

SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF NIGERIA'S FOREIGN POLICY OF BIG BROTHER

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ABSTRACT

Every nation is an actor in the global scene and deploys certain variables of power and influence to achieve interests beneficial to its citizens, development, and prestige. This paper, therefore, puts into perspective the costs and benefits of Nigeria's foreign policy of 'Big Brother' to several African countries. It traces the historicity and rationale behind the country's foreign policy perspective. The nature of Nigeria's relationship with its immediate neighbours, notably Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, had profound significance for the lives of its citizens in various ways. The discourse centres on the impact of the relationship on the country's economy and security. The paper adopted a historical analytical approach, and the findings reveal that Nigeria's actions in the international arena, particularly with its immediate neighbours, led to weak immigration policies and the accommodation of criminal aliens, which posed considerable threats to the country's security and economic development. The study's findings indicate that the fluid migration of the armed guerrilla fighters who escaped from Libya resulted in an increase in small and light weapons in large quantities in Nigeria. The 'I have it all, and I will carry the burden of the less endowed with resources' policy of Nigeria is detrimental to national cohesion. The ethnic and religious contiguity between Nigeria and its immediate neighbours and the incongruous national interests of the various countries made the borders difficult to control. The study concludes that internal variables should be premium in the country's relationship with other countries.

KEYWORDS: Security, Foreign Policy, Big Brother, Border, and Immigration.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria achieved political independence on 1st October, 1960, from the British, who had held the territory as a colony for close to a century. The country's

immediate neighbours are the Republic of Benin to the West, the Cameroun Republic to the east, Chad to the north-east, Niger to the north, and Equatorial Guinea to the south on the Atlantic Coast. Nigeria has a total of about 5000 kilometres of international borders, drawn from diverse geographical and cultural zones. Out of these borders, 1000 kilometres are shared with the Benin Republic, 1500 kilometres are shared with Chad, Nigeria shares 1700 kilometres of border, and 700 kilometres along the Atlantic coast with Equatorial Guinea. (Akubor, 2014)

There were cross-border bilateral relations in diplomacy, economic ties, sports, and education, among others, between Nigeria and these countries. These relations were conducted with the sole aim of benefiting from each other. It is against this background that the study looks at the foreign policy of Nigeria with its immediate neighbours, particularly Chad, Niger, and Cameroun. In other words, these countries are the three critical immediate neighbours of Nigeria that share common borders with Nigeria's eight States in the northern part, namely Adamawa, Borno, Yobe, Taraba, Gombe, Jigawa, Katsina, and Sokoto. In view of the crescendo of terrorist attacks in the northern part of Nigeria, there is a need to turn our searchlight on the issue of the country's foreign relations with its neighbours towards the north. In doing this, we need to ask a pertinent question. How far can we say Nigeria benefited from the foreign policy of good neighbourliness adopted after the civil war? The relevance of the study is to appraise Nigeria's foreign policy thrust with its immediate neighbours, particularly those in the northern part, in view of the consistent terrorist activities in the region. The understanding gleaned from this study can ignite a paradigm shift in the country's foreign policy of good neighbourliness.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Security

Security refers to all the precautions that are taken to protect a given location or place from danger. Security is also a legal protection against possible harm or loss. Security means protection from hidden and hurtful disruptions in the pattern of daily life in homes, offices, or communities, and it is related to the presence of peace, safety, happiness, and the protection of human and physical resources or the absence of crisis, threats to human injury, among others. (Otto and Okpere, 2012) Security involves the totality of actions and measures, including legislative and operational procedures, adopted to ensure peace, stability, and the general well-being of a nation and its citizens. (McNamara, 1968). In recent times, the concept of

national security includes social, economic, cultural, technological, and political considerations, and it is based on this notion that Robert McNamara, a one-time United States of America Secretary of Defence, asserts that:

Any society that seeks to achieve adequate military security against the background of acute food shortages, population explosion, low technological development, inadequate and inefficient profit utilities, and chronic problem of unemployment has a false sense of security (Babangida 2012)

These variables mentioned above fall within possible threats to national security; therefore, to establish sound intelligence and national security policies, one must look thoroughly and eliminate all threats that are considered inimical to the country, including some policies that made the border porous, which can constitute a danger to national security. Furthermore, Babangida (2012) views Nigeria's national security as the physical protection and defence of its citizens and territorial integrity, but also the promotion of the economic well-being and prosperity of Nigerians in a safe and secure environment that promotes the attainment of Nigeria's national interest and those of its foreign partners.

