TRANSNATIONAL THREATS AND FOREIGN POLICY SHIFTS: INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION ON WEST AFRICAN COUNTRIES

MOLIKI, AHMED OLAWALE
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, TAI SOLARIN UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, P.M.B. 2118, IJAGUN, IJEBU-ODE, OGUN STATE
molikiao@tasued.edu.ng

AKANBI, NURUDEEN ABIDEMI
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, TAI SOLARIN UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, P.M.B. 2118, IJAGUN, IJEBU-ODE, OGUN STATE
akanbiabidemii@yahoo.com

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ABSTRACT
Globalisation is a blessing as well as bane to humanity. Its impact on societies around the globe is diverse, presenting both opportunities and challenges. For most developing countries, the challenges are more than the opportunities. The challenges of terrorism and insurgency in West Africa countries is highly facilitated by the advent of globalisation, and this has greatly impacted how these nations position their foreign policy, shifting from the traditional way of foreign policy making to one that encompasses collaborations to tackle emerging threats. This research therefore explored transnational threats and foreign policy shifts, with a focus on investigating the impact of globalization on West African countries. The paper adopted the use of secondary data collection. Thus, sources of data in the conduct of the study were derived from journals, books, newspaper, institutional publications, and the internet. The paper adopted Complex Interdependence theory as a theoretical framework. The paper observed that West African countries have been significantly affected by globalisation, which has brought them a variety of challenges and opportunities. Therefore, the findings revealed that globalisation, while promoting economic growth, cultural interaction, and technical progress in West Africa states, has also given rise to non-state actors like terrorists and has disruptive consequences for sovereignty and national security. Therefore, the paper concluded that it is necessary for West Africa nations to establish efficient governance systems, regional collaboration platforms, and policies that capitalise on the advantages of globalisation while minimising its negative consequences. The paper recommended that West African

countries should prioritize deepening cooperation through regional organizations like ECOWAS, enhancing mechanisms for intelligence-sharing, joint military operations, and capacity-building initiatives to effectively combat transnational threats.

Introduction

Globalisation has become a significant influence in creating the geopolitical landscape of the 21st century, due to the extraordinary interconnection of our time. The increasing interconnectedness of nations and the removal of obstacles to communication and trade have led to the widespread influence of globalisation, which has radically transformed traditional concepts of sovereignty, security, and statehood in societies around the world (Ernst & Haar, 2019). However, despite the fact that globalisation has brought numerous advantages, its effect on developing countries, especially those in West Africa, provides a situation of opportunities and difficulties.

West African countries, located at the intersection of various regional and global forces, experience the profound effects of globalisation. The region, which possesses rich natural resources and cultural variety, has experienced a significant increase in transnational risks due to the widespread influence of globalisation. Non-state actors, including terrorist organisations and transnational criminal networks, take advantage of weak borders and leverage technical progress to commit acts of violence, engage in illegal trade, and create instability throughout the region (Akanji, 2019).

Furthermore, the interdependent nature of the globalised world has significant consequences for the foreign policy goals of West African nations. In order to effectively address emerging difficulties, states in the region are now adjusting their foreign policy methods and objectives as they traverse the dynamics of an increasingly interdependent international system. The conventional model of diplomacy centred around the state is being replaced by a more diverse approach, where collaborating with regional and international entities becomes crucial for protecting national interests and fostering regional stability (Grevi, 2018).

In light of this context, this research aims to examine the nexus between globalisation, transnational challenges, and the foreign policy responses of West African nations. The research aims to gain a thorough understanding of how globalisation affects the security situation in West Africa and influences the strategic decision-making of its policymakers by examining the dynamics of this phenomena. Thus, this research highlights the urgent necessity to analyse the consequences of globalisation on how West African countries deal with non-state actors and emerging challenges. The research will establish a solid foundation for a more efficient strategy to tackle the continuous security threats in the region.

