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# Rebooting the System: Nigerian Foreign Policy and Economic Development beyond the 2023 General Elections

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**Abstract:** The foreign policy of nations is directed at harnessing and mobilizing their foreign policies towards economic development of the domestic structures. This study x-rays the questions: What is the consistent behavioral pattern of the present Nigerian government in external relations for her economic development in the wake of the 2023 general elections? Is the weak capacity of the Nigerian leaders to mobilize and deploy productive forces towards the realization of the goals and objectives of Nigerian foreign policy implicated in the external dependence of the Nigeria's economy? The study was anchored on system and complex interdependence theoretical frameworks while data (documentary sources) was generated and interpreted through content analysis and trends analytical technique. By exploring historical contexts and contemporary issues, this study offers insights into how Nigeria can position itself as a leading player on the global stage

while addressing the pressing domestic socio-economic challenges. Ultimately, the study found that a proactive and coherent foreign policy framework based on creativity and indigenous technologies are essential for achieving sustainable economic development beyond the 2023 general elections. The study concluded that technological capability which creates new industrial and economic bases is underdeveloped in the pursuit of the country's foreign policy and thus, make her leaders dependent on foreign aid while promoting the economic interest of the metropolitan bourgeoisie.

**Keywords:** Foreign Policy, Nigerian Foreign Policy, Economy, Development, Elections, Domestic structure, System and complex interdependence

## Introduction

In foreign policy formulation and implementation, governments take into consideration the varied interests and sensitivities of the political, geo-political, security, economic, socio-cultural, technical or military components etc. within its territory. It goes to show that a country's foreign policy and her assertions is a function of her domestic environment. A feature of geography is population. The population of a country shows the national character of a country. It shows the altitude of citizens to the political process and foreign policy. It also reflects the morale of the citizenry and the morale is determined by the level of inclusion and exclusion and whether the government is legitimate or illegitimate, or whether there is an erosion of support. A feature of population that impinges on foreign policy is the demographic character or tapestry of the country (ethnic composition of the country). Foreign

policy, therefore, is an important key to the explanation of international behaviors. It is not possible to understand inter-state relations without understanding foreign policies of the states involved.

Nigeria's foreign policy has undergone a series of transformations, in focus and tempo, in the last six decades. From the sedate and cautions days of the Tafawa Balewa regime who preferred policy papers from his cabinet ministers than from the external affairs ministry, through the combative, assertive, calculating and reflective years of the Murtala-Obasanjo era, to the difficult and painful years of International Monetary Fund politics and diplomacy under the Babangida regime. These changes were patently reflective of the complex matrix of Nigeria's socio-economic and political landscape and the varying fortunes of the international environment. Thus, it has gone through many phases of policymaking over the years and continued to

change under different governments, the ideological orientations and personal idiosyncrasies of the leaders (Bobboyi, 2010; Okolie, Nnamani and Mbaegbu, 2023). Despite these transformations, the promotion of regional integration has remained one of the cardinal objectives of Nigeria's foreign policy. Theoretically, Nigeria's foreign policy has often been explained by Nigerian diplomats and scholars in terms of four "concentric circles" of national interest. The innermost circle represents Nigeria's own security, independence and prosperity and is centered on its immediate neighbours - Benin, Cameroon, Chad and Niger; the second circle revolves around Nigeria's relations with its West African neighbors; the third circle focuses on continental African issues of peace, development and democratization; and the fourth circle involves Nigeria's relations with organizations, institutions and states outside Africa (Gambari, 1989). This concept still guides Nigeria's foreign policy priorities.

It is worthy of note that Africa has remained the centre piece of Nigeria's foreign policy. Nigeria's major concerns in Africa have been as follows: promotion of peace, prosperity, stability and development in Africa; promotion of political goodwill and understanding among African countries despite the cultural, linguistic and economic barriers erected by erstwhile colonialism; the discouragement of international intervention and presence in Africa; the promotion of rapid social-economic development of Africa through regional economic integration; the strengthening of sub-regional economic institutions and the reduction of economic dependence on extra-continental powers; the development of cultural cooperation as a means of strengthening political ties with

all African countries; and finally, self-determination for all countries on the continent, the elimination of apartheid in South Africa and the eradication of all forms of racial discrimination in Africa (Ashaver, 2013).

The first major factor that shaped Nigeria's foreign policy is colonialism. Colonialism fostered political and economic subjugation and replaced indigenous pre-capitalist modes of production with a capitalist mode of production. It led to the transformation of the class structure of the society and the process of permanent integration and development of an export-import economy. It also led to the dominance of the economic interest of the metropolitan bourgeoisie in the Nigerian foreign policy process. Other historical facts are the role of ideology, the impact of different form of nationalism-micro and macro nationalism, the impact of Pan-Africanism, socialism and African socialism. The citizens of Nigeria have variously demonstrated their supports or others for aspects of Nigerian foreign policy in stances like the abrogation of Nigeria Defense Pact in 1961, expulsion of illegal aliens from Nigeria in the 1980s, in the independence of Zimbabwe and in the conferences in Nigeria's foreign policy in 1961 and in 1986. However, Nigeria's foreign policy has been in the doldrums for sometimes, and thus has been losing much of her influence in West Africa and Africa. The contradictions, constraints, and inherent weaknesses are glaringly manifest; hence the urgent need to strengthen and reevaluate policy in line with the requirements of a fast-changing and rapidly globalizing world (Jega, 2010).

