AFROCENTRISM IN NIGERIA'S FOREIGN POLICY: AN ANALYSIS OF HER ENGAGEMENT IN CONTINTENTAL POLITICS

Muhammad Shehu, PhD
Department of political science
Usmanu Danfodiyo University, PMB 2346, Sokoto
+234(0)8038370665
mshehuamb@gmail.com, muhammad.shehu2@udusok.edu.ng

Ismail Aliu
Department of political science
Usmanu Danfodiyo University, PMB 2346, Sokoto
+234(0)8137092984
ismailaliu2@gmail.com, ismail.aliu@udusok.edu.ng

DOI: https://doi.org/10.64633/wissj.v10i8.01

Keywords

Africa, Afrocentrism, Foreign Policy, Nigeria, Realism

Abstract

Research Problem
Afrocentrism has been a major feature of Nigeria's foreign policy since her political independence in 1960. Despite Nigeria's significant financial and diplomatic investment in its Afrocentric policy, its effectiveness in the achievement of tangible security and development outcomes for both Nigeria and Africa remains a subject of scholarly debate. This study critically examines this paradox.
Methods/theory
This study adopts a qualitative historical-analytical research design, drawing on secondary data from policy documents, text books, journals, newspapers and institutional reports. Theoretically, the study employs a realist theoretical framework to analyze Nigeria's foreign policy behavior within the continent of Africa.
Results
The study finds that, in spite of the fact that Nigeria's Afrocentrism has successfully given it the opportunity to function relatively as a regional hegemon and has facilitated substantial contributions to decolonization, peacekeeping, conflict resolution, democracy and institutional development (OAU/AU), its effectiveness is undermined by a gap existing between continental objectives and domestic vulnerabilities.
Conclusion
The study therefore concludes that Nigeria's foreign policy largely reflects its power-driven aspirations, yet it cannot remain viable without a corresponding emphasis on strengthening internal state capacity and revising its foreign policy goals so they more effectively advance national interest.
Key contribution to Knowledge
This research contributes to the literature by offering a balanced, critical

appraisal of Afrocentrism, moving beyond descriptive analysis to assess its results in light of the realist requirement of national interest.

Recommendation

The study recommends foreign policy reform that prioritizes economic diplomacy and domestic security, so that Nigeria's leadership on the continent is reinforced by a strong and stable internal front.

INTRODUCTION

Afrocentric principle has been a major feature of Nigeria's foreign policy since independence, which has its root from the popular speech of Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa that was later known as the Balewa Doctrine. This principle have provided direction and focus for successive regimes in Nigeria both military and civilian in the areas of decolonisation, peacekeeping, African integration and unity and economic diplomacy. Afrocentrism as a principle denotes that Nigeria's engagement in the international system would be considered through the lens of Africa (Ebegbulem, 2019). This means that Africa would be at the centre of Nigeria's external relations. Nigeria's Afrocentric policy is "an extension of Pan-Africanism which aimed at promoting and defending an African agenda to end colonialism and racist regimes, achieve unity, stability and sustainable development in Africa" (Ebegbulem, 2019:11).

While Nigeria continue to pursue African interest, the country battles with persistent insecurity, corruption, weak institutions, poverty, and unemployment among others. This has generated questions and attracted scholarly attention on the place of Afrocentrism in Nigeria's foreign policy. While studies conducted by scholars like Akinterinwa (2010), Chukwu (2023), Ebegbulem (2019) and Mbachu (2011) have provide an historical and descriptive account of Nigeria's Afrocentric policy. Others such as Akindeyin (2025), Egbe and Ushie (2022) and Tijjani (2024) demonstrated the extent to which Nigeria pursued its Afrocentric agenda in international politics and also highlighted the need for Nigeria to balance domestic interest with foreign ambitions. However, little or no attention on 'why' Nigeria continue to pursue African interests despite its domestic challenges. This study fill this gap by analysing Nigeria's Afrocentric policy in continental politics using realism as a framework of analysis. The study sets out to achieve the following objectives:

i. To examine the evolution and rationale of Nigeria's Afrocentric policy.

ii. To assess the effectiveness of Nigeria's contributions to continental peace, security and integration.

iii. To analyse the nexus between Nigeria's Afrocentric posture and domestic development challenges.

iv. To evaluate the theoretical underpinnings of Nigeria's foreign policy behaviour in Africa.

