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Nigeria's Foreign Policy in the Post-BREXIT Era

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Abstract

In 2016, Britain voted to leave the European Union (EU) in a move that is popularly known as Brexit. Brexit resulted from growing disenchantment by British citizens with the EU's dysfunctional and stagnated economic status, failure to address economic problems and an immigration policy that undermined the sovereignty of member-states. By leaving the EU, Britain decided to take charge of her own affairs. This move by Britain has some salient lessons for Nigeria which by virtue of her foreign policy continues to bear the burden of the entire African continent to the neglect of her citizens. Nigeria's foreign policies over the years have been focused on Africa to the neglect of the Homefront and this has negative implications for the country. In view of current realities, there is a call from experts for a review, re-evaluation and replacement of the policy. The aim of this paper is to assess Nigeria's Afrocentric policy, its challenges and suggest the way forward. The paper draws data from secondary and primary sources. Findings from the study show that Nigeria's Afrocentric policy has outlived its purpose and continuing with it will be burdensome to the country. Considering that the country does not have what it takes at the moment to undertake a continental task; it is suggested that the policy be replaced with an inward-looking and people-oriented foreign policy.

Keywords: Afrocentrism, Brexit, Foreign policy, Nigeria's foreign policy

Introduction

Brexit, meaning "British exit" or the withdrawal of the United Kingdom (UK) from the European Union (EU) has been the focus of International relations scholars since the 23rd of June, 2016 when Britain took a decision to leave the EU. Britain had been a key member of the organization for 43 years (since 1973) when it was known as the European Economic Commission (EEC) before it was renamed EU on 1 November 1993, to reflect the evolution of the organization from an economic union to a political union. UK's decision to leave the union came amidst growing controversies over issues such as inequality, insecurity, unemployment and immigration. Before this period, there had been calls for a referendum to decide whether the country would remain in the EU or not and although in 2012, Prime Minister David Cameron rejected these calls owing to pressure from many of his MPs and from the rise of the UK Independent Party (UKIP), in January 2013, he announced that a Conservative government would hold an in-out referendum on the issue before the end of 2017, on a renegotiated package, if elected in 2015 (BBC News, 2013). The unexpected victory of the Conservative Party in the 2015 general election with a majority, led to the introduction of the European Union Referendum

Act 2015 into Parliament to enable the referendum and on 22 February 2016, Cameron announced a referendum which eventually took place on 23 June 2016 with the result showing 52% in favour of the 'Leave' group and 48% for the 'Remain' group, setting the stage for UK's withdrawal from the EU (UK Parliament, 2015). Disappointed, Cameron announced his resignation and stepped down on 13th July, 2016 paving way for the new Prime Minister, Theresa May, Britain's second female Prime Minister. There are key lessons for Nigeria from the foregoing.

Since independence on 1st October, 1960 and despite grappling with issues of internal cohesion, insecurity, unemployment etc, successive Nigerian governments have focused on Africa in their foreign policies posture. Sir Tafawa Balewa Nigeria's Prime Minister laid the foundation for Nigeria's foreign policy after independence and all Nigerian governments have pursued this policy vigorously over the years. With time, Nigeria adopted the Afrocentric policy and under this framework, she committed huge resources to the decolonization struggles in Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, and anti-apartheid struggles in South Africa, even though she was geographically far removed from the theater of the struggles which was in the Southern African region (Pine, 2011; Murithi, 2005). In a bid to integrate the African continent, Nigeria played a central role in the formation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) while also being key to the formation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and she spared no human and material resources in tackling conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Togo, Guinea and restoring democracy to these countries.

While Afrocentrism has boosted Nigeria's image as a regional power, it has no doubt outlived its usefulness. Nigeria has not been able to address internal conflicts and growing unemployment and poverty. The economy is in such a bad shape in recent times that many Nigerians cannot afford one meal a day. As a matter of fact, some Nigerians now eat from the dustbin or steal pots of soup while some sell their children in exchange for food (Dachen, 2017; Nigerian Current, 2016; Utebor, 2016). The reality is that while we make Africa a priority and parade ourselves as the giant of Africa, hunger, starvation, inequality, insecurity and unemployment are the order of the day in the country.