National security covers critical dimensions such as Economic security, Food security, Health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security. These seven dimensions of national security are described as "protection from the threat of disease, hunger, unemployment, crime, social conflict, political representation, and environmental hazard" (Otto and Ukpere 2012).

From the various definitions provided above, national security is sacrosanct and non-negotiable. It is perhaps on this basis that in Nigeria every President at the time of assuming office or position of authority is required to take an oath to provide security for lives and properties of the citizens as Section 14(b) of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria as amended states that: "it is hereby accordingly declared that the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government" (Obasi, 2003).

Historically, the concept of security has been categorised into two, and these are the traditional and non-traditional conceptions. The traditionalist category defined security in military and state-centric approaches, while the non-traditionalist category broadened the meaning of security to include such issues as socio-economic, environmental, feminist, and other threats. The emphasis is on what could possibly endanger the survival of the citizens as well as the state.

In whatever form, security is a standard measurement of the viability of any nation. This is because, in the status of international law, every nation-state has the right to protect its territorial space and secure its citizens from any imminent attack. (Otoro, 2017) Besides its military dimension, security can be understood as a public policy of maintaining the integrity and survival of the nation–state through the use of other means like economic, political, technological, religious strategies, or the exercise of other diplomatic means, either in terms of war or peace. It is in line with this perspective that Robert McNamara (1968) states that: “A nation that seeks to achieve adequate military security against the background of acute food shortages, population explosion, low level of per capita income, low technological development, inadequate and insufficient public utilities, and chronic problems of unemployment has a false sense of security.”

Indeed, the survival of any nation-state cannot be primarily restricted to its military preparedness, but also to the development of a relative pattern of stable socio-economic and political growth, as well as policies put in place in relations with the outside world.

Foreign Policy

There is no widely accepted definition of the term Foreign Policy; however, Foreign Policy is a system of action of one government towards another state or government towards an international organisation in its entirety. Foreign policy is the sum of all policies that have an effect upon a national government (Victor, 2000). Ray Ofoegbu (1980) sees foreign policy as that which deals with defence, security, international political relations, and international economic relations, and it involves the relations between one actor in the international system and another in the same system. Although the definition of foreign policy remains endless, scholars agree that the concept has come to be seen as a mechanism through which nation-states attempt to project and preserve their sovereignty, security, and interests (Akpan, 2003).

AN OVERVIEW OF NIGERIA’S FOREIGN POLICY

In 1960, when Nigeria gained independence, there were basically two policy fields of primary concern to the country. The first was the concern over her relations with her former colonial master, Britain, and other members of the Commonwealth, which, like Nigeria, were former British colonies. The second was her relations with

other African States. Given its size, population, and vast natural resource endowment, Nigeria was perceived as a country destined to play crucial roles for progress and development throughout the world and a natural leader on the African continent (Philips, 1964). The government of Tafawa Balewa, which took charge immediately after independence, defined Nigeria's broad foreign policy objectives that set the stage for its leadership position in Africa. The Prime Minister of Independent Nigeria, Tafawa Balewa, was passionate about Africa and African issues, to which he gave significant attention (Fawole, 2003)