Conceptual Clarification

Transnational Threats

Transnational threats are security concerns that reach beyond national borders and constitute substantial dangers to the stability, prosperity, and sovereignty of governments (Reveron, 2018). These threats involve a wide range of criminal activities, including terrorism, organised crime, cyber warfare, and pandemics. Furthermore, transnational threats, in contrast to traditional security concerns, transcend national borders and take use of the interconnection of the globalised globe to carry out their malicious operations. Therefore, these threats challenge traditional ideas of a country's authority and geographical boundaries, requiring organised and cooperative actions at both the regional and global levels (Koch & Stivachtis, 2019).

Terrorism is a significant example of transnational threats, as extremist organisations and radicalised people utilise worldwide networks and communication channels to spread their violent ideology and carry out acts of terror in many regions (Renard, 2022). Modern terrorism, which is characterised by its ability to adapt and change, is made easier by improvements in technology and communication. This allows terrorist groups to easily find new members, obtain funding, and plan attacks. As a result, national security agencies and law enforcement authorities around the world have significant hurdles in

combating this threat. In addition, the unbalanced characteristics of terrorist strategies, such as suicide bombs, guerrilla warfare, and cyber strikes, make it challenging to effectively counter this global threat (Asongu & Biekpe, 2018).

Furthermore, transnational organised crime is a significant part of the wider range of transnational threats, alongside terrorism. Transnational criminal syndicates, which extend across many continents and operate in various unlawful marketplaces, partake in a wide array of illicit endeavours such as drug trafficking, people smuggling, arms proliferation, and money laundering. These illicit organisations utilise worldwide distribution networks, networks of corruption, and digital platforms to avoid detection by law enforcement and take advantage of weaknesses in national regulations. As a result, they weaken the authority of the legal system and diminish public confidence. Furthermore, the connection between international organised crime and other illegal activities, such as funding terrorism and cybercrime, adds to the difficulty of dealing with these interconnected dangers (Shettimma, 2021).

Additionally, in the digital era, cybersecurity has become a crucial aspect of transnational threats. Cyber attacks provide significant threats to the security of national infrastructure, financial systems, and repositories of sensitive data. Government-sponsored cyber attackers, organised crime groups, and activist hackers take advantage of weaknesses in network defences and utilise advanced malicious software to penetrate government agencies, private businesses, and parts of essential infrastructure, resulting in extensive disruption and financial harm. The absence of borders in cyberspace, along with the ability to remain anonymous through digital technology, makes traditional methods of cybersecurity outdated (Gunduz & Daz, 2020). This requires international collaboration to successfully reduce this transnational threat.

Foreign Policy

Foreign policy, as defined by experts in the fields of international relations and political science, encompasses the strategic objectives, principles, and actions that a nation-state employs to handle its interactions with other governments and international entities. It is fundamentally shaped by a state's understanding of its own national interests, values, and security concerns within a global system that is becoming more interconnected and intricate (White, 2018). Foreign policy therefore implies a comprehensive strategy that involves many diplomatic, economic, military, and cultural tools used by governments to pursue their interests, safeguard their independence, and foster stability and prosperity globally.

Furthermore, experts in foreign policy emphasise the fluid and flexible nature of foreign policy processes, influenced by several elements such as domestic politics, historical influences, international conventions, and evolving geopolitical dynamics (Panke, 2019). States consistently evaluate and readjust their foreign policy plans in reaction to changing global patterns, rising dangers, and chances for collaboration, thereby demonstrating a solid interaction of interests, values, and power dynamics in the field of international relations (Baylis, 2020). Thus, foreign policy is essentially the way a country's goals and talents are shown to the world. It is an important tool for dealing with the challenges of the globalised world and achieving national objectives in a constantly changing geopolitical environment.

According to Northedge (1968), foreign policy is the dynamic interaction between external and internal factors, which is a fundamental notion in the field of international relations. Frankel (1973) sees foreign policy as a dynamic process that involves the interaction between evolving home demands and the changing international environment. In addition, Rourke (2008) expressed the view that foreign policy encompasses the objectives pursued, beliefs upheld, decisions made, and acts done by states and national societies. It represents an endeavour to strategize, oversee, and regulate the international interactions of national societies. Thus, foreign policy can be seen as a strategic tool that nations employ to exert influence on their relationships with other countries and to accomplish their goals within the global framework.