The study contribute to the existing literature on realism that states actions in international relations is largely motivated by the quest for power and influence. Realism provide insights on how Nigeria use the Afrocentrism as an instrument for power projection and establishing regional influence in Africa. The study focuses on thematic analysis of issues of Nigeria's Afrocentric policy on decolonisation, peacekeeping and security, economic diplomacy and African integration from the independence period to the Fourth Republic. In addition, the study is organised into eleven sections including introduction, literature review, materials and

methods, theoretical framework, Afrocentrism and Nigeria's foreign policy, four the analytical sections that discusses Nigeria's continental engagements, the domestic-foreign nexus, and conclusion and recommendations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Discourse

Afrocentrism

Afrocentrism is a philosophical perspective that emphasizes and promote African culture and civilization. It is "represents the totality of the historical, cultural, spiritual, and artistic worldviews of Africans from the past times to the present, in order to preserve African civilizations and to struggle against slavery, racism, colonial and neo-colonialism" (Tijjani, 2024:918). The philosophy is rooted in Pan-African movement which seeks liberate and integrate Africans nations and promote unity among them. Afrocentric policies came about following the emergence of newly independent states in Africa as a result of liberation struggles and the need to assist those still under colonial rule during the 21st century (Adedoyin, 2025). This partly explains why Nigeria immediately after her independence in 1960 became active in the liberation struggles and the fight against racial discrimination in Southern Africa. Afrocentrism in Nigerian foreign policy means that Nigeria will pay attention to African interest in her international engagement. Meaning that, the business of Africa is by implication the business of Nigeria in global affairs.

Foreign Policy

A policy is a laid down course of action in order to achieve specific goals or objectives. States as major actors in the international system, more often than not, usually developed a laid down rules and principles that would guide their engagement in world affairs. Thus, foreign policy would simply mean a nation's rules of engagement in international affairs. It is basically what a nation seeks to achieve and the means for achieving them (Chukwu, 2023). As nations interact in the international arena, there are certain objectives they seek to achieve, which are expressed as foreign policies. In reality, the foreign policy of any nation-state is an extension and the advancement of its national interest (Chukwu, 2023). Foreign policy in this regard, means the pursuit of national interest. Foreign policy could also be defined as "a dynamic process of interaction, between the changing domestic demands and supports and the changing external circumstances" (Frankel, 1979 cited in Chukwu, 2024:50). This means that nation-states equally pursue domestic interest in the international system. In essence, foreign policy means the pursuit of national interest, which encompasses both domestic and foreign interests.

An Empirical Review of Nigeria's Afrocentric Foreign Policy

Afrocentrism has been an important feature of Nigerian foreign policy since independence. Upon becoming a sovereign entity in 1960, the immediate Nigerian leadership felt the need to assist other African nations that are still under colonial rule in liberation struggles. This provide the basis for Afrocentric principle in Nigeria's foreign policy. While colonial rule has ended in Africa, Nigeria continue to commit herself to the Afrocentric principle in the conduct her foreign relations. This has generated questions regarding the place of the principle in Nigerian foreign policy and what Nigeria stands to gain from such. In a study conducted by Egbe and Ushie (2022) using secondary sources and adopting linkage theory. They examine the principle of Afrocentrism in Nigeria's foreign policy against the claim that it does not promote Nigeria's national interest. The study discovered that while Afrocentric principle is still much relevant in its essentials, Nigeria's domestic conditions which

contradicts her external engagement as cast doubt on her foreign policy generally. Therefore, Nigeria need to address her domestic challenges so as to give meaning and credibility to Afrocentrism (Egbe & Ushie, 2022). In another study, Tijjani (2024) examines Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy under President Olusegun Obasanjo's administration between 1999 and 2007. Using a historical and analytical approach, the study adopted concentric circle theory as a theoretical framework. The findings show that the administration of President Obasanjo commit itself to preserving the Afrocentric principle through the promotion of democracy, peacekeeping and economic development in Africa. However, the study contends that while Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy is altruistic, it may require recalibration to better align with national interests (Tijjani, 2024). From the foregoing, Tijjani (2024) and Egbe and Ushie (2022) have demonstrated the altruistic nature of Nigeria's Afrocentric policy and the need for Nigeria to balance domestic interest with its broad national interest in relation to Afrocentric principle.

