

Internal Factors that Determine Nigeria's Foreign Policy since 1960

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Abstract

This work focuses on the internal factors that determine Nigeria Foreign Policy since 1960. These factors affect the formulation of policy in different ways under different circumstances. Some of these factors are permanent, some temporary, some are obvious while others obscure. However, all interact temporary with each other. In devising its foreign policy, a nation must consider certain basic factors of existence. This frame of reference includes its geographic-strategic situation, population potential, economic endowments and ideological environment. Foreign policy inputs are geography, culture and history, technological and economic development, social structure, moods of public opinion, political accountability governmental structure, situation factors both external and internal. Fundamentally, foreign policy has its roots in the unique historical background, political institutions, traditions, economic needs, power factor and aspirations, peculiar of values held by a nation. Among basic determinants of Nigeria foreign policy includes geography, economic development, political tradition, domestic milieu and international milieu, military strength and national character. This paper examined that the factors which have shaped and some of which continues shape the foreign policy orientation of Nigeria since independence. The paper finds out that, the foreign policy of a state is conditioned by two determinants. The paper, thus argues that power has always been personalized to the extent that whatever a regime does is a reflection of the man who occupies the seat of president. This study further argues that the nature and character of Nigeria's leaders is a major determinant of the nation foreign policy. The paper also argues that internal factor determines the policy statement of a state relationship with other states and non-state actors at the global arena. This paper is historical; hence, it adopts a qualitative method of analysis. Useful piece of information was obtained from important relevant documents, reports and array of secondary sources.

Keywords: Internal, factors, determinant, Nigeria, foreign. Policy.

Introduction

Several scholars have tried to define foreign policy from their point of view. Alade opines that, "foreign policy is the actions of states towards external environment and the conditions, usually domestic, under which decisions are formulated."ⁱ While Millar posits that, "foreign policy is presumably something less than the sum of policies which have an effect upon a national government's relations with other national governments."ⁱⁱ Ebegbulem states that, foreign policy is a mechanism through which nation-states attempt to project and preserve their independence and security, as well as the pursuit and protection of their national interests."ⁱⁱⁱ Foreign policy is a product of many factors and forces. Some of these factors and forces are mutual, while some are man-made.^{iv} Also while some are permanent others are temporary. According to Northedge, "the foreign policy of a county is a product of environmental factors

– both internal and external of it.”^v By determinant of Nigeria’s foreign policy we are referring to the factors which have shaped and some which continues to shape the foreign policy orientation of the county from independent to date. Chuka Euka opined that, “The understanding of foreign policy has the problem of establishing the boundary between that which is foreign, and those who are domestic.”^{vi} It must be pointed out that there is no consensus of opinion among scholars on these factors.

It is important to note at this juncture that the foreign policy of a state is conditioned by two determinants, namely the domestic and the foreign. There are contending arguments over the primacy of one determinant over the other. Ola Adeniyi argues that the external factor that is, the nature of the international system in which nations operate, primarily determines the foreign policy of especially the developing countries.^{vii} He maintains, “This is a reality to which African countries have to adjust”^{viii}. According to Chimaraoke Akakwandu, Nigeria’s foreign policies are cushioned/conditioned by the existing/epochal bilateral or multilateral relationship with other global actors.^{ix} This work is of the view that internal factor determine the policy statement of a state relationship with other states and non-state actors at the global arena.