The Nigeria's 2023 general elections offer an opportunity to break away from the past foreign policies

depending on the winner of the presidential election. What do we see in Nigeria's foreign policy beyond 2023 general elections with respect to its domestic economic development? Will there be efforts to leverage and harness Nigeria's human and material resources towards indigenous technological development of the domestic economy? Nigeria's economy has coasted for far too long on a recipe of diminishing returns that involves dividing up revenues from oil exports in opaque and corrupt ways. Nigeria's large domestic market has remained untapped, as it is the poverty capital of the world. The path out of poverty through the indigenous manufacturing sector for higher value-added processes and greater technological development remains underdeveloped by the political leadership. The quest to mobilize and sustain indigenous technology in advancing national interests by providing better opportunities for Nigeria's young population is vital in Nigeria's foreign policy making.

In Nigeria, there has been the tendency in the existing literature, to examine the country's huge population, natural resources (oil and gas wealth), the size of a country and factors of geopolitics and her global peace keeping efforts in accelerating her economic profile at international level. However, an area that seems to be lacking in the existing literature in this respect is harnessing and mobilizing foreign policy towards economic development of the domestic economy. How well has Nigeria's foreign policy focused on economic development? Is the weak capacity of the Nigerian leaders to mobilize and deploy productive forces towards the realization of the goals and objectives of Nigerian foreign policy

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implicated in the external dependence of the Nigeria's economy? Thus, the present study aims to examine the effects of foreign policy formulation and implementation on economic development of Nigeria beyond the 2023 general elections.

### **Conceptual Analysis Foreign Policy**

Foreign policy has been defined by Holsti (1972), as the actions of a state towards the external environment and conditions usually domestic under which these actions are formulated. Similarly, Nnoli (1978) maintained that foreign policy is a nation's reaction to the external environment involving the organization of both domestic and external relations. According to Chibundu (2003), foreign policy refers to a country's response to the world outside or beyond its own frontiers or boundaries, the response which may be friendly or aggressive, casual or intense, simple or complex. It comprises many elements; namely diplomatic, military, trade, economic, social, cultural, educational, sporting, etc and it varies in form and focus according to circumstances. Okolie (2009:5) posits foreign policy as "... not as actions based on some grand design but as a continual process of pragmatic adjustment to the actions of others in the international environment." As a corollary to the above, we can define foreign policy as declared or written decisions or actions of long-term perspectives that governments of independent nations make in their pattern of relationship with other actors in the external environment. These consistent behavioral patterns in external relations can be political, economic, socio-cultural, technical or military in nature.

### Nigeria's Foreign Policy

Generally, studies of Nigeria's external relations since independence in 1960 have focused on various themes based on different conceptual approaches to Nigeria foreign policy. In this connection, Nigeria's external relations have been perceived as a linkage system in which domestic policies and foreign policy are organically interlinked (Idang, 1973; Akinyemi, 1974; Ofoegbu, 1978). Thus, Idang (1973) focused on the impact of the parliament, political parties, foreign policy elites and the importance of a coherent and inclusive national ideology in which to base an overall foreign policy. Akinyemi (1974) focused on the character of the administrative structure, the impact of political parties, and the attitude of political elites in the foreign policy process in Nigeria. Equally, Ofoegbu (1978) comments on the dominant role that bureaucratic and political institutions, the government, values and pro-Western attitudes of the leaders, have continued to play in the direction of Nigeria's foreign policy. The conceptualization of Nigeria's external relations as a linkage system has a general orientation to see the foreign policy of a nation as a product of the domestic structure. Although the 'linkage' scholars highlight the various domestic variables that shape the foreign policy of nations, they do not situate them in their proper material context of the national political economy and the dynamics of the accumulation process. The 'linkage' argument emphasizes more the internal dimensions of foreign policy and as such fail to capture the complexity of international politics and foreign policy.

Further attempts were made by other scholars to capture the complexity of international politics and foreign policy. Accordingly, some writers argue

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that what is relevant in the study of foreign policy, is to know how decisions were made and by whom. Nigeria's external relation is, therefore, perceived to be a product of bureaucratic politics (Aluko, 1981; Nweke, 1990). These writers see decision making process as a dynamic interaction between institutions and personality, whose character varies with the resilience and effectiveness of the other elements of the domestic structure to impose limits on the action of others. The bureaucratic politics argument emphasized the influence of organizational behavior while focusing on the institutional structure and decision-making processes of Nigeria's external relations. This argument tends to concentrate on the tactical manoeuvres by bureaucrats, based on the definition of politics as bargaining and politics (Asobie, 1990). The focus on bureaucratic policy may lead to the erroneous assumption that the nature of the foreign policy system, rather than the entire structure of the global socio-economic system, determines the characteristics of Nigeria's foreign policy. The role of the bureaucracy in the policy process and, in particular, the impact of the struggle for power and functions among different bureaucratic units on both the policy process and policy output in Nigeria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) is established. Thus, the MFA is a complex bureaucratic organization with many interests and many wills which often distort both the policy process and the policy output (Okolie, Nnamani and Mbaegbu, 2023).