Furthermore, Akindoyin (2025) also interrogates Nigeria's foreign policy focusing attention on the extent to which her commitment have been reciprocated by other African states. The also adopt quantitative approach relying on secondary sources of data. Constructivism was adopted as a framework of analysis. The study discovered that there is a persistent gap between Nigeria's expectations of reciprocity and the reality of limited support from African partners. The above studies have demonstrated the extent to which Afrocentrism has been pursued by the Nigerian leadership. The studies have also highlighted the need for Nigeria to balance her domestic interest with her foreign interest so as to give credibility to Afrocentrism in her foreign engagement. However, the above studies paid little or no attention to interrogate why Nigeria continue to pay attention to the problems of Africa when it is bedevilled with domestic challenges such as corruption, insecurity, bad governance, poverty, economic crises among others. Therefore, this study filled the gap by examining Nigeria's continental engagement vis-à-vis Afrocentric policy through the lens of realism as a framework of analysis. Realism provide insights on how Nigeria use the policy as a tool for power projection in continental politics.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study adopts a qualitative research design with a historical-analytical approach. Secondary sources of data such as books, a journal in edited book and academic journal articles were utilised in the study. These category of secondary sources were selected as they serve useful resources for thematic analysis of Nigeria's foreign policy, Afrocentrism, and continental engagements from independence period to the Fourth Republic between 1960 and 2025. The study also adopts thematic analysis in analysing the data from the secondary sources. This process involves: exploring the data by reading and re-reading them to become familiar with information and to form some initial ideas about the data; coding of the data; and developing findings in the forms of description and themes from the codes (Clark & Creswell, 2015). These themes were further categorised into key areas for analysis. These areas, as identified in the study, include decolonisation, integration, peacekeeping and security intervention, economic diplomacy and the nexus between domestic policy and foreign policy.

Table 1: Summary of Data Sources

Source Type	Example of Sources	Number of Sources
Academic Journals	Journal of Globalization Studies, Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Icheke, LWATI, FUDMA International Journal, Journal of Political Economy among others.	11
Books	Akinterinwa (2010), Chukwu (2023), Chukwu (2024), Clark & Creswell (2015), Grigsby (2012), and Mbachu (2011).	6
Article in an Edited Book	Sanda (2005).	1

Source: Compiled by the Authors (2026).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper is anchored on realism as a framework of analysis in explaining Nigeria's engagement in the international system vis-à-vis Afrocentrism. Key scholars in the realist school include among others Thucydides, Hans Morgenthau, John Mearsheimer and Kenneth Watz. The thrust of the theory is that states as the most important actors in international politics, are rational and unitary, acting in line with their respective national interests. National interests for realists are pursued through perpetual pursuit of power and security relative to other actors. Therefore, it is power that shapes state's behaviour in the international system (Chukwu, 2024). Realists further contend that the international system is anarchic owing to the absence of an overarching authority above states. This makes the international arena characterised by perpetual insecurity, competition and as well as possible and actual conflict (Chukwu, 2024). For a state to survive the anarchic international system, its foreign policy must be based on a state's need to protect and advance its own power and not on morality (Grigsby, 2012). A major implication of realism is that the theory provide insights on how states interactions are defined within the context of the pursuit of national interests which are expressed in terms of power and military security. Therefore, Nigeria's engagement in continental politics through Afrocentrism within the context of realism, can be understood as a tool for the advancement of national interest by demonstrating military capability, leadership role and economic viability, all of which are elements of power.

One major weakness of the theory is that it is state-centric as it downplays the role of non-state actors in international politics. Besides, the theory neglects how identity, norms, culture and values shape state behaviour and international outcomes. While these critics are valid, they overlooked the fact that sovereignty is the ultimate national interest that states seek to protect. States' actions and reactions is therefore influenced by the need for power maximization and not social construction of ideas or multilateralism as advocated by constructivists and liberals respectively. Despite these shortcomings, the theory offers useful explanation in understanding Nigeria's Afrocentric policy not as mere commitment to continental norms based on Pan-Africanism but rather as a strategic move towards advancing her national interests particularly in relation to decision making role in international affairs. Nigeria's active military interventions in African states explains her power projection in order to maintain regional influence in the African Union (AU) and assert herself as an hegemon in regional politics. Similarly, realism offers useful explanation on how Nigeria also use the Afrocentric principle as a means to maintaining dominance the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) thus using the West African sub-region as sphere of influence. The foregoing

could explain why Nigeria is advancing for an African permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