The domestic factors are important determinants of the thrust of a state’s foreign policy objectives. Apart from forming the basis for the formulation of state objectives that guide foreign policy, internal variables define the tools for their realisation. Internal factors have been identified as the constitutive elements of national power. According to Otubanjo, “The domestic environment refer essentially to features, factors and forces...peculiar to the state,... foreign policy is being made. The domestic environment includes geographical location of the state, its peculiarity, natural and human resources, the nature of the political system, quality of leadership, the nature of the interaction among groups in the society etc.”^x Marston postulates that it is in the “home made” and aggregate of all the external conditions and influences that affect the life and development of organism, including also foreign policy.^{xi} Kissinger in his submission examined the role of domestic structures in a country’s relations with other nations in the world system.^{xii} Northedge states that, “Domestic environment as a matter of fact determines the role a nation plays in the international system”.^{xiii}

However, scholars among which was Sonni Tyonden argued that socio-political domestic milieu is a crucial determinant of foreign policy.^{xiv} According to Rodee, in devising its foreign policy, a nation must consider certain basic facts of its existence.^{xv} This frame of reference includes: its geographic situation, population potential, economic endowment and ideological environment. Brecher in his own summation outlined geography, external, and global environment, personalities, (Elite images) economic and military position and public opinion as the major components of foreign policy.^{xvi} Rosenau differed a bit in his own component. He listed size, geography, economic development, culture and history, great power structure alliances, technology, social structure, moods of opinions, political accountability, government structure, and situational factors (both external and internal).^{xvii} In addition, Chuka and Ikenna saw the Nigeria Civil War as a domestic determinant of Nigeria’s foreign policy.^{xviii} Therefore, internal factor or what is also known as domestic environment determines the role a nation plays in the international system. Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, USSR was a champion of communist policy, but today, the effect of perestroika and glasnost has affected her role-playing in the international arena. The domestic structure plays a crucial role in the way actions of other states are interpreted. Nwosu postulates that, “We cannot therefore consider the domestic structure in isolation of the international system since the technological achievement of any country has a ready impact on other states”^{xix}.

By determinants of Nigeria's foreign policy, we are referring to the factors which have shaped and some of which continues to shape the foreign policy orientation of the country from independence till date. It has been pointed out at the early stage of this work that there is no consensus of opinion among scholars on these factors. The reason for this is not far-fetched. Nigeria has come to have more ties with the Anglo-phone countries, who share a common colonial heritage with her. Some writers have asserted that the colonial history of any country is the major determinant of its foreign policy. Thus, Okunu asserts quite conclusively that the foreign relation of any African State is the function of its colonial history.^{xx} Though Nigeria has a lot of bilateral treaties with both countries of the Western and Eastern blocs, it has remained more closely tied to the West capitalist orientation which in any case is part of its colonial heritage.

Suffice it to say that the determinants of foreign policy can be broadly divided into three categories:

1. Internal factors
2. External factors
3. Policy making factors

For the sake of this work therefore we shall dwell on the internal factors that determine Nigeria foreign policy, which will be enumerated below. It should be noted that despite the fact scholars The paper is divided into nine parts. The first part is introduction. This is followed by economic factor as internal determinant of foreign policy. The third discusses the political factor, while the fourth examines the constitution as a vital factor. The fifth analysis idiosyncratic factor, while the sixth highlights the military factor. The seventh looks at the interest/pressure group factor. The penultimate section is an analysis of the decision, making factor. The last part is the conclusion. The argument tends to suggest that the foreign policy of a country is a product of environmental factors – both internal and external. As a matter of fact, the determinant of foreign policy can be broadly divided into three categories. The work argues that since pursuing a vibrant foreign policy is expensive, Nigeria's external activities seem to fluctuate with its economic fortunes. The paper also argues that internal factor determine the policy statement of a state relationship with other states and non-state actors at the global arena. This paper exposes the underlying factors that in Nigeria like in any other country, the internal determinant of her foreign policy can at the same time serve as the external determinant.