It is obvious from domestic realities that Nigeria pursues an ambitious foreign policy which has become obsolete and irrelevant. There is therefore a need for the country to pursue a foreign policy that will take into consideration her domestic environment instead of engaging in what Ukaeje (1988) refers to as; 'naira-spraying Diplomacy- the process whereby we 'dash' or donate more and more naira to African countries just to demonstrate that we are a great power' that we are not at the moment. Paying more attention to our domestic problems as Britain seeks to do through her exit from the EU and America is doing through her 'America First' foreign policy is important since foreign policy is not only an extension but a projection of a country's domestic policy.

Although this paper discusses Nigeria's foreign policy, its focus will be on her Afrocentric policy.

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopts realism as a framework for understanding the subject of discussion. Realism or political realism remains one of the oldest schools of thought and most frequently adopted theories of international relations (Donnelly, 2000). It is often described as the dominant worldview in the study of International Relations (IR). Thucydides is credited with being the first realist author with his book *'History of Peloponnesian War'* in which he detailed the causes of war between the Greek City States. Other realists include; Machiavelli, Rousseau, Edward Hallett Carr and Morgenthau who made the theory popular through his book *'Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace,'* (Ajodo-Adebanjoko, 2017). Realists focus more on power and national interest and direct more attention to political security than to economic issues. They postulate a state-centric theory of international relations by asserting that nation-states are the main actors in international politics and work only to increase their own power and interest relative to that of other states. For them, international politics is a struggle for power between self-interested whose interactions are driven by competition. According to Morgenthau (1967):

international politics like all politics is a struggle for power. Whatever the ultimate aim of international politics, power is always the ultimate aim. Statesmen and people may ultimately seek freedom, security, prosperity or power itself. They may define their goals in terms of a religious, philosophic, economic or social ideal. They may hope that this ideal may materialise through its own inner force, through divine intervention, or through the natural development of human affairs. They may also try to further its realisation through non-political means, such as technical cooperation with other nations or international organisations. But when they strive to realise their goal by means of international politics they do so by striving for power.

According to realists, actions of States are determined not by moral or legal considerations but by considerations of power and interest (Morgenthau cited in Donnelly, 2005). Mearsheimer (2007) States that; “for better or for worse, states are rarely willing to expend blood and treasure to protect foreign population.....” Realists see the state as a rational decision maker that seeks to maximize benefits and minimize costs or losses but Nigeria’s actions in Africa run contrary to this (Cohn, 2012) which is why Ajere (2012) opined that Nigeria’s role in African affairs is perceived as more of that of a volunteer who seeks no gain in return for her services. The Liberian mission for instance was predominantly funded and executed by Nigeria on a conflict that did not directly affect her own security and at a time when the country’s debt stood at \$35 billion (Murithi, 2005; Annan, 1998). Nigeria is not geographically adjacent with most of the conflict areas where she has made enormous contribution like Liberia, Sierra Leone and Sudan whereas there are countries that are nearer to these countries that would have readily waded in. Some of these actions on the part of Nigeria are nothing but attempt to show off and portray herself as a giant when she is actually not one or to be fair to her, a sleeping giant at the moment. Nigeria has no doubt neglected her national interest by continuing to focus her

attention on Africa at a time when internal insecurity, poverty, unemployment, poor governance and corruption pose a challenge to the country.

Nigeria's Afrocentric Policy: An Overview

Nigeria's foreign policy operates within what scholars have described as the three concentric circles. The theory of 'concentric circles' as the framework of national policy was developed in 1983-85 by foreign policy thinkers led by Professor Ibrahim Gambari (Mailafia, 2010). The innermost circle consists of Nigeria's policy towards her neighbors in West Africa, the inner one is her policy towards the rest of Africa, and the outer circle is her policy toward the rest of the world (Ajulo, 2008).

Before independence in 1960 Nigeria's leadership potential in Africa was anticipated domestically and internationally (Ajere, 2012). For instance, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe referred to Nigeria as 'Nigeria-Africa' to symbolize Nigeria's inseparability from African affairs while in January 1960 former Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa stated that Nigeria will have a wonderful opportunity to speak for the continent of Africa (PAC Document, 2005). In the same vein, former External Affairs Minister, Jaja Nwachukwu at the UN General Assembly on October 10, 1960 stated that:

Our foreign policy is based on three pillars; the concept that Nigeria is an African nation, it is part and parcel of the African continent and therefore it is completely involved in anything that pertains to that continent and the moment Africa is affected, we are involved....Nigeria finds herself involved in anything involving the African continent anywhere, any square inch of African territory, we are involved...the peace of Africa is the peace of Nigeria (Akinterinwa cited in Ajere, 2012).