For several years, Africa was the centre-piece of Nigeria's foreign policy. This foreign policy emphasized aggressive championing of the freedom of African countries, which were still under the yoke of colonial domination. The foreign policy emphasizes or even over-emphasises the strength and the credibility of the country. For instance, Jaja Nwachukwu, Nigeria's first Foreign Affairs Minister, says that: "Our country is the largest single unit in Africa... we are not going to abdicate the position which God Almighty has placed us... The whole black continent is looking up to this country to liberate it from the thralldom" (Mbachu, 2011). It should be reiterated that Nigerian foreign policy principles are tailored to meet the goals of the defence of its territorial integrity and national independence, promotion of the unity and solidarity of African countries, eradication of all forms of colonialism from African countries, and the promotion of World peace and the well-being of mankind in general. As such the foundation of Nigeria's foreign policy objectives in Africa since independence are systematic and clear "promotion of African unity, the eradication of colonialism, racism and imperialism from the face of the continent, the espousal of respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of African States and the promotion of close co-operation in the economic, social and cultural fields among African countries" (Mbachu, 2011) As Nigeria joined the ranks of newly independent countries, she adopted as a guiding framework of her African policy as follows:

1. Acceptance of the sovereign equality of all African States.
2. Respect for the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of every African State.
3. Non-interference in the internal affairs of other African countries.
4. Commitment of functional co-operation as a means of promoting African unity.
5. Total eradication of racism and colonialism from Africa.

The above framework clearly points to the fact that Nigeria's foreign policy focuses on Africa with emphasis on its liberation from all forms of domination and towards the achievement of a better life for Africans.

NIGERIA'S FOREIGN POLICY THRUST OF GOOD NEIGHBOURLINESS

The Nigerian civil war brought a change in the country's relations with its immediate neighbours. Nigeria came to realize that its security, defence, and freedom could not be distinctly separated from those of its immediate neighbours. The civil war provided a basis for the recognition and better appreciation of the relevance of the principle of contiguity and propinquity as important factors in Nigeria's West African relations (Mbachu 2011). The civil war made Nigeria realize that her corporate survival, security, peace, and progress, and those of her immediate neighbours, were mutually intertwined. The lesson of the war also made Nigeria perceive that its immediate neighbours, no matter how small and powerless, should not be ignored or considered as inconsequential in its foreign policy. This is to guard against conspiracy, for, as the saying goes, "if enemies fail to take advantage of your weakness, your friends surely will." For instance, during the civil war, if the immediate neighbours had supported Biafra instead of Nigeria, it would have been very difficult for Nigeria to survive as a corporate entity. The recognition of the importance of the concept of contiguity and propinquity in foreign policy spurred the Nigerian government, beginning with General Yakubu Gowon, to adopt a policy of promoting good neighbourliness and mutual solidarity support towards Nigeria's contiguous countries. In fact, it was on this basis that Nigeria went beyond just support to playing a big brother role in her relations with the contiguous neighbours, which turned to be detrimental to national security as we shall see in this paper.

There is also a need to emphasize that the concept of contiguity and propinquity was important in Nigeria's stance in the formation of the Chad and Niger Basin Commission in 1964. These commissions came into being at the instance of Nigeria's government, and over the years, the country single-handedly sponsored and spent a lot of its resources to furnish them. Even when the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was formed, Nigeria played a major role in its formation. Thus, the Nigerian government's initiative in the formation of the Chad and Niger Basin Commissions both in 1964, as well as the formation of ECOWAS in 1975, not only underlined the importance of the sub-region in Nigeria's

security and diplomacy but also the display of its role as big brother over its neighbours that were less endowed with resources neighbours.

The treaty establishing ECOWAS was designed to accelerate economic integration and increase political co-operation of West African States. It also set up a common market and allowed free movement of persons, services, and capital among member states. Nigeria accounts for over 57% of the economy of ECOWAS, and its annual contribution to the community funds is assessed at 32.5% of the community's budget. The Nigerian government views ECOWAS as the most important agency for economic integration in the African continent, and as a country endowed with enormous resources, it is its responsibility to see to the growth and survival of the organization (Mbachu, 2011).