Economic Factor:

The economic structure of a state refers to the economic forces at play in that state to foster development. The economic structure is significant determinant of a nation's foreign policy choices. The birth of the Nigeria state in 1960 marked the beginning of conscious efforts as a country to position itself on a pedestal relative to the world. When Nigeria gained her political independence, agriculture was her mainstay. The structure of her economy was basically on the production of raw materials – cash crop production such as cocoa and coffee, an export based economy, which sales were determined by the world market price. Olaniyan confirms this, when he stated that in the state's infantile days, Nigeria aggressively began programmes that would make it relevant regionally and in the world.^{xxi} The agricultural sector as at then formed the bulk of Nigeria's exports. According to Ofoegbu,

Until the country's Third National Development Plan, the financing of the country's development plans was dependent on private economic and financial investments and the major source of private investment was foreign, and these foreign investors came from Britain, USA, the Netherlands and Western Germany,

that is from western powers. The structure of Nigeria's international trade at independence in 1960-1901, and ten years after independence 1969-1970 discloses heavy dependence in the West for 92.6 per cent (1961 exports), 81.8 per cent (1971 imports).^{xxii}

The economy structure reflects a predominant British share of the trade both at independence and ten years thereafter. It shows a pro-western economic foreign policy choice. In the same vein, Adedipe observes that, at independent in October 1960, agriculture was the dominant sector of the economy, contributing about 70 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employing about the same percentage of the working population, and accounting for about 90 per cent of foreign earnings and Federal Government revenue.^{xxiii} The early period of post-independence up to mid-1970s saw a rapid growth of industrial capacity and output, as the contribution of the manufacturing sector to GDP rose from 4.8 per cent to 8.2 per cent. Adedipe further argued that, this pattern changed when oil suddenly became of strategic importance to the world economy through its supply-price nexus.^{xxiv} One of the positive impacts of the oil economy boom according to Aluko, is that efforts to reconcile with geographic neighbours and achieve a sub-regional leadership role were facilitated by Nigeria's boom.^{xxv}

A state that has a high level of unemployment due to low absorptive capacity, or whose economy is not effectively in the hands of its citizens or that is dependent on importation for its needs may not be truly independent and may be unable to fashion independent foreign policy objectives. In general terms, economic development has remained for a long time one of the principle objectives of the various Nigeria administrations. The result is that Nigeria's foreign policy has been conditioned by economic consideration.^{xxvi} Therefore, Aluko has identified four means through which Nigeria have been trying to improve her economies through the foreign policies. They are: maintaining close relationships with key industrial nations, promoting inter-African economic co-operation, the formation of custom, union and through Bilateral Trade Pacts.^{xxvii} Though all these attempts have not really brought about the much-desired economic development, they have remained the major motivating factors in our Foreign policy.

Nigeria is a mono-cultural economy with oil as the chief foreign exchange earner. Being a backward, import dependant, and vulnerable economy, with a heavy debt burden, has affected Nigeria's alliance and stand on world affairs. Naturally, she would not want to hunt her traditional trading partners and those from whom she is perpetually seeking debt relief. This has constrained the nation from pursuing an independent and dynamic foreign policy. The dependency syndrome that characterises third world economies is a product of the incapacity of their national economies to independently fend for themselves. Also, the level of sophistication of an economy in terms of its productive forces and level of diversification determine its relative strength in the international arena. Thus, a state with mono-cultural economic base, no matter the type of product and its saliency internationally, is structurally incapacitated to pursue a vigorous foreign policy.

It should be noted that the economic fortunes of Nigeria has always influenced the pace or tempo of its foreign adventures. According to Chukwu, Nigeria one of the giants of Africa in terms of economy, population and military strength was instrumental in helping the South Africans rid themselves of the oppressive rule of the apartheid regime.^{xxviii} The oil boom of the 70's, oiled Nigeria's commitment to the de-colonisation struggles of the period, hosting of FESTAC 77 and its big brother role in Africa. The Gulf windfall helped Babangida in his

ECOMOG adventure. The point been made here, is that since pursuing a vibrant foreign policy is expensive Nigeria's external activities seem to fluctuate with its economic fortunes.