Foreign Policy Shifts

Foreign policy shifts can be understood and analysed from numerous angles, representing distinct aspects and viewpoints of international relations. It simply refer to the process in which a country modifies its alliances, partnerships, and geopolitical posture in order to adapt to

evolving global dynamics (Zaidi & Nirmal, 2023). This could involve moving away from conventional allies towards new strategic partners or adjusting diplomatic and military commitments to better correspond with evolving challenges or possibilities. A critical example is that of the United States' strategic shift towards Asia during the early 21st century and Saudi Arabia's endeavours to broaden its ties in the Middle East.

Another definition of foreign policy shifts pertains to alterations in a nation's policy priorities and agenda. This entails a reassessment of a country's interests, values, and goals, resulting in changes in how resources are distributed, diplomatic efforts are made, and participation in international collaborations is approached. These adjustments might happen as a result of changes in domestic politics, economic difficulties, or changes in global standards and priorities (Walgrave, Varone & Dumont, 2013). For example, a nation can give greater importance to economic diplomacy rather than military involvement or place a strong emphasis on promoting human rights in its foreign policy.

Additionally, foreign policy shifts can also pertain to alterations in a nation's moral position and ideological alignment regarding global matters (Rathbun, et al., 2016). This entails changes in the fundamental principles, values, and beliefs that shape a nation's interaction with the global community. Normative shifts might encompass a transition towards increased compliance with liberal democratic standards, multilateralism, or non-interventionism. Alternatively, they can comprise a shift towards authoritarianism, nationalism, or protectionism. These changes can have substantial consequences for a nation's global reputation and alliances.

Foreign policy shifts or adjustments can also be characterised as alterations in a nation's geographical concentration and preferences. This entails realigning diplomatic, economic, and security approaches towards certain regions or subregions in reaction to changing geopolitical dynamics, regional conflicts, or economic prospects (Taffet, 2012). For instance, a nation might redirect its attention from one area to another as a result of evolving security risks, reliance on certain resources, or changes in trade dynamics, resulting in a redistribution of diplomatic assets and strategic investments.

Consequently, it can be seen as adaptive reactions to external shocks, crises, or systemic alterations in the international system. This pertains to a nation's capacity to adapt its strategy and tactics in foreign policy to effectively navigate through unpredictable situations, minimise risks, and take advantage of unexpected possibilities. These adjustments may encompass crisis diplomacy, conflict resolution endeavours, or humanitarian initiatives that try to tackle urgent difficulties while simultaneously protecting long-term interests and stability (Frank, et al., 2014).

Thus, foreign policy shifts can be understood via different lenses, including strategic realignment, policy prioritisation, normative changes, regional reorientation, and adaptive responses to external challenges. These factors contribute to understanding the shifts in foreign policy.

Globalisation

Globalisation is a frequently researched term in the fields of economics, sociology, and political science. It describes the growing connectivity and interdependence of civilizations, economies, cultures, and governance systems worldwide. Globalisation is primarily characterised by the increased movement of products, services, capital, information, technology, and people across national borders (Keohane & Nye, 2020). This movement is made possible by developments in transportation, communication, and digital technologies. This phenomena surpasses conventional limits and obstacles, restructuring the manner in which individuals, communities, and nations engage and assimilate into the global system (Kobrin, 2017).

There are several aspects of globalisation, such as economic globalisation, which involves the opening up of markets, the growth of trade and investment, and the merging of national economies into a worldwide system of production and consumption. Economic globalisation is propelled by causes such as technical advancement, deregulation, and the expansion of multinational firms. This results in heightened specialisation, improved efficiency, and the spread of wealth and opportunity across national boundaries. Nevertheless, globalisation also presents difficulties such as disparities in wealth, displacement of jobs, and susceptibility to financial crises, underscoring the intricate and

diverse effects of globalisation on economic systems and procedures (Islam, et al., 2019).

