out of their woes. Sierra Leoneans and Liberians have forgotten the loss of lives by Nigerian soldiers in their efforts to defend unity and peace in these countries. Though Africa should not be forgotten, Nigeria's interests should come first in all our foreign policy analysis and decisions. Retired General Danjuma wasn't saying anything different when he said "Right now, we are becoming the United States of ECOWAS at very great cost to us. We think this is unaffordable to us now" (Vanguard, 1999: 12). It is therefore pertinent that regarding important sensitive internal policy issues that would have effect on our foreign policy, the policy formulations process should include all the major actors for a more global approach to policy issues than was the case in the past. For efficiency, Nigerians would need to put in place new foreign policy objectives.

### *5.3. New Foreign Policy Objectives*

From the study made so far on the subject of this paper, there is a consensus on the need to review and redirect the former orientation and aims of the country's foreign policy which as it presently stands, is in a deplorable state. This fact is corroborated by Olukotun, (2013); Akinboye, (2013:42-48) and Ashiru, (2013) who all call for a review of the Afrocentric and non-alignment policy that Nigerian leaders have continued to pursue since independence. On the contrary, they all call for a clearer articulation of Nigeria's Foreign Policy objectives, as specified in the 1999 constitution. The Minister for Foreign Affairs had earlier on noted that the foreign policy objectives since the 1999 constitution have not produced the much desired impact with regards to economically improving the lives and lot of Nigerians. In another encounter, another commentator, Gen. Ike Nwachukwu, reiterated the sad folly of the Nigerian predicament when he wondered how realistic is was for Nigerian to desire "to play in China's league when our economic and social infrastructures were weak and in some cases, non-existent... and where corruption appears to define our political culture?" Olukotun, thus concludes: "any rethinking and reforming of the Nigeria's foreign policy must begin with an earnest effort to clean up our act, domestically, by creating an exportable Brand Nigeria as well as undertaking a harnessing of our soft power indices" Olukotun, (2013).

The new Nigerian foreign policy objectives should aim at creating benefits for the betterment of the people. Such a policy shift would mean a very careful choice of external actors. Although this paper does not advocate dropping Africa, Nigeria needs to make a careful choice of our closest allies based not on the wealth or technological advancement of the partner but on Nigeria's vital national interests in the cultural, economic, political, scientific and technical areas as well as in the military field. A commission comprising diplomats, top-level Military Officers, University Professors and politicians should be set-up to review our foreign policy objectives and to redefine our vital national interests. Its mandate should be short and precise. These interests should be made the fundamental guidelines of all our foreign policy objectives in Africa, the European Union, America - both North and South, Asia and the Pacific. Nigeria's foreign policy objectives should henceforth focus on the benefits of such policy for its people. To facilitate the formulation of new foreign policies, the task of President, Goodluck Jonathan would be to make the ordinary Nigerian feel the positive effects of the government in his or her life.

## **6. Conclusion & Recommendations**

So far in this study, the paper strove to provide a wide view of Nigeria's foreign policy. The paper also tried to articulate its historical trajectory from its foundations in both the pre-colonial and the postcolonial era. In the third part of the work, the paper examine critically and holistically, the various conceptual and ideological constructs adopted by the various administrations as part of the Nigerian foreign policy initiatives which directs

the formulations and implementation of policy relations with both the internal and the external context. The critical analysis undertaken in this section demonstrated that since independence to date, although there have been conceptual and doctrinal transitions in Nigeria's foreign policy, in reality, they are not grounded in deep philosophical thought, visionary imagination and broad based considerations of long lasting benefits to the national interests of Nigerians.

The paper generally argued that the ideologies were borne out of pragmatic exigencies, political faddism, conceptual elegance and regime identity. As a result, Nigeria's foreign policy (53) fifty three years down the road, can be summed up to have changed along the line without any serious change and continuity, a kind of weak motion without movement, dynamism without surge. The other parts of the paper stressed how the weakness in the institutions of the kind of leadership which Nigerians have had in the past have resulted to a disfunctionality in the Nigerian foreign policy system; leading to policies which have been proven to be detrimental to the interests of the good citizens of Nigeria. There is therefore the need for a paradigm shift and a positive transformation plan which should have the capacity to reverse the degeneration that presently looms the diplomatic practice in the face. The federal government of Nigeria needs to set positive mechanisms in place to birth new foreign policies that will contain the crisis of underdevelopment, the challenges of poverty, leadership, political development, and a host of other maladies and launch her as a modern state, into the twenty first century in order to realize her full potentials and cravings for continental and global leadership.

In the light of the forgoing, the paper makes these recommendations:

1. This paper calls for a major reorganisation of the Foreign Service such that positions of the Ambassadors and other key positions will no longer be politicised as was the former practice. Only career diplomats and practitioners who understand the nuances of international relations and global politics should be appointed into those sensitive positions and offices.
2. The government of Goodluck Jonathan should holistically address the economic challenges confronting the nation. The economy needs to be attuned to the realities of globalisations, as such, the economic diplomacy of the present administration need to be directed towards addressing contemporary challenges in the society.
3. The part and place of Nigerians in the Diaspora towards nation building in the new world order should be recognised, encourages and emphasised. This is because they have a prominent role in advancing the foreign policy of the country, as such, they ought to be given adequate diplomatic attention.
4. Since diplomacy is a game of elaborate rules requiring sound professional acumen, the federal government must ensure that recruitment into the ministry of Foreign Affairs should hence forth be based on merit alone. Special trainings in international relations at the Masters level and in other related areas should be encouraged as this will further equip and arm the officers with all they need to properly discharge their duties.

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