

## **Nigerian Foreign Policy and Engagements under President Olusegun Obasanjo's Democratic Administration**

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**Abstract:** Foreign policy is essentially about the projection, protection, realization and advancement of the national interest of a state. Countries all over the world do sign and imply what foreign policies are, in order to guide their external relations as well as protect, promote and defend their vital national interests. Foreign policy constitutes a critical component of a country's conduct of public policy as it relates to other actors (both state and non-state) in the larger international system or the external environment (Fayomi, 2013). On the basis this, the importance of foreign policy in a country's agenda, gives considerations to all actors in the international scene that affect the policy-making and implementation processes. The policy decisions include relations with other nations, international and non-governmental organizations, institutions and agencies, as well as individuals, in so far as they impact on the system of inputs and outputs. The dynamics of policy choice that entail the processes of formulation and implementation, sometimes conflicting, other times cordial, determine the character, content, direction and the possible impact of the country's foreign policy. This paper examines Nigerian's foreign policy and engagements under the democratic administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo and the extent to which the nation's foreign policy and engagements during the period approximates Nigeria's national interest. The paper contends that the regime over-concentrated her foreign policy and engagements mostly on African countries and issues pursued were not in any way commensurate with the nation's national interests. On this basis, the paper recommends that Nigeria's foreign policy should be urgently patterned towards achieving vital national interests such as the socio-economic growth and development so as to improve the standard of living of the populace, who in the midst of plenty are in penury. It is also posited that Nigeria's foreign policy should be fashioned to be result-oriented and directed at aggressively pursuing her interests not only in Africa but with the industrialized nations of the West.

**Key words:** Nigeria • Foreign Policy • Engagements • Democracy and National interest

### **INTRODUCTION**

With an estimated population of 170 million, expected to double by 2050 and a GDP of \$510 billion, Nigeria is at once the largest market and biggest economy in Africa. Add a growth rate that has been consistent at about 6% for the past several years and it is easy to see why the country has been a top destination for foreign direct investment in Africa. Foreign policy has been and remains, a vital element in the country's growth trajectory, but can the self acclaimed "giant of Africa" use it to fill a perceived leadership vacuum on the continent?

Nigeria as a British creation became independent as a sovereign state on October 1 1960. Nigeria appeared in a diplomatic scene in 1960 and would be 57 years in 2017. Nigeria is a mega-state. Even on a world scale, Nigeria is a major country. Larger than France or Britain, it claims over one-fifth of the people in Africa and has the largest black population. Considering its stupendous resource endowments and population, Nigeria is also called the "giant of Africa. Nigerians justifiably see themselves as the "giant of Africa" Nigeria is a conglomerate of various ethnic nationalities, this is why the country is governed by a system of government that operates in accordance

with the provisions of a Federal Constitution that has its main objective as the security of the country as one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign state. Since the attainment of independence in 1960, Nigeria has had at the national a total of level twelve different governments led by both the military and civilian leaders. With the granting of independence by the British imperial power, Nigeria was automatically bestowed with the sovereign right to conduct her external relations with other sovereign and independent states in the international system based on her vital national interest.

As aptly pointed out by [1], the compulsory involvement of all nation-states (Nigeria inclusive) in the web of international relations gave rise to the imperative for them to formulate and implement policies which will maximize their interest within the fiercely competitive global system. This implies that, once a state is granted independence by their colonizers, it has been conferred with unfettered sovereign rights to relate and be related within the international community and to formulate and implement its foreign policies. From independence till date, successive administrations in Nigeria have formulated and implemented diverse foreign policies, basically in line with or without taking into consideration, principles and objectives guiding Nigeria's foreign policy. This paper, attempts a unified overview of Nigeria's foreign policy and engagements under the democratic administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo in the Fourth Republic and the extent to which it approximates the country's vital interest.