Generally, for Ifesinachi (2010) the 'linkage' and bureaucratic politics' arguments recognize that conflict provide the motor for decision making, however, adequate systematic effort is not made to analyze the dialectical implication of

these conflicts on Nigeria's political economy and foreign policy. The analysts emphasize the multiplicity of structural, social and economic forces that define the domestic environment for foreign policy without a common materialistic terrain that gives coherent meaning to them. Even where aspects of the internal economy are highlighted, they are subordinated to strategic political considerations. In the process these analysts tend to treat economic and political aspects of foreign policy in isolation, thereby failing to establish the organic linkages and contradictions between economic and political forces. More comprehensively, Nigeria's foreign economic policy is, therefore, the decisions on economic matters of a long-term perspective indicated by the consistent behavioral pattern that the government projects outwards to other actors in the international environment. States usually define their foreign economic policies and pursue them with the aim to develop their socio-economy. The goals which nations pursue in the international system are essentially directed at tackling the contradictions and problems of the domestic economy by projecting the issues outwards into the external environment. The foreign economic policy of Nigeria is therefore expected to address her developmental objectives, to wit, democratization, economic self-reliance and social welfare (Ifesinachi, 2009).

### **Economic Development**

Development according to Todaro (1992) has been dominated by three major strands of thought in literature. First, are the stages of economic growth theories of the 1950s and early 1960s. The thinking of the 1950s and early 1960s focused mainly on

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the concept of successive stages of economic growth in which the process of development was seen as a series of sequential stages through which all countries must pass. Second, are the international dependency theories of the late 1960s and the 1970s. This approach focused on the phenomenon of underdevelopment, which is viewed in terms of international and domestic power relationships, institutional and structural economic rigidities, and the resulting proliferation of dual economics and societies a few rich nations coexisting with many poor nations. Third, are the free market theories of the 1980s and 1990s, which argues that developing societies needed more free markets and less government intervention in the economy in order to promote competition and stimulate rapid growth and development. The reduction or elimination of poverty, inequality and unemployment were perceived as critical indices for economic development.

Furthermore, as Todaro argues, economic progress is an essential component of development, but development is not purely an economic phenomenon. Ultimately, it encompasses more than the material and financial side of people's lives (Todaro, 1992). According to World Development Report cited in Sapru, (1997:7), economic development is "a sustainable increase in living standard that encompass material consumption, education, health and environmental protection" Development can, therefore, be seen as the increasing capacity of the political leadership to internally control the mobilization of the human and material resources of the nation, towards the acquisition of and utilization of the relevant scientific knowledge, for tackling the difficulties

posed by the bio-physical environment, and man's interaction with his fellows (Ifesinachi, 2010).

### **Theoretical Perspective on foreign policy and economic development**

The study was anchored on the theoretical orientations of system and complex interdependence as theories utilized in international relations discourse. With respect to systems theory, Easton, Almond, Mitchell and Kaplan were the leading political scientists who contributed to the development of this theory. While Easton and Almond concentrated on its application in the field of national politics, Kaplan applied it in the field of international politics. Easton's concept of political life is that of a system of behavior embedded in an environment, to the influences of which the political system itself is exposed and in turn reacts. Political behavior consists of interactions between the different parts of the system acting as members of the system. Easton stresses the integration of identified components that make up the political system based on the specificity of component functions. This is because the political system is chain-structured with each component affecting the other. Kaplan is one of the most recognized of the systemic school. According to him, there is some coherence, regularity and order in international politics (Kaplan, 2007). He asserts that international politics implies two things: international system and nation state system. While nation states are the main actors in international politics, the role changes with the change of international system. In summation, the system theory sees nations as constantly interacting in order to give and get in return from other

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nations. The theory asserts that in order for this to happen nations must engage in some degree of participation in the international environment.

The complex interdependence theory in international relations as a critique of political realism was postulated by Keohane and Nye (1977). It argues that states and their fortunes are inextricably tied together. Interdependence in world politics refers to situations characterized by reciprocal effects among countries or among actors in different countries. Complex interdependence stresses the complex ways in which as a result of growing ties, the transnational actors become mutually dependent, vulnerable to each other's actions and sensitive to each other's needs (Keohane and Nye, 1977). Under this mutual dependence, the relationship between the actors involved, including states as well as other transnational actors, is characterized by both cooperation and competition. In interdependence there are costly reciprocal effects of transaction among the actors. The policies and actions of one actor have profound impact on the policies and actions of the other actors and vice versa. Interdependence does not only mean peace and cooperation among actors, but a relationship between actors characterized by cooperation, dependence, and interaction in a number of different areas, and conflict as well.

According to Keohane and Nye (1977) interdependence should not be defined entirely as situations of 'evenly balanced mutual dependence'. They contend: "It is asymmetries in dependence that are most likely to provide sources of influence for actors in their dealings with one another. Less dependent actors can often use the interdependence relationship as a source

of power in bargaining over an issue and perhaps to affect other issues (Keohane and Nye, 1977: 10-11)". Interdependence entails a relationship in which two or more parties are linked in a system of action in such a way that changes in one party impact in some meaningful way on the attainment of needs, values, and/or desired outcomes of the others. In other words, the satisfaction of each party's needs and values is contingent to some degree on the behavior of others. The concept of interdependence is used in several areas. In general international systems, a system functions as a whole because of the interdependence of its parts.