AFROCENTRISM AND NIGERIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

Afrocentrism has been a major feature of the Nigeria's foreign policy since independence. Its origin is traceable to the administration of Prime Minister Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, who made a remark while addressing the UN General Assembly in October 1960, maintaining that "Nigeria hopes to work with other African States for the progress of Africa and assist in bringing all African countries to a state of independence" (Akinterinwa, 2010:8). This indicates that the independence of Africa and its development motivated the Afrocentric posture of Nigeria's foreign policy particularly under the Balewa's leadership. Besides African independence and African development, Pan Africanism, the common historical experiences Nigeria shared with other African countries and the common identity in terms of race were other factors that motivated the Afrocentric stance of Nigeria in her foreign relations (Ebegbulem, 2019). During another address at the UN General Assembly on the 8th of October, 1960, Balewa reiterated Nigeria's commitment to African course thus;

> "So far I have concentrated on the problems of Africa. Please do not think that we are not interested in the problems of the rest of the world: we are intensely interested in them and hope to be allowed to assist in finding solutions to them through the organizations, but being humans we are naturally concerned first with what affects our immediate neighbourhood" (Tafawa Balewa, Nigeria speaks, 1964 cited in Akinterinwa, 2010:8-9).

Afrocentrism in Nigeria's foreign policy means that, Africa is at the center of Nigeria's external relations. In other words, Africa is the 'centerpiece' of Nigeria's foreign policy. In another dimension, it means Nigeria's engagement in the international system would be conducted through the lens of Africa (Ebegbulem, 2019) thereby giving it the attention it requires by promoting its interest and those of its populace. Afrocentrism in the foreign policy of Nigeria seeks to consider the 'progress', 'security' and 'well-being' of Africa as Nigeria conduct her foreign relations.

To show Nigeria's seriousness to its Afrocentric stance, the administration of Balewa paid much attention to the independence of African countries which were still under colonial rule. His administration also frowned at apartheid regimes in Southern Africa using all the means available to bring about the end of apartheid rule in South Africa. In 1961, Balewa's administration did everything within its capacity to ensure that South Africa was expelled from the Commonwealth. In addition, Nigeria incurred over 61 billion US dollars on her anti-apartheid campaign (Akinterinwa, 2010). Equally, when the President Sylvanus Olympio of Togo was assassinated in 1963, the first Nigerian Foreign Minister, Jaja Wachukwu, declared that Nigeria would not condone the killing of the leaders of her allies. Therefore, the principle of non-interference would not apply. The foregoing shows the level of Nigeria's commitment to the African cause. While emphasizing the Afrocentric posture of Nigeria's foreign policy, Jaja Wachukwu in his statement during the 16th Session of UN General Assembly on October 10, 1961, posited that:

> "Our foreign policy is based on three basic pillars: The concept that Nigeria is an African nation; it is part and parcel of the continent of Africa and therefore it is so completely involved in anything that pertains to the continent that it cannot be neutral and must never be considered as a neutralist country. We are independent in everything, but neutral in nothing that affects the destiny of Africa. The moment

> Africa is affected; we are involved…. The peace of Africa is the peace of Nigeria. Its tribulations are our tribulations and we cannot be indifferent to its future" (Jaja Wachukwu, 1961 cited in Mbachu, 2011:51).

The above statement by the then Foreign Minister indicates that Nigeria was ready to shoulder the responsibility of promoting the interest of Africa and ensuring its wellbeing, stability, security and peace. Perhaps, Nigeria's Afrocentric posture was intended to promote her national interest using Africa as means to the ends she seeks to achieve in the international system. It could also be that Nigeria seeks to position herself as a regional hegemon by playing the 'Big Brother' in African politics. In relation to the foregoing, Aluko (1981) cited in Ebegbulem (2019:11) provided a justification for Nigeria's Afrocentric principle arguing that:

> "Using Africa as the centre-piece of Nigeria's foreign policy is rationalized on the basis that Nigeria is better positioned in Africa to identify with and defend the legitimate interest of Africa than any other nation. The assumption has been that the independence of Nigeria would be meaningless if it does not lead to the total liberation of all African states. Nigeria had wished to use her population, size and resources as advantage to contribute and facilitate the collective interest of Africa and this mandate was consummated as Nigeria's historic mission".

Afrocentrism in Nigeria's foreign policy in essence denotes how central the issue of Africa is to the Nigerian politics. By implication, it became part of the feature of Nigeria's foreign policy following the need to eliminate colonialism and apartheid rule in Africa as well as the need for African unity and integration. Therefore, Africa's independence and its unity could say to be the circumstantial factors that accounted for Nigeria's Afrocentric stance in her external relations.