On the international front, Mugabe declared in 1982 that 'Africa is hollow without Nigeria' (Adebayo, 1999). All these attest to the fact that Nigeria has always been expected to play a leading role in Africa's politics and Africa's relationship with the outside world. Nigeria's potentials for a leadership role in Africa and the world have been as a result of her enterprising huge population, rich endowment of natural resources and a favourable climate. Based on the three concentric circles, Nigeria has since independence regarded Africa as the pivot of her foreign policy, a concept which has found expression in the foreign policy of both democratic and military regimes in the country.

The concept of 'Africa as centre piece' was coined by the Adedeji Report under Murtala/Obasanjo regime and is premised on the understanding that Nigeria's engagement in the international system will be looked at through the binoculars of Africa" (Pine, 2011). General Olusegun Obasanjo in 1976 defined Nigeria's national interest as comprising among others, the creation of a suitable political and economic environment in Africa and the world at large which will facilitate the defence of the independence and territorial integrity of African States and the promotion of equality and self-reliance in Africa and the rest of the world. By this Nigeria was expected to play an active role in Africa and champion African cause at the global level. This was based on the fact that Nigeria considered the pursuit of peace and enduring unity in

Africa as purely a function of historical role conferred on her by virtue of the fact that she has the largest concentration of blacks in Africa and the world. In addition, she feels she has the capability to be a leader in Africa because of her oil wealth, military strength and large population. Other factors which influenced Nigeria's afro-centric policy include threat perception and leadership perception. The Afrocentric foreign policy was further strengthened by section 19 of the 1979 Constitution which enjoins Nigeria "to promote African unity, total political, economic, social and cultural liberation of Africa", as well as "combat racial discrimination in all its manifestations" (Ajere, 2012). Nigeria's Afrocentric policy manifest in six ways; good neighbourliness, support for the OAU/AU, commitment to peaceful settlement of inter-State disputes and conflicts, anti-colonial pre-occupation, total identification with Anti- Apartheid Front and the Promotion of intra-African economic co-operation (Ajodo-Adebanjoko and Orinya, 2015). Nigeria showed a determination to pursue an Afrocentric policy when she became the first country to sever diplomatic relation with France in protest against the latter's testing of atomic bomb in the Sahara. In addition, Sir Tafawa Balewa played an important role in the events that led to the withdrawal of South Africa from the Commonwealth in 1961. This opposition to the racist and apartheid regimes in South Africa was continued by successive governments in Nigeria.

The policy of Afrocentrism was a laudable goal before the 1990s and the issues that gave practical expression to this were the relics of colonialism on the continent, apartheid in South Africa, liberation wars, ideological and proxy conflicts among others (Pine, 2011). Others factors include the issue of a shared racial universe, of cultural neighbourhood, of shared historical experiences and the ideals of pan-Africanism further lubricated the wheels of this foreign policy conceptualization. Nigeria assumed the role of a big brother because of her perception of Africa as a territory that has been terribly exploited, is very backward in the world, cheated by colonial legacy and capitalist manipulation and ridden with poverty (Ajere, 2012). Nigeria's Afrocentric policy was also informed by the attitude of some African countries and such powers as Portugal, France and Apartheid South Africa during the Nigerian Civil War. Their support on the side of the secessionists led to a change in Nigeria's attitude to African and pan-African affairs. For instance, by the action of these powers, Nigeria became more aware than ever before that these powers with the vestiges of colonialist and neo-colonialist interest in Africa had negative influence in the continent. Aware of this, she became an ardent supporter of Africa's Liberation effort as well as one of the leading exponents of the pan-African idea, especially in the area of economic integration and joint security venture. Although the country's pre-occupation with reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction limited the scope of her practical defense commitment in the continent during this period, it was obvious that the period of Nigeria's passivity and foot-dragging in African affairs was over.

Nigeria's ascendancy in the international system in general and in Africa in particular was the result of the Nigeria Civil War (1967-1970) which furnished her with one of the ingredients of power and the pre-requisite of a leadership role in

international politics; a huge army which had grown more than ten times its pre-war size (about 230,000) and was considered the biggest standing army in black Africa and twice than any African country (PAC Document, 2005).