The fundamentally anarchic character of the international system according to realists is the most important guide to interpreting foreign policy. The pursuit of security and efforts to enhance material wealth place states in competition with other states, limiting the scope for cooperation to a series of selective, self-interested strategies. Calculations of national interest are self-evident and can be rationally arrived at through a careful analysis of material conditions of states as well as the particulars of a given foreign policy dilemma confronting states (Uchegara, 2008). Hence, economic prosperity and certain types of relationships between states and other economic actors is the key to security. Therefore, policy commitments to international economic cooperation would derive from the very logic of the pervasive interdependent relationships existing in the modern global community (Kaarbo and Ray, 2011). If we have to take as a given the assumption that we live in an interdependent world economic order, it therefore behooves every nation to have an external economic policy of national

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self-adjustment and adaptation to the external world, because it is through these economic relations that nations communicate their economic resources for export purposes, seek to augment their resource deficiencies, define and articulate their conception of a just and equitable international economic order and participate generally in the continuously expanding networks of international economic transaction (Akindele, 1990).

To apply the theory to the study, it can be concluded that the entire world is a system and the distortion of one part can affect other parts either positively or negatively. It also stresses the already known fact which is no nation can stand as an island and therefore require interaction or relationship with other nations in order for it to meet or accomplish its domestic interest through its foreign policy. This interaction or relationship is usually symbiotic and mutual and therefore enables both sides to gain from each other. Complex Interdependence is said to have been a breakthrough in the pattern or structure of the Nigerian foreign policy. This pattern is seen as concentric circles (Nigeria's national interest, West Africa, Africa and the World). Nigeria's foreign or external relations has been conditioned by the international environment particularly by the ideological dimensions of bi-polarity filtering through from Africa's former colonial masters Britain, France, Belgium and Portugal. The conviction that peace, unity and stability among states were vital for global peace has been the driving force of Nigeria's policy formation.

The Nigerian government played a part in Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), OAU/AU (African Union), and United Nations (UN) and hoped they will provide



machinery for the settlement of disputes. Nigeria helped in the establishment of African Development Bank to develop African economies; and also participated in the joint negotiation with the EEC now EU (European Union) alongside other developing countries of the Caribbean and Pacific. The Nigerian government hosted the OAU Economic Summit called the Lagos Plan of Action in 1980 which set the strategy for genuine economic integration of Africa. The OAU Economic Summit Was later to metamorphose into African Economic Community (AEC) by the year 2000. Lastly, Nigeria has friendship treaties with all neighboring states.

### **Research Methodology**

The research methodology adopted is documentary method (secondary sources of data collection and specifically the Afro barometer Nigeria data section database and interpreted through content analysis and trends analytical technique. The Afro barometer secondary database on Nigeria includes the analysis of Nigeria's domestic socio economic development crisis and foreign policy trends. The data collected answers the research questions on how well have Nigeria's foreign policy focused on economic development? Is the weak capacity of the Nigerian leaders to mobilize and deploy productive forces towards the realization of the goals and objectives of Nigerian foreign policy implicated in the external dependence of the Nigeria's economy? To provide answers to these questions, the dynamic interplay of the contradictions and paradox of affluence and affliction, greater wealth but rising vulnerable employment opportunities and unsustainable development are explained or accounted for by the recklessness of

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greedy and self-serving Nigerian elite who have mismanaged the economy, undermined infrastructure and socioeconomic development, and basically squirreled away the country's resources into their private coffers. The domestic environment, no doubt will help in providing answers to these research questions.

### **Analysis of Findings Historical Trajectory of Nigeria's Foreign Policy**

The trends, patterns and orientations of Nigeria's foreign policy since independence is about the narrative, structure, the impact of the nature, character and interplay of domestic forces and the external environment in the formulation of her foreign policy. The history of Nigerian foreign policy since 1960 has constantly been changing, though the principles guiding her foreign relations remain the same (Gambari, 1989). This view was reiterated by Ashaver (2013), when he posited that Nigeria's foreign Policy since independence has not experienced noticeable changes in its core principles and objectives. What is noteworthy is the modus operandi employed by succeeding governments in the country. At the very best, such continuities and discontinuities are cyclical, oscillating back, and forth in consonance with the dictates of peculiar circumstances both internal and external under which each succeeding administration in the country had to operate. Nigerian leaders are largely responsible for these unstable external relations. Apparently, Nigeria's foreign policy is deeply rooted in Africa with strategic emphasis on political and economic cooperation, peaceful dispute resolution, and global nonalignment (Gambari, 1989).

In the early years, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa- the Nigerian prime minister abhorred radical ideologies and regimes. “He was passionate about Africa and African issues to which he gave significant attention” (Fawole, 2003:40). Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa preferred policy papers from his cabinet than from the External Affairs Ministry. However, critiques have characterized Balewa’s foreign policy as not only conservative but also hesitant and moralistic, and lacking in content and consistency (Idang, 1973; Alkali, 2003). Some have argued that the first phase of Nigeria’s foreign policy under the Balewa government was driven by altruistic motives (Hart, 2009). It was also said to be broadly pro-Western to excessively accommodate British colonial interests. Successive Nigerian governments, especially under military rule, have striven to assume or claim a leadership position through foreign policy declarations and actions and other modes of international engagements. This commenced with General Yakubu Gowon’s drive for regional integration and key role in the formation of the ECOWAS. Increased oil revenues enabled Nigeria’s more generous foreign policy undertakings, proactive engagements, and the emergence of hegemonic ambitions (Jega, 2010).