Furthermore, globalisation also includes cultural globalisation, which refers to the dissemination of ideas, values, conventions, and practices throughout societies, assisted by the interchange of information and the widespread availability of mass media, entertainment, and digital platforms. Cultural globalisation promotes the uniformity of cultures, as Western standards and consumer behaviours have more influence worldwide. This phenomenon sparks discussions over cultural variety, individual identity, and cultural domination (Anim, et al., 2022). In addition, globalisation has led to the development of a global civil society. This society is defined by international networks of non-governmental organisations, advocacy groups, and social movements that unite around common values, causes, and concerns. They use their influence to pressure governments and international organisations to tackle global problems and advance human rights, environmental sustainability, and social justice (Clarke, 2019).

Theoretical Framework

This research adopted the Complex Interdependence Theory. The Complex Interdependence Theory, formulated by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye in their influential publication "Power and Interdependence" (1977), arose as a counter to conventional realist viewpoints in the field of international affairs. It became more prominent during a time when globalisation was starting to speed up, which questioned the old perspective of international relations that focused on the state (Mija & Teosa, 2014). The theory postulates that states are interconnected through diverse channels, including economic, social, and political connections, highlighting the mutually beneficial nature of their interactions. According to the theory, non-state entities such as multinational businesses, NGOs, and international organisations have a substantial impact on influencing global politics. In the setting of complex interdependence, military force is often regarded as less efficacious than diplomacy, economic incentives, and other manifestations of soft power (Walker, 2013).

Complex Interdependence Theory offers valuable insights into the impact of globalisation on the foreign policy shifts of West African countries grappling with transnational concerns. The process of globalisation strengthens the interrelationships between West African nations and the rest of the world, resulting in heightened susceptibility to transnational threats such as terrorism, drug trafficking, and infectious illnesses. Also, globalisation enables economic interconnectedness, which exposes West African nations to global economic shocks and weaknesses. Again, social and cultural interactions facilitate the dissemination of ideologies and networks linked to transnational threats. As a result, West African countries need to change their foreign policies from traditional state-centric methods to more cooperative measures in order to address these difficulties.

However, this theory has been highly criticised. The critics of Complex Interdependence Theory contend that it tends to underestimate power dynamics and the significance of military force in international relations, which may not sufficiently grasp the realities of geopolitics, particularly in conflict-prone countries such as West Africa. Moreover, the theory's focus on cooperation and interdependence may not provide a comprehensive explanation for instances of conflict and security rivalry, where governments prioritise their own national interests over shared benefits. Again, critics argued that the theory fails to consider the existence of structural disparities in the global economy. These inequalities have a greater impact on less-developed countries such as West Africa, restricting their capacity to fully capitalise on economic interdependence. Nevertheless, the Complex Interdependence Theory provides a useful paradigm for understanding how globalisation affects the foreign policy shifts of West African nations.

Transnational Threats and Foreign Policy Shifts: The Nexus

The interaction between global challenges that transcend national borders and changes in foreign policy creates a connection that influences how countries act in the modern global system. In this wise, transnational threats are threats that go beyond national borders and impact numerous countries at the same time. These threats include terrorism, organised crime, pandemics, and environmental degradation (Yakubu & Idehen, 2021). These challenges present substantial security, economic, and social threats to states and societies, leading governments to reevaluate

their foreign policy objectives and actions in reaction.

An important factor in the relationship between transnational threats and shifts in foreign policy is the acknowledgment of the connectivity and interdependence in global events. The existence of transnational threats highlights the necessity for countries to work together and synchronise their actions across borders in order to efficiently tackle common concerns (Bala, 2017). Therefore, changes in foreign policy frequently entail a heightened focus on multilateralism, regional collaboration, and collective security institutions. Also, states can pursue alliances, enhance international institutions, and participate in diplomatic initiatives to effectively handle transnational dangers through cooperative endeavours.

Furthermore, transnational threats have the potential to trigger modifications in the strategic decision-making of nations, resulting in adaptations in their foreign policy orientations and objectives. For instance, the rise of novel security dangers like cyberattacks or hybrid warfare may compel nations to redistribute resources, redirect military assets, or embrace fresh diplomatic approaches to mitigate growing threats (Kshetri, 2019). Thus, changes in foreign policy in reaction to transnational threats may require adjusting alliances, partnerships, and strategic engagements to better match developing security dynamics.