NIGERIA'S AFROCENTRIC POLICY AND THE DECOLONISATION AGENDA: A REALIST ANALYSIS

Since independence, successive Nigerian governments, both military and civilian have provided support for anti-colonial struggles and liberation movements in Africa in line Nigeria's Afrocentric policy agenda. Nigeria provided financial and military support for several liberation movements including the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), the Patriotic Front in Zimbabwe, the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) in Namibia, the Pan-African Congress (PAC) and the African National Congress (ANC) both in South Africa (Halidu et al., 2018; Chukwu, 2023). Besides, Nigeria equally provided institutional support by providing funding for the special operations of the OAU Liberation Committee (Ebegbulem, 2019).

While Nigeria's commitment towards self-determination in Africa showcases the Afrocentric posture in her foreign policy, the policy also served as the means through which Nigeria seeks to advance its strategic interests within the African continent. Realist asserts that the interests of states are best promoted when they acquire and maintain power relative to other state actors (Grigsby, 2012). Therefore, Nigeria's support for decolonisation and anti-apartheid struggles can be understood mainly as a means of gaining power and asserting influence in the continent, so that her interest can be better protected. By asserting influence in continental politics, Nigeria can project herself as a leader, which ultimately would place her in a better position of pursuing her national interest in Africa.

Furthermore, Nigeria had spent over 61 billion US dollars to support the elimination of apartheid regimes between 1960 and 1995 (Egbe & Ushie, 2022). Nigeria's spending of 61 billion US dollars is not merely altruistic but rather in realist terms, it is a show of

economic power. Nigeria's financial support allows it to sustain her commitment to liberation struggles and to also exercise influence. The use of both military and economic power serves as means of consolidating Nigeria's "Big Brother" role, while also enabling it to shape to issues in continental politics. Also, Nigeria deployed diplomatic instruments in its decolonisation agenda in Africa by supporting 144 out of 156 UN Resolutions on self-determination and apartheid rule between 1960 and 1980 which amounts to 92.30% of the Resolutions (Obiozor, 1994 cited in Mbachu, 2011). This demonstrates that Nigeria is a leading advocate of African liberation. By committing itself to international norms, Nigeria is in a way gaining international recognition and becoming influential within the comity of nations. In essence, Afrocentric policy agenda served as a framework within which Nigeria's commitment to decolonisation struggles became a means for asserting influence and pursuing national interests both in Africa and in the international system.

AFROCENTRISM AS A TOOL FOR REGIONAL HEGEMONY IN AFRICAN INSTITUTIONAL POLITICS

Afrocentrism backed by the idea of Pan-Africanism equally influenced Nigeria's support for African unity and African integration. The process of integrating and uniting African states through institutional framework was met with disagreement among African leaders, thus, leading to the emergence of three groups: the Monrovia group (spearhead by Nigeria), the Casablanca group of Kwame Nkrumah and the Brazzaville group. Nigeria rejected Kwame Nkrumah's radical-holistic approach towards African integration because of the belief that such approach is inimical to the sovereignty of African nations thus it advocated for a gradual approach towards African unity. In order to bring about consensus on the issue of African unity, Nigeria adopted diplomacy to woo the Casablanca group to support the Monrovia group. An important development was the Lagos Conference hosted by Nigeria in 1962 which later gave birth to a resolution known as the Lagos Charter based on the consensus of 20 African states on the formation of a permanent organisation of Inter-African and Malagasy states (Chukwu, 2023). Consequently, a conference was held at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on May 23, 1963. At the conference, the OAU Charter was signed thus giving birth to the Organisation of Africa Unity. After the conference, Balewa returned to Nigeria. While briefing the House of Representatives on the formation of OAU, he joyfully expressed that "all the decisions reached were in accord with the policies of the Federal government" (cited in Chukwu, 2023:64).

As a regional hegemon, Nigeria assumes the position of leadership in the formation of OAU. The adoption of Lagos Charter as part of the OAU Charter demonstrates that Nigeria provided direction and focus on the path to African integration. Shinkaiye (2004) asserts that "the Charter of the OAU was based largely on the Lagos Charter, a charter drawn up in Lagos by a team of Nigerian officials drawn from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Cabinet Office and the Federal Ministry of Justice" (Shinkaiye, 2004 cited in Mbachu, 2011:57). This further suggests that Nigeria was able to achieve her foreign policy objectives in the formation of OAU in relation to her Afrocentric posture. In essence, Nigeria used the Lagos Charter to shape the African integration agenda while also bolstering its leadership role. Arguing along realist viewpoint, Nigeria participated in the process of integrating Africa because such arrangement is consistent with her national interest. Nigeria could use the organisation to influence collective decisions as it did through

the Lagos Charter and also promote policies that align with its strategic interest.