From the mid-1970s, Nigeria’s military leaders began to define the country’s foreign policy objectives in the context of its perceived power and continental aspiration for leadership. Under Generals Murtala Mohammed and Olusegun Obasanjo (1975-1979), Nigeria was a leader on African issues with an enthusiastic, some say radical, thrust. Nigeria’s foreign policy objectives were more coherently defined than was hitherto the case. Africa was made the

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centerpiece or cornerstone of Nigeria’s foreign policy. Although protection and defense of the country’s territorial integrity, as well as pursuit of economic development have remained core objectives, they were in practice subsumed under the Afro-centric thrust of the defined national interests. Nigeria’s foreign policy profile rose significantly due to its commitment and assistance to liberation struggles in Southern Africa during this period- in recognition of which it earned membership in the Frontline States as well as chairmanship of the UN Anti-Apartheid Committee. Its influence over African matters was such that “if Nigeria wasn’t at a table where African issues were discussed, (the discussion) is incomplete” (Eze, 2009).

From the 1980s to the 1990s, however, Nigeria’s foreign policy concerns shifted to a preoccupation with peacekeeping at the sub regional level and economic diplomacy at the international level. Increased civil strife and military conflicts in the West African sub region, especially in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Cote d’Ivoire, gave rise to concerns with national sovereignty, territorial integrity, and a possible spillover effect to the rest of the countries in the sub region. Good neighborliness was threatened, and there were fears of the destabilizing implications of massive inflows of refugees from war-torn areas in the sub region. In spite of the declining revenues and the onset of an economic crisis, Nigeria maintained peacekeeping operations at high costs.

The pursuit of economic diplomacy as an additional plank of Nigeria’s foreign policy was aimed at cushioning the damaging impact of the economic crisis that engulfed Nigeria in the 1980s and at assuaging the consequences of the structural adjustment

measures introduced to contain the crisis. Foreign policy was redirected from a predominantly political focus to an economic one in which foreign policy instruments were used to advanced domestic economic development objectives (Ogwu and Olukoshi, 1991). Through economic diplomacy, launched by the Babangida government in 1988, Nigeria hoped to improve relations with its development partners, attract foreign investment, mitigate the burden of indebtedness, and garner international assistance from bilateral and multilateral sources for the country's socio-economic development. The thrust of economic development according to Ibeanu (2010) was an important feature of what he terms the "realist" phase of Nigeria's foreign policy in the 1980s and the 1990s.

Domestic instability and insecurity and the majority of the citizen's lack of prosperity have affected Nigerian's appreciation of and support for their country's worthy endeavors in foreign policy and global politics. In spite of attempts by the Obasanjo (1999-2007) of economic diplomacy of New Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), and Yar'Adua (2007-2010) governments' citizens' diplomacy to "eradicate" poverty, statistics still point to a bleak picture, standing at about 70 percent (Usman, 2007:4). Industrial growth production rate is estimated at – 1.8 percent, levels of unemployment are high, and life expectancy is 55 years, and the overall literacy rate is 64 percent. Nigeria continues to be over dependent on the oil sector, which still accounts for 95 percent of foreign exchange earnings and 80 percent of budgetary revenues. However, oil revenues have not been properly harnessed for socioeconomic development, as evidenced by dilapidated

infrastructure, chronic power outages, and institutional decay (Jega, 2010). Thus, none of the administrations succeeded in reinventing a new Nigeria capable of socio economic growth and development.

Late president Yar' Adua anchored his government's policies on "7 point agenda" under citizenship diplomacy. Citizenship diplomacy was however, wrongly contextualized and the then Foreign Affairs Minister late Ojo Maduekwe misconstrued it to mean reciprocal attacks on the adversaries of Nigeria. Nigeria's image abroad under the Jonathan administration's foreign policy of Transformation agenda (2010-2015) was not one that was very palatable because of the government's weak and somewhat ineffective and inefficient ties with others nations. This really affected the government's reception of foreign investments and military aids. In fact, the administration's relationship with America left much to be desired. Little wonder the American government refused to sell arms to Nigeria to aid in the fight against Boko Haram, thus prompting Nigeria to turn to Russia. More so, increased poverty in Nigeria has smeared Nigeria's global image. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) Nigeria Poverty Profile Report (2010), Nigeria's North-Eastern and North-Western regions had higher figures of 76.3% and 77.7% of relative poverty compared to the 67% and 59.1% figures of the South-Eastern and South-Western regions respectively. This high rate of poverty especially in the nation's Northern regions made a mockery of Nigeria's Afrocentric policy, since charity should, and must always, begin at home.

Under the Buhari administration's "change agenda",

Nigeria's image in the international sphere attracted high level of diplomacy and has also been smeared. Human security in Nigeria has been very low in the Buhari's administration. Terrorism, insurgency and violent conflagrations by a multiplicity of groups in Nigeria have been a thorn in the flesh of Nigeria's global image under the Buhari Administration. First is the Boko Haram insurgency that has relatively been weakened. Added to the Boko Haram insurgency are the different cases of violence by the neo-Biafra movement, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), operational in Nigeria's South-Eastern region, the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), Arewa People's Congress (APC), and the current inhumane activities of the Fulani herdsmen-community clashes in the Middle Belt region. In the light of these insecurity issues, for Chidozie, Ibieta and Ujara (2014), many foreign companies have had to withdraw their operations from Nigeria. For those that managed to stay, doing business in the country has become very expensive.