Another major factor that conferred power on the country immediately in the post war years was the oil boom which changed the course of Nigeria's history particularly in international relations. Currently the second largest producer of petroleum in Africa and the sixth largest supplier of crude oil in the world, oil has been a commodity of unprecedented economic and geo-strategic significance and value for over four decades to Nigerian economy (Balouga, 2009; Watts, Okonta and Von Kemedi, 2004). With the oil boom of the 1970s Nigeria found herself in the position of prominence which earned her a position in the Committees on Mediation in the O.A.U especially on border disputes between member states and when for instance the Republic of Guinea was invaded by the Portuguese in the 1970s, Nigeria quickly offered her immediate assistance. As already noted this was due to the oil boom which shot her to the position of prominence. As Eze (2009) puts it, "...her influence over African matters was such that, if Nigeria wasn't at a table where African issues were discussed, it is incomplete." During this period, Nigeria's African policy was not only dynamic but also assumed an unprecedented militancy as she engaged in petro-dollar diplomacy in defense of African interest on the international scene. For instance in 1975, she swayed OAU countries in support of MPLA in the Angolan crisis and was also instrumental to the liberation of Zimbabwe and in the process earned for herself the appellation a 'frontline nation' and assuming permanent chairmanship position of UN Anti-Apartheid Committee. This era is often regarded as the golden period of Nigeria's foreign policy as this era witnessed a new dynamism in the country's foreign relations (Adefere, 2016). The Murtala Mohammed/Obasanjo regime pledged a commitment to the eradication of apartheid and Southern African Liberation struggles. The new activism was reflected in several areas: Nigeria's rejection of a policy dictation from U.S on Angola, Nigeria's financial and diplomatic support for MPLA in Angola, nationalization of British petroleum for selling oil to South Africa an action that sped Zimbabwean freedom and Nigeria became a mecca for liberation struggles and movements. On the eve of the commonwealth Prime Minister's Conference held at Lusaka, Zambia 1977, Obasanjo's tough stance at the conference hastened the Lancaster house negotiation that heralded an independent Zimbabwe. Babangida and Abacha did not deviate from this continental role. Babangida for instance pledged the sum of 50 million to liberation movements. Nigeria also played a role in the independence of Namibia contributing about US\$20 million to assist the South West Africa People's Organization in the 1989 elections and other preparations for Namibian independence. The country also contributed financially to liberation movements in South Africa and to the front line states of Zambia, Tanzania, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe, which were constantly harassed by South Africa. Other regimes have also committed men, material and money to various African countries. For instance, Nigeria has contributed immensely to resolution of conflicts in Sierra Leone, Congo and Liberia.

Nigeria was further thrust in the centre stage of the world politics by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) of which she became a member in 1971. The new prominence of OPEC in international relation catapulted Nigeria into the forefront of Africa and world affairs. With the boom in oil and the other factors already highlighted, Nigeria began tentative steps towards actualizing her potential not only for African leadership but also major role in international system which marked the beginning of an aggressive foreign policy.

In the area of economic relations with African countries, Nigeria sought to bring about economic co-operation and assistance, an effort which culminated in the formation of the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) in 1975 and since its creation in May 1975, Nigeria has been playing very prominent role in the organization. Nigeria remains a key member of this organization and the largest contributor in addition to being the highest contributor to the organization of African Unity (OAU) now AU, of which she was a key founder (Adefere, 2016). In 1981, Nigeria signed the ECOWAS defense protocol. Under this defense arrangement, Nigeria committed herself to combating any form of armed aggression within the sub-region. The signing of the ECOWAS defense protocol represented a landmark in Nigeria's continental strategy. It was the first time Nigeria formally accepted a firm defense commitment in Africa. Nigeria has also been active in peace-keeping operations in Chad. Nigeria's intervention in Chad in 1979, confirmed the fact that she had built up her defense capability to a reasonable level, that she could independently undertake troop deployment for peace-keeping and other lower grades of military operations outside her borders and especially in Africa. The later troop deployment to participate in the United Nation's peace-keeping operation in Lebanon and later OAU peace-keeping in Chad in 1982 is good example. Nigeria has also been instrumental to the formation of the ECOWAS monitoring group (ECOMOG) and has also contributed substantially to it in terms of manpower and money. The successful conduct of the multiparty election in Sierra-Leona and the establishment of a civilian government under Tijjan Kabbah again emphasized Nigeria's achievements in Sierra-Leone as promoter of democracy in Sierra Leone and Liberia, after contributing in enforcing and maintaining peace in both countries.