Simultaneously, transnational threats can worsen pre-existing tensions and disputes among states, resulting in increased competitiveness, distrust, and instability within the global system. Instances of territorial conflicts, resource competition, or ideological disagreements can be intensified by the existence of transnational threats like terrorism or arms trafficking (Nelsom, 2010). During such instances, changes in foreign policy may entail a strengthening of stances, heightened security measures, and a prioritisation of independent actions rather than cooperative resolutions.

In conclusion, the nexus between transnational threats and shifts in foreign policy emphasises the complex interaction between local needs, international influences, and worldwide trends.

Globalization and Its Impact on West African Countries

Undoubtedly, West African countries have been significantly affected by globalisation, which has brought them a variety of challenges and opportunities. An important factor is the rise of non-state players, including multinational businesses, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and transnational criminal networks, which have gained enormous influence in influencing the socio-economic environment of the region (Shittu, et al., 2020). These actors frequently engage in activities that span multiple countries, taking advantage of the interconnections created by globalisation to advance their own interests. However, while several non-governmental organisations (NGOs) make a good contribution to development endeavours, others may worsen existing issues by engaging in exploitative practices or by contributing to conflicts. Transnational criminal networks that participate in illicit operations such as drug trafficking, arms smuggling, and human trafficking provide substantial security risks to West African countries. These networks take advantage of ineffective government systems and easily crossed borders (Anang & Pokoo, 2014).

In addition to these emerging issues, globalisation has also introduced disruptive consequences for sovereignty and national security in West Africa (Clare & Walshe, 2019). The conventional understanding of sovereignty, which involves the authority over boundaries and government inside a nation-state, is being increasingly questioned due to the impact of global economic forces and transnational dangers. The process of economic globalisation has resulted in the deregulation of markets and the incorporation of West African economies into the worldwide economy, making them susceptible to external disturbances and vulnerabilities that are beyond their influence (Okafor & Enyi, 2022). Furthermore, the process of globalisation has also weakened the power of states by making it increasingly challenging to control the movement and actions of individuals, ideas, and information within a country's boundaries. For instance, during the Twitter Ban era in Nigeria, individuals still use the social media platform despite ban pronouncement by the president.

Furthermore, the impact of globalisation on national security in West Africa can be clearly seen in the increase of transnational risks such as terrorism, organised crime, and contagious illnesses. Terrorist organisations such as Boko Haram and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb

(AQIM) take advantage of weak borders and socio-economic issues to enlist members and carry out attacks in several nations within the region (Maza, Koldas & Aksit, 2020). Likewise, criminal syndicates exploit inadequate law enforcement and corruption to participate in illegal operations, which undermines the effectiveness of governance and stability. Moreover, the interdependent structure of the globalised world enables the swift dissemination of contagious illnesses, exemplified by epidemics such as Ebola and COVID-19, which provide substantial health security hazards to people in West Africa (Bernes, et al., 2020).

Conclusively, globalisation has presented both advantageous prospects and difficulties for nations in West Africa. Although it has promoted economic growth, cultural interaction, and technical progress, it has also given rise to non-state actors and has disruptive consequences for sovereignty and national security. To tackle these challenges, it is necessary to establish efficient governance systems, regional collaboration platforms, and policies that capitalise on the advantages of globalisation while minimising its negative consequences.

Effects of Transnational Threats on Foreign Policy Shift in West Africa Countries

The West African region has had substantial repercussions from transnational challenges or threats such as war, globalisation, terrorism, and arms trafficking. These challenges have had a profound impact on the foreign policy decisions of the countries in the region. Primarily, the high incidence of war and armed conflict in West Africa, encompassing civil wars and regional disputes, has compelled countries to reevaluate their foreign policy priorities and strategies (Bolarinwa & Yakubu, 2022). However, as a response to the disruptive consequences of conflict, governments in the area frequently endeavour to enhance regional cooperation structures, participate in peacekeeping missions, and solicit assistance from international allies to tackle security concerns. For instance, nations like as Nigeria and Senegal have assumed prominent positions in regional peacekeeping endeavours, indicating a transition towards proactive involvement in resolving conflicts and fostering peace (Adeleke, 2017).