### **Nigeria's Foreign Policy Implementation and Economic Development: Assessing the Trends**

There is an inextricable link between a nation's foreign policy and its economic development. The whole essence of foreign policy is for the furtherance of economic development at home. Hence, economic welfare should be a key preoccupation of the foreign and domestic policies of a state (Ubi and Akinkuotu, 2014). Nigeria's foreign policy has since independence been consistently guided by the same principles and objectives. The protection of the country's national interest remains the constant variable defining its policy actions. Studies on Nigeria's foreign

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policy have pointed to the structures' and processes' incapacity for conceptualizing and implementing foreign policy decisions to meet the challenges of the rapidly changing reality of the contemporary international system such as national competitiveness in the globalized economy, promotion and defense of universal rights, environmental protection and sustainable development goals, and the promotion of peaceful coexistence and democratization (Akindele, 1990; Adebajo and Mustapha, 2008 and Jega, 2010). However, has these changing realities and transformations through globalization created the necessary conditions for Nigeria's economic development?

Similarly, Asobie (1991:1) posited that "the study of Nigeria's foreign policy is grossly underdeveloped". Despite its being a copious and voluminous industry, the study of Nigeria's foreign policy has been unsystematic, basically idiosyncratic, and lacking in theoretical and empirical rigor. As aptly noted by Hart (2009), foreign policy studies in Nigeria have generally been narrative inclined; they are not analytical and offer little if any basis for a choice of scientific framework to guide conceptualization, implementation, or study and understanding of Nigeria's foreign policy. Foreign policy cannot be considered in isolation from domestic issues such as oil and other economic and social factors. As a result of domestic factors, there has been a significant narrowing of the choices which Nigeria faces in conducting its foreign policy. For Okolie, Nnamani and Mbaegbu, (2023) the weak and dependent nature of Nigerian state and economy has vitiated the ability of Nigeria's foreign policy to protect her national interest in the global political economy. It is a truism that a

state's foreign rating and influence is a reflection of the health, quality and size of the country's economy. While Nigeria has a large economy, it equally has serious economic crisis that makes it difficult to realize its full potential. The structure of Nigeria's economy exhibits largely a neo-colonial orientation, depending largely on the export of primary goods and importation of finished commodities. Hence, external development strategies and associated distortions reverberate negatively in the economic fortunes of the country. This, unarguably, disallows it to play the critical roles it craves in the international system.

Nigeria has always looked beyond its borders. She has played an important role in international peacekeeping both under the auspices of the United Nations (UN), as well as ECOMOG (the Economic Community of West African States Ceasefire Monitoring Group). Nigeria has also been immersed in conflict, either at the level of intra-elite power struggles or identity conflicts within the context of its troubled federal experiment. Thus, while Nigeria possesses the necessary potential as well as institutional structures needed to formulate a vibrant foreign policy, its constraints lie in domestic factors, namely, the nature of the foreign policy elite and Nigeria's economic dependence and vulnerability. Eghosa Osaghae's description of Nigeria as a "crippled giant" is perhaps most pertinent in this regard (Eghosa, 1998). The interface between political stability and foreign policy in assessing the domestic economy of Nigeria will underscore the social and economic development of the country as a dependent economy cannot pursue an aggressive foreign policy.

Over the years, Nigeria has been able to use its economic strength as a hard and soft power resource to project its power status, particularly within Africa. For instance, in 1975, at the peak of its economic recovery following a devastating civil war, Nigeria nudged other sub-regional states to establish ECOWAS. Then Nigerian leader, Yakubu Gowon, not only played a pivotal role, but also pledged that the country would be responsible for a full one-third of ECOWAS's financial needs. The unexpected oil boom of the 1970s, which brought about a buoyant economy, increased the impetus for Nigeria's rising continental prominence. The confident posture of its leadership and the economic prosperity and well-being enjoyed by the country at the time afforded it the platform to pursue a rigorous and active foreign policy, clearly manifested in the leading role it played during the struggle to secure independence for Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Namibia and Zimbabwe, as well as the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa (Adeniji, 2005).

Despite experiencing a severe economic downturn in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Nigeria's sustained economic resurgence since the late 1990s has re-established the country as a dominant economy in Africa. Based on rebased figures announced in April 2014, Nigeria's economy is undeniably the largest in Africa with a GDP of US\$522 billion and a growth rate of 6.2%. Nigeria's GDP is ranked 26<sup>th</sup> in the world. With the addition of the informal sector (not included in official figures) estimates of the true size of its economy are put at US\$630 billion. In second place is South Africa, with a GDP of US\$350 billion and a growth rate of 2.6% (Magnowski, 2014; Awojobi, Ayakpat and Adisa,

2014). As the 2014 recalibration of its GDP suggests, Nigeria's economy and economic value is far less conditioned by revenue generated from the exploration for and production and exportation of crude oil, which has a 14% share of the GDP. Other sectors such as agriculture, services and manufacturing enjoy large shares of the Nigerian GDP, along with the informal sector. Oil accounts for barely 14% of official GDP figures and thus remains a minimal part of Nigeria's economy (Barungi; Ogunleye and Zamba, 2015).