Generous aids programme and technical assistance in the field of bilateral relations has also been a feature of Nigeria's Afro-centric policy. This assistance is often through the African Development Bank of which it was a major benefactor. Nigeria has sent millions of Naira to some drought stricken African countries such as Niger, Chad, Burkina Faso, etc in addition to some like Niger Republic enjoying the supply of electricity from Nigeria while the country continues to have erratic power supply. In addition, many African countries especially East Africa have benefitted immensely from the country's technical aid programmes under which Nigerian lawyers and Judges have been sent to a number of African countries in addition to the Technical Aid Corps programme established in 1987 where young Nigerian professionals serve in other African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries where their expertise is needed. Nigeria has also provided scholarships and fellowships, training

facilities, grants, equipment, and medical supplies and security to various African countries.

Even though Nigeria in the late seventies came to accept the inevitability of a defense role in Africa, she took very little interest in continental defense in the early years of the country's independence. During this period from the First Republic and the Civil War years 1960-1970, Nigeria was pre-occupied with the problem of keeping the country together and had little or no energy to devote to African Affairs. In those early years of independence, she was mainly pre-occupied with consolidating her independence and coping with the problem of internal stability. During this period there was agitation by the minority groups in the country for their separate states and political unrest in the Western Region of the country among others. Partly as a result of these internal threats the strategic, deployment of the period was mainly inward-looking and localized. External defense agreement entered into like Anglo-Nigeria Defence pact was for the consolidation of internal security rather than for external defense. Apart from the fear of possible subversive activities teleguided by countries like Ghana under Nkrumah, there were no obvious external threats to warrant any ambitious continental strategy. This period represented the period that Nigeria played a hesitant role in African Affairs. Nigeria has often appeared to be sitting on the fence on important issues much to the detriment of our image and interest especially in Africa. For instance, Nigeria's support for the liberation movements never went beyond giving her financial contribution to the relevant OAU bodies. She resisted the establishment of offices in the country by the liberation movements. Nigeria was also one of the African countries who objected to the establishment of an African High Command. She felt the idea was not ripe at the time. Nigeria's continental strategy during the First Republic was therefore characterized by cautiousness, restraint and conservatism. She did not want to encourage any development in Africa which will portray the newly independent African state as confrontational to the western powers. That may explain why she did not support the call for an African defense system when during her participation in the United Nations Peace-keeping in the Congo (Zaire) the operation was hijacked by the West. Even her participation in the United Nations peace-keeping operations in the Congo was imposed on her by the force of circumstances as she did not want to be left out or allow the radical African countries like Nkrumah's Ghana and Nasser's Egypt to steal the show. This minimal commitment to African affairs did not change much when Nigeria sent a peace-keeping troop to Tanzania to replace the British troops in 1964. Her intervention was borne out of the demand for the replacement of the British troops with troops from an African country. There was no time during this period that Nigeria tried to articulate her defense policy to accommodate a coherent and visible peace-keeping role in Africa. All through the period of the First Republic, Nigeria's defense remained low and incapable of carrying out independent military operation outside her borders unaided. To be able to play the role she played in the Congo and Tanzania, Nigeria had to rely heavily on outside logistic back-up. Lacking the wherewithal to undertake a military intervention outside her borders, she adhered strictly to the policy of non-interference in internal affairs of other countries. She did not even attempt to

intervene in neighboring countries which had spill-over security implications for the country.

Evaluating Nigeria's Afrocentric Policy

Nigeria's Afrocentric policy has come under sharp criticisms. According to Pine (2011), the concept of Africa as a center piece of Nigeria foreign policy is also not grounded in considerations of economic growth and national development, and as such no matter how conceptually lush it may be, it remains substantially empty. Other than the boosting the image of the country and endorsing Nigeria's growing state as a regional military force in the early days owing to the qualified success of the operations and other endeavors, there is no doubt that the policy has more negative than positive gains. In view of this, there is a need for its review, re-evaluation and amendment for the following reasons.

In the first place the policy is no longer relevant because one of the factors that led to it such as colonialism is currently non-existent. Nigeria herself is a victim of a new form of colonialism 'neocolonialism' and cannot help other African states who are also victims. Besides, the oil wealth which gave impetus to her actions is currently not sufficient to meet the challenges within the country. While Nigeria is carrying out this policy of Father Christmas, the Homefront is neglected. For instance, Nigeria has aided countries whose economies currently perform better than hers. The money spent on some of the various endeavours is believed could have been used to better the lot of Nigerians at home in terms of socio-economic transformation and power generation among others.