Political Factor:

The type of government operational in a state is essential in determining its foreign policy thrust. Like any other developing heterogenous society faced with the challenges of finding unity in diversity that first civilian republic of Nigeria displayed political inadequacies for pursuing an assertive foreign policy. The Nigeria domestic environment was steeped in the tradition of ethnic polities. Consequently, the political parties that emerged were divided along ethnic lines, most of them owing their principal allegiance to their ethnic groups.^{xxix} Some institutions have come to influence the activities of the government though not in a very profound manner. The press, student's religious bodies, and other pressure groups have come to constitute a noticeable opposition force to the government especially during military rule, due to the absence of organised opposition groups. The pressures being excited on the government in power moderates its foreign policy actions. For instance, the 1960 Anglo Nigerian Defense Pact which was abrogated due to the opposition from Nigerian students and other bodies.

The Constitution:

The constitution is the promotion of African unity (of which Nigeria is a unit) world peace, international co-operation and understanding, consonant with the traditional or enduring objective of Nigeria's foreign policy,^{xxx} the constitution specifically states that, "the state shall promote African unity as well as the local, political, economic, social and cultural liberation in Africa."^{xxxi}

The constitution is a document that details the processes, procedures and rules through which an organisation is governed. It set the rules, regulations and structure guiding document for exercising state power. It therefore sets out the broad outlines of Nigeria's foreign relations. Under the fundamental objective and directive principles of state policy, it specifies the foreign policy objective of Nigeria. It is therefore the duty of the government to pilot the affairs of the country within this broad policy framework.

Nigeria is also a signatory to numerous treaties, which though international, are automatically part of our municipal law. These treaties also shape our foreign policy formulation and implementation.

Idiosyncratic factor:

The duty of fashioning the foreign policy of the country falls on the government of the day. According to Akinyemi, constitutional provisions form the skeleton: they are the bare bones. It is the personality of the people running the system that puts the flesh on the skeleton giving us the recognisable form.^{xxxii}

The crucial importance of personality and psychological factors as a determinant of foreign policy appears to be succinctly articulated by Akinyemi, what Rosemau calls the 'idiosyncratic variable',^{xxxiii} should not be under played in any analysis of Nigeria's external behaviour, especially the fact that foreign policy is largely determined by the Executive almost to the fact exclusive of other relevant groups.

It is quite true that in Nigeria, like most other developing countries, power has always been personalised to the extent that whatever a regime does is more or less a reflection of the man who occupies the seat of president. Foreign policy actions are not immune from this personalisation of power, and are even the area where it manifests most. The field of foreign

affairs is often regarded as the special presence of the president.^{xxxiv} Nigeria's external relations from independence till date can be said have reflected to a very large extent the character of her leaders. Thus the personal style and idiosyncratic of our past leaders have made a study of our foreign relations a study of regime types, since there is hardly a standard pattern of behaviour. It should be noted that Nigeria's relations with her neighbours and the world at large have always changed with its leaders.

The point been made here is that without discounting the importance of other factors, the nature and character of Nigeria's leaders is a major determinant of the nation foreign policy.

Military Factor:

The basic aims of national security, defense and self-preservation have been one of the priorities of Nigerian government.^{xxxv} The reality of international policies requires that Nigeria re-examine its military preparedness, for foreign policy cannot be successful without the attribute capable of protecting national interests. In this regard, Nigeria in the future will have to increase the size of its armed forces and began a long-term modernisation programme in terms of education, training and equipment. Secondly, is for the country to develop a military industrial complex. Its critical role in creating a viable productive capacity and military capability cannot be underscored. Brazil is one country where the positive effects of the development of the armament industry have been most viable. In the case of Brazil, they have utilised economic growth to promote military power. The capability of a state's military formation is dependent on several empirical referents such as the size of the armed forces and other ancillary security formations, technology available to them, the source, quality and sophistication of their weaponry and battle-readiness of the armed forces in terms of qualification and training as well as the capacity to satisfy their complex needs.^{xxxvi} The state of modernity of military skill and security infrastructure is an important determinant of a state's capability to formulate and defend its objectives. The military future for Nigeria cannot be realised in the absence of a healthy economy. The economy cannot sustain an armed establishment that spends nearly 75 per cent of its budget on personnel.^{xxxvii}