REVIEW OF NIGERIA'S FOREIGN POLICY OF GOOD NEIGHBOURLINESS

Unarguably, the foreign policy of every nation-state is dynamic, and on that note, the concept of contiguity and propinquity should be appraised. The three immediate northern neighbours of Nigeria, namely Chad, Niger, and Cameroun, boast of over 300 dedicated Qur'anic schools with a radical slant of the Islamic Salafist ideology that encourages the philosophy of the Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), which has given root to the Boko Haram sect in Nigeria (Salifu, 2012). The scenario was such that Nigerian governments' good neighbourliness allows for the free movement of persons within its borders; thus, the radical Islamic population took advantage of the porous borders and moved to Nigeria. The irregular migration of Chadians, Nigeriens, and Cameroonians into Nigeria has swelled the population of the Muslim street children popularly known as *Almajirai* in Nigeria.

In fact, the Nigerian government's policy of good neighbourliness has also exacerbated the country's unemployment situation. The situation worsened, considered against the backdrop of the cultural and religious integration of immigrants with the local population in the northern parts of the country. The immigrants easily mingled with the locals, thereby swelling the population of the unemployed in the country. Thus, Nigeria's unemployment situation is a threat to national security.

It must be noted that the poverty rate is more preponderant in the northern part of the country, where the country shares borders with Chad, Niger, and Cameroun. Most of the youths of the northern part of Nigeria were either jobless or

unemployed in a country that claims to possess economic resources it could freely share with its less-endowed neighbours. The idle youths were fascinated by the radical, extreme religious teachings of the immigrant Islamic scholars, who preached that their plight was caused by the privilege few living in affluence and through corrupt means. This led to the expression of fanatical views among the youths in the illusory tendency to create an ideological political economy to pursue their faith and welfare. Boko Haram and the recent Lakurawa sects in Nigeria had their roots in the association with religious extremist leaders who, without hindrance, cross the borders of these contiguous countries.

Even though Nigeria operated the foreign policy of collaborative border patrol with Chad, Niger, and Cameroun encapsulated in the Lake Chad Basin Commission agreement among the four countries, and other Bilateral Boundary agreements, these have rarely been effective because they are driven by incongruous national interests of the various countries (Akpomera & Omoyibo, 2014).

Nigeria had always pursued a big brother foreign policy towards the poorer countries in Africa. The natural endowment of the country made the government adopt a foreign policy whereby it put in place weak immigration policies and accommodation of aliens in the name of African brotherhood. In this vein, Chad, Niger, and Cameroun encouraged their poor citizens to migrate to Nigeria, where their conditions could improve and food security guaranteed. These poor citizens could be victims of political instability with a radical religious undertone that gripped their countries, and they became carriers of such radical ideology to Nigeria. The root of the armed incursion into Nigeria could be linked to the political insurgency that engulfed Chad and Niger in the preceding few years (Akpomera & Omoyibo, 2014)

The underlying challenge in Nigeria's relations with Chad, Niger, and Cameroun is that the ethnic groups in the northern part of the country have common ethnic and religious ties with these countries. The Hausa, Fulani, and Kanuri are dominant in the northern part of Nigeria and in neighbouring Chad, Niger, and Cameroun. The four countries have common historical ties. For instance, Zinder, the second biggest city in Niger, was part of the old Borno kingdom in northern Nigeria, also Maradi, another city in Niger, was part of the Katsina Emirate in northern Nigeria. Arising from these historical ties, the dominant ethnic groups that are Hausa and Fulani cross the borders daily, and Nigeria's currency is a legal tender in Maradi and Zinder. These ethnic and religious affinities greatly affected Nigeria's foreign policy; thus, the rationale for the borders not to be properly demarcated officially as

the people on the borderlands of these countries have lived together for centuries, sharing cultural values, intermarrying, engaging in trade in the same marketplaces, and worshipping in the same Mosques. In this way, criminal elements transcended the borders and were protected by the locals (Akpomera & Omoyibo, 2014).