Secondly, Nigeria does not enjoy the appreciation of some of the countries she has staked her human and financial resources for. In the heydays of Nigeria's sanction by the international community, South Africa was at the forefront of the campaign for its realisation. In recent times, there have been xenophobic attacks by South Africans against other nationals including Nigerians showing that they do not appreciate Nigeria's contribution to ending apartheid in the country. Beyond all these, some African countries see in Nigeria's interventionist policy in Africa a grand design for an imperial ambition. Perhaps, informed by this consideration, some African countries which have benefitted immensely from Nigeria's contributions in the areas of peacekeeping, have repeatedly shown ingratitude to her. In this regard, one has in mind Angola, Namibia, Chad, Liberia, Zimbabwe and South Africa which was responsible for Nigeria's suspension from the common wealth of Nations in 1995. In addition, during the election of Nigeria as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in 2009, Sierra Leone, Togo and Liberia indirectly stood against the candidature of Nigeria by voting for themselves when they were not listed for the election (Adefere, 2016).

Thirdly, the number of Nigerian soldiers who have lost their lives in peacekeeping operations is estimated to be over 2,000 (Francis, 2009) although it is believed that the number of deaths cannot be accounted for. Many officers and Soldiers have been rendered disabled and thereby denying the nation their good services while seasoned and young officers who could have contributed to national

advancement have been lost to peace-keeping operations in Africa, a cause that is not appreciated by many of the recipient countries.

Fourthly, despite huge financial expenditures and massive loss of human and material resources in the Liberian and Sierra Leone wars, for instance, Nigeria has not been able to reap any economic benefits. To date, one cannot tell one single Nigerian company involved in the post-conflict reconstruction activities going on in these two countries (Okolie, 2010). Also, despite her efforts, trade relations between Nigeria and most of the conflict states remained comparably marginal and unfavourable to the country in the post conflict era (Poku, 2008). Furthermore, the appointment of a Rwandan general, Patrick Nyamvumba, to lead the United Nations/African Union Hybrid Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), in place of a Nigerian is deemed unfair to the country (Okolie, 2010). Materials and equipment that should have been expended on country have been finding their ways of the country on self-imposed peacekeeping efforts. Thus, the country has been denying herself of some resources which would have made a difference in the management of her affairs.

Nigeria's Foreign Policy and Lessons from Brexit

The political implications of Brexit for the country deserve attention. The upsurge of nationalism in Britain could have a strong influence on secessionist tendencies in Nigeria. Despite the failed attempt for the independence of Scotland in 2014, in the wake of Brexit, the First Minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon has stated that Scotland would hold a referendum to remain in the EU. This will no doubt fuel agitation for independence for some of Nigeria's ethnic groups as we saw in the increase in the tempo of the quest for a State of Biafra among others. Commenting on the impact of Brexit on self-determination Utomi (2016) shared the same view when he stated that: "I have a feeling that this is a new dawn for plebiscite or referendum democracy. People are going to be asking why they should be in any union. It could be Sierra Leone; it could be Nigeria. They will call for their own referendum. Culture, trends and patterns tend to take on a global dimension."

Insecurity is a serious challenge for Nigeria's foreign policy and there is need to address this. Inequality or alleged marginalization has heightened insecurity in the country. Since independence, perceived marginalization by different groups within the country has led to secessionist tendencies. The first coup of 15th January, 1966 and subsequent ones were staged because of perceived inequality between the Igbos and Hausas among others. In 1967, the Igbos having been victims of northern killings returned to their country home in the East on the request of their leader Col. Ojukwu and demanded for a State of Biafra. This threw the country into a civil war from 1967-1970. The Biafra agitation rages to date. Other groups such as the Ogoni and others in the Niger Delta have demanded and continue to demand for a State of their own owing to inequality in the sharing of the nation's resources. Ogoni crisis which metamorphosed into the Niger Delta crisis continue to have both negative economic and political implications for the country. It will not be false to state that militancy in the Niger Delta region had a spill-over effect on the emergence of insurgency in the north where the Boko Haram group has demanded for a Sharia State. The group has

been responsible for the abduction of women and girls in addition to carrying out series of suicide bombing which has led to the death of many within and outside northern Nigeria and insecurity of the country. Other issues on the list of threats in recent times are ethnic crises, religious crises, farmer/herder conflicts and inter and intra communal clashes in different parts of the country. These have taken their toll on the country in terms of human and material loss. In addition, subversions and sabotage by individuals and groups opposed to government policies have led to the destruction of military, economic and political projects or programmes. Such acts have tended to jeopardize national security while revolts, violent demonstration and riots also tend to undermine civil order and national stability. Others include cultism, assassination, armed robbery etc which have all made life insecure for the Nigerian population. All these have constituted a cog in the wheel of progress of the Nigeria State. Not until recently, the Nigerian polity was dominated by the military. Nigeria must ensure the security of the polity by ensuring the security of her people because security is a value. It is a value because states are postulated suppliers or guarantor of domestic 'political goods', order, liberty, justice, welfare and the like which are captured by the Latin expression; '*Ubi bene, Ibi Patria*': '*where it is well with me, there is my country*'.