EXERCISING REGIONAL HEGEMONY: NIGERIA'S PEACE AND SECURITY INTERVENTIONS

Nigeria's peacekeeping efforts across Africa further provides context within which its Afrocentric policy could be understood. Nigeria has deployed her military contingents, military personnel, including unharmed observers as well as the police and civilian personnel to help restore peace and tranquillity in conflict-ridden areas (Egbe & Ushie, 2022). Nigeria has participated in several peacekeeping missions in Africa both under the auspices of OAU/AU in Chad, Rwanda and in Sudan (Sanda, 2005) and under the UN-led peacekeeping missions in Congo, Somalia, and Rwanda. In 2000, the administration of President Olusagun Obasanjo approved 1.8 billion naira for the Nigerian contingents in Sierra Leone and DR Congo for their equipment and facilities (Nwanolue & Iwuoha, 2012 cited in Tijjani, 2024). Besides peacekeeping, Nigeria had engaged in conflict resolution and settlement of disputes through mediation, reconciliation and arbitration in Tanzania, Uganda, Western Sudan as well as in other African states through 'Shuttle Diplomacy'. In addition, Nigeria also participated in security-led operations together with Niger, Chad, and Cameroon by forming the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJF) to combat the Boko Haram insurgency.

From realist perspective, Nigeria's peace and security operations could be understood largely as an instrument of military power projection and as a way of securing political alliance in Africa. While Nigeria demonstrate her military might to deter potential aggressor, it equally enable it to pursue its strategic interest in the international system. Realists would posit that possessing sufficient military might is in the interest of states to ensure their own security and to promote their interest (Grigsby, 2012). Nigeria's active involvement in peacekeeping serves as a way of demonstrating to the international community that it is primary security provider in the continent. Nigeria could leverage on this so as to be seen as an important actor that shapes security outcomes in the international system. This could partly explains Nigeria's quest for an African permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

Furthermore, Nigeria's peace and security interventions from realist viewpoint can also be expressed as a way of ensuring regional stability which can be attributed to national stability in line realist theory. Security for states neighbouring Nigeria is equally security for Nigeria. Conversely, insecurity for its neighbours also means insecurity for Nigeria. Therefore, Nigeria's actions demonstrate why nation-states prioritize security as instability could threaten its survival i.e., sovereignty. In international relations, states pay much attention to issues of national security and power more than anything (Chilaka, 2014). When there is instability in states neighbouring Nigeria or those within the West African sub-region, there is the tendency of spill-over effect into Nigeria. Besides, it could also generate further security concerns such as humanitarian crises, trans-border crimes among others for Nigeria. Specifically, Nigeria's involvement in the MNJF with Niger, Cameroon and Chad can be understood as a strategic alliance to curtail emerging threat within its borders. From the foregoing, Nigeria's role as a peacekeeper and security provider within the realist school demonstrate a strategy for maintaining regional stability while projecting military and diplomatic power.

ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY AND THE EXPANSION OF INFLUENCE

Nigeria equally used its economic power to expand her spheres of influence in Africa. It was instrumental in the formation of

organisation such as the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), and African Development Bank (ADB), the Lake Chad Basin Commission (Olumuyiwa and Ufo Okeke, 2015 cited in Halidu et al., 2018:14; Ebegbulem, 2019; Chukwu, 2023). The creation of NEPAD was meant to build an effective democratic governance that can attract foreign aid in Africa and to also develop a new path for Africa's development founded on the tenets of democracy. This, in realist terms can be seen as a way of forming strategic alliance with the West, who are advocates of democratic governance. Nigeria also supported economic integration of Africa by signing the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AFCFTA), an initiative aimed at creating a single market for Africa so as so allow for free movement of human capital, goods and services. Furthermore, Nigeria established the Technical Aid Corps (TAC) in 1987 to provide technical know-how and expertise to the developing countries of Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP).