Interest/Pressure Group:

In most organised polities, there is usually a built-in influence system- a term used as a synonym for interest or pressure group politic. Influence may take the form of demand on or support for government policies.^{xxxviii} Nevertheless, it provides the basis of interaction between the rules and the citizens, particularly the citizens who have basic interests to project. Viewed from a broad perspective, the policy-influence system serves variously as a barometer, a mirror, and pillar for the decision makers. According to Coplin, the policy influences also make demands on the policy makers, which, if not satisfied in one way or another may lead to a 'partial or total withdrawal of support.'^{xxxix} The decision makers may choose to respond to these demands or ignore them; the important assumption here is that groups formed on the basis of shared values or attitudes exist in every state, and they make demands and attempt to influence policy decision through various means.

The Decision-Making Process:

Foreign policy like domestic politics is products of various processes. The elites which make these policies are human beings, who have their individual preference, world views, and emotions. The decisions which they make to a large extent are reflection of their personalities. Like Frankel said, "Policy choices flow inexorably from the composite images of competing elites within the political system".^{xl} It is therefore very difficult to divorce the personality of a leader from the policies of his government. Suffice it to say that the personality of a leader

plays a very virtual role in determining the foreign policy of their countries. Nations foreign policies are made to reflect the personal preferences of the nation's leaders. The Afro nationalistic zeal of Murtala Mohammed reflected greatly in his decolonisation stance in Africa. Babangida's idea of a great Nigeria informed his economic diplomacy as Nigeria's big brother role in Africa, while Abacha's criminality and dictatorial tendencies reflected in his "Area Boy" diplomacy.^{xli}

Conclusion:

The foreign policy of a nation is conceived in the minds of the men who subscribe to certain fundamental beliefs relating to the distribution of power in society, the proper function of government and a particular way of life. The policy is expressed in terms of beliefs and behaviour, though custom and tradition is conditioned thereby.

There is considerable speculation as to whether ideology per se constitutes one of the vital interests of a nation. At times a leader makes use of ideology merely to justify his policy or behaviour in terms which are acceptable to his countrymen. But on other occasions, a nation professing opposite ideologies; live in peace with each other for a number of years. It was only real-politic which led to the signing of the Russo-German Pact in 1939, although they were ideologically pole apart. However, the country evidence is also available. The foreign policy of the Soviet Union cannot be fully explained if we do not take into consideration "world revolution as one of its objectives. In her case, the expansion of communism was a bona fide goal. Hence Russian aggrandizement since 1945 aimed to achieve the establishment domination. However, the importance of ideology in the determinant of foreign policy should not be exaggerated. Often it is used to obscure the real facts of a situation or real motive of an biting rulers. Sometimes governments stand for certain ideas only to command popular support at home and preferably abroad also. It is, therefore, safer to maintain that value and ideologies do not fully determine foreign policy objectives, although they influence them. To quote Joseph Frankley, "while long rang objectives can be deduced from an ideology, the shorter the time scale the lesser the correlation between the aspirations and the actual policies".^{xlii}

Finally, it should be noted that in Nigeria like in any other country, the internal determinant of her foreign policy can at the same time serve as external determinant. A good example is the Nigeria civil war and Eneke and Odife argued that there is no contradicting the fact that the experience of the civil war substantially influenced the direction of foreign policy in Nigeria in the year under consideration.^{xliii} The reason being that, Nigeria who was clearly pro-West before the outbreak of the war, was disappointed with the role played by its Western allies during the war. Initially Britain decided to be neutral at the beginning of the war, and even when it finally decided to support Nigeria, it still refused to support her with heavy arms. Due to the disappointment by her Western allies, Nigeria had no choice than to turn to the other super power, the Soviet Union which immediately agreed to give her the needed arm to prosecute the war decisively. After the war, the country's policy towards the East changed drastically as it became accommodating to her, thus becoming increasing non-aligned.

Endnotes

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