Another issue of importance is immigration which is closely linked with security. One of the key reasons behind Brexit was the issue of immigrants. Though Britain has been a member of the EU, it was never a member of the Schengen State as it had its own immigration and visa policies. In the wake of the EU's decision for member countries to open up their borders to asylum seekers from war-torn countries of Syria and others, Britain felt that with global terrorism activities, her security and that of her citizens would be compromised and therefore decided to withdraw from the Union. Nigeria has a great lesson to learn from this. Recently in July 2016, a single passport for Africa was launched during an African Union meeting in Kigali. The implication of this is a more porous border and increase in crime waves across Africa particularly Nigeria. A porous border can encourage the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and their availability to insurgents thereby leading to increased rebellion as we are currently seeing in the herdsmen/farmers' crisis across the country. Since 2006, Nigeria has ranked 15th on the failed state index indicating her growing susceptibility to collapse (African Union, n.d). With ill-equipped and inadequately trained security personnel, some analysts are of the view that internal rebellion could lead to the nation's collapse (Ajere, 2012). For a country already battling with internal security, we need to jettison the idea of a single passport and stick to our immigration rules. It must therefore be our cardinal security policies to frustrate attempt to jeopardize the country's political stability through collective decisions that are inimical to our security. Besides, maintaining an Afrocentric policy in the atmosphere of growing domestic instability and insecurity is not feasible.

Another important lesson in the post-Brexit era is the need to focus on economic security. Britain's decision to leave the EU was partly because of the need to strengthen her economy. If a developed country like Britain is mindful of this, Nigeria should be more mindful considering her volatile economy and what the

Minister of Finance described as a 'Technical recession' (AIT News, 21st July, 2016). The problems of mounting national and international debt, poverty, corruption, unemployment and underemployment must be addressed. In the wake of the fall in the price of crude oil and volatility of the market, Nigeria needs to diversify her economy to redirect the country from a mono economy which she became following the oil boom of the 1970s. Nigeria's unstable economic climate characterized by low balance of payment problems and huge internal and external debt is a source of security concern (Buzan and Weaver, 2003). In spite of debt servicing and repayment, Nigeria's external debt currently stands at an alarming rate of \$35.23 billion (Index Mundi, 2018). This has a serious security implication for the country because a country that is heavily indebted becomes completely dependent on the sources of aid and the result is that 'the rich rules over the poor and the borrower becomes servant to the lender', thereby undermining the security of the dependent nation. Debt servicing and repayment threatens the internal stability of debtor states and by implication their security. Nigeria must address her debt problem urgently and for this reason, stop any further borrowing. Furthermore, there is need to study the debt problems of other nations and if need be, adopt their strategy in the solution of the country's debt problems.

To have a credible foreign policy, there is need for a solid economic foundation at home. A country of Nigeria's size and potentials cannot formulate a credible foreign policy for the future without first laying a solid political and economic foundation at home. The problems of economic development should then become the pro-occupation of our foreign policies. We should learn from the American example where the current government is emphasizing 'America First' in terms of a solid economic base at home in line with one of Clinton's American National Security speeches in which he had this to say:

A central goal of our national security strategy is to promote America's prosperity thorough efforts both at home and abroad. Our economic and security interest are inseparable The strength of our diplomacy, our ability to maintain an unrivalled military, the attractiveness of our values abroad all these depend in part on the strength of our economic (Clinton, 1995)

Societies that are characterized by weak and fragile economic base cannot formulate a credible policy. In the modern world, a strong economic base is a pre-requisite for security. Security means availability of food, shelter, employment etc. Security is not all about military hardware, military force or traditional military activity but about development. It is impossible for a hungry and famished population to be good human materials for national defence and security since they cannot even provide the necessary materials or surpluses for national defence of the territorial space and sovereignty of the country. Nigeria therefore needs a strong economic base to guarantee its national security. Nigeria needs to embark on a strategy which includes stringent economic reforms. Waste in the public sector must be eliminated and corrupt government officials and fraudulent businessmen (419ers) should be

identified and punished and where necessary be made to disgorge what they illegally appropriated. The sources of leakages such as the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), ports and customs should be reorganized for efficiency.