While the above demonstrates Nigeria's commitment to regional development, realism translate these actions as a way of showing economic viability and expanding influence. Dispatching over 8000 experts outside Nigeria to various countries between 1987 and 2020 to provide expertise in various field of human endeavour through TAC (Dalapo, 2020; Ogbonna et al., 2018 cited in Onuoha & Onuoha, 2022; Egbe & Ushie, 2022) can be understood as a way of asserting influence in the ACP. Realist would argue that states sign bilateral or multilateral agreements when they are consistent with their national interest. By signing the AFCFTA, Nigeria can establish economic diplomacy with other African states and also maintain economic dominance in the continent. Given Nigeria's economic viability, Nigeria can create markets for her goods and services and at the same time shape economic policies consistent with her national interest. In essence, Nigeria's involvement in NEPAD and AFCFTA as well as the establishment of TAC is not just about commitment to international institutional engagement but as means for consolidating political dominance.

THE DOMESTIC-FOREIGN POLICY NEXUS

The foreign policy of a nation is assumed to be a combination of both its domestic and foreign interest which are often expressed as national interest. National interest is the sum total of all a nation's interest both internally and externally. This follows that a nation's foreign policy is by implication an extension of its domestic policy. Fearson submits that "there is no foreign politics without domestic politics and that what may be referred to as foreign politics is merely the domestic politics of foreign countries or the product of their domestic politics" (Egbe & Ushie, 2022:102). Therefore, it is rational for states to pursue their domestic interest along their foreign interests in their external engagements. This brought to the fore the nexus between domestic and foreign policy in Nigeria's continental affairs. While Nigeria's Afrocentric policy has recorded significant success externally, the country at home is confronted with internal challenges. This raises questions regarding the place of Afrocentrism in Nigeria's foreign policy. Why would Nigeria continue to pursue the interest of Africa abroad? While at home it is battling with persistent insecurity, corruption, unemployment, poverty, weak institutions among others. Commenting on Nigeria's Afrocentric policy, Professor Ukaeje opines that "our false generosity at abroad and penury at home are proof that we are pretending to be what we are not….in reality, we have been overstreching ourselves" (Wogu et al., 2015:143). The foregoing demonstrates that there is a huge gap between what Nigeria achieves externally and its domestic realities. Unlike other countries, Nigeria has placed African interest rather than

its domestic interest as the foundation of its foreign policy (Egbe & Ushie, 2022).

From a realist perspective therefore, Nigeria's regional influence and its position as a regional hegemon would be meaningless if it is incapable of deploying the needed resources to address its domestic challenges, which pose threat to its internal sovereignty. States as rational actors in the international systems are expected to engage in a cost-benefit analysis before embarking on any foreign policy action, which should align with their national interest. Realists would argue that a state's survival is of paramount. This explains why states constantly pursue power to advance their national interest in the international system. It could be argues that Nigeria's pursuit of power and influence through Afrocentric policy has distracted its leadership from addressing the socio-economic and political problems it is confronted with domestically. The disconnection between the domestic realities and the external relations of Nigeria is inconsistent with realist perspective. This is because Nigeria pays little attention to conditions that threaten its survival as a nation domestically. If Nigeria should lose its sovereignty internally, it would ultimately lose its recognition as a state within the comity of nations. Besides, the national interest of a state encapsulate its domestic realities including its survival, the strengthening of national security, economic prosperity, promotion of peace and the general wellbeing of the citizenry (Halidu et al., 2019).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Arguably, Nigeria's Afrocentric policy has largely shaped her engagement in continental politics in the areas of peacekeeping, decolonisation, integration and economic diplomacy. While this policy is motivated by the spirit of Pan-Africanism, the analysis demonstrates that Afrocentrism is a strategic instrument through which Nigeria seeks to project her national power and also pursue her broader national and strategic interests. By demonstrating commitment to advancing African interest, Nigeria is by implication projecting herself as a regional hegemon through which the voice of Africa is being heard. From a realist perspective, this study provide empirical evidence to demonstrate that states' actions (that is foreign policy behaviour) in the international system are primarily driven by the quest for national interest which are expressed in terms of power and influence. Therefore, Nigeria's Afrocentric policy is not only altruistic but also a tool for projecting power and establishing regional influence.