In essence, Nigeria wields the financial power to assert influence on an international scale. This substantial economic prowess gives Nigeria the wherewithal not only to intervene in regional conflicts to maintain political stability and foster development, but also to support a dynamic foreign policy that has ultimately contributed immensely to the growth and development of the continent (Amao and Uzodike, 2015). To a considerable extent, Nigeria's diplomatic behavior is rooted in concrete terms in its economic strength, which affords it the opportunity to play a subtle hegemonic role by providing focus and leadership, particularly for the African continent. This, for instance, is displayed over the years in its active commitment to the eradication of slavery, colonialism, apartheid and all forms of racial oppression, and to continental transformation. Nigeria has been able to play a leading role on behalf of Africa in multilateral institutional arrangements such as the UN, the OAU, now the AU and ECOWAS.

Paradoxically, despite its abundant human and natural resources, Nigeria has failed to maximize the returns from its economic assets by effectively translating them into national economic

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growth and prosperity. This is due to a myriad of factors, such as: poor planning; inconsistencies in policy formulation, implementation and monitoring; fiscal indiscipline; poor articulation of economic structures; and dysfunctional economic sectors that are not properly integrated and coordinated (Olusola and Okeke-Uzodike, 2016). As a result of long years of neglect of basic infrastructure, which is necessary to support economic vibrancy, the Nigerian economy was lopsided for decades, delivering a shadow of its true potential – a situation that translated into a poor quality of life and standard of living for many Nigerians. One major culprit behind Nigeria's relative economic misfortune was the onset of corruption, which has become embedded in the political economy. Over the years, Nigeria's economy has been repeatedly undermined by continued bad governance and generalized theft of state assets. At the same time, rampant corruption, poverty and political violence have done very little to lessen Nigeria's attractiveness to international investors and investment bankers (Enweremadu, 2013).

### **Repositioning Nigeria's Foreign Policy Orientations and National Development Beyond 2023 General Elections**

How do we analyze or determine the foreign policy of a state? Do we look at the budget, ends-means pronouncement of actors, statesmen, ambassadors, prime minister etc? What we look at is the consistent behavioral pattern of that government in external relations. This led most analysts in foreign policy to see foreign policy as plan of actions, principles, strategies and tactics in external relations for the

actualization of objectives and goals in foreign relations. Foreign policy is said to be a policy that is internally formulated and externally projected. Nigeria's national interest must be re-assessed beyond political activities of 2023 to include economic interest. Put differently, Nigeria's local economy vis-à-vis the manufacturing economy engenders a developed agricultural sector when the vibrant pursuit of her foreign policy extricate itself from the appendage of imperial capitalism to underscore the welfare, developmental aspirations and living conditions of Nigerians (Thom-Otuya, 2015). The point being made is that the fusion between policy and practice in the articulation and implementation of Nigeria's foreign policy (often at the expense of its own people) reflects the sacrifices the country has made in its dedication to the continent. Driven largely by altruistic concerns about the sociopolitical and economic challenges facing the continent, Nigeria's Afrocentric policy has often been criticized at home for relegating Nigerians to the background in pursuit of continental advancement.

Nigeria's 2023 general election was a global event. Since Nigeria's democratic rebirth in 1999, the just concluded electoral cycle translates into 24 years of uninterrupted electoral democracy – the longest in the political and democratic history of Nigeria. The optimism which came with the preparations notwithstanding, the actual conduct of elections was remarkably flawed. The discredited nature of the outcomes of the 2023 general elections is bewildering and has implications for Nigeria's foreign policy. According to Ogunnubi, and Uzodike (2016), Nigeria's domestic political insurgency threatens its stability and economy while endemic

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corruption continues to undermine developmental activities and weaken the legitimacy of the state and its leaders. What is clear is that Nigeria is yet to fully leverage its massive material and human resources to deepen its hegemonic ambition or justify such a claim on the continent through the implementation of its foreign policy.

With the assurances that it is able to tackle Africa's problems through its enormous human and material resources, wealth and strong military, Nigeria's role in Africa has been triggered by a genuine moral conviction and commitment, which are critical ingredients for regional hegemonic status. One instance of the goodwill of Nigeria's foreign policy is its supply of electricity to West African countries such as Benin and Niger despite an inconsistent power supply within its own borders. In addition, the Technical Aid Corp Scheme (TACS), instituted in 1987 as a foreign aid initiative, continues to provide technical and developmental assistance to African and Caribbean countries. Beyond the fact that most Nigerians have little or no confidence in their political leadership as a collective, the domestic reality of severe socio-economic and human-security challenges – particularly high unemployment and criminality, rickety infrastructure and the attendant lack of basic services, and environmental decay – have combined to create a sense of anxiety and suspicion about external financial commitments. For the average Nigerian who argues that 'charity must begin at home', external needs are obviated by Nigeria's domestic imperatives.