**Theoretical Framework:** Nigeria's foreign policy and engagements under the leadership of President Olusegun Obasanjo could be explained using the four "Concentric Circles" of national interest. Hence this study adopts the **Concentric Circles Theory** as a framework of analysis. The theory was first propounded as a methodology of delimiting and prioritizing the strategic boundaries of Nigeria's national defense and foreign policy projection. The major idea underpinning the **Concentric Circles Theory** was to provide effective defense necessities within the West Africa Sub region [2]. According to the theory, the **first circle** represents Nigeria's own security, independence and prosperity and is centred on its immediate neighbour-states that are contiguous, which could constitute a basis for the defense of West Africa. At this level, the theory advocates a foreign policy of re-assessment, self-appraisal and defense of Nigeria's

strategic interest before West Africa and then the continent. The **second circle** takes into consideration the strategic interest of the states in the West African sub-region or Nigerian involvement on continental African neighbours. The **third circle** involves foreign foreign policy involvement on continental Africa issues of peace, development and democratization; and the **fourth circle** involves Nigeria's relations with organizations, institutions and state outside Africa [1].

This article is premised on the **four circles** to evaluate Nigeria's foreign policy and engagements under the civilian administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo in the Fourth Republic. Nigeria's role expectations at different "concentric circles" of her foreign policy have generated multiple role perceptions, thus leading to unintended role conflict. For instance, the policy of Afro-centrism (the policy of Africa being the centre-piece of diplomatic relations) which informed and guided Nigeria's foreign policy for the first four decades of her independence, culminating in the country's massive investment in material and human resources in the prosecution of the "war" against racism and imperialism in Africa yielded little or no diplomatic dividends for the country. [2], puts it most eloquently:

Unfortunately and disappointingly, many of the countries that have benefitted tremendously from Nigeria's largess often turned around to show ingratitude to both its citizens and the government itself...South Africa exhibited xenophobic attack against Nigerian citizens living in that country... Besides, the countries it has supported financially, diplomatically and strategically becomes but the butt of derision and envy by them. Some of these countries equally harbour or even offer training facilities for terrorists, while others campaign openly against Nigeria's bid to occupy one of the permanent seats of the United Nations Security Council. From these instances, it has become clear that the age-long philosophical notion of Africa as the centre piece of the country's foreign policy has become moribund, mundane and anachronistic [2].

**Conceptualization of Foreign Policy, National Interest and Democracy:** Several attempts have been made to provide a generally acceptable definition of foreign policy within the confines of international studies. Foreign policy not only shapes the country's identity and its

image but also determines its place and its future in the world at large. Foreign policy, like other concepts in political science is subject to different definitions as there are many authors with different persuasions. Discussing foreign policy poses a number of intellectual and practical problems though and theses begin with problems relating to the basic terms 'foreign' and 'policy'.

To [1] "nobody has really formulated a universally acceptable definition of the concept and probably nobody will ever succeed in doing so. [3], sees foreign policy simply as "an interplay between the outside and the inside". [4], "the foreign policy of a state usually refers to the general principles by which a state governs its reaction to the international environment." To [5], "foreign policy is presumably something less than the sum of all policies-which have an effect upon a national government's relations with other national governments." [6], foreign policy is that area of politics which bridges the all-important boundary between the nation-state and its international environment. The implication is that in the view of [7], foreign policy is made within the frontiers of the state but is directed at and must be implemented within the environment external of the state. It might also be argued that 'foreign' suggests, not only the direction but also a particular type of policy which refers to the area of government concerned with the vital security interests of the state. Some have argued that foreign policy as security policy should be shielded from the 'cut and thrust' that characterizes domestic politics. Hence, [8] insist that, foreign policy is the "strategy or planned course of action developed by the decision makers of a state vis-a-vis other states or international entities, aimed at achieving specific goals defined in terms of national interest". According to [9], foreign policy involves "the formulation and implementation of a group of principles which shape the behavioural pattern of a state while negotiating with other states to protect or further its vital interest". For [10], "foreign policy consists of decisions and actions which involve, to some appreciable extent, relations between one state and others". Some scholars though, find the specification of foreign policy more difficult. [11], for example, locates foreign policy between "the grand designs of a De Gaulle and the day-to-day reactions of diverse policy-makers to foreign events in the light of their habits of response". For the purpose of this study, we shall examine few of them. [12] defines foreign policy as "the search for the preservation of a country's independence and security, the pursuit and protection of

its economic interest". As [13] puts it, foreign policy "seems to penetrate all that is fundamental to continued human existence and to future human welfare". In sum, Foreign policy of a nation is geared towards promoting and protecting a nation's national interest. For the purposes of our discussion in this paper, we shall conclude that some of the above definitions as conceived by renowned scholars of international relations are in synch with research outcomes. The above definitions *ab initio* corroborate Nigeria's national interests which, according to [14], can be categorized as:

- Self preservation, i.e. maintaining the country's territorial integrity,
- Defense and maintenance of the country's independence,
- Economic and social well-being of the people,
- Preservation and promotion of the ways of life especially democratic values,
- Enhancement of the country's standing and status in the world, especially in Africa and,
- Promotion of world peace.