Furthermore, foreign policy shifts in West African countries have been significantly influenced by globalization (Asongu, 2012). The growing interdependence of economies, communities, and cultures has intensified the necessity for governments in the region to embrace more sophisticated and flexible foreign policy strategies (Ubi & Akinkuotu, 2014). Hence, West African governments have responded to globalisation by attempting to broaden their diplomatic and economic alliances, utilise regional integration efforts, and collaborate with non-governmental entities such as multinational firms and civil society organisations. This has prompted a reassessment of conventional alliances and a heightened focus on economic diplomacy and the projection of soft power.

Consequently, terrorism has become a prominent transnational threat in West Africa, with organisations like Boko Haram, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) operating beyond national boundaries and presenting substantial security challenges (Pham, 2016). Due to the increase in terrorism in the area, foreign policies have been adjusted to focus on improving collaboration in counterterrorism efforts, reinforcing border protection, and tackling the underlying factors that lead to radicalization and extremism. Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger have strengthened their collaboration with international allies such as the United Nations, European Union, and African Union to counter terrorism and bring stability to regions devastated by violence (Bacon & Warner, 2021).

Furthermore, arms trafficking worsens security challenges in West Africa by intensifying conflicts, escalating bloodshed, and undermining the authority of the state. The illegal trafficking of small arms and light weapons has enabled the spread of armed factions and criminal syndicates, exacerbating the instability in the area (Mohammed & Baba, 2017). Hence, West African nations have taken steps to bolster arms control measures, fortify border security, and expand law enforcement collaboration in order to combat the illegal trafficking of weapons. The changes in foreign policy have also included active participation in global initiatives such as the Arms Trade Treaty, as well as regional frameworks like the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons. These efforts aim to tackle the cross-border aspects of arms trafficking.

Thus, transnational threats, including war, globalisation, terrorism, and arms trafficking,

have significant impacts on the changes in foreign policy in West African nations.

Conclusion

The nexus between globalisation, transnational threats, and shifts in foreign policy in West Africa countries highlights the complex interaction between worldwide influences, regional factors, and internal obstacles. The process of globalisation has enabled West African countries to become more intertwined with the rest of the globe, resulting in both advantageous prospects and potential weaknesses. The interconnectivity in this region has increased its vulnerability to transnational threats such as terrorism, organised crime, and contagious illnesses. These risks go beyond country boundaries and necessitate cooperative actions. Consequently, West African nations have experienced substantial changes in their diplomatic strategies, adjusting to the changing security environment and striving to tackle emergent issues through collaboration among neighbouring countries and alliances with international partners.

These shifts in foreign policy may be seen in a range of efforts designed to improve security cooperation, bolster border management, and foster socio-economic growth. Regional organisations, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), have been instrumental in coordinating efforts to address transnational threats. In addition, West African nations have collaborated with global allies such as the United Nations, European Union, and individual donor countries to garner assistance for counterterrorism initiatives, border security initiatives, and development projects that target the underlying causes of instability.

Recommendations

Based on the analysis above, the following recommendations are put in place:

i. First and foremost, it is important to strengthen regional cooperation. West African countries should prioritize deepening cooperation through regional organizations like ECOWAS, enhancing mechanisms for intelligence-sharing, joint military operations, and capacity-building initiatives to effectively combat transnational threats.

ii. Secondly, addressing root causes of violence in the region should be prioritised. Efforts to address transnational threats should go beyond security measures to tackle underlying socio-economic and political factors contributing to instability. This includes promoting good governance, rule of law, and inclusive development to address grievances and prevent radicalization.

iii. Border security should be enhanced. Given the porous nature of borders in West Africa, investing in border management technologies, training for border security forces, and cross-border cooperation mechanisms are essential to prevent the movement of illicit goods, weapons, and extremist elements.

iv. West African countries should incest in sustainable development goals. Investing in education, healthcare, infrastructure, and job creation programs can address socio-economic disparities, promote social cohesion, and reduce vulnerabilities to extremism and criminality, contributing to long-term stability and prosperity in West Africa.

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