The foreign policy pursuit of the government of President Muhammadu Buhari 2015-2023 is based on security,

economic prosperity and corruption eradication. Nigeria's international relations in the next few years are expected to prioritize economic growth and increased focus on promoting regional collaboration. The ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) in their campaign manifesto in 2014-2015, promised to pursue a more assertive foreign policy that promotes the national interest and reverses negative international perceptions about Nigeria. Specifically it promises to champion economic integration as a priority within ECOWAS so that a common tariff and currency is achieved by 2020 under Nigeria's leadership. The current commitment of the federal government in assuming the commanding heights of the economy through effective participation in the strategic sectors of the economy, notably in the petroleum, banking, and commerce and agriculture industries was not reflected in the foreign policy pursuit and implementation; this has in no small measure undermined the development of the domestic economy. What Nigeria lacked most in the past (and one can add, the present), has been a national sense of purpose, particularly in economic matters. This is purely a failure of leadership as political and economic governance in Africa, nay Nigeria has over the years remained authoritarian, and an instrument of neopatrimonialism and primitive capital accumulation (Mbaegbu, 2018).

In Nigeria's policy frame work and political economy, the capitalism-socialism debate resulted in a middle cause of a mixed economy system by the Nigerian policy makers. Historical factors also resulted in the definition of the Nigeria's national interest based on six principles as articulated by Aluko (1981:265) as follows:

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1. Self-preservation of a country
2. Defense and maintenance of the country's independence
3. Economic and social well being of the people
4. Defense, preservation and promotion of the ways of life of the people especially their democratic values
5. Enhancement of the country's standing and status in world capital especially in Africa
6. Promotion of world peace

With respect to the above mentioned principles, where did he mention research, technological development, education and industrialization which are the thrust of development of any society?

The government should enhance the industrial capacity of Nigeria. We cannot be processing raw materials without having the technology to transform them into finished product. Nigeria has overtaken India as the country with the largest number of people living in extreme poverty, with an estimated 87 million Nigerians, or around half of the country's population, thought to be living on less than \$1.90 a day. Nigeria has a lot to learn from the Chinese, especially in terms of how to structure the economy and balance national development. In China, there is deployment of communist political structure to administer a clearly capitalist economy and this is of great significance in the Chinese political genius.

Nigeria's present foreign policy leaves much to be desired with regards to national development. The future of Nigeria's foreign policy will depend on an astute domestic economic diplomacy that tackles effectively issues like restructuring and diversification of the



mono-cultural nature of the Nigerian economy, poverty reduction, provision of critical infrastructure/infrastructure services, healthcare, education and foreign investment etc for national development beyond 2023 general elections. How ready and effective is the country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in executing this policy? Nigeria's foreign policy should transcend what they say or what they produce or the direction of the resources but actions taken over time and pattern of relationships towards economic development of the country. There is a weak link between foreign policy and the country's domestic agenda in terms of investment and economic development. To bring about a beneficial domestic economic policy engagement so as to achieve overall national development calls for maximum mobilization of external financial resources given utmost priority to economic objectives, and apply economic instruments and considerations to foreign policy goals beyond the 2023 general elections.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

This paper has been able to establish that Nigeria's foreign policy has been characterized by both consistencies and inconsistencies for the past 64 years. Among the consistencies is the country's unalloyed focus on Africa. With respect to this, good neighbor policy (policy of friendship, cooperation without any consideration of territorial ambition, military adventurism and expansion), decolonization, African unity and economic development have been central. However, while these themes have been consistent, there have been clear discontinuities in Nigeria's foreign policy goals and objectives for achieving

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the thrusts of national development through research, technological development, education and industrialization.

It is our considered view that technological capability which creates new industrial and economic bases is underdeveloped in the pursuit of Nigeria's foreign policy and thus, makes her leaders dependent on foreign aid while promoting the economic interest of the metropolitan bourgeoisie. Poor political leadership in Nigeria ensured capitalist dependent of the economy on the western countries and the entrenchment and direction of domestic and foreign policies based on the interest of capital. Thus, this reflection of the pursuit of a pro-west conservative foreign policy which was activated by moralistic gradualism undermined the domestic economy, nay economic development of the Nigerian state.

As corollary to the above, we recommend as follows:

1. There should be a broad review of Nigeria's foreign policy and strategy after the 2023 elections in lieu of the dynamic and changing global environment.
2. There is urgent need to build strong and efficient institutional frameworks to address intermittent polarization and instability, high level of unemployment and poverty, mono-cultural economy and low technology, industrial and agricultural productivity in the country. Furthermore, the federal government must therefore occupy the commanding heights of the economy in the quest for purposeful national development and provide the leadership and honest administration necessary

for the attainment of a national sense of purpose towards creativity, industrialization acquisition and transfer of technology. This is the panacea for externalizing domestic priorities of economic and industrial development of the country.

3. The Nigeria foreign policy should be directed on investment, economic co-operation, humane treatment of Nigerians both locally and abroad, and the creation of a better statute friendly investment environment for attracting investments and bilateral trade.
4. Nigerian foreign missions must move away from armchair diplomacy to building the nation's economy by attracting foreign direct investment and opening markets for made in Nigeria goods. This is necessary for a strong foundation for economic growth and development.
5. Nigerian foreign policy should aim at creating benefits for the betterment of the people. It should no longer focus on Africa without clearly defined domestic policy objectives. Nigeria's ability to transform itself into an economic power house via foreign policy is hinged on the prioritization of these issues

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