The need for foreign policy is a highly reserved and prized activity of every state in the international relations, be it the area of geography, population size, resource endowment, military capability, land mass and economic prowess. [15], sees foreign policy as "the system of activities evolved by communities for changing the behavior of other states and for adjusting their own activities to the international environment". In line with, [16], he posits that, foreign policy refers to "the actions of a state towards the external environment and the conditions usually domestic under which these actions are formulated". In a very simplistic but meaningful description, [10], defines foreign policy of any nation as "consisting of a series of discrete and identifiable decisions and deliberate actions of government directed to the outside world".

The above definitions point to the relationships between "external and domestic environment". Meaning that there can be no foreign policy if such policies does not involves the interplay between domestic and external environment and the role they played while a given nation formulate and implement her foreign policy. [17], tends credence to the above proposition when he defines foreign policy of any nation as "a product of the interaction of her environmental factors both internal and external". This equally implies that the foreign policy

behavior of any nation is to a large measure, influenced by both internal and external factors belonging exclusively to it. These factors may include the size, population, internal political situation, economy, natural resources, military capability, the structure of the internal system, membership of international organizations among others;

Another definition by [18], that is all-encompassing defines foreign policy thus:

Ideas or actions designed by policy makers to solve a problem or promote some changes in the policies, attitudes, or actions of another state or states, in non-states actors (e.g terrorist groups), in the international economy, or in the physical environment of the world (1992:82).

Such actions may include the promise of granting foreign aid, displays of military strength – such as the gumboil diplomacy wielding a veto in the UN Security Council, walking out of a conference, organizing a conference, issuing a warning in a diplomat note, sending arms and money to a liberation movement, instituting a boycott on the goods of another state or declaring total war. Some governments or leaders may also seek to exercise influence for the sole purpose of achieving or defending other goals, which may include prestige, territory, souls, raw materials, security or alliances. [19], posit that, foreign policies are the strategies governments use to guide their actions in the international arena. Foreign policies spell out the objectives state leaders have decided to pursue in a given relationship or situation. As [20] observed thus:

When we speak generally about foreign policy and the decision-making processes that produce it, we mean the goal that officials heading states (and all other transnational actors) seek abroad, the values and underlies those goals and the means or instrument to pursue them (2007:56).

Though Kegley identifies bureaucratic, geographical, global and historical perceptions influences as well as multinational corporations' interference as factors that impinge on the formulation and implementation of a nation's foreign policy, he however, counseled that while formulating foreign policy, variables that affect foreign policy choices, such as geostrategic location, military

might, economic powers and system of government should be taken into consideration. [21], sees foreign policy as involving “the formulation and implementation of a group of principles which shape the behavior pattern of states while negotiating with other states to protect, or further its vital interests”. By vital interest, we mean national interest. And a nations foreign policy is the expression of its national interest vis-a-vis those of other nations. Childs [15], argues that, foreign policy of a state is “the substance of foreign relations”. But, however, an outcome of foreign relations can only become foreign policy when those actions are supported or known by the government. This invariably, implies that not all international contacts and relations can be really associated with foreign policy. Finally, a working definition is important, to the authors: foreign policy is programme of action and in action carefully design by state to promote and protect its national interest.

**Link Between Foreign Policy and National Interest:** A country's foreign policy, also called foreign relations or foreign affairs -policy, consists of self-interest strategies chosen by the state to safeguard its national interests and to achieve goals within its international relations milieu. Foreign policy is a set of guiding principles that a country (or a group of countries) has or follows in handling and furthering its external relations. These principles are with reference to a particular country (or a group) towards another country, a region or an issue. Foreign policy of a country (or a group) would have the following key components: (i) Goals - Such as internal development of the country, maintenance of peace, territorial expansion or even ideological ones (ii) Priorities - Some principles would be more important than others. (iii) Timeframe - Priorities and goals may change with time. (iv) Formality – Foreign policy originates from a government or a formal set-up. Foreign policy and national interest are twin concepts in the realm of International Relations, thus a sound foreign policy is a product of national interest. National interest as a concept can be traced back to Italy in the 16th and 17th centuries England. In America, its use by statesmen began since the establishment of the constitution. (<http://fletcher.tufts.edu/research/2004/Shembilku-Rozeta.pdf>). The approaches are strategically employed to interact with other countries. The interest of a nation as a whole held to be an independent entity separate from the interests of subordinate areas or groups and also of other nations or supranational groups. Every