However, while Nigeria's Afrocentric policy is quite laudable, there is need for the Nigerian leadership to pay attention to domestic needs and addresses internal challenges. This is because, domestic conditions in terms of political stability and economic viability would assist Nigeria in sustaining Afrocentric policy. Besides, Nigeria needs to embark upon a foreign policy reform that would give more attention to its national interest especially as it as to do with her internal politics. Therefore, the Nigerian leadership should prioritize economic diplomacy and bilateral trade relations that would project Nigeria has a hub for foreign direct investment (FDI). This would give Nigeria the opportunity to achieve its economic interest and also address the issue of unemployment particularly among the youths. Besides, Nigeria should also leverage on its regional influence to address its domestic security challenges through coordinated intelligence sharing, trans-border patrols and the development of a collective security architecture that would not jeopardise her national sovereignty. By embarking upon a foreign policy reform, Nigeria can strike a balance between her interest at home and at abroad, thus providing legitimacy to the latter. If Nigeria can use her foreign policy to

advance African cause, then she should be more willing to use same in addressing her internal challenges of insecurity, unemployment, corruption, ethno-religious conflict among others. Being active on the continental stage would be a wash while at home she is weak in handling crises that threaten her internal sovereignty.

REFERENCES

Akindoyin, D.I. (2025). Afrocentrism and the Nigerian Reciprocated and Unreciprocated Foreign Policy: A Review. FUDMA International Journal of Social Sciences, 14(1), 22-34.

Akinterinwa, B.A. (2010). Nigeria's Citizen Diplomacy: Theoretical Genesis and Empirical Exegesis. Bolytag International Publishers.

Chilaka, F.C. (2014). A Theoretical and Empirical Understanding of Political Realism in the Contemporary World. Journal of Social Sciences and Public Policy, 6(2), 59-67.

Chukwu, R.D. (2023). Nigeria's Foreign Policy from Independence: Challenges for the 21st Century. Advanced Publishers.

Chwkwu, R.D. (2024). Dynamics of International Relations. Advanced Publishers.

Clark, V.L.P. & Creswell, J.W. (2015). Understanding Research: A Consumer's Guide (2nd Edition). Pearson Education Inc

Ebegbulem, J.C. (2019). The Evolution of Nigeria's Foreign Policy: from the Pre-Independence and Post-independence Perspectives. International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Studies, 6(11), 1-12.

Egbe, B.O. & Ushie, R.U. (2022). Nigeria's Foreign Policy and Afrocentrism: A Critical Analysis. LWATI: A Journal of Contemporary Research, 19(4), 89-109.

Grigsby, E. (2012). Analyzing Politics: An Introduction to Political Science (5th Edition). Wadsworth.

Halidu, A., Obiageli, N.L., & Idagu, A.E. (2018). Nigeria Foreign Policy Principle since 1960: The Storyline and Analysis. Icheke Journal of the Faculty of Humanities, 16, 1-20.

Mbachu, O. (2011). Nigeria's Strategic Interest in Africa: A Critical Analysis of Contemporary Strategic Studies. Medusa Academic Publishers LTD.

Mustapha, A.H. & Adetoye, D. (2020). Nigeria & the African Continental Free Trade Agreement Area (AFCFTA): Issues, Challenges and Prospects. Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal, 7(2), 237-250. https://doi.org/10.14738/assrj.72.7698

Mustapha, A.H. (2020). Nigeria and the African Union (2002-2019). Journal of Globalization Studies, 11(2), 35-54. https://doi.org/10.30884/jogs/2020.02.02

Onuoha, J. & Onuoha, I. (2022). Rethinking Nigeria's Afrocentric Foreign Policy and the Politics of the Technical Aid Corps Programme. University of Nigeria Journal of Political Economy, 12(1), 1-15. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6987182

Osarumwense, C.O. (2019). Domestic Policy and Foreign Policy: A Critical Analysis of Nigeria's Foreign Policy under Civilian Rule, 1979-1983. Port Harcourt Journal of History and Diplomatic Studies, 6(2), 95-106.

Sanda, J. (2005). Nigeria's International Peacekeeping Efforts outside of Africa: 1960-2005. In Akinterinwa, B.A. (ed). Nigeria and the United Nations Security

Council (pp. 271-292). Vantage Publishers LTD.

Tijjani, A. (2024). Assessment of Nigeria's Afrocentric Foreign Policy: A Case Study of President Olusegun Obasanjo's Administration. International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research & Studies, 4(5), 917-921.

Wogu, I.A., Sholarin, M.A. & Chidozie, F.C. (2015). A Critical Evaluation of Nigeria's Foreign Policy at 53. Research on Humanities and Social Sciences, 5(2), 137-147.