Brexit also demonstrated the beauty of democracy and the fact that the will of the people must prevail. Nigeria needs to learn from this. Just like the British people voted on a key issue, Nigerians must be allowed by their leaders to express their opinion on issues which affect them when the need arises. This may mean conducting a referendum if need be. In addition, Nigerian leaders must learn from Cameron who kept his word to not only conduct a referendum but stood by his decision even when the outcome was not in his favour. He did not cancel the result of the referendum on the grounds of a thin line between the 'Remain' and 'Leave' groups or succumb to the pressure for a re-run. They must therefore accept the will of the people when their (the leaders') policies are rejected.

Conclusion

Nigeria's foreign policy for over five decades has largely focused on Africa with little or no consideration for the nation's interest. In the wake of Brexit and considering domestic realities, Nigeria needs to reassess her role in continental organisations vis-à-vis their contributions to the development of the country. US president Donald Trump during his campaigns and on assuming office stated that the United States of America would henceforth look inwards and by this proposed an 'America First' foreign policy. By virtue of this, he stated that America would no longer be the sole or principal financier of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). As a result, for the first time in many years, contributions to the body by allies increased. Nigeria needs to take a cue from this as it regards bearing the burden of the entire African continent under the various regional organisations. In other words, she must ensure that contributions to these organisations be the responsibility of all the members by hesitating to give out money hastily and singlehandedly whenever there is a need.

Nigeria has to also make calculations of costs and risks in regard to power available for the pursuit of her foreign policies. This means that any policy that does not benefit the country must not be embarked upon or pursued. The whole issue of foreign policy is interest and interest is what benefits you and your citizens. Nobody goes to war or embark on an endeavor without hoping to win or make gains. We need to redefine our foreign policy focus on Africa. We can no longer continue to enrich and solve the problem of other African countries while the masses of our population languish in miseries and poverty. Nigeria alone cannot police the whole of Africa or liberate the entire black race. We can contribute our quota and channel it through the AU and other relevant organizations and let other African countries make their own contribution for the same course. Indeed, ensuring peace on the African continent demands a collective effort which cannot be a task for Nigeria alone and until we realize this, we will continue to make inappropriate policies that are detrimental to our national security.

A major challenge for the country is the fact that some Nigerians, especially the leaders, are still presumptive about the country's leadership role in Africa. Nigeria has enormously overrated her capacity for Leadership in the African continent. This overestimation of her capabilities to lead has led them to refer to the country in glowing terms such as 'Giant of Africa,' 'Defender of the Black Race' while many observers and scholars who think otherwise use such phrase as 'a crippled giant'; 'open sore of a continent'; 'a giant with clay feet'; 'hegemony on a shoestring', 'crumbling Tower of Babel', 'Africa's Gulliver faced the threat of becoming the Lilliput of the globe', among other terms to describe Nigeria and its relationship with the rest of the world (Jega, 2010). Nigeria has to discard the ideas that she is a superior economic and military power and therefore the champion of African affairs. A modest view of herself will enable her to devote more attention to her internal needs and pay less attention to the needs of the other African countries which are even better off than her. This is not advocating isolationism but emphasis is on the need for a more cautious policy to enable her harness her meager resources for the transformation of her potential power into real power. Great powers are countries with vibrant economies and while Nigeria by any standard has the potential to be a great power owing to her natural endowments among others, she is not yet one. Attention should therefore be paid to diversifying the economy from its current dependence on crude oil.

Inequality must be addressed at whatever level it is found. Gender inequality in politics, in employment and inequality in appointments and allocation of resources must all be addressed before they fester and create problems that would take years to resolve. Underlying issues responsible for the ongoing agitations in the Niger Delta and South-East, the Boko Haram insurgency as well as farmer/herder conflicts which are making lives insecure across the country must be addressed. Nigeria has no moral justification for keeping peace in Africa especially where there is nothing at stake for her, when she cannot secure her citizens.

There is need for proper education of the masses or citizens on critical decisions of government. If Nigeria is going to take steps that entail some cost to the Nigerian government and people, then the views of Nigerians should be sought. A situation where government does what it lacks with tax payers' money without their knowledge and consent is nothing short of impunity.

In sum, a 'Nigeria First' foreign policy that addresses the issues of poverty, unemployment, underdevelopment, corruption, inequality, leadership, governance and insecurity among others is advocated.

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