nation has a foreign policy to ensure that its needs are represented in the global community. However, throughout history, including recently such as during and after the Cold War, power has used in the international scene to push forward national interests and agendas, sometimes without any regard to the nations and people they may directly or indirectly affect. National interest is the condiment that adds taste to the execution and implementation of foreign policy of any state. A state without pre-designed national interest is doomed to fall to the intricacies of global politics. Today, the concept of "national interest" is often associated with political realists who wish to differentiate their policies from "idealistic" policies that seek either to inject morality into foreign policy or promote solutions that rely on multilateral institutions which might weaken the independence of the state. National interest is an important concept in the field of International Relations (IR) which scholars pinpoint to examine the action of states within the global system. Such examination, according to IR scholars, takes into cognizance some salient features of a particular state in defining the national interest. As would be expected, all independent states within the international system formulate foreign policies that take care of the domestic and external imperatives and most of the state's action and behaviors within the international system have always been interpreted from the lens of national interest.

National interest is used to explain the motives behind Nigeria's relations with other countries of the world. It is a public declaration of a country's needs and intentions based on an assessment of the current situation. The country's foreign policy is driven by a set of principles and objectives that the state intend to actualize in the course of her relation with other countries. The role played by national interests in building a civic nation deserves special mention. A popularly supported declaration of national interests consolidates people, helping them overcome divisions between different ethnic groups, social and economic status and level of education. A "common cause" usually brings people together. The legitimacy of a government that pursues a national interest policy increases along with popular support for foreign policy expenditures. If necessary, people can even agree to pay a certain price for the sake of important common goals. The uniting power of declaring national interests should not be overestimated, though, because different socially active groups and

political forces can assess them very differently. Clear public gains (preferably financial) from the consistent implementation of the declared foreign policy principles are a sufficient condition for such consolidation. A critical examination of the place of the national interest in the pursuit and implementation of the principles and objectives of Nigeria's foreign policy shows that there are four broad trajectories along which these interests can be located and analyzed. These are:

- Policy towards its neighbours
- Policy within the West African sub-region
- African policy and
- Policy within the wider global context. It is important to state from the outset that Nigeria has never shied away from using its diplomatic clout and economic resources to advance the cause of its real and perceived national interest both at the narrow bilateral and wider multilateral levels. However, in doing this, the country is guided by:
  - the principles of respect for the sovereign equality of all states, irrespective of their size;
  - respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states and non-interference in the internal affairs of other states; and
  - commitment to functional cooperation to promote African unity. Bounded as it were by less endowed Francophone countries such as Niger Republic and Chad to the north, Cameroon to the east and Benin Republic to the west, Nigeria always sought to cultivate and maintain cordial relationship with these neighbouring countries in pursuit of its national interest. It has done this in a variety of ways, ranging from outright monetary and material donations to the governments of Chad, Niger and Benin Republic and participation in joint business ventures like the Onigbolo cement and Sabe sugar companies with Benin Republic and the mainly Nigeria-funded Lake Chad respectively. Ordinary Nigerians had had cause to condemn their government's accommodating attitude of "turning the other cheek" to these provocative acts which they see as a serious negation of the country's core national interest.

Therefore, national interest, broadly conceived, is a guide to the formulation of foreign policy. It is not an end in itself but a means to an end. In other words, it is a method of reaching a goal; and in formulating such goals, core values and national ethos must be considered.

The central role that values play in defining national interest has been underscored by [3]. According to him "value describes the inner element brought to bear by the decision makers upon the process of making decision." The relationship between foreign policy and the national priorities agreed upon on the promotion of democracy, achievement of a balanced development and fighting terrorism in Nigeria. A good foreign policy operates under the standard of national interest of state or citizen. Professor Ibrahim Gambari, had articulated this direction of foreign policy based on what he perceived to be the discrepancy or asymmetry between Nigeria's foreign policy and the peoples' direct needs. He avers that:

Nigeria's foreign policy has never been directly related to the needs of the masses of the people; rather it is formulated, articulated and implemented in highly elitist circles. Hence, the country's foreign policy relations have reflected the needs and aspirations of a national super elite of business, bureaucratic, military and traditional ruling group... cited in [22].

In essence, constructive and beneficial foreign policy direction of the Obasanjo administration was intended to address and redress the perceived inadequacy inherent in concentricism: which was the fact that "concentricism was not at all an objective but a means; it was more or less a foreign policy tactic that had not been fully taken advantage of; and as a means to an end, concentricism had to have focus" [22]. Consequently, Obasanjo's foreign policy was largely shaped by the above philosophy, which guided his diplomatic approaches to issues in regional and global politics. He nonetheless, set out in achieving this lofty principle through a number of approaches. The most visible was his deliberate decision to personally embark on shuttle political diplomacy, earning him the title of the most travelled Nigerian Head of State [23-25].

**Democracy:** Although democracy is often simply defined as "people's rule", the definition of the concept which always and readily comes to mind at the mention of the word is as given by Abraham Lincoln, who in its "classical sense" defines democracy as "government of the people, by the people and for the people". Harris, who critically examines Lincoln's definition, lucidly observes that:

It is certainly possible to have government of the people and no government would claim that it did not have support of the people to give it legitimate status. The whole idea of elections is that they

enable electors to choose their representatives from those recommended to them, usually by political parties. Yet when elections are badly or dishonestly conducted, as they are in some states in Africa and Asia (even as fraudulent as the elections which brought President Olusegun Obasanjo into office in office in 2003-emphasis min), the government which emerges still tends to describe itself as having the support of the people (1983, 203).

On the idea of government by the people, he argues further that, it is an impossible proposition because the "people" cannot actually "rule". And that the people have to rule by means of their representatives, who are in turn guided by the Cabinet, or by their party. On government for the people, he said government is for the best interest of the people. He submits that Lincoln's three really means representative government. In the view of [26], a representative government exists where the electorate chooses its political leaders and ensures accountability by such leaders; and a democratic system of government in which the people elect representatives to act as their agents in making and enforcing laws and decisions;

The "operational definition" of democracy adopted for this study and as given by [27] is that:

Democracy is a form of government organized in accordance with the principles of Popular Sovereignty, Political and Economic Equality, Popular consultation and Majority Rule.

The principles of popular sovereignty requires that the basic governmental decision-making power be vested in all members of the community or in particular person(s) and that community alone has the right to delegate this ultimate power to an individual or a collectivity. Corroborating the above standpoint, Hoffman and Graham posit that:

Democracy involves both direct participation and representation and representation needs to be based on a sense that the representative can empathize with the problem of her constituents (2006:104).

The above definition explains in clear terms that democracy is all about representation and its basic function include problem-solving and is development oriented. It is based on the above assertion that [28] is of the opinion that, "Democracy is about issues, policies and national development. One of its essential ingredients is

making allowance for a wide choice of issues, programmes and plans and will uplift humanity from the morass of poverty, deprivations and ignorance". [29], however, notes that "all states today profess to be democracies because a democracy is what it is virtuous for a state to be".

**Principles Underlying Nigeria's Foreign Policy:** Nigeria derives her foreign policy objectives from two main sources namely: the Nigerian Constitution and the actions of the leaders, which are dynamic and reflective of the policy thrust of any administration in power. Beginning with the Tafawa Balewa's government, the thrust of Nigeria's foreign policy was spelt out in the following terms:

- The sovereign equality of all African States;
- The respect for independence, sovereign and territorial integrity of all African States;
- Non-interference in internal affairs of other African States;
- Commitment to functional cooperation as a means of promoting African States;
- Total eradication of racism and colonialism from Africa [30-33].

It is pertinent to note here that, the above foreign policy thrusts were grossly afro-centric and did not take into consideration the fourth platform of the concentric circles that seeks to manage Nigeria's relations with multilateral organizations, institutions and states outside African continent.

Again, the Constitution of the [34] specified Nigeria's objectives at the external level as follows:

The state shall promote AFRICAN Unity as well as the total political, economic, social and cultural liberation of Africa and all other forms of international cooperation conducive to the consolidation of universal peace and mutual respect and friendship among all people and states and all combat racial discrimination in all its manifestations [33].

Further, in Section 19 (a-e) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, we find enshrined the fundamental objectives and directive principles of foreign policy, whose provision fall within the well known goals that have always underpinned Nigeria's foreign policy as follows:

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

The provision for the promotion of African integration and support for African unity clearly indicates a strengthening of policy on African integration, while the provision on promotion of a just world order indicates a willingness to cooperate with other countries of the developing world in challenging global structure of inequality. As further pointed out by [32], provision for the implementation of treaties would be found in Chapter 1, section 12; and on War, in section 5 (4a-b) and sub-section 5. These provisions tried to delimit the extent of powers exercisable by the President, National Assembly and State Assemblies.

**Foreign Policy and Engagements, 1999-2007:** The death of General Sani Abacha on the 8th of June, 1998, brought General Abusalami Abubakar to the helm of the nation's affairs. On assumption, he set up a transitional programme of return to civilian rule. The programme transformed into political parties with the emergence of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, the presidential candidate of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) who won the presidential election of 1999. On May 29, 1999, Olusegun Obasanjo was officially sworn in as the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria with Alhaji Atiku Abubakar as the vice. On assumption of office as president, Obasanjo made diplomatic moves to redeem the battered and shattered image of the country which was as a result of the unending transition to democracy, increase in the abuse of fundamental human rights and the regular killing of innocent citizens in the 1990s. This led to the several imposition of international sanctions on Nigeria as result of military involvement in politics. President Obasanjo's second (civil) administration was faced with the immediate challenge on how to transform Nigeria from a Pariah State, shunned and treated with contempt by the international community to a respectable and responsible nation, contributing its quota in making the world a safe and.

healthy place for all. Obasanjo therefore was bent on reintegrating Nigeria into the global economy-and politics. In his inaugural address in Abuja, May 29, 1999, president Obasanjo left no one in doubt about the thrust of his foreign policy and his intention to return Nigeria to the centre stage of global politics.

Nigeria once a respected country and key player in international bodies became a Pariah nation. We shall pursue a dynamic foreign policy to promote friendly relations with all nations and will continue to play a constructive role in the United Nations and OAU and-other international bodies. We shall continue to honour existing agreements between Nigeria and other countries. It is our firm resolve to restore Nigeria to her position in the comity of nation [35].

However, with the return to democracy to Nigeria the new leadership under this administration came to realize that there were new forces, in the international system, which were turning the world into a “global village”. They acknowledged that the “new millennium” was being shaped by “forces of globalization”. They viewed the new forces with apprehension, describing its implication for the underdeveloped countries as “hallow and dubious value” because it did not seem to address the critical problems of disease and poverty which constituted the “modern-day threat to world peace and security” [36]. Therefore, stressed the need for the “world community” to evolve a new system of international cooperation that would “eliminate abject poverty throughout the world and integrate the developing countries into the globalized world economy”. The foreign policy and engagements of Nigeria under democracy, from 1999 to 2007 was the foreign policy and programmes under President Olusegun Obasanjo. Nigeria successfully transited to democratic rule on May 29, 1999 after a long period of governance by successive military dictatorial regimes and the birth of democratic government was greeted with high hopes and expectation sin the belief that a new dawn had eventually been ushered-in. The world over, such expectations were informed by the fact that democracy is regarded as the best form of government, which offers better opportunities for emerging states and its challenges especially in this era of globalized world. The views of the emerging states like Nigeria are a good example of such on our external relations. As Agbu [33], argues further:

The implication of this development for Nigeria’s foreign relations is important, especially when

juxtaposed with the foreign policy style of the previous military administrations. Again, the economic scenario substantially changed with the deepening of economic globalization and economic reforms in various sectors of the economy.

On assumption of office, President Obasanjo declared his intension to chart a new course for Nigeria domestically and internationally. As aptly pointed out by [32], at the domestic level, the administration promised respect for human rights; the consolidation of the hard-won democracy, strict adherence to the universal values of transparency; accountability and good governance; a war on corruption; and a campaign for national rebirth. At the international level, the policy thrust was aimed at an African renaissance and a renew of the Pan African spirit. The realization of the above imperative caused President Obasanjo to embark on foreign policy and engagements, which few important ones are enumerated hereunder.

- At the multilateral level, President Obasanjo’s had made the presence of Nigeria well felt with several trips abroad to attend sessions of the United Nations (UN); Goup 77 (G77), Group 8 (G8); Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF); World Economic Forum (WEF); United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); Non-Aligned Movements(NAM); Commonwealth Organizations; Africa Union (AU); Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); and many other organizations and specialized committees.
- On bilateral aspects, President Obasanjo government either visited on a number of occasions or sent emissaries to South Africa, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Morocco, Republic of Niger, Algeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, Botswana, Togo, Zimbabwe, Uganda and Sao Tome and Principe. Others include Zambia, Sierra, Leone, Equatorial Guinea, Burkina Faso, Republic of Benin, Namibia, Senegal, Mali, Ghana, Libya, Gabon, Liberia and Sudan. President Obasanjo was also at the United State of America (USA), Brazil, Venezuela, Panama, Mexico, Jamaica, Cuba and Barbados, among others [4].

Though critics argue that, the President’s diplomatic shuttles were unnecessary, it has been pointed out that, due largely to these visits, Nigeria’s diplomatic relationship with these nations had remained stable:

- Nigeria under President Olusegun Obasanjo played a pivotal role and initiative in drawing up the Constitutive Act of Africa Union (AU), the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). Also under NEPAD, Nigeria initiated Joint Africa/G8 plan to enhance Africa's capability to undertake Peace Support Operations [37].
- Nigerian commitment, towards solving African problems, could also be seen in various peace and mediation talks she hosted. These include, hosting of mediation talks between Sudanese government and Darfurian rebel factions. She also mediated severally between various rebel factions in the Liberian crisis and eventually granted asylum to the former Liberian President Charles Taylor in order to end crisis in that country.
- In 2003, a group of soldiers led by Major Fernando Pereira "Cobo" toppled the democratic government of Sao Tome and Principe and seized power from President Fradique de Menezes while attending the 6<sup>th</sup> Leon Sullivan Summit in Abuja [38]. Nigeria was in the vanguard of the restoration of the democratic government there. President Obasanjo headed the "International Mediation Group" (IMG) that negotiated and restored the government. Nigeria also donated US \$50,000 to the government of Sao Tome and Principe Towards the country's July 2006 Presidential elections.
- President Obasanjo's government also succeeded in ensuring that due constitutional process was followed in installing democratically elected President in Togo after the death of President Gnassingbe Eyadema in February 2005.
- During the period under review, Nigerian Armed Forces were actively involved in peacekeeping mission in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Sudan Nigeria also sent Military Observers (MILOBS) to trouble spots to help keep the peace, like in Kuwait, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Sudan.
- Nigeria contributed towards the management and resolution of the conflict in Cote d'Ivoire and used diplomacy to avoid a disguised military coup in Togo and facilitated an election that provided a basis for a government of National Unity and Reconciliation.
- Nigeria was also instrumental in the evolution and enactment of Article of the AU Charter, which declared unlawful take-over of government in Africa as illegal. President Obasanjo in his address at the Fifty-Fourth Session of the United Nations General Assembly on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1999 (cited in Agbu, 2007) stated:... "Forceful and undemocratic changes of government will no longer be overlooked or tolerated.... It is our duty and moral responsibility to treat our citizens decently and humanly".
- On debt rescheduling and cancellation, [31] and [32] posits that  
*Nigeria had an activist foreign policy under President Obasanjo. He launched a campaign for debt relief, which has been globally acclaimed and yielded for Nigeria the cancellation of over \$18 billion of her debt to the Paris, club and later exit of Nigeria from its indebtedness to the London Club of Creditors.*
- The relationship between Nigeria and Cameroon since assumption of office by President Obasanjo in 1999 was centered on crisis over the oil-rich Bakassi Peninsular. Though the International Court of Justice (ICJ) had passed its judgment in favour of Cameroon, via what some critics called diplomatic blunders. President Obasanjo embarked on diplomatic moves in search of a political solution to the crisis without prejudice to the ICJ ruling. This moves finally led to the signing of the Green Tree Agreement.
- The administration also attempted a resolution of some of the distortions inherent in the domestic structure of Nigerian foreign policy. Such steps included the efforts geared towards the reconciliation of Nigerians, who suffered devastating operation and violation of human rights under the previous regimes.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although Nigeria's foreign policy under President Olusegun Obasanjo's democratic government has helped to improve the country's national image and ensure effective exercise of the country's sovereignty and economic, political and peacekeeping/peace-building in African continent, among others, Nigeria played less meaningful role in the then global diplomatic scene. A cursory look at the various engagements made by the regime reveals over-concentration of Nigeria on Africa issues. Nigeria's foreign policy outside continental Africa is vague, insignificant and not anchored on principles that would confer on Nigeria robust political or economic advantage at the international level. Nigeria's role expectations at different "concentric circles" of her foreign policy have generated multiple role perceptions, thus leading to unintended role conflict. For instance,