The Nigerian government had made tangible efforts in terms of high-tech intelligence gathering and capacity building to improve the patrolling of the borders, yet the fluidity of the cross-border movement in the northern part of the country remained. The influx of small arms and light weapons continues to increase across the borderlands. The influx of small arms and light weapons from North Africa into Northern Nigeria is facilitated by the ease with which the religious extremists from North African countries enter the country from Chad and Niger. The Nigerian Immigration Service admitted that Nigeria, for many decades, operated a near borderless official foreign policy with its immediate neighbours, especially in the north-east region of the country until the advent of the religious violence that became serious in 2011 (Akpomera & Omoyibo, 2014).

The international border between Nigeria, Chad, Niger, and Cameroun has not been properly demarcated (Akpomera & Omoyibo, 2014). In some places, they are in the jungle, while in others, there are settlements along the borders. The fact remains that until the wake of the rising crescendo of terrorist attacks in the northeast region, the Nigerian government had no plan for serious security along the borderlands with Chad, Niger, and Cameroun. However, there are some factors that propelled the border activities along the borderlands. The domestic conditions in Chad, Niger, and Cameroun, which include socio-economic, political instability, and the near collapse of state control of resources, were the factors that pushed the citizens of these countries to Nigeria. On the other hand, the socio-economic prospect, food security, religious and cultural affinity with Nigeria, and political freedom were some factors that pulled them to Nigeria.

It should be noted that every foreign policy attracts costs and dividends. The cost of the foreign policy includes human, material, and administrative costs of sustaining the machinery for the practice of such policy thrust, while the dividends encapsulate the achievement of the positive values earned by the state actors from the pursuit of the policy in the international system. For Nigeria, the terrorists' activities and entry through her border and are facilitated by the foreign policy of good neighbourliness have brought to the front-burner issues of core interest of national security in her foreign policy with her immediate neighbours. Nigeria's relationship with its immediate neighbours in the north-east region could be likened

to the USA and Mexico border with regard to socio-economic and security challenges. The USA-border with Mexico-border has gained notoriety for its security challenges to the former suggesting a similarity with the Nigeria-Chad, Niger, and Cameroun borderlands in terms of perception, function, and security challenges.

The Nigerian government's foreign policy thrust of good neighbourliness, to say the least, has done more harm than good to the country in all ramifications. Just like the USA under Donald Trump has adjusted its relations with Mexico along the borderlands, Nigeria should adjust its foreign relations with its immediate neighbours to prioritize national security.

CONCLUSION

As shown above, at independence, Nigeria adopted a foreign policy of protecting African states from foreign domination and the promotion of World peace and well-being of mankind in general. Nigeria arrogated to herself the leadership role of liberating Africa from thralldom and considered such as destined by God Almighty and vowed not to abdicate the position. In the late 1960s, there were changes in the political status of many African states as many of them gained political independence and became free to chart the course of their countries.

Nigeria came out of the civil war with another brand-new foreign policy perspective. Nigeria realized that her corporate survival, security, peace, and progress, and those of her immediate neighbours, are mutually intertwined. The lesson of the war also made Nigeria perceive that its immediate neighbours, no matter how small and powerless, should not be ignored or considered as inconsequential in its foreign policy. The recognition of the importance of the concept of contiguity and propinquity in foreign policy spurred the Nigerian government, beginning with General Yakubu Gowon, to adopt a policy of promoting good neighbourliness and mutual solidarity support towards its contiguous countries. This led to the foreign policy of a near-borderless or open/porous border between Nigeria and its contiguous neighbours, particularly Chad, Niger, and Cameroun. The consequence of this good neighbourliness is the influx of criminal elements into Nigeria, which has heightened the socio-economic situation of the country. The unending terrorists' activities in the northern part of Nigeria, which shares borders with the Sahel countries, have their roots in the influx of criminal elements into the country. Therefore, it is time for the foreign policy of good neighbourliness to be jettisoned for national interest. This is because Nigeria seems to gain nothing from

its immediate neighbouring countries. Even though the ECOWAS protocols claim trade relations among the member states, Nigeria has little to show as its benefits in terms of economic prosperity.

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