the policy of Afro-centrism (the policy of Africa being the centre piece of diplomatic relations) which informed and guided Nigeria's foreign policy for the first four decades of her independence, culminating in the country's massive investment in material and human resources in the prosecution of the "war" against racism and imperialism in Africa yielded little or no diplomatic dividends for the country.

That Nigeria's engagements towards an Africa agenda in the areas such as peace keeping missions, as well as bilateral and unilateral aid she rendered in the continent to a very large extent show that the omnibus nature of the principle of African centredness in Nigerian foreign policy does not appear to be well aligned to the country's national interest or has not served the country's interest in a much more expected and commensurate measure. This implies that there is an apparent disconnect between national interests and Nigeria-African relations. It is apparent that the nation is doing too much in the African continent without corresponding positive outcome. While commenting on the Nigerian foreign policy framework Obadiah Mailafiya (cited in [37]) graphically captured the above scenario when he argues that "the centerpiece of any country's foreign policy ought to be that country itself if it seriously considers itself a rational actor on the world stage... Every single action ought to have been adjudged by how much it advances a nation's national power and influence and how much it advances her interest, objectives and purposes". Similarly, Proessor Ukaeje argues that "our false generosity abroad and penury at home are proof that we are pretending to be what we are not" – "Giant of Africa" and "African superpower" etc. Nigeria's pursuit and involvement in African affairs during President Obasanjo democratic administration has cost the nation huge financial and human resources, coupled with persuasive corrupt practices that reached its crescendo during that time.

Apart from concentrating on the first, second and the third circles in the concentric circles, which revolve around Nigeria's relations with the contiguous state, West African sub-region and at the continental levels, the fourth circle which seeks to manage Nigeria's multilateralism in the conduct of her foreign policy seems not to be effectively utilized. This implies that there is a missing link between Nigeria's foreign relations with highly industrialized nations of the West which would have been more gainful. That the little which Nigeria was able to achieve was due largely to a democratizing foreign

policy environment. Foreign policy is best served under a democratic dispensation as it enables flexibility. It is therefore opined that, democracy is an object of security and the instrument and mechanism for promoting foreign policy.

From the foregoing, the following recommendations are made:

- Nigeria's foreign policy should be more focused towards achieving vital national interest such as the socio-economic growth and development so as to improve the standard of living of the populace. In this respect, over-concentration on Afro-centric foreign policy should be checked.
- Nigeria's foreign policy should be re-ordered in the search for a fairer deal from the industrialized nations of the West; and this requires of the nation a more global approach to world affairs than was previously the case.
- Nigeria needs to put significant premium to developing diplomatic relations with countries such as China, Singapor and Malaysia among others, whose economy is fast developing based on their policy goals.

Since the nation's foreign policy and engagements seem not to be in tandem with the country's national interest, there is an urgent need for the government to convene a foreign policy summit to address issues such as re-defining the country's national interest, refocusing her foreign policy in order to minimize loss and increase gains, as well as trying it to the socio-economic growth and development of Nigeria.

- Nigeria's foreign policy goals need to be completely reappraised and must be fashioned to be result oriented and directed at aggressively pursuing her interest not only in Africa but around the world.
- Nigeria must carefully identify areas of convenient participation in international politics which could still guarantee the protection, promotion and preservation of her national interests.
- Now that Nigeria is seeking to become one of the first twenty most developed economics in the world by the year 2020 (Vision 20:20), one good approach to achieving the objectives is foreign policy, predicated on conducive foreign policy environment and democratic governance which international community is particularly